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Nov/Dec 1997: Roe v. Wade 25th Anniversary, Police Torture in Brooklyn, IRA Cease Fire, UPS Strike, Menstrual Extraction, Kenya, Zapatistas, Mexico's elections, Iran's Elections...

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Mar/Apr 1997: International Women's Day, Bo Brown Interview (part 2 of 2), Luisa Capetillo, Women in Zapatista Territory, Women and Welfare, Judi Bari, Neoliberalism and World Revolution, UDC Student Movement...

Jan/Feb 1997: Anti-Prison Movement, Bo Brown Interview (part 1 of 2), CIA Deals Crack, 1996 Elections, Police Brutality, Strikes in Toronto & Quebec, Spirit of Magon in Mexico, Mario Savio, Robert Williams...

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VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2

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BY GENE
On March 27, 1998 thousands of demonstrators descended on Washington, DC to demand amnesty and freedom for all Political Prisoners (PPs) and Prisoners of War (POWs) held in the United States. People from all corners of the country put the government on notice that we will no longer accept its denial of the existence of PPs/POWs in America and that we will stop at nothing short of their release.

Over 150 men and women who participated in movements for social justice and liberation in the 60s, 70s and 80s languish in prison today as a result of their political commitment. The majority of these prisoners have already served 10-25 years, mostly for non-violent crimes. Some prisoners' actions, considered "illegal" by the government were taken in direct response to state-

sponsored attacks and terror against oppressed or colonized peoples and their organizations. In cases where the activists have admitted and defended their actions, their sentences have been much higher than for those convicted of the same "offense" whose motivations are not political. The state adds 20, 30, even 50 years to a sentence because it was politically motivated, yet it denies the existence of "political" prisoners. Many activists were targeted by and framed the FBI and police because they were identified as movement leaders, and then did not receive fair trials. This was the case with Geronimo ji jaga Pratt, recently released after serving 25 years for a crime the government knew he did not commit; Leonard Peltier, the American Indian Movement activist still in prison after being framed with the killing of two FBI agents, and Mumia Abu-Jamal, who remains on death row in Pennsylvania despite ample

Jericho '98 Draws Thousands of People

evidence of misconduct in his trial.

Many of the movements from which these individuals came were devastated by the illegal and despicable practices of government agencies like the FBI that set out through programs like COINTELPRO to "neutralize" the Black, Puerto Rican, and Native American liberation movements and disrupt anti-imperialist and anti-war struggles. The results of these campaigns included the frame-up and assassination of the movements' leaders, fomenting divisions between individuals and organizations and forcing underground and into exile of numerous dedicated activists whose only crime was to struggle for a better world and the liberation of oppressed people.

Jericho '98 recognizes that building a new movement for positive social change to take us into the year 2000 and beyond requires an active campaign on behalf of those freedom fighters who put their lives on the line for the struggle but remain incarcerated. Most of these comrades have received the harshest treatment (sent to the highest security facilities, placed in control units, subjected to psychological and physical torture). These prisoners have endured in some cases over 20 years of this type of treatment, with little or no outside support. They already face the highest expression of state repression—from the lock-downs in the maximum security and control units where most PPs/POWs find themselves to the threat of death (by legal execution in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal but also the "accidental" deaths that have occurred

either due to conditions, lack of health care, or prisonrat and government plots).

Many of them, already in their 40s, 50s and 60s, continue to be wronged as their attempts at parole are denied based on their political views and associations. Sundiata Acoli who is associated with Assata Shakur recently received a 20 year hit at his last hearing. Susan Rosenberg, also associated with Assata Shakur, received a 15 hit. This means they cannot return to the parole board for 20 and 15 years respectively.

The march and rally in DC were just the first steps towards building a sustained campaign to bring our people home. The day was seen by many prisoners and activists as a historic step forward. The diversity and unity expressed throughout the effort was a milestone in the struggle to address the issue of political prisoners and prisoners of war in the US and in rebuilding the radical movement in the US.

Paulette, a long time political prisoner support activist and anti-authoritarian who worked with the Jericho '98 National Coordinating Committee said it was the "first truly diverse multinational work done around political prisoners... the only call being to build this march and rally and organization that would relate to the political prisoners themselves."

Jericho '98 was initiated over 18 months ago when the call was put out by political prisoner Jalil Abdul Muntaqim, a former Black Panther of the NY3. The call was taken up by Safiya Bukhari and Herman Ferguson, ex-PPs/POWs themselves and

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Students Fight Educational Apartheid

BY SUZY SUBWAYS
On January 14, New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani attacked the City University of New York's open admissions policy in his State of the City address, claiming that the University has no "standards." Within weeks, several CUNY Trustees and college presidents made proposals to limit remedial education and impose stricter entrance requirements on students at CUNY's 17 colleges. These proposals sparked a series of student and faculty protests, but barely three months passed before the Trustees voted on May 26 to end all remedial classes at the senior colleges.

CUNY's open admissions policy was won by radical Black and Latino students in 1969, with a long struggle culminating in a student strike at City College that had tremendous support from the surrounding Harlem community. At the time, the student body of City College was 94% white; it was called the "pearl of Harlem." To open the door to higher education to all New Yorkers, the open admissions policy guaranteed a place at CUNY for everyone who has graduated from high school or earned a G.E.D. Now the majority of CUNY students are people of color and many are single mothers, immigrants, and poor people.

Advocates of open admissions at CUNY also pressured the NYC Board of Education to improve the city's neglected public school system so that all high school graduates would be prepared for college. Instead, the quality of public education has consistently declined due to overcrowding and budget cuts. As a result, 63% of freshmen entering CUNY fail one or more of three placement tests in math, writing, and reading. These students take remedial classes to bring them up to the college level. This way the more challenging and interesting classes can be taken alongside remediation, which can motivate and inspire a student to patiently work through the drudgery of making up for what is often 12 years of wasted classroom time.

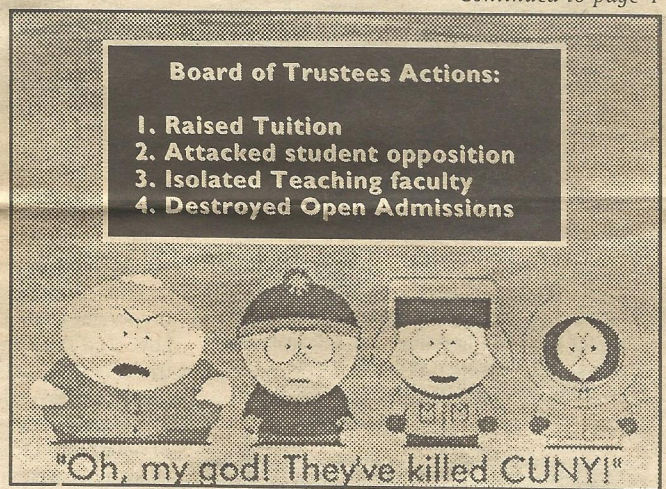
The call to "raise standards" has nothing to do with actually improving education at CUNY. If they wanted to do that, they would restore the departments and faculty that have been eliminated over the years of deep budget cuts. But the call for "standards" resonates with some students who would actually benefit from a shift by CUNY towards elitism.

If CUNY's 4-year colleges stopped offering remedial classes, two thirds of the Black, Latino and Asian students who apply

for admission would be turned away, re-establishing educational apartheid at CUNY. Since CUNY has been the primary route out of poverty and into the middle-class for New York City's Black, Latino, and immigrant populations, shutting out thousands of people of these communities will effectively preserve any jobs with decent pay, benefits, and working conditions for white, middle-class graduates.

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT COMES BACK TO LIFE

Student activists started meeting in February to rebuild the movement at CUNY. So far it has been a slow but steady process of growth, based on a conscious effort to learn from the mistakes of past years. At Brooklyn College, for example, this has meant that activists are beginning to understand the need to spend time getting to know the people in clubs on campus and



Courtesy of Hunter Envoy

planning events with these clubs instead of expecting individuals to come join some isolated and culturally alienating activist group. At all the colleges, activists need to be more open and welcoming to new people, instead of creating a dynamic of "honcho-ism," where a few individuals enjoy a sense of importance by dominating all the leadership positions. This dynamic is usually related to an abuse of male or white privilege.

Every spring, a new coalition is born in

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Mexico: Rumors of War

BY CHRISTOPHER DAY
Talk of Peace... "If you want peace" the bumpersticker reads, "prepare for war." The Mexican corollary to this bit of back-country wisdom seems to be "If you want war, make proposals for peace." March was a month of peace proposals in Mexico with three major "peace initiatives" following in rapid succession. The first was from the newly-appointed Governor of Chiapas, Roberto Albores Guillen of the PRI (the Revolutionary Institutional Party that has ruled Mexico for 70 years). The second was from the right-wing PAN (National Action Party). And the third came from President Ernesto Zedillo, also of the PRI.

In spite of all the hype, none of these plans has even the remotest chance to bring peace to Chiapas, where a government-sponsored "low-intensity war" continues to maim, kill, and terrorize indigenous peasants in spite of international outrage at the massacre of 45 unarmed people by government-sponsored

paramilitaries in the village of Acteal on December 22, 1997. Instead, the "peace initiatives" all seem to have been carefully crafted for rejection by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)—so that the government could portray the Zapatistas as "intransigent" and "unwilling to negotiate" and prepare for a military offensive against them.

After 12 days of fighting in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas in January 1994, the Zapatistas agreed to participate in negotiations with the Mexican government. All the while the EZLN express profound skepticism about the sincerity of the government's desire to resolve the social problems that were the cause of the Zapatista uprising. That skepticism has proven to be well founded. In February, 1995 the Mexican Army launched a military offensive against the Zapatistas and an unsuccessful manhunt for the EZLN's military leader and chief spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos. In spite of this treachery the Zapatistas returned to the

negotiating table shortly after the government offensive. In February of 1996 the EZLN signed an agreement (the San Andres Accords) with the government for changes in the constitution and federal laws that would establish a significant degree of autonomy for Mexico's indigenous communities in the areas of education, language rights, self-government and control of natural resources. Half a year later the government had done exactly nothing to carry out the changes called for in the San Andres Accords. The Zapatistas then announced that they were withdrawing from any further talks until the government implemented its side of the agreements.

In the intervening year and a half the government has claimed that the Zapatistas need to come back to the negotiating table to approve specific legal language required to implement the agreement, even though the Accords are quite explicit in their content and specific legal language has been proposed by the Commission for Conciliation and Peace

(COCOPA)—(a multi-party body established by the government in 1994 for the purpose of negotiating with the Zapatistas). Broader and broader sectors of Mexican civil society have progressively become convinced that it is the government and not the Zapatistas who have been intransigent. The new "peace initiatives" are really just another attempt to turn this situation around and prepare the ground for another government offensive against the Zapatistas.

Governor Albores Guillen's "peace plan" is perhaps the most blatant in its disregard for what a real peace in Chiapas demands. Guillen was appointed Governor in January after the previous appointee, Julio Cesar Ruiz Ferro, was forced from office in the wake of the Acteal massacre. The Zapatistas have insisted from the first days of their uprising that they did not view their grievances as confined to the state of Chiapas and accord-

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Boring Disclaimer

The articles we print do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Federation or of any member of the Federation, unless specifically marked. Sometimes we print articles we don't agree with because we believe that they are interesting, provocative, or raise important issues for the revolutionary movement. Some articles represent one view among many views held by Love & Rage members on a topic.

About Our Politics...

Love and Rage is a bi-monthly anarchist newspaper intended to foster revolutionary anti-authoritarian activism in North America and build a more effective and better-organized anarchist movement. We will provide coverage of social struggles, world events, anarchist actions, and cultures of resistance. We will support the struggles of oppressed peoples around the world for control over their own lives. Anarchy offers the broadest possible critique of domination, making possible a framework for unity in all struggles for liberation. We seek to understand the systems we live under for ourselves and reject any pre-packaged ideology. Anarchism is a living body of theory and practice connected directly to the lived experiences of oppressed people fighting for their own liberation. We anticipate the radical and on-going revision of our ideas as a necessary part of any revolutionary process.



Love and Rage Breaks Up

After more than 8 years of hard work, the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation voted to dissolve itself during a brief conference at Hunter College in New York City on Saturday, May 23, 1998. Some participants in the conference spent the rest of the weekend laying the foundation for a new provisional organization, the Fire By Night Organizing Committee. Members of the another faction at the conference also announced their intention to launch a journal and a new organization. Neither of those projects has a name yet.

Love and Rage started out as a continental anarchist newspaper at a conference in Chicago back in 1989. The founding group included individuals and members of anarchist collectives from across the US and Canada as well as an anarchist faction of the freshly-dissolved Trotskyist group Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). Over the years, Love and Rage evolved from a loose network around the newspaper into a tighter organization. It became the Love and Rage Network in 1991 and the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation in 1993. This desire to build a serious and committed organization coupled with the involvement of the ex-RSL members made Love and Rage an object of continuous controversy within the anarchist scene. Despite these controversies, the reliable publication of the newspaper provided a valuable source of news and a forum for debate among anarchists and activists of many persuasions.

The break-up of Love and Rage was preceded by a two-year-long debate within the organization around a number of issues that proved irreconcilable. In the course of this debate, the ex-RSL members and a few others active in the Anti-Racist Action Network (ARA) signed onto a document entitled "What We Believe" (WWB), which argued that all of the practical and theoretical problems that faced Love and Rage could be answered from "within anarchism." Other members raised provocative questions (How do you defend the ideals of a new society without replicating elements of a state? How does a revolutionary relate to her or his communities as an organizer?) and often found that anarchist history and thought didn't have satisfying answers. The WWB document and its backers offered vague and moralistic answers to such questions. Worse, WWB warned that this questioning was evidence of a covert plot to corrupt anarchism with Marxist thought.

A second major issue was the theory of white skin privilege, which holds that the material and psychological privileges granted to white people in the US, and not just racist ideology, is the primary obstacle to multi-racial unity among oppressed people in this country. WWB described the privileges granted to whites as "petty and apparent" and some members of the WWB faction attacked the theory of white skin privilege. In opposition to this position, others argued that opposition to the system of white skin privileges was central to their politics and part of what attracted them to Love and Rage in the first place.

A third major issue was practical work. Some of the WWB faction members had stopped doing any sort of mass organizing years ago. This was reflected in their politics. Some did political work locally which often wasn't integrated into the Love and Rage Federation's strategic working groups. A

couple were doing good work building ARA, but had failed to fulfill responsibilities to the organization which they had taken on when the Love and Rage Coordinating Committee (CC) was moved to their area. The CC was the body responsible for the day-to-day decision-making of Love and Rage, but this CC never met after it was elected at the 1997 Love and Rage Conference.

While this debate was taking place, two of the main Love and Rage locals broke down. The Minneapolis local became less and less active after several key members relocated to other cities and others came to see the organization as irrelevant to their work. The breakdown of the New York local came later and was more directly associated with the political divisions that finally split the organization.

Although many sought to keep the debate over these issues civil and focused on the underlying political questions, a number of documents sunk into personal attacks and distortions of people's actual political positions. It was in this context that many of the opponents of WWB decided that they could no longer remain in the same organization with the WWB faction. The degeneration of the debate combined with the organizational breakdown of the CC and several locals created a general demoralization that was followed by a rash of resignations from the organization, though these came primarily from members who had long been inactive.

It was clear that the organization had come to an impasse. Opponents of WWB realized that it was necessary to support a resolution to disband the organization, in order to clear the way for launching a new organization on a firmer foundation of political unity and commitment to actual participation in mass struggles.

This new organization took the name Fire By Night Organizing Committee from the Black spiritual "Go Down Moses" which refers to the use of "fire by night" to illuminate the route of the Underground Railway during slavery times. The name also reflects our desire to root our politics in the real traditions of struggle of the society we live in. In that spirit, we have decided to form a provisional committee that seeks to build an organization from the ground up with other groups and individuals we see as our political allies.

Several members of the new group still identify as anarchists, and the organization is committed to anti-authoritarian politics and an anti-statist revolutionary strategy. But we have deliberately chosen not to identify as an anarchist organization to make clear our anti-sectarianism, our openness to a range of political influences, and our determination to create a new revolutionary politics more in tune with the conditions of the 21st century. We look forward to continuing to work with all of our allies, both those who identify as anarchists and those who don't.

The Fire By Night Organizing Committee is currently composed of two local branches, one in New York City and one in the San Francisco Bay Area. A number of other groups and individuals have already expressed interest in affiliating or working closely with the new organization. We will continue our participation in student and poor peoples' organizing efforts and we will carry out an intensive study and discussion process in order to clarify our basis for political unity. Fire By Night also plans to pub-

lish a critical evaluation of our experience in Love and Rage and a collection of documents from the debates that occurred over the past two years. There is a strong commitment on the part of its members that, in comparison to Love and Rage, the Fire By Night Organizing Committee will be more consistent in making sure that its members live up to expectations of membership that are appropriate to a serious revolutionary organization, and that we will be more serious about the development of our politics through study, discussion and ongoing critical reflection on our experiences in mass organizing work.

The WWB faction has begun work on two projects. The first is a journal to be titled either "Liberty" or "Utopia" and to be produced by the ex-RSL members. The second is a call to form a "Fresh Revolutionary Anarchist Group," "a federation of collectives united around firm anarchist/anti-authoritarian politics and outlook, oriented to the working classes and most oppressed and active in building Anti-Racist Action as an anti-authoritarian mass movement." Some members were unhappy with the lines along which the organization split and will not be part of any of the post-Love and Rage projects, nor will the small minority who actually did come to Marxist conclusions during the period of debate.

The final conference started civilly with reports on the work and future plans of the people in the room followed by a unanimous vote to disband Love and Rage. This tone was only broken when the question of dividing up the resources of the organization came up, and it became clear that the debts of the organization were greater than its assets. As it currently stands, the Fire By Night Organizing Committee has been shouldered with all of the debts incurred by Love and Rage. Negotiations are under way to see if the other projects will contribute anything toward retiring Love and Rage's debts.

Members of Love and Rage expressed feelings ranging from deep sadness to profound relief at the disbanding of the organization. The burning question for members and non-members alike was what would happen to the newspaper, which was respected by many who never supported the organization that produced it. A final issue of the newspaper, which was almost ready to go to press at the time of the break-up conference, will be published [You're reading it now!]. The Fire By Night Organizing Committee has decided not to create a new publication for at least six months, until we can determine whether or not sufficient support exists for it and whether or not it is a politically appropriate use of our limited resources. We all appreciate the value of the newspaper, not just to ourselves but to the larger movement, and will be distressed if we end out choosing not to resume publication (under a new name of course).

The Fire By Night Organizing Committee can be contacted through the old Love and Rage Newspaper Office in New York at:

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Vermont School Custodians Fight Privatization and Win!!

In May of 1997, the Barre City School Board made Gregg Bradley and his fellow custodians at the local high, middle, and elementary schools an offer they couldn't refuse: take a 10% pay cut or lose your job. The custodians took the cut, amounting to over two thousand dollars per year for each employee. If the custodians hadn't taken the pay cut, they would have faced privatization: the contracting out of their work to private companies. These contractors sometimes rehire the fired workers, but nearly always at minimum wage and without benefits.

In Barre, a small city in central Vermont dominated by a dying granite industry, living wage jobs are few and far between. "We felt we had no choice but to take the cut," says Bradley. The Barre school custodians may have had to take a pay cut, but they were determined not to give in to privatization without a fight. A petition was drafted calling on the Barre City and Town school boards to adopt a no-privatization policy. Working with several local community groups and unions, the custodians went door-to-door in working-class areas in Barre, gathering over 1,500 signatures on the petition — 15% of the registered voters in Barre. The canvassers also circulated a petition demanding an \$8 an hour minimum wage, making clear the connection between the particular fight against privatization in Barre, and the general fight for a living wage for all Vermonters.

Centrally involved in the campaign were the #10 Collective, which was a Love and Rage local, and Central Vermonters for a Livable Wage, a community group of low-wage workers, union members, and welfare recipients, which has been organizing in central Vermont since 1996. Before becoming involved in the anti-privatization fight, activists had been involved in strike support, speakouts on the need for a living wage, passing town meeting resolutions, and doing door-to-door canvassing. Also involved in the campaign were members of the teachers union (NEA), AFSCME, which represents the school janitors and most city workers in Barre, MMOP, a youth anarchist group, the Progressive Coalition (affiliated with 'socialist' Congressman Bernie Sanders) and the Plumbers and Carpenters unions.

The canvassers were well-received by the community, something of a surprise since Vermonters don't like having strangers knock on their door for any reason (This writer included). Most residents were already aware of the problem and opposed to the privatization proposal because, as one resident put it, "the little guy is getting shafted by the big guy again."

Chris Karr, one of the most active canvassers, said there were positive implications of the successful petition drive. "People instantly realized the janitors were getting a raw deal. Everyone needs a living wage, including the janitors, and we are going to do what it takes to make sure they get one." Karr noted that nearly half of all Vermonters don't make a living wage that provides them with health care, food, shelter, transportation, and heat.

PACKED PUBLIC MEETINGS

The petitions were presented in a series of four meetings with the Barre City and Town school boards in late October and early November. While we knew that Barre residents were opposed to privatization, we didn't know if they were motivated to do anything about it. We were pleasantly sur-

prised. Over 100 people consistently packed the meetings in support of the custodians (in a town of 8,000). Many people who attended were angry over what they saw as unfair decisions to make low-paid workers suffer while handing administrators raises. Barre schools superintendent Lyman Amsden, who currently makes more than Governor Howard Dean, was the target of much criticism. "Lyman's getting \$82,000 a year and they want to cut \$2,000 from the guy making \$20,000," said Lloyd McCormack, a custodian for twenty years.

Gregg Bradley echoed McCormack, saying, "They cut us 10 percent and give themselves a raise. How do you justify that?" Attendees at the school board meetings also discussed the broader political implications of privatization in the Barre schools and changes in the economy generally. Residents talked about other local examples of privatization, the increasing numbers of part-time jobs without benefits, workfare, temp jobs, local businesses moving away, and the growing gap between rich and poor.

"There's all sorts of welfare and tax breaks available for corporations," said Roseanne Scotta. "But not for people."

Norm Frattini, a janitor at the high school, said that "This privatization, capitalism, all that, it's the wrong priorities. I'm working wherever I can just to get by. We need fairness and respect. Put the workers first."

Amy Lester, a Love & Rage member, was pleased with the meetings. "Sometimes starting with the most revolutionary, pure politics and dramatic actions isn't effective. Sometimes you need to start with where people are at, and radical viewpoints will be expressed spontaneously. Then it's a lot more meaningful to put out your particular slant."

Ellen David-Friedman, a veteran organizer for the teachers union, Vermont-NEA, said "This has been one of the best expressions of organized class consciousness that I've seen in over twenty years."

VICTORY!

Bowing to community pressure, the Barre School Boards have dropped plans to privatize. The Barre Town Elementary & Middle School formally directed superintendent Amsden that it would not consider privatization. While the Barre City Board, which oversees the high school, has also said it will not consider privatization, it did not make a binding commitment. And of course, the School Boards know any attempt to privatize will be met with community opposition.

IS THIS ANARCHIST ORGANIZING?

Many anarchists may not consider this campaign particularly anarchist in nature. We certainly did not rely on common anarchist tactics, such as dramatic direct actions, demonstrations, or banner hangings. Instead, we used petitions, canvassing, and packing school board meetings. Some members of the #10 Collective considered it an example that community organizing can be better at getting results than direct action. "By any means necessary should mean by any means necessary. If that means petitioning, so be it," said #10 Collective member Tanya Waters. "Direct action can sometimes be more satisfying in the short run—and it can certainly be part of community organizing. But it shouldn't be the only tactic used. The living wage campaign and this fight have also really taught me that the great need isn't for edu-

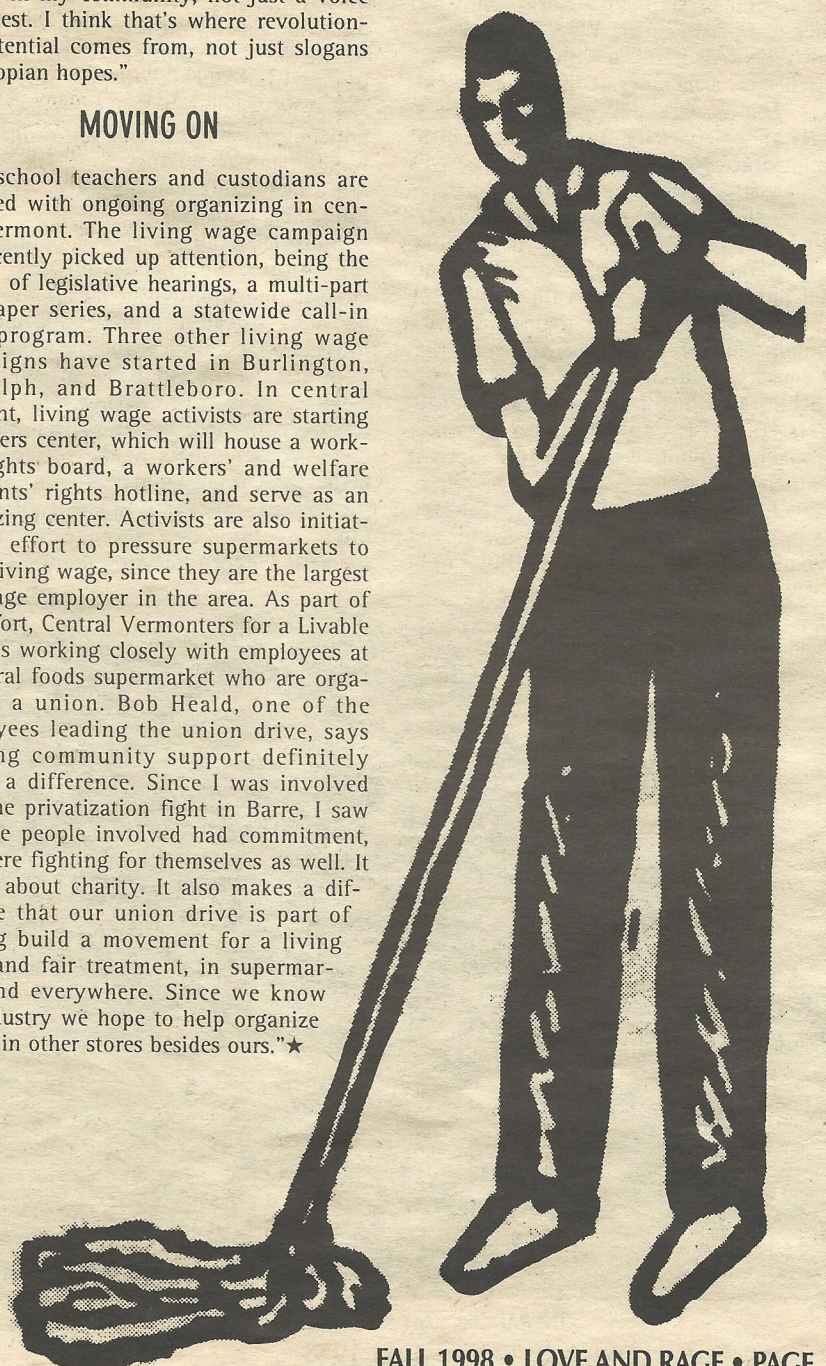
cation, like liberals are always saying. People know what's going on. The great need is for organization. We as radical activists need to tackle issues that directly affect people's lives, and to build trust and ongoing relationships with them."

Waters and other activists were quick to note that while they were raising criticisms, there was radical organizing going on locally and nationally which they respected and were inspired by. Love and Rage members were outspoken about their political beliefs from the beginning of the campaign, distributed anarchist literature, and discussed revolutionary politics with many people one-on-one. But the experience also posed hard questions about the relevance of the current anarchist movement. "Sure, we talked politics," said Waters, "We talked about not relying on electoral politics, about mutual aid, about being anti-capitalist, and sometimes about the need for revolution. But beyond expressing that viewpoint, we didn't have a lot to offer as anarchists. We mainly offered our willingness to work hard and our organizing experience."

"We are always trying to push the envelope of being radical while continuing to build community support. But if anarchism is going to be relevant, it has to have some power to bring to bear on fights like this, and right now the anarchist movement is so tiny, it just doesn't have that power. I'm committed to making compromises if that's what it takes to be a relevant force for change in my community, not just a voice of protest. I think that's where revolutionary potential comes from, not just slogans and utopian hopes."

MOVING ON

Barre school teachers and custodians are involved with ongoing organizing in central Vermont. The living wage campaign has recently picked up attention, being the subject of legislative hearings, a multi-part newspaper series, and a statewide call-in radio program. Three other living wage campaigns have started in Burlington, Randolph, and Brattleboro. In central Vermont, living wage activists are starting a workers center, which will house a workers' rights board, a workers' and welfare recipients' rights hotline, and serve as an organizing center. Activists are also initiating an effort to pressure supermarkets to pay a living wage, since they are the largest low-wage employer in the area. As part of this effort, Central Vermonters for a Livable Wage is working closely with employees at a natural foods supermarket who are organizing a union. Bob Heald, one of the employees leading the union drive, says "Having community support definitely makes a difference. Since I was involved with the privatization fight in Barre, I saw that the people involved had commitment, and were fighting for themselves as well. It wasn't about charity. It also makes a difference that our union drive is part of helping build a movement for a living wage and fair treatment, in supermarkets and everywhere. Since we know the industry we hope to help organize people in other stores besides ours."★



Anti-authoritarian Epitaph for the RAF

THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE FROM
THE RED ARMY FRACTION (RAF)

The original text of this document is more than twice the length of what is presented here, and we apologize in advance for any distortion of the ideas of this document as a result. We encourage people interested in what has been omitted to contact ATS at <ats@etext.org> or visit their website, <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats/> or write: Arm the Spirit, P.O. Box 6326 Stn. A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W1P7 CANADA. Interesting reading about the RAF can also be found in the book *Televisionaries: The Red Army Fraction Story 1963-1993* by Tom Vague, available for \$6.95 from AK Press, P.O. Box 40682 San Francisco, CA 94140-0682.

THE URBAN GUERRILLA IS HISTORY...

Almost 28 years ago, on May 14, 1970, the RAF was born from an act of liberation: Today we are ending this project. The urban guerrilla in the form of the RAF is now history...

We stand by our history. The RAF was the revolutionary attempt by a minority of people to resist the tendencies in this society and contribute to the overthrow of capitalist conditions. We are proud to have been part of this attempt.

The end of this project shows that we were not able to succeed on this path. But this does not speak against the necessity and legitimacy of revolt. The RAF was our decision to stand on the side of those people struggling against domination and for liberation all across the world. For us, this was the right decision to make...

1975 - 1977

With the 1975 occupation of the German embassy in Stockholm, the RAF launched a phase during which it did everything possible to liberate its prisoners from jail.

First came the "1977 Offensive" during which the RAF kidnapped Schleyer. The RAF posed the question of power. This began a radical and decisive attempt to push through an offensive position for the revolutionary left against the state power. It was exactly this which the state wanted to prevent. The explosive escalation of the conflict, however, also came against the background of German history: The continuity of Nazism in the West German state, which the RAF attacked with its offensive.

Schleyer, a member of the SS during the Nazi regime, was, like many Nazis in all levels of society, back in office with all his honor intact. Nazis built careers in the West German state in government positions, the courts, the police apparatus, the armed forces, the media, and in major corporations. These anti-Semites, racists, and genocidal murderers were often times the same people responsible for crimes against humanity under the Nazis, and now they were back among the powerful elite.

Schleyer worked towards the ends of the Nazis and the capitalists to create a European economic region under German dominance...

When it became more clear that the state was prepared to abandon Schleyer, the RAF gave its approval for a civilian airliner to be

hijacked in a guerrilla action as part of its own offensive, and this made it appear as though the RAF no longer differentiated between the top and bottom sectors of the society.

Although the attempt to free the prisoners from torture was justified, the social-revolutionary dimension of the struggle was now no longer visible. From the break with the system and the rejection of the conditions in the society - the preconditions for any revolutionary movement - had come a break with the society as a whole.

FROM THE 1970s TO THE 1980s

The RAF had gambled everything and suffered a huge defeat. In the process of struggle until the end of the 1970s, it became clear that the RAF was left with just a few people from the period of the 1968 upheavals. Many people from the '68 movement had given up on movement politics and used their chances to build careers. The RAF, as part of the global anti-imperialist struggle, had taken up the war of liberation within West Germany...

THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT OF THE 1980s

In the early 1980s, there were several struggles directed against inhumane projects of the system, but which were also expressions of the search for free forms of living. A social revolt which sought a new social reality, now.

Thousands of people from these new movements went onto the streets in the 1980s to protest the same thing which the RAF sought to attack since 1979: The militarization policies of the NATO states, which would enable the West to wage "one and a half" wars simultaneously, the war against the Soviet Union and, at the same time, warlike interventions against liberation movements and revolutions, like in Nicaragua, where the first step towards liberation from Western dictatorship had been taken.

The RAF assumed that they would not be alone during this new phase. The concept was fueled by the hope that militant sectors of various movements would join a common front. But this concept failed to recognize that, in the given social situation, only very few people saw any purpose in a liberation struggle on the level of a war...

The social revolutionary outlook disappeared from the theory and praxis of the RAF. The orientation became reduced to the anti-imperialist line, and the result of this was the anti-imperialist front. The RAF was not a factor in social questions. This was a fundamental mistake.

Subsuming all social and political content under the anti-imperialist attack against the "entire system" produced false divisions instead of a process of unity; and it led to a lack of identity on concrete questions and the content of the struggle.

The resonance within the society remained limited, because the proposal to create consciousness in the society and to break the consensus between the state and the society - a central moment of any revolutionary process - disappeared. Instead, the RAF sought to destroy the state's domi-

nance of control by increasing the intensity of its attacks. The priority shifted to the military dimension. This emphasis remained throughout the 1980s and it defined our struggle. We carried out attacks against NATO projects as well as the military-industrial complex of capital, together with other guerrilla groups in Western Europe; an attempt was made to forge a West European Guerrilla Front comprised of the RAF, Action Directe in France, and the Red Brigades/PCC in Italy.

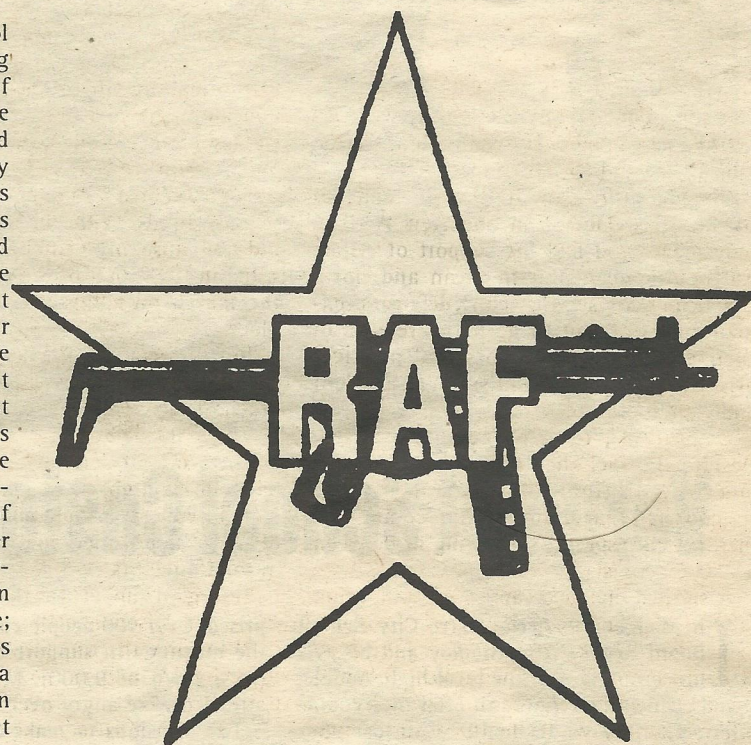
The RAF concentrated - as far as its strength allowed - on attacking NATO projects and, after 1984, the formation of a new power bloc by West European states. The focus remained on our own limited forces and those militants who closely identified with the RAF. The attempt to form a front with other groups from the resistance movement did not broaden into reality.

There was a great discrepancy between the willingness of RAF militants to give everything in the confrontation and the ability, at the same time, to seek new ideas for the process of liberation. In this respect, very little was risked. During this time - the concept of the 1980s was by then a few years old already - there was also development on our side, which was characterized by demonstratively coldly-driven politics, which was little more than "making politics," and which was far removed from anything having to do with liberation. But this was also a time when the RAF and its prisoners, despite all the difficulties and defeats, showed with their determination that they had remained uncorrupted by the course of history and remained committed to changing the conditions against the will of the ruling powers...

WE, MOST OF WHOM BECAME ORGANIZED IN THE RAF VERY LATE...

...joined in the hope that our struggle could contribute new impulses for global revolt in the changed conditions. We sought changes for the liberation struggle, for a new path on which we could join ourselves with others. And we wanted to give something back to those who had taken up the struggle before us, and who had died or been sent to prison. The struggle in illegality had a very attractive affect on us. We wanted to break through our borders and be free of everything which confined us within the system.

Armed struggle in illegality was, for us, nothing more than the only possible and necessary way for the liberation process.



Our hope was to create new ties between the guerrilla and other sectors of the resistance in the society. To do this, we sought a new proposal, in which all struggles from the city neighborhoods to the guerrilla could stand together.

It Was Important For Us, Following The Collapse Of East Germany, To Bring Our Struggle In Tune With The New Existing Social Situation.

We wanted to take steps to relate to all those people whose dreams had ended with the collapse of the DDR and its annexation into West Germany. Some had realized that "real existing socialism" was not liberation after all. Others, who were part of the opposition to real existing socialism in East Germany, had dreamed of something different from either capitalism or real existing socialism. Most people who had lived in the DDR and who had demanded reunification with West Germany began to examine the new, depressing social situation which had come about, with social security measures having been drastically done away with.

We wanted to relate to all those people, during this historical situation which was unknown to everyone, who had struggled for liberation in confrontation with the West German state and also those who were fed up with the racist and completely reactionary developments unfolding in the now non-existent East Germany. We did not want to abandon these people to resignation, or to the right-wing.

Later on we saw that the dimension of this change could only result in a new and internationalist liberation project if the new reality in both East and West were dealt with. The RAF, with its roots in the history of resistance in the old West Germany, could not achieve this.

THE ATTEMPT TO ANCHOR THE RAF IN THE 1990s WAS AN UNREALISTIC PROPOSAL

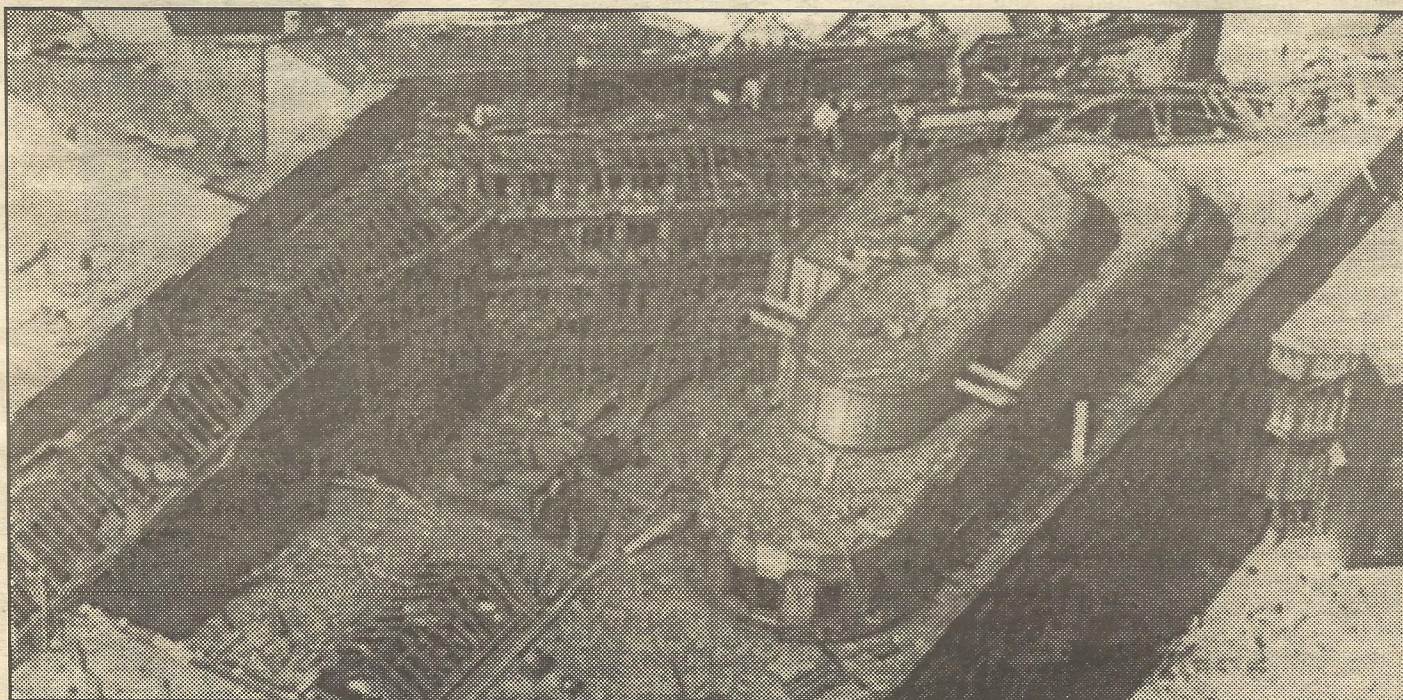
We wanted to transform a concept which had arisen from the 1968 movement into a new, social revolutionary and internationalist concept in tune with the 1990s. This was a time when we sought for something new, but - weighed down by the dogmas of the past years - we did not go radically enough beyond the old concept. So we made the same mistakes which all of us made after 1977: We overestimated the support for this continuity of our conception of struggle...

We wanted to think things over one more time with those who were in prison, and take a new step together.

But in the end, the very hurtful split of one group of the prisoners from us, who declared us to be enemies, completely erased the very conditions which had given rise to the RAF in the first place - solidarity and the struggle for collectivity.

THE PROCESS OF OUR OWN LIBERATION...

...was important to us, and yet we always seemed to become stagnant. We desired collectivity just as we desired the joint overcoming of all forms of alienation. But the contradiction between war and libera-



The RAF's bombing of Weiterstadt Prison, shown here, inspired many revolutionary activists in 1993

continued to page 13

Jericho

continued from page 1

vice-president of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) and Administrator of the New Afrikan Liberation Front (NALF), respectively.

The main thrust for Jericho '98 came out of the Black Liberation and New Afrikan movements and had the support of Asian, Native American, Puerto Rican and north American activists, the many defense organizations working to gain the release of their captured combatants and political prisoners, families of PPs/POWs, student and church groups.

Organizing took place in 25 cities. Despite the fact that the turnout did not meet the original goals set out by the Jericho National Coordinating Committee, there was a respectable showing of between 6-8,000 activists.

A spirited march capped off a morning rally in Malcolm X park and made its way to Lafayette Park, where it was joined by hundreds more on its way to the White House. The march was followed by an afternoon rally which featured statements from the prisoners themselves and former political prisoners and POWs. Chief Billy Tayak (Chief of Piscataway Nation) welcomed all those attending including Geronimo ji jaga, Safiya Bukhari, Ramona Africa, Dr. Alan Berkman, Kathleen Cleaver and Angela Davis. Representatives of a variety of prisoner defense and freedom committees gave powerful testimony to the need to turn the tide, unify, organize, fight and do all in our power to support those left inside.

The presence of good number of young anarchist/anti-authoritarians was a positive reflection of the focus many anarchists have placed on support and freedom for PPs and POWs. While we still have a long way to go and much struggle ahead of us, the issue of PPs/POWs in the United States has struck a chord with anti-racists, anarchists and anti-authoritarians. The work is

more readily picked up rather than completely ignored by the anarchist milieu.

It was clear that while Jericho '98 succeeded in mobilizing and unifying activists already committed to the struggle around PPs and POWs, it did not reach too far into the grassroots. No doubt that the organizing effort leading up to the event helped to educate many and bring some attention to the issue outside our normal circles, but in Washington we were mostly ignored by the press, prevented by the police from vending to raise funds. With our small numbers we did not cause any disruption to business as usual in DC — part of the reason for calling the march on a business day in the first place.

But one march on Washington will not determine the success of this movement. Much of the work is yet to come.

Where do we go from here?

The work of Jericho '98 continues and has four main goals:

1) to educate people about the existence of political prisoners and prisoners of war in the United States.

2) to gain support for these political prisoners and prisoners of war.

3) to force the United States government to recognize and acknowledge their existence;

4) to win amnesty and freedom for all political prisoners and prisoners of war in this country.

A legal defense fund will be set up to provide legal aid in the cases of (political prisoners and prisoners of war). This is especially crucial since so many of our imprisoned activists have no funds to spend on their legal cases. A number of lawyers have already volunteered time towards this effort.

With few if any outside support groups, little to no financial support, no jobs (many PPs refuse to participate in prison slave labor programs or are refused the opportunity to work) and families that also need support, many PPs/POWs don't have money even for a cup of coffee, cigarettes, or to put money on their phone accounts to be able to talk to the outside world with the brief phone time they are allowed.

Jericho '98 hopes to start providing some type of material aid to help with everyday existence in the joint. This is crucial given that life inside, especially in the current American political "lock 'em up" climate, has gotten harder on the psychological level for prisoners in general.

We need to deal with this on a human level — keeping in mind how hard it is for these comrades, who aside from their own plight, are not able to take care of their own families. Many have been yanked away from their parents, brothers, sisters and children. The families of so many have suffered. As a movement we need to start figuring out how to support and aid the families of these prisoners.

Securing the release of those held so long requires that we as a movement assume responsibility for the reintegration of prisoners back into the world and the movement, when they are ready. Every opportunity for parole should be met with a strong campaign of support in the form of housing, employment and support. This will help create the conditions that might achieve the release but also help in the person's readjustment to "normal" life. This process will also prepare us as a movement for the future struggle.

Jericho '98 has also hopes to be in the position to begin to aid those people in prison who, while not incarcerated for their outside activism, have been politicized on the inside and/or have become active members of our overall political struggles. Many of these "social prisoners" face severe repression and get extra time or control unit/isolation time for speaking up or acting against the injustices of the so-called criminal justice system. Those with political or religious convictions are often the tar-

gets of repression campaigns and should be viewed as part of our movement. Jericho '98 is prioritizing those prisoners who were imprisoned for their activism outside but hopes to build a movement that can include these politicized prisoners as well.

Ongoing organizing will continue. Regional committees are already being set up, merging many of the local committees. The national coordinating body has opened a new office in New York, and a separate NY chapter will form to be part of the Northeast region. A national board will be comprised of delegates from each of the regional committees.

As the movement grows, the prisoners will be more in the spotlight and it will be important not to let up. No doubt pressure will increase on our locked-down comrades who would take the brunt of any of the state's reaction to our efforts. Any failure of the movement to keep growing or the movements inability to follow through on what we started could leave our comrades in a worse position. The process of organizing the event gave us a meter by which to judge our current strengths and weaknesses and an opportunity to come together, united around this one issue.

You can aid the struggle by joining the Jericho movement and/or making the struggle for the freedom of these prisoners part of the work you are already doing.

Find out what you can do by keeping in touch with Jericho's website:

<www.jericho98.com>

For more information contact:

e-mail: <jericho98@usa.net>

call (212) 330-8362

write: Jericho '98, P.O. Box 650, New York, NY 10009 ★

Jericho Solidarity Statement From Mexican Political Prisoners

March 27, 1998

Comrades:

We, the 37 political prisoners of the Voice of Cerro Hueco in Chiapas, Mexico, today declare our solidarity with the political prisoners in the United States and the world. Since 1994, the Zapatista National Liberation Army has been voluntarily participating in the struggle for democracy, liberty and justice in Chiapas and all of Mexico. We prisoners are indigenous activists that have worked in a peaceful manner to help the political goals of the Zapatistas. We have been incarcerated unjustly for helping the Zapatistas. To struggle for our liberation from the prison of Cerro Hueco and other prisons in Chiapas and to struggle for peace with dignity in Chiapas, we have formed the organization of political prisoners, The Voice of Cerra Hueco.

Extensive violations of human rights can be found in our cases. Many of us were tortured by the police. Some of us did not have lawyers during our interrogations. Even though the mother tongue of many of us is an indigenous language, it is rare that they assign us a translator. In some cases, the government fabricated evidence and used coercion to obtain testimonies against us.

Many of us did not have the opportunity to confront our accuser during our trial. At the moment we are serving sentences of fifteen years or more.

The prison of Cerro Hueco is presently overpopulated. There are more than 900 prisoners condemned to death in a prison designed for 300 people. We sleep on cardboard in the halls of the prison.

One of the 5 conditions of the EZLN for the continuation of dialogue is our freedom. In January of this year the government liberated 300 non-political prisoners from the prisons claiming that this was a contribution of good faith on the part of the government for the peace process. We express the fact that not one political prisoner was part of the 300 freed. Demonstrations broke out all over the state of Chiapas to demand the liberty of the true Zapatista political prisoners.

In the last two months, the government has freed eleven members of the Voice of Cerro Hueco. However, at the same time the government detained another Zapatista sympathizer, and condemned two of us to fifteen years in prison.

We are fed up with the contradictions of the government! The government liberated some prisoners to improve its image and then turned around and imprisoned other Zapatistas. We have started a hunger strike to reveal the hypocritical actions of the Mexican government.

Not one of us will leave the prison until they liberate all of the political prisoners. We are grateful to you for giving us the opportunity to tell you in the US of our situation. We invite you to join us to struggle for our freedom. Please write letters to the governments of Mexico and the state of Chiapas demanding our freedom.

We are proud to link ourselves with the struggle of the political prisoners in your country. All of us must struggle against oppression wherever it is found. We know of the permanent and systematic campaign against men and women that struggle for a life with dignity.

Our struggle is the same as that of Leonard Peltier. Our struggle is the same struggle as that of Mumia Abu-Jamal. We struggle just as Janine Philips Africa, Tom Manning, Sekou Odinga, Linda Evans, Carmen Valentin, Marshall Eddie Conway, Yu Kikumura, Standing Deer, Mutulu Shakur, Sundiata Acoli, Jalil Muntaquin, Sylvia Baraldini, Oscar Lopez Rivera, Carlos Alberto Torres, Dylcia Pagan, Ricardo Jimenez, Marilyn Buck, Bashir Hameed, and all of the political prisoners that have been incarcerated unjustly.

All of us must struggle for dignity and justice. We have to stand up joined together and demand the liberation of all the compañeras y compañeros who dare to struggle for justice, democracy and liberty. FREEDOM FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!

—Voz de Cerra Hueco ★



In memory of

Merle Africa

Merle Africa, imprisoned since 1978 for her participation in the revolutionary organization MOVE, died on March 13, 1998 under suspicious circumstances at the age of 45.

A nurse reportedly stated that it appeared that she had died from tumors as a result of years of beatings. Before her death, she had written: "I feel privileged to be allowed to be a member of MOVE, to help spread the teaching of John Africa to the people of the world, to give them the motivation, the will to stop endorsing this system and start fighting it and take back all that it's taken from us!"

PART TWO OF A DISCUSSION WITH MARILYN BUCK, DAVID GILBERT AND LAURA WHITEHORN

By MEG STARR AND MATT MEYER

The last issue of *Love and Rage* introduced readers to three white political prisoners serving time for taking up arms against the US government in solidarity with oppressed peoples. On the eve of the March 27 Jericho '98 mobilization to the

ENEMIES

White House demanding amnesty for all political prisoners and prisoners of war, we're pleased to re-introduce them:

Marilyn Buck was among the first women to address the national Students for a Democratic Society (SDS, a radical mass anti-war organization) around issues of sexism. Her experiences working with the Black community and protesting the Vietnam War led to her consistent resistance. She is serving an 80-year sentence for conspiracies to free political prisoners; to protest and alter government policies through the use of violence, and to rob banks to fund Black liberation organizations.

David Gilbert was a founding member of Columbia University SDS and returned three years later to be active in the 1968 student strike there. He was a charter member of Men Against Sexism in Denver. He is serving a 75-years-to-life sentence on charges of participating, as an anti-racist ally of the BLA, in the 1981 Brinks robbery and shoot-out.

During the Vietnam War, Laura Whitehorn organized 400 women to take over Harvard University administration buildings. She worked with anti-racist whites to defend Black communities from attack, and helped found the Madame Binh Graphics Collective, a radical art group. She is now serving a 23-year sentence for conspiracy to protest and alter government policies through the use of violence against government property.

The following is the second and final excerpt of our interview with Marilyn, David and Laura.

1) How did you first become politically aware and active? What are a few key moments that led you to an anti-imperialist perspective?

Marilyn: I became politically aware before I became politically active. Awareness is a process of observing the world around you, integrating your own experiences to those beyond yours. Nevertheless, without action, awareness is an unrealized, or even suppressed, potential.

My father was a Civil Rights activist—a minister. I was raised with a set of human-oriented values and ethics. Nevertheless, as a teenager I did not join in the civil rights movement. I did nothing. I wanted to fit in—be popular, though in one sense I could not be because of who my father was. I resented that then.

The seeds of my own discord lay in being "female" in this society. This was an oppression I could identify, understand and

challenge. I could see beyond a dry intellectual awareness of injustice, inequality, oppression to the need to do something to break out of this bondage. But I did not know what to do, except be angry and alienated.

Even when the war in Vietnam escalated in 1965, I still did not protest. My awareness had not gone beyond my own subjective white, middle-class, female reality. In college, I did transcend that subjective isolation. There was a lot of social and political ferment. I was skeptical that sit-ins and moral outrage could end the war. But more militant sectors were rallying. When the Black Power movement emerged from the Civil Rights movement, raising questions of power, I was vitalized, yanked up out of my chair of skepticism and alienation, and moved to activism. I joined Students for

activist, vital student organization at that time—1967.

David: The Civil Rights movement—which exploded into my consciousness in 1960, when I was fifteen—both exposed intolerable racism and inequality, and inspired with its humane sense of purpose and community. Particularly formative for me was an opportunity to tutor school kids in Harlem; the spirit of resistance and the vitality of the culture there showed me that the oppressed had to become the arbiters of their own destiny, that self-determination was the key for moving all social change forward. In the same period, there was an intense escalation of the war in Vietnam. In March 1965, I founded and was the first chairperson of the Columbia University Independent Committee Against the War in Vietnam. That work led me to SDS, because I was looking for some group that combined anti-war work with anti-racism, a belief in democracy, and at least a vague idea of socialism.

Organizing a successful demonstration or a teach-in was never my main goal. From the beginning, my concern was to find ways to keep building to the point where we could actually make a difference in overturning the injustices, towards changes that would actually affect peoples' lives. That impetus led me to search for a deeper analysis of the power structure we faced. In 1967, I wrote the first SDS pamphlet that defined the system as "US imperialism," and that analysis was my threshold into the ensuing revolutionary period.

Laura: It appeared that armed struggle could be a way to speed up the victory of a people, and so lessen a nation's suffering. It seemed to me that those of us in the belly of the beast—citizens of the imperialist power—could shorten the war by attacking the US military and political machinery inside the US. We could play a significant role in shortening the war by increasing its material and political costs. This was an important strategy point for anti-imperialists within the anti-war movement, and it applied to solidarity with other national liberation struggles as well. That's why I took part in mass confrontations, in attacks on military think tanks and in building takeovers at big universities. It's also why I

later took part in armed actions against targets like the NY Police Benevolent Association, the Israeli aircraft industries, and the US War College and Capitol Building.

Taking powerful action against the oppressor had a liberating quality which affected my view of how all of us can free ourselves. As a woman and a lesbian, the desire to fight against sexism and homophobia fueled my desire to wage armed struggle against all aspects of this oppressive society. As a revolutionary, I seek to change the entire system, not just one or two parts of it.

2) We hear all the time about people who were revolutionaries in the 1960s and now buy into white corporate America. What have been your experiences with this?

David: There are, of course, those examples that the media has spotlighted. But most of the people that I know from the movements of the 1960s still try to find ways to implement the ideals of that period. Most are in human service areas like teaching, or medicine or law. Beyond being "nicer" to their "clients" than most professionals, they are open to and looking for initiatives for empowerment from within the oppressed communities. Granted, only a precious few of these individuals have been able to continue as full-time activists, or have sustained a practice of confronting the power structure, but that shortcoming is more a problem of where we are all at collectively in the current period, in terms of building the type of movement we need.

Marilyn: I have been treated as an enemy of the state and a traitor to the white race. So I am not holding my breath waiting for any calls. I've not been asked to join white corporate Amerikka, so I have no experiences in that realm. Thank goodness!

It is hardest to be revolutionary in a non-revolutionary period. And we've been in a non-revolutionary period for nearly two decades. This society is defined by cynicism, despair, defeat, self-protectiveness, and of course that monster, fear. A whole generation has grown up under such conditions.

I think about Bertolt Brecht's observation: "There are those who struggle for a day and they are good. There are others who struggle for a year and they are better. There are those who struggle many years, and they are very good. But there are those who struggle all their lives and they are the indispensable ones."

3) What were the specific historical conditions that led you to take up armed struggle?

Marilyn: In the US, after Black soldiers had returned from fighting in WWII, there was a rising up to demand justice, civil rights, economic inclusion; Latinos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans demanded self-determination and independence. It was a historical moment. There was a sense of a new world, poised to emerge from the dungeons in which it had lain shackled and gagged. People world wide picked up arms to take back their lives, their lands, their human rights and dignity. Armed struggle was a means to drive out the imperialist dictatorship of the colonizers, to force out the military or oligarchic dictatorships that were bleeding to death the masses of people in many countries. My consciousness was stirred, my complacency challenged. As a North American woman, I had been brought up to believe in justice, democracy, equality—and to question. As a woman, I was held back, constrained. But it was the Black Power movement and the Black Panther Party (BPP) that awakened many young people to the fact that there was a war raging against the dispossessed, a war led by this very country (the belly of the beast as Che Guevara referred to the US), and that it was time to fight back.

This was our generation's moment—a time when even those of us from the oppressor nation could step forward to call capitalism and imperialism for what they were and continue to be: the oppressors of

humanity. We threw off the chains of our own role in the white privileged oppressor state to stand side-by-side in a class and national liberation struggle.

David: Between 1969 and 1970, two main realities impelled us toward armed struggle. One was the intensity—the human toll—of the war in Indochina. The US government continued to escalate despite massive protests. The second was the series of murderous assaults on the Black liberation movement, conducted through the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO). About forty members of the BPP were killed between 1969 and 1971, and more than one thousand were imprisoned. It was also a time of mass uprisings, met by deadly state repression, in New Afrikan ghettos across the US.

The Weather Underground Organization (WUO) arose from a commitment to raise the level of struggle in solidarity with Vietnam and Black liberation. We also felt that such solidarity in practice was the cutting edge for building any truly revolutionary movement worthy of that name amongst white people.

You have to understand the context of the times; armed struggle wasn't some narrow conspiracy of a handful of people. In addition to powerful third-world struggles, there was also a surging anti-war militancy among white youth: hundreds of Armed Forces ROTC buildings, military recruiting centers, and Bank of America branches were burnt to the ground. Hundreds of thousands of people participated in demonstrations that involved breaking windows at government buildings, or they disrupted meetings of bigwigs, or resisted arrest. And there was a significant minority among the millions opposing the war who supported armed struggle. It was also a time when Vietnam offered a concrete example that US imperialism could be defeated, especially if it was overextended by having to fight on many fronts.

4) Do you see armed struggle as a relevant strategy in the US today?

Laura: Yes, I don't think armed struggle is ever an irrelevant form of struggle—although it may take more or less prominence at different points in history. I'm reminded of something I was told by members of the Vietnam Women's Union during a trip there in 1975, right after the Vietnamese victory.

They told of how hopeless the situation looked under the French, especially following the burning of the rice crop in the 1930's. Peasants felt there was no chance of ever winning anything. It wasn't a good time to try to organize people into the Viet Minh resistance, because of the fear. In one village, cadres of the party worked to organize the peasants to

beat drums at night—something that the French

occupiers outlawed. An elaborate plan was made for people to beat drums in various homes and in the rice fields, forcing the French soldiers to spend an entire night searching for one offender after another. At the end of the night, the soldiers withdrew, exhausted, to the rat-tat-tat of yet another drum!

The point was that the village gained courage and hope from the activity, and eventually this was used as a model of how armed actions could be carried out—with a lot of cooperation and strategic planning. When the drum beats were replaced by arms, the villagers decisively drove the French out of one village after another.

In terms of armed self-defense, I definitely believe it has a role to play today. I don't understand why a period marked by the strength of reactionary forces needs to be a period only of legal activities by leftists. That thinking allows fear to be perpetuated! I think that it's important to have good plans and to minimize the risk of arrest in this period; more busts for long sentences wouldn't help much! But I don't think that means that all kinds of creative illegal resistance should stop.

Sometimes it seems to me particularly important to be thinking about illegal forms

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of struggle now, just because the right-wing is in such control. It would be a shame for us to be caught unprepared as the state moves more towards all kinds of attacks on human rights, and as legal forms of struggle become fewer and riskier.

I do think that armed action needs to be responsive to the level of struggle at any given time, and to the level of mobilization and anger focused around any particular issue in question. From my own history, I think that bombing the US Capitol and other political and military buildings after the invasion of Grenada (and while the US was waging a counter-revolutionary offensive in Central America) was fine and correct. But I think it was wrong to raise, in our message claiming the Capitol action, the threat of killing Congressmen and Senators, because it doesn't seem to me that assassination was anywhere within the realm of what the anti-intervention and pro-Grenada movements in this country were thinking about or would be prepared to defend. It should be noted that many people in the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) and other groups did defend the bombings themselves—both at that time and later, even when they came under FBI scrutiny, and after we were busted.

Marilyn: I'm not sure what the most relevant strategy is today. A particular strategy cannot be imposed upon objective social and economic conditions.

Focoist strategy, when a small group of armed radicals can spark a massive rebellion, worked only in very particular circumstances. . . In peoples' war, advanced throughout the Chinese revolution and Vietnamese war of liberation, popular forces must first be organized and mobi-

strong anti-imperialist movement is.

5) How have your years in prison and the changes in the world over these past years affected your understanding of the systems of imperialism and oppression?

Laura: Being in prison has only reaffirmed my understanding of how imperialism operates. I can see even more clearly the painful cost it extracts from its oppressed subjects and the inextricable relationship between the system as a whole and white supremacy in particular (not to mention sexism). Being in prison has also awakened me to the isolation and elitism of a lot of the left—at least the white left. Prisoners understand so much of what the system is and how it works, while the left often talks and acts like they're the only ones who understand anything. The language and organizing strategies of the left have so often been overly intellectual and removed from the actual practice of peoples' lives.

In terms of world changes, I, like most other leftists, was floored by the Sandinistas electoral defeat, and by the crumbling of the bureaucratic "socialist" states. I often think about how much joy I took from the part of Lenin's *Imperialism* where he says that opportunism won't hold sway in the working class of any imperialist power for as long as it has in the English working class. About how we embraced Lenin's view of the crumbling of imperialism, or how much I believed that through people's war the liberation of Puerto Rico and New Afrika would be taking place right about now, with a strong armed and political anti-imperialist solidarity movement led by white oppressor-nation communists.

So I guess I'd have to cop to having to adjust my views to a different scenario and time table! What hasn't changed, though, is

policeman). And, as Mumia is the first to emphasize, the effort to save him has got to be part of a broader campaign for the 3,000 other people on death row—to stop the brutal and racist death penalty.

Mumia is an excellent writer, with a magnetic personality. That's helped to build a growing movement, and it's been exciting for me to be able to feel active in it. But people have got to understand that it is still a very uphill battle; we have to build up a whole lot more momentum to stop the premeditated murder of this vibrant brother.

A second priority would be the case of Leonard Peltier, where there has been well-known and well-documented proof of frame-up. And there have been a number of other magnificent comrades—like Nuh Washington and Sundiata Acoli—who have been in prison since the early 1970's.

7) What are your thoughts on the current political climate and on possible strategies for movement building?

Marilyn: I think we are in the midst of a



The alternative has to be all about humane use of social resources, controlled by grassroots organizations within the oppressed communities. Early ACT UP! and other efforts around AIDS in the gay community provided a positive example; the environmental racism movement in many third-world communities is another very good example.

There is a lot of social activism going on, just not that much sense of a coherent or

An Open Discussion with Political Prisoners

Marilyn Buck, David Gilbert and Laura Whitehorn

lized before an armed strategy can seriously begin. Urban guerrilla warfare? The base does not exist; it was defeated in the '60s and '70s. Armed propaganda? Small armed clandestine groups in this country were not able to ignite popular resistance for a multitude of reasons. Do the conditions of ferment and discontent with the state exist, or do the vast majority either have faith in reforms or fear of repression? There are a multitude of questions to examine, analyze and answer. We need a vision—a clear-eyed revolutionary analysis and political strategy. Only in such a context can the question of armed struggle as a strategic force be understood and considered.

David: To me, the primary question isn't armed struggle per se but rather the building of a strong anti-imperialist movement or movements. Any movement serious about confronting power has to carefully prepare to build struggle at all levels, but armed struggle is not the most pressing, immediate aspect; building an overall

my view that there will eventually be successful struggles that develop a new form of socialism: that the fundamental contradictions of imperialism still exist and still cause suffering and necessitate resistance. What hasn't changed is my view that human beings will not settle for a culture of death.

6) Once you're in prison, does your political work end, or does "being a political prisoner" become your political work?

David: It is important to recognize that for those in the most repressive conditions—like the federal control unit at Florence, Colorado or on death row—continuing to be a principled political person is in itself a victory. But most of us have additional opportunities and forms to continue active political work. Being a political prisoner is not just a status designation; it's a life-long commitment to fight against injustice.

On December 13, 1986 Kuwasi Balagoon—my codefendant and a courageous Black Liberation Army warrior—died in prison of AIDS. Ever since then, my main area of work has been around the issue of AIDS in prison. It is by far the number one cause of death among New York State inmates, killing about 250 a year.

The most urgent situation facing political prisoners in the US today is the case of Mumia Abu Jamal (the radical Black journalist facing execution after being framed for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia

fascist consolidation. The iron fist has not yet manifested itself fully, but it will. It appears to me that the white left in general does not share such a view. Of course, in the late 20s and early 30s most German citizens did not experience rising Nazism as dangerous to their social existence—not until military bombings, food shortages, etc. Most people were little concerned with the death and concentration camps. Dead and imprisoned communists, mass genocide of Jewish and Gypsy peoples and Soviet citizens, were not of concern to the vast majority. But these camps and prisons were hell for the imprisoned and money-makers for the capitalist class.

David: The left has been tarred with the right-wing's brush of "big government," due to the policies of liberals on the one hand and Stalinists on the other. But actually, with our commitment to self determination and our struggle against the warfare and police state, revolutionaries have been the most consistent opponents of the massive repression functions of government. We now urgently need an activist movement that counters racist scapegoating by dramatically shining the floodlights on the real sources of the problems:

- the lion's share of public welfare that goes to the rich via staggering interest payments on government debt, bank bail-outs, pork-barrel military contracts, etc.,

- the big bureaucracies of the transnational corporations, run by a handful of corporate executives who determine the life choices of the vast majority of people,

- the "structural adjustment programs" (SAPs) imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on over seventy third-world countries. These draconian austerity measures are designed to extract debt payment and cheap raw materials for the banks and industries of the North. The SAPs are the cutting edge for destroying human life and well-being in the world today.

- the growth of big government in its most virulent forms: prisons, police, military might, and the concomitant attacks on civil liberties.

forceful overall movement. It seems that a big part of the challenge before us (and I really don't know how to do it) is to find ways to connect the range of different oppressions, and band against our common enemy, imperialism, and to find ways to synthesize grassroots activism with a global consciousness and solidarity.

Marilyn: People fought back against European fascism. They worked in clandestine resistance movements. Would the imperialist big-bang war have ended German and Italian fascism and aggression without the internal resistance movements which were led in large part by anti-capitalist forces? Think about that!

We need the capacity for, understanding of, and willingness to resist and use whatever means necessary to stand for justice, human dignity and liberation and against national oppression, white-supremacy, class exploitation and the oppression of women and of gay people.

How we—as progressive, radical or revolutionary white people—relate to the objective, material conditions of struggle, will in large part define our historical ability to play a role in making the changes necessary to open the way to liberation and justice for all. That is our responsibility, and our challenge.

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Meg Starr and **Matt Meyer** are members of R'n B, a Brooklyn, New York-based affinity group which has published an unedited version of the above discussion. To obtain a copy, contact them c/o WRL, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012 or mmmsrnb@igc.apc.org. R'n B—which stands for Resistance in Brooklyn, Roses and Bread, Red and Black and a number of other things—is planning to produce a future publication compiling opinions from other pp/pows and interested parties, addressing the questions posed above. They invite your thoughts and input. ★



In The U.S. Dr

GEORGE CAFFENTZIS

MIDNIGHT NOTES

Barely seven years after a major military attack that left Iraqi industry, hospitals, water and sewage treatment plants devastated, and caused thousands of civilian casualties as well as widespread sickness among American soldiers, the United States government prepared to go to war again against Iraq in February 1998. The Clinton administration's reasons for initiating this war—although noticeably shifting as the weeks went by—were clothed in dramatic language. Secretary of State Albright said in a Columbus, Ohio "town hall meeting" on February 19, 1998—"that the United States and the civilized world cannot deal with somebody who is willing to use...weapons of mass destruction on his own people, not to speak of his neighbors. "Later the same night, Albright reiterated, "[Saddam Hussein is] a brutal dictator who is terrifying his people and threatening the region.....our policy is to contain him."

The US war aims, according to Pres. Clinton, were to undermine the Iraqi government and to "substantially reduce or delay" its ability to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction.

Such justifications, however, were generally unconvincing, as the audience in the famous Columbus town hall meeting demonstrated. Their questions and the answers they received showed that the Clinton Administration was far from transparent about its true war aims.

The Columbus "town hall meeting" gave voice to a pervasive sense growing throughout the country and the world that the Clinton Administration was hiding something. Was the movie *Wag the Dog* right? Was the threatened war nothing but a diversion from a sordid sex scandal, or was there another explanation? Clinton Administration officials stuck to their cover story through thick and thin simply because, however shaky it may have appeared, it put the opponents to the war on the defensive. After all, who wanted to defend secret weapons of mass destruction or a tyrannical regime?

Alternative explanations are necessary as probes to challenge and deflate the ever present threats of war. For even though the agreement between Kofi Annan, the UN General Secretary, and the Iraqi government seems to have averted the immediate threat of war, there is very good reason to believe that the US government will be vitally interested in fomenting similar episodes in the future. This strategy of tension can delay the lifting of the sanctions and restrict the sale of Iraqi oil for years to come.

Moreover, one of the main arguments of anti-war opponents—a war would cause the loss of innocent Iraqi lives—is morally valid, but politically weak. Its moral validity is obvious. As we know, the combined effects of the aerial bombardments and the sanctions imposed on Iraq, which restricted the import of food and medicine, have been responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people, most of them children.

And we can easily imagine that a future bombing campaign would produce a carnage and a devastation of incommensurable proportions.

OFFICIAL ISSUES AND THE FINE PRINT

At the end of the Gulf War, a series of agreements were concluded between the Iraqi government and the United Nations. One of the most controversial was the right of the United Nations to search for and destroy any "weapons of mass destruction" that the Iraqi state would produce. The "UN Special Commission" on Iraq ("UNSCOM") is the name of the UN inspection team in charge of the search-and-destroy mission; its present head is Richard Butler, a former Australian ambassador to Indonesia. Once UNSCOM completes its work, the sanctions will, presumably, be lifted.

The Clinton Administration justified its threatened bombing of Iraq by claiming that the Iraqi government has violated this agreement. Was this true? Immediately before the Secretary General Kofi Annan's arrival in Baghdad in February 21, 1998, there appeared to be two interpretations of what complying

with the original agreements meant.

The issue was not whether the inspections should go on, but how they should be conducted. The Iraqi authorities were demanding that the accords be put in specific terms (specific times, places and persons), with a limit of eight sites and sixty days, while the US demanded inspection at any place-any time.

The Iraqi government's insistence on specific terms in the interpretation of the accords came from its desire to maintain at least a shred of sovereignty. It wanted the terms of the accord to be open to negotiation at each turn in the story and the story itself to have a time limit that would lead to the end of sanctions.

The US government, on the other hand, claims the right to carry on an absolute surveillance over the entire Iraqi territory, for an indefinite span of time, and wants the absolute right to control and destroy any possible means that might lead to the development of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery. This demand is tantamount to requiring that the Iraqi nation become a pre-industrial colony producing crude oil, at best. For, as we have learned from the ecological movement, almost any industrial development is either a potential weapon of mass destruction, or allows for the development of such weapons. For example, any petro-chemical industry makes chemical weapons possible; any aero-space industry makes delivery vehicles possible; any bio-engineering or pharmaceutical industry makes biological weapons possible.

What the US is, in fact, demanding is the elimination not only of Iraqi governmental sovereignty over its territory, but the total control over of the Iraqi nation's future industrial development, if not the total destruction of its industrial capacity. The seemingly formal issue concerning the interpretation of the accords hid a much more substantial one: whether the ruling Baathist government will accept Iraq's return to a colonial, dependent status.

The crisis was averted when the Iraqi government decided to accept an interpretation of the accords brought by Kofi Annan to Baghdad on February 23, 1998. It lifted the sixty day limit on inspections, but kept the reference to the eight sites.

Similarly, it included a gesture to the recognition of Iraqi sovereignty by adding a group of senior diplomats to the UNSCOM "technical" team—whose members were arrogant and disrespectful, according to Iraqi officials—that will inspect the presidential sites. Finally, the document's references to the "legitimate concerns of Iraq relating to national security, sovereignty and dignity" and the "lifting of sanctions" seemed enough to assuage the Iraqi government. But the fundamental issue between the US and the Iraqi regimes concerning the political sovereignty and economic independence of Iraq remains and will be the source of tension in the future.

The US government insists that any negotiation with the Iraqi government about the conditions of the accords and the end of sanctions—conditions involving its territory and economy—are illegitimate. It is by virtue of its military power that the US government and its transnational corporate allies have in recent times battered down all trade and political barriers wherever they stood in the way of US national and corporate interests. The recent showdown with Iraq was not different, even if the justifications given appealed to the well-being of the people of the world.

THE OIL SECRET

Oil has long been recognized as a major factor in the Gulf War. This insight was expressed most graphically in the 1990/91 anti-Gulf War movement's slogan "NO BLOOD FOR OIL!" What exact role oil played then, however, was often disputed. According to some commentators at the time, the US's interest in "cheap oil" brought about a confrontation with Iraq. But the US government was never committed to any particular price for crude oil. In 1974, for example, the US government gave the go-ahead to the Saudis to hike the price of oil dramatically while in 1986 it bombed Libya and sent cakes to Iran in order to lower the price of oil. The US was

responding not to the Iraqi state's demand for high oil prices, but to its desperate attempt to bypass the US military and economic control of Persian Gulf oil.

A key to understanding the present situation is to realize that the Iraqi government has managed to face seven years of total military surveillance and economic sanctions without capitulating completely to the military subordination and economic dependence that US has demanded of the states in the region. The Iraqi state is still insisting on some control over the nation's resources and its independent entrance as a seller into the global oil market. For example, the Iraqi state has made major deals with a number of non-US oil companies to bring them into the joint development of oil fields in Iraq once the sanctions are lifted. These deals involve French companies like Elf Aquitaine and Total SA (involving fields of 12.5 billion barrels) and Russian companies like Lukoil, Zabrubezneft and Mashinoimport (involving fields of 7.5 billion barrels).

The only companies left out of the oil exploration bonanza when sanctions are lifted will be US-based, unless the Saddam Hussein regime is somehow persuaded otherwise.

The economic situation now is the opposite of what it was during the 1991 Gulf War. The Baath regime in 1990 was desperate because it was caught in a pincer. On the one side, the Iraqi proletariat, after nearly a decade of war with Iran, was demanding a "pay off" in the form of high-

The US is proposing a panopticon ("a regime where everything occurs on the plane seen controlled by the US government")

er living standards, on the other side, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the US, and the UN were demanding the privatization of state industries and an end to subsidies, i.e., the imposition of a policy of austerity and structural adjustment. The invasion of Kuwait was a calculated risk meant to gain some breathing space from both the Iraqi working class and the IMF/US/UN (by gaining concessions from the Kuwaitis and other elements of Middle Eastern capital in exchange for a pull back).

The invasion was also premised on the US not having a viable political alternative to the Baath party. In a way, the invasion did save the Baath regime and did impose austerity on the Iraqi people. In 1990, Iraqi authorities were calling for \$25 per barrel and one of their official reasons for invading Kuwait was that Kuwait was violating its OPEC quota and depressing the price of oil. The Saudis won the oil price debate with Iraq both at the last OPEC meeting before the Gulf War and in reality up until 1997. The price of oil on the international market between 1992 and early 1997 averaged in the region of \$19-\$20 (with the low at \$14 in late 1993 and a high of \$25 in early 1997).

In 1998, Iraq is objectively not a force for higher oil prices. In fact, the full return of Iraqi oil into the international oil market would substantially lower oil prices. In 1994, the Clinton Administration estimated that,

with the full lifting of sanctions, Iraqi oil on the world market would drop prices by almost 50% and there would be no reason to believe that this estimate would be true today. Such a price collapse would be especially problematic for the world's major oil corporations in a period when they believe that there are new, profitable scale investments to be made in exploration and development (especially former non-Russian Soviet republics) at the same time they face a declining demand because of the "oil glut." Such a price collapse would also threaten the present control structure of Saudi Arabia, a US client state, and would devastate the capital of a local "oil patch" in Texas and elsewhere. These are no small losers in the event and they have tremendous power over the government.

The "oil-for-food" agreement between the Iraqi government and the UN Security Council (Resolution 986) and the regulated and restricted return of oil onto the world market in January 1998 led to a dramatic collapse of the price of oil. In two months (January-March) the price fell from \$24 to \$18 and a year later it was in the \$16 range.

The US fought against the price collapse diplomatically and militarily. The last US attack on Iraq—the 27 cruise missiles on September



Examining Of Iraq



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delayed the implementation of the Resolution for almost four months. Though it could not stop the "oil-for-food" deal completely, US diplomats have crafted the resolution in a very restrictive way. First, it only allowed for the sale of about 700,000 barrels per day, 20% of the 3,000,000 the Iraqi state was exporting before the Gulf War. Second, an essential part of the agreement is the placing of 151 monitors from the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA) throughout Iraq who observe whether the food bought from the oil revenues is properly distributed through an agreed upon ration card system at more than 60,000 retailers throughout the country. Third, along with food, essential technology to repair water and sewerage systems as well as equipment for the oil industry may be purchased with the oil money. These imports are checked by a monitoring team as well. Consequently, the Iraqi economy is not only watched by satellite, spy plane over flights, and the UNSCOM inspectors; hundreds of accountants and market inspectors are also auditing it daily.

These monitoring teams are clearly more important for the fate of the Iraqi people and state than the UNSCOM inspection teams, but they are not often talked about in Clinton administration press conferences. If they are removed from Iraq or cannot do their work there, the "oil-for-food" deal will become null-and-void and the Iraqi right to sell oil

openly will be rescinded. In effect, any time the US bangs the "drums of war," Iraqi oil is driven out of the market. This is certainly one of the secret motivations for US war threats, since they permit control over Iraqi oil sales in the short-run. For example, the UN Security Council increased Iraq's quota for exporting oil from \$2 billion to \$5.2 billion on February 20, 1998 as an inducement to Saddam Hussein's government to sign the new interpretation of the accords in Baghdad. This increase permitted the Iraqi national oil company to sell up to about 50% of its pre-Gulf War exports. But this limit is purely theoretical, because (a) the UNDHA inspection teams must be operating on the ground in Iraq and (b) parts must be imported in order to repair oil extraction and pipeline equipment in order for the Iraqi National Oil Company to be able to increase production to meet this limit. If the US threatens war again or objects that some imported piece of equipment can be used to construct a weapon of mass destruction, the Iraqis will find themselves either thrown out of the market or unable to enter into it.

GEOLOGY AND THE OIL PRODUCING PROLETARIAT

The Iraqi people are not the only intended targets of the threatened smart bombs. As in the previous Gulf War, all people around the world involved in the production of oil and not totally subservient to the plans of major oil companies and their US and British governmental allies are also targeted.

The Gulf War forced a total change in the composition of the workforce in the Middle East. The Palestinian, Yemini and Egyptian workers were expelled and along with them the threat of their demands for political recognition in the states like Kuwait and the UAE where they comprised the majority of inhabitants.

The oil proletariat's revolt since the early 1990s has moved out of the cities and into the countryside, e.g., in Chiapas in Mexico, in Ogoniland in Nigeria, in Chechnya in Russia, and throughout the Caspian region. The indigenous population of the world, estimated at 300 million, live in zones which have 60% of the natural resources of the planet. They are confronting the soldiers of their own governments as well as the death squads of the transnational companies anxious to get the oil beneath them at any cost.

These people, who have been living on the "margins" of industrial development, have been forced to become protagonists in a new world war because of the growing scientific

consensus that world oil production will peak in the next decade or two. Oil companies are now desperately trying to position themselves to be able to stake out and possess the remaining oil areas on the planet which invariably are in regions that had previously been undeveloped. According to this reasoning, if the companies do not make their claims now, they will be left out of the price boom in the first half of the 21st century caused by a decline in production and an increase in demand.

This consensus is based on the work of M. King Hubbert who accurately predicted in the 1950s that US non-Alaskan oil production would peak in 1969. Extrapolating Hubbert's work on the US to the whole planet, geologists have noted that the number and size of new oil discoveries have been falling since the 1960s and are rapidly heading to zero. They also note that the larger fields are usually found first, while there are diminishing returns on new exploratory wells in the late period. Oil consumption is growing at approximately 2 percent per year. Old oil fields are drying up and new fields are expensive to find and exploit as well as being objectively rare. A price hike of dramatic proportions looms.

It follows that all the new profit to be made out of oil production now lies in the geographical margins of the planet. But it is exactly in this drive to the margins, all the horrors of the primitive period of the oil industry are returning. Indigenous people must be driven from their lands; previously uncontaminated waters and lands must be polluted; cultures, peoples and ecologies must be exterminated. But these peoples—from the Chiapans to the Ogonis to the Papuans to the Ecuadorians—are resisting their own extinction and are receiving the support of the world. Remarkably, they are managing to stall the oil industry's self-proclaimed final advance.

Oil is inevitably surrounded by an ideological aura. It is a basic commodity (i.e., it is an input in the production of almost every commodity) and the oil price affects the price of all other commodities as well as the distribution of profit throughout the planetary capitalist system.

The US's ongoing threat to bomb Baghdad at the slightest hint of resistance makes it clear that any people who do not accept the recolonization of the oil fields beneath their feet by the international oil companies and their US and British government allies will likely suffer attack. As Secretary Cohen paradoxically suggested in Columbus, the Iraqi people have become the objects of US military assault because they have not overthrown Saddam Hussein's Baath regime and, on top of that, they would not accept the recolonization of their country the US promises. This apparently places them in the same position as the Zapatistas in Mexico and the Ogoni in Nigeria who have the temerity to demand control over the oil underneath their feet. The main difference between them is that the Iraqis face high-intensity warfare while the indigenous peoples are tormented with modern war's low intensity cousins.

Cohen's paradox was even more cynically twisted by his claim that the US military planned to bomb instead of invading Iraq, because the US government feared the breakup of the Iraqi nation! The US government has never had qualms about breaking up nations. The problem with the breakup of Iraq, say, to the three Ottoman provinces it was synthesized out of—Kurd-dominated Mosul, Shi'a-dominated Basra, and cosmopolitan Baghdad—is that the oil politics of the result would be more troublesome than Saddam Hussein's.

First, the resulting nations can claim not to be responsible for the debts and war-damages his regime incurred. Second, an independent Kurdish republic would be able to use its oil wealth for the liberation of its Kurdish brethren in Turkey, Iran and Central Asia. Third, the technologically sophisticated Baghdad-centered proletariat would be expecting an end to austerity (after its trials) and not the replacement of the Baath party by an IMF Structural Adjustment government that would inevitably follow under US sponsorship.

Fourth, a Basra republic would ally itself with Iranian Islamic state, which promises to

be troublesome competitor in the development and marketing of Central Asian oil. An Iraq ruled by Saddam Hussein's Baath Party is clearly the US government's and the oil industry's best choice.

Since then the US and Iraqi governments have been playing a mutual game of deception on their populations, by using the peoples' fear and rage of each other government's actions as the basis for control. If the US were seriously interested in seeing the Baath Party's demise, a quick abolition of the sanctions would be on the agenda.

In the words of a Kurdish rebel from Iraq who recently concluded, awaiting deportation back to Iraq by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service after having been airlifted by the CIA out of Iraq in 1994 and brought to "safety" in the US: "The US and Saddam are two sides of the same coin."

THE GULF WAR AND GLOBALIZATION

All the imagery used in the Gulf War to demonize the Iraqi state is now being recycled to create the impression that the US government is acting against Iraq in response to the exceptional evil Saddam Hussein embodies. But this planned attack is in line with the policy the US government has pursued throughout the 1980s and 1990s under the guise of "globalization" in every region of the world.

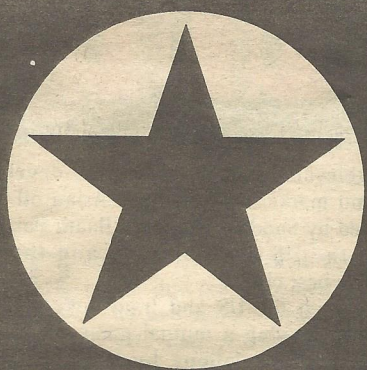
The US prosecution of the Iraq war is best understood as the contemporary equivalent of the British empire's Opium War against China mid-19th century. The British saw their war as a crusade for "free trade" and their major war objective was to break down the Chinese government's perfectly reasonable (but "protectionist") resistance to opening up its market to opium produced in the British colony of India. At stake in Iraq is the right of the US government to control the resources of the planet according to its desires as long as it presents itself as the uniform of an international agency, be it the UN, the IMF, the WTO or the WHO.

The Russian government is also deeply concerned, as indicated by Yeltsin's remark that a US attack on Iraq could trigger "World War III". The planned attack on Iraq is an attack on its future as well—it puts an end to the hope that the Russian state and capital may draw some benefit from liberalization and that the oil resources of the previous Soviet Union will not be monopolized by US and English oil companies. With the intensification of its strategy of tension, the US state is telling its Russian colleagues that their management of oil resources must comply with the its schemes or else.

The planned attack also sends a message to Asian governments. In fact, there is a deep relation between Iraq and the assorted Tigers and Dragons: Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea. All these states had adopted a nation-state model of capitalist development. The Asian countries' attempt proved tremendously successful in the 1980s and appeared to be an alternative development model for previously colonized countries. But this alternative was thrown into crisis last year. The US response to the "Asian crisis" is to demand the right of absolute surveillance over their economies. Just as the Iraqis have to show the US government every secret nook in the country, similarly the Thais, Indonesians and Koreans have to "open up their books" to show the IMF (backed by the US government) all their dealings and, of course, gain their approval in order to survive.

The US government is proposing a global Panopticon ("all seeing") regime, where everything that occurs on the planet has to be seen, controlled and approved by the US government (or its representatives in an international agency it controls). Thus, the US is not only aiming to be the "cop" of the world, as it did in the 1960s, but it aspires to be the "investigator," "warden" and "executioner" of the "world" as well at the dawn of the 21st century.

On the most general level, the issue at stake in the Gulf War (old and new) is the possibility of any nation-state charting a sovereign path to its existence and of a people to actively (or even passively) resist the dictates of the world market (as roughly guided by the US government and its supranational proxies).★



The Zapatista Dream



By Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

TRANSLATED BY JESSICA PARSONS

El Sueño Zapatista (The Zapatista Dream) is a collection of interviews with Subcomandante Marcos, Major Moises, and Comandante Tacho of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) by Yvon Le Bot in collaboration with Maurice Najman. It has been published in French by Editions de Seuil and in Spanish by Plaza & Janés (Enrique Granados 86-88, 08008, Barcelona, Spain). It includes a lengthy introductory essay by Le Bot that is a very good introduction to the historical context in which the EZLN emerged and some of the political challenges they have raised. It also includes 250 pages of interviews with three of the leading figures in the EZLN detailing the history of the EZLN, and their political development. It is almost certainly the best single source of information on the EZLN in the period before 1994 and should be read by all who wish to understand the Zapatistas. Unfortunately it is not available in English. The following translated extracts only give a taste of what this book has to offer and we urge French and Spanish readers to buy this book. We know of no plans to publish the book in English but hope that these extracts will generate interest in doing so. The following is the second installment of extracts from interviews with Subcomandante Marcos. -the Editors

ANATOMY OF AN UPRISING

We knew that our deadline was twelve midnight December 31st, 1993, because this was the time that the committee [CCRI-CG] gave when it gave us the mandate. It said: "A period of one year to start the war, no more, if not, we are going in our own direction." The communities had warned that if we did not march with them, then they would advance alone and they gave us a period of one year. . .

For precisely this reason, we needed to deal a strong blow, to sound a wake-up call. We had to make the cost very high for them to attack the civilian population. We thought that they would react in the classic terms of counterinsurgency: pursue the armed force and neutralize it, control the civilian forces and turn them to their side. We thought that they would follow the Vietnam model in the unoccupied territories, that was called the war of hearts and minds. But if we were able to rapidly draw attention, the annihilation or the harassment, or the attacks on the communities, against the civilian population, would be very difficult. But we prepared for war, in whatever form. The indigenous communities were prepared for moving out the resistance and counted on a successful military action at first that would make it so that if the government started up its death

machine, it could not do it with impunity. We had to raise the cost of indigenous blood. . .

And for this we needed time, the communities had to prepare themselves and endure the time necessary for national and world public opinion to stir and force the government, at least to be careful with the civilian population; even though they would attack us, the Zapatistas, the combatants, with everything, that is how it happened in the first days. . .

It was a strategy. Wait, you will understand better with a picture: here is Chiapas; here, the Jungle; to the east, the border and Guatemala; to the north Tabasco; and higher up Veracruz; to the west, the state of Oaxaca. Our idea was to start with a strong blow to make us known and then advance as much as possible. It was to take the war as far as possible from the Zapatista zones, concentrated in the Lacandon Jungle, the North of Chiapas, and the Highlands, to give time to the communities to organize the resistance. First take the cities and from there march to the capital.

Knowing that they would annihilate us on the way. But this would take the war away from the communities.

The story is not over, we are going to reach Mexico City. That, our march on Mexico City has not been abandoned. But at the time, that was our strategy. And we started the spreading out for the advance on Tuxtla, Tabasco, Oaxaca and Veracruz when the cease-fire arrived. . .

The units that were to protect the villages withdrew, but the guerrilla columns were ready to go forward, they would take the municipal heads of the Highlands, the North and advance toward Tabasco. Another column would take San Cristobal, move toward Tuxtla and from there move toward La Ventosa, then Oaxaca, and Veracruz for the other [column]. . .

In the case of Comitán, when the column took Las Margaritas, an important officer was lost, the person in charge of the advance toward the other positions. When he fell, another officer, who was entrusted with protecting the communities, started to advance toward Comitán and I realized that the communities were going to be unprotected. Then I gave him the order by radio to return, but they were about four kilometers away, they said that they could see the lights when they stopped. But the other units already were moving to Tuxtla and moving to the north, moving toward Tabasco. Then, the army started to bomb the communities to the south of San Cristobal. They bombed during the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th of January, that is when we shot three helicopters and three airplanes in the mountains. . .

Then one part of the Ocosingo garrison broke off to go north and the other part returned to the jungle to protect the communities. Not everyone returned to the jungle, one battalion stayed in Ocosingo, Major Mario's battalion stayed inside the

market waiting for the vehicles to leave. The 2nd of January came, when a secret parachuters unit attacked them. Meanwhile, a motorized column entered from the Palenque side. There were military errors there, there was no defense of the perimeter. But the fundamental problem was that this unit should not have been there on the 2nd, it did not succeed in withdrawing. . .

A section of the northern forces returned to try to aid those in Ocosingo. They were going to leave people nearby and they told us that they were not beaten, that they were resisting. They tried to make a heroic escape. Finally, the number of our fallen soldiers in Ocosingo held at 40 or 50 combatants. There were many civilians killed, people that went by there. The soldiers shot at everything, in spite of the fact that we were uniformed, they shot at everything that moved.

All the exits were covered; look, there are three access points into Ocosingo, the road from San Cristobal, the one from the jungle, controlled by those that had to withdraw to defend the villages, and to the north, the road from Palenque. But the morning of the 2nd we started to withdraw. The unit that went north, toward Tabasco, is the one that was entrusted with obstructing the road from Palenque. But it did not blow up the bridge, they watched it and left, thinking that everyone had left Ocosingo or that they didn't have to be careful, that the line of defense was already inside the Jungle. The battalion that was in the market stayed alone and the military entered without a single difficulty. They should have been delayed at the bridge at least, but the unit that guarded the bridge thought that nobody had stayed in the town and they didn't blow it up. If they had attacked the communities we would have had to attack farther away, "Look at me, I'm over here", so that the soldiers would leave the Jungle and they would go after us.

Everything was planned to minimize possible losses. There would be a rearguard line to evacuate the wounded, the dead, to take them into the Jungle. . .

During the 5th through the 10th of January--we had all the problems I have told you about. That is, we were being heavily bombed in Ocosingo and in the southern mountains. I took the bombing in the mountains south of San Cristobal, with Swiss Pilatus airplanes, that are supposedly for peace, they were ordered to kill Mexicans. We decided to withdraw to the Jungle, on one side, and withdraw from the other communities. . .

When they designated Camacho as commissioner of peace, to us it seemed like a fraud. They named someone to make like they wanted peace, but they continued beating us. So, we did not take it seriously. We continued our operations. The 12th of January came as a surprise to us: the cease fire, the offer of amnesty by Salinas and the

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offer of dialogue by Camacho. But we thought it was a trick. We said, well no, they want us to show our faces in order to betray us, but that was not going to be the case. Because we were facing a world that didn't know what was really happening. The great mobilizations of the civil society in Mexico City and other parts of the world, we didn't know about them until after.

We thought the 12th of January was a trick. We made a military appraisal, we had forces still surrounded in Ocosingo, approximately 80 wounded in our country hospitals, lost people, units that didn't appear in the long withdrawal from the Highland zones to the Jungle. So, we decided to approve the cease fire and to place conditions on the dialogue. But thinking that they would not comply with the conditions, that it all was a trick, that there was not going to be a cease fire. Above all because the 13th and 16th there were still clashes in San Miguel, in Monte Libano and the bombing continued. . .

We didn't lose anybody then, but the soldiers did. We blew up a tank near San Miguel and the occupant went on to a better life.

And when the cease fire was made real we began to find out what had happened in other places. We did not realize until then, I am talking between the 16th and the 20th. Then we realized that this plan that I explained to you in drawings was not possible. We realized this other force had appeared, that had asked us to dialogue, that was not the government, but rather was the people. We thought that the people either would not pay attention to us or would become a part of us and fight. But they did not react in either one of these two ways. The result was that all of these people, there were thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, that did not want to rise in revolt with us, but neither did they want to fight us, and neither did they want to annihilate us. They want to dialogue with us. That broke our whole schema and ended up defining what had been Zapatismo, as Neozapatismo. . .

So then what had been the political-military organization with respect to the communities --conceded, that is to say here there is something new, we don't know what is happening, let's try to learn --, it made the Revolutionary Clandestine Indigenous Committee, or that is, the leadership of the movement, say: "Here is something new, and we don't know, let's pause and see what is happening, but what we planned is not possible". We decided to wait, okay, it is not the government that is asking us, no, it is the people, the people for whom we are fighting, that are saying to us we won't fight, what do we do? We are not going to fight against them. Are we going to fight in spite of them or what do we do? . . .

For us, Salinas' calculation was that it would be cheaper to negotiate and see if the Zapatistas could be bought, than to take a chance and annihilate us, because that would throw out his whole propagandistic project. . .

I am sure that within the highest spheres of power there were those who opposed going the violent route. Including in the military, because the military realized that this was not a movement against which they had been preparing. The federal army officials had been preparing with a mentality of national security, the School of the Americas and all of that; against guerrillas planted from outside, financed by foreigners. And soon they discovered an indigenous guerrilla, because they saw that who they killed were indigenous. And furthermore they raised banners that were the same as those of the soldiers: homeland, democracy, liberty, history. All that is the property of the federal army the other army appropriated. We were a very inconvenient enemy, not in military terms, but rather in political and ethical terms. . .

We were familiar with their internal structure and their fire power. We do not think, and did not think, that they were capable of annihilating us like they had said, with a blow by the hand. But yes they were superior in military terms. . .

We would have loved, during the worst of the war, to have contact with other armed groups. But the only one that contacted us was PROCUP. During the actions that happened in January, the bombings that they did. And we already had distance and differences with them from a long time before. . .

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

When Zedillo came in to support Roblado Rincon that was a clear signal to us. If the electoral fraud of Zedillo was not obvious, that of Roblado Rincon's as governor of Chiapas was perfectly visible. There had been checks and there was a tribunal, many observers were able to demonstrate that there had been fraud. And Zedillo's first act of governance was to support Robledo's takeover. It was there, where the Committee said, well no, the government was not going to pay attention, they were going to act like nothing happened. We needed to do something to remind them that we are here. That was when it was decided to break through the encirclement, in December of '94.

What we wanted was to sound the wake-up call one more time: "Here we are, Zedillo", as we did to Salinas "Remember, you have guerrillas in the southeast and you have to resolve it in some way, militarily or politically". We broke the encirclement and then the government used it to ignite what, we know now, was an imminent crisis. The economic crisis burst some hours after, they tried to put the blame on us, and the peso went to hell. The stock market and the flight of capital and all of that. . .

It is significant that the crisis had been germinating for a long time. I think that our actions opened a hole, like a pressure cooker, and it exploded. But in México, concretely, the result spilled over because the misery of the indigenous people became shared by millions of Mexicans. It generalized everything. The government really was a focus of resentment that had to be annihilated. Or rather, the indigenous were now not the only people with whom it was possible to sympathize; now it was possible to convert many people who had recently started to experience the same standard of living, in equal conditions of misery, into comrades in struggle. That is when they attacked us in February of 1995. . .

THE LEGACY OF CHE

For the Zapatista National Liberation Army the reference to Che is a reference to the Che that left Cuba and went to Bolivia. The Che that continued struggling, that demanded to continue being a rebel, he who decided to abandon everything and start new, in another place, with all of the difficulties that that represents and the failures or mistakes that are committed. Our reference is more to the human side, the side of resistance, of rebellion, the similarity between "everything for everybody, nothing for ourselves" and that which we see in the proposal of Guevara, more than his political proposal or his manual for taking power. Our admiration for Che is ancient, coming from ten years in the mountains, it was a historical reference. Not so much as a guerrilla method, of the guevarist foco, because we were making a regular army; nor after, when the Zapatistas point to that mix that is Neozapatismo. In the end, that is not a part that Zapatismo rescues from Guevara, but rather the human part, the sense of sacrifice, the surrender to a cause and above all, the consequence, the convictions. He was a man that lived in accordance with what he thought. And that is difficult to find. Independently of whether his ideas were correct or not, he dealt with the consequences. . .

POLITICAL STRUGGLES WITHIN ZAPATISMO

All of our problems are attributable, the majority of times, to errors of the Zapatista Army and its civilian leadership structures. For example, intolerances on the part of the community heads with respect to internal criticisms; religious problems that filter into the civilian leadership structure of the Zapatista Army, that is, the Revolutionary Clandestine Indigenous Committee. Or problems that they do not give time to and don't resolve in a tolerant way, including trying to apply military criteria to political decisions and problems not attended to, that then grow and burst when they have reached grand proportions. I sincerely believe that the main problems that we have in the Jungle, in the North and in the Highlands must be errors that come from zapatismo. . .

The democratic proposal of the EZLN was constructed after January of '94, and included terms about tolerance and inclusion, that did not appear before in Zapatista discourse. It was in this confrontation with the outside that that started to be built.

Now the communities contribute their own practices, that have their limits: they regularly resolve their problems by consensus; they discuss them in the assembly until they have unanimity or there isn't agreement; they do not vote. In the majority of the communities there is not voting, the decisions are unanimous or there is no decision. They have a logic of argumentation that is internal and is valid for the problems that truly affect everyone. . .

I think that this form of democracy is only possible within a communitarian way of life. It functions in an indigenous community because within their social organization it is possible to have success with this form of political democracy, but I don't think that it can be transferred or generalized to other situations, for example, in urban situations, or at larger levels, statewide and national. That is, the collective control over authority must be the referent. . .

ZAPATISTA THEORY

What I am talking about is something that started to gestate a long time long ago, in this process of translation of the university Marxist-Leninist culture to the indigenous culture. This translation was a very good transformation. I remember reading once that he who translates poems is actually a poet; in this case, the true creators of Zapatismo were the translators, the Zapatista theorists, people like Major Mario, Major Moisés, Major Ana María, all these people that had to translate it into different dialects; Tacho, David, Zevedeo, are really the theorists of Zapatismo. . . They constructed a new way to see the world. . .

Perhaps Marcos is not longer a Marxist, but I don't know if this is bad, I don't know if it is something that will be reproached or appreciated. . . I do not say that to be a Marxist is a sin, but if one is to be of the left, revolutionary, one is in movement, is renovating continually, Zapatismo is revolutionary and is significant. I don't know what it can be called, if it is Marxism, anti-Marxism, revisionism, or reformism like Castaneda says. . .

THE CRISIS IN SOCIALISM

The fall of the Berlin Wall left us deserted. We are talking of a very solitary time in the mountains. It meant, among other things, to question the idea that one conception of the world can impose itself without being confronted continually by those that supposedly were its beneficiaries. That which called our attention, not only the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also the fall of the socialist camp, it was sanctioned by the

people who had been supposedly freed by socialism. Now for them to have seen the freedoms of socialism, it was a very strong wake-up call. We could not simply explain it with an analysis at a distance or make it go away, contenting ourselves by saying "It is a grand failure, and the people were subjugated."

Evidently something has not come about. Yes, they were seriously beating down the socialist countries during the Cold War, but that calls attention to the fact that it was the people themselves who did not defend what supposedly was their homeland. For us, that signified that it was impossible to impose an economic model with the force of arms.

But the most difficult question is what followed after the fall of the Berlin Wall, or that is, what other walls rose from the rubble of this wall, the walls of global capitalism established in its neoliberal phase. The united world, the globalized world, the borders that dissolve for capital and for the merchants, and that multiply for the human beings until they end up in grotesque and sad situations, like that in Yugoslavia, the racial wars of the end of the 20th century, where the blood you have costs you your life, those absurd questions.

That world has been constructed out of a lie. But that did not mean that that proposal had failed in understanding the world, I am referring to the understanding of the left. It is necessary to remember the wall, the socialist camp, received strong criticisms from the left, it was not attacked solely from the right, it also was attacked by the left, claiming that many things had changed. Being encircled they thought "Everyone who is against me is for my enemy" and that made it difficult for the socialist countries to accept any criticism without placing it immediately in the category of treason, reaction, revisionism, all of the categories. That allowed for all of the mistakes, the deficiencies and the incapacities to magnify, grow, accumulate, until it rotted from inside. . .

REVOLUTIONARY HUMILITY

When Durito points out that I fall, that I get tired climbing a small hill, or the teasing of Old Antonio about our movements in the mountains; the teasing shows that we are not so heroic nor are we supermen. All of that is the work of Durito, to keep the Zapatistas from seeing themselves like the people say they are. Because there are people that look to us as models and always it is necessary to remember that we are ordinary and common beings, that are here by accident, but we don't have anything special.★



Mexico: Rumors of War

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ingly have insisted on negotiating only with the Federal Government. The two key elements of Albores Guillen's plan seem to be the carrot and the stick: a \$3 billion investment package that would undoubtedly enrich Chiapas's already bloated economic elite, and the outright prohibition of marches and other forms of political protest. The proposal also calls for disarming the right-wing paramilitary groups that the government has been arming and training since 1994, but includes no specifics on how this will happen and almost nobody seriously believes that the state government has any intention of actually making it happen. A related initiative by the Governor in which he promised to release Zapatista prisoners proved to be a farce when none of prisoners released turned out to be Zapatistas.

The PAN and Zedillo initiatives propose changes in the constitution on the questions of indigenous autonomy. They are basically gutted versions of the San Andres Accords. They formally recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to some sort of autonomy but do not include the most substantive expressions of that autonomy found in the San Andres Accords. The Zedillo initiative recognizes the right of indigenous people to the use of natural resources but not in the collective form agreed upon in the San Andres Accords. Similarly the provision for autonomous

indigenous control of television and radio stations recognized in the San Andres Accords is rendered toothless by subordinating that control to the licensing authority of the Federal Government. The provision in the San Andres Accords for the bilingual education of indigenous children is stripped of the sections in the San Andres Accords that provide for its actual implementation.

If there had been no Zapatista uprising and no San Andres Accords the PAN and Zedillo initiatives would be small steps forward for the rights of indigenous peoples in Mexico. But understood in their larger political context they are actually an attack on the indigenous movement that was energized by the Zapatista uprising. By making unilateral proposals that modify the San Andres Accords the PRI and PAN are effectively abandoning the negotiating process begun in 1994 that produced the Accords. The PAN and Zedillo initiatives are more or less the same in terms of political content. If anything the PAN proposal is even emptier than Zedillo's. What is most significant about the PAN's initiative is that it effectively ends their participation in COCOPA and ruptures the broad united front of opposition parties on both the left and right that has blocked the PRI's power in the lower House of Deputies. The PAN has basically handed the PRI the freedom to impose its solution on Chiapas without any effective legislative opposition.

ACTS OF WAR

The true nature of the government's strategy is to be found not in their pious declarations for peace but in the daily waging of a dirty counter-insurgency war against the indigenous communities of Chiapas that are the Zapatistas' primary bases of support. The December 22 Actéal Massacre momentarily focused the world's attention on the Mexican government's use of paramilitary organizations against indigenous communities. That strategy has not changed in the months following the massacre. It has merely been supplemented with increasingly direct military action against the Zapatista communities by the Army and the police.

Every day continues to bring new reports of attacks on indigenous communities by either the Army, the state police, or the paramilitaries. On February 25, ten PRI members and 26 state police evicted 17 households from their lands around Agua Blanca Serrania that they had reinhabited in December after a previous eviction. On February 28 while Albores Guillen was announcing his "peace plan," four peasant Zapatista sympathizers, Vincente Lopez Alvarez, Abelardo Perez Alvarez, Felipe Molina Perez, and Andres Gomez Perez were wounded in an ambush by paramilitaries at the entrance of the town of Benito Juarez Simojovel. On March 3, 120 soldiers entered the community of Monteflores in the municipality of Las

Margaritas and threatened the peasants who had occupied the lands in the vicinity. On March 10 a group of paramilitaries protected by the state police sacked and burned two houses in the community of Chimix in the municipality of Chenalhó. On March 14 Trinidad Cruz Perez, a Zapatista supporter from the town of Roberto Barrios, was macheted to death by members of the PRI. On March 15, soldiers and police officers fired shots in the air in Actéal, forcing women in the refugee camp there to flee. Later that night state police and paramilitaries fired shots in the air in the vicinity of Polho, where many of the survivors of the Actéal massacre still remain. And this is just a sampling of reported events from a two-week period.

INCREASING US INVOLVEMENT

Through constant attacks on the indigenous communities that support the Zapatistas the Mexican government hopes to drive a wedge between the EZLN and their bases of support. Systematically instilling terror among indigenous Chiapanecans, particularly through the use of government-supported paramilitary gangs is a cornerstone in the very conscious strategy of low-intensity warfare. Strategies of opposing peoples' movements were cultivated by the US in Viet Nam based on the experiences of the British Army

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Anarchist Perspective on Puerto Rico

BY MIKE POIZONE

For the umpteenth time since the US invaded Puerto Rico 100 years ago, Congress is discussing the "permanent" fate of the Caribbean island. This time around the debate is framed by the Young Bill, proposed by Alaska Republican Don Young, which would authorize a supposedly binding plebiscite in which Puerto Ricans would be able to determine their own status. Puerto Ricans would choose among three options: Commonwealth (the current, vaguely autonomous but essentially colonial relationship with the US), Statehood, and Independence. In Puerto Rico, and in Puerto Rican communities in the US, "status issues" are the bedrock of all political affiliations. Just about everyone has an opinion on the issue, and all are quite passionate about their beliefs. Considered in terms of US politics, Statehooders are generally right-wing republicans, commonwealth advocates tend to be democrats somewhere between Kennedy and Clinton, and independentistas are left of the mainstream, from social democrats to revolutionary communists of all stripes. In the US, the plebiscite idea is widely lauded, especially by moderates and liberals: after all, it is finally supposed to let Puerto Ricans decide for themselves, without the intervention of the US government. Much of the Stateside opposition to the Young Bill comes from the extreme right, with Patrick Buchanan being the most vocal opponent of the plebiscite. Letting all those brown people become their own state is a bit frightening to the proto-fascists. In Puerto Rico, the strongest backers of the plebiscite are the Statehooders, and their support has had a big influence on the language of the Young Bill. Independentistas and, to a lesser extent, Commonwealth advocates are generally opposed to the Young Bill, primarily because they find it biased toward Statehood. The Congressional opposition to the plebiscite was led by Representative Luis Gutierrez of Illinois, a liberal Democrat and the only independentista out of four Puerto Ricans in the House of Representatives.

And, of course, the bill leaves the particulars of the plebiscite undetermined. It does not specify whether or not Puerto Ricans residing in the US would be allowed to vote; how to phrase each option on the ballot; whether statehood would require an English-only or English-first provision; and so on, and so on. These open questions seem to have stalled Senate action on the bill, after it barely passed in the House of Representatives (by exactly one vote) in March.

Hidden beneath the morass of main-

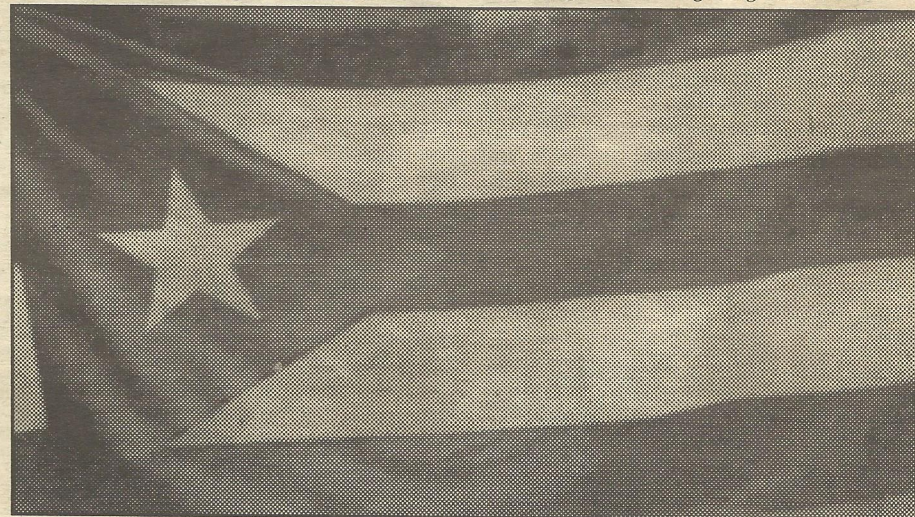
stream political disputes over the Young Bill are a number of key facts which can help define an anarchist response to the issue of Puerto Rican status generally. First things first: Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, plain and simple. Commonwealth status in its current form allows some measure of self-government to the island but does nothing to eliminate the massive military presence, the absolute control of the US government over any foreign policy decision-making, or Puerto Rico's devastating economic dependence upon federal welfare state institutions. These factors alone, among a much longer list, are enough to demonstrate that the current status is colonial. Second, and hopefully this is obvious, anarchists should oppose colonial status. This amounts to supporting self-determination for the people of Puerto Rico, which in turn amounts to being an independentista. (It does not automatically mean supporting the creation of a nation-state, whether neo-colonial or state socialist, but we'll get to that soon.) So, if the plebiscite were a reasonable way to determine Puerto Rican status, it would make sense for anarchists to support a vote for independence. But then there's the third fact: the plebiscite is a sham. And this is not a simple anarchist rejection of electoral politics, though such a rejection makes sense in particular contexts. Essentially, the plebiscite ignores the current colonial situation, and pretends that an equal opportunity exists for each of the three options. But the ballot, for example, however it ends up being worded, will present independence as an option without offering any real explanation of how to transform a colony into an independent country, much less one that avoids neo-colonial dependence on the US. Without such a plan, independence, as many Commonwealth supporters point out, is not viable. More centrally, the plebiscite is being planned and authorized, not by the people of Puerto Rico, nor even by their supposed "representatives," but by the US government. As a result, the possibility of obtaining independence outside of a neo-colonial situation is just about nil under the Young Bill. Of all the possible ways for the US to guarantee a favorable outcome to the vote, maintaining absolute control over it has got to be the most sure.

This understanding has led much of the independence movement to reject any and all plebiscites as meaningless or (worse yet) deceptive gestures. An independentista poster from an older plebiscite reads: "La Cuarta Opcion - Abstencion!" ("The Fourth Option - Abstention!"). These segments of the independence movement demand, sensibly enough, a complete withdrawal of US

military forces before any discussion can even begin about Puerto Rico's future status. They are also insistent that this discussion must begin and end not with the US Congress, but with the Puerto Rican people. Because of all this, anarchists can stand firmly with the most radical sections of the independence movement in opposing not only the Young Bill, but all plebiscites which attempt to "resolve" the status question without recognizing and rejecting the current colonial status. That is the easy part: anarchists should stand against Puerto Rico's continued colonial status, and against the Young Bill. The harder part, as is always the case for anarchists, is figuring out what we are for. In this case, given how contentious issues of nationalism are inside the anarchist movement these days, I'm going to drop the "we" altogether, and simply speak for myself, based upon several years of work as a white anarchist in solidarity with a radical section of the state-side independence movement. For me the ideal Puerto Rican status is the decentralized anarchist utopia I want to live in myself. As a way to get there, I support community-based modes of self-determination and self-management. Some communities are multi-racial and/or multi-national, but many are not. And, since communities often overlap, some members of a given multi-racial community (especially a geographically-based one) may identify themselves primarily as members of a race- or nation-based community. Nations, as I understand them, are communities of communities, and as such they both represent and distort the aims and desires, or in short, the perspectives, of the communities that compose them. To the extent that they express these perspectives, nations are meaningful and valuable social and cultural entities. But, to the extent that they distort

the actual perspectives of real communities, whether for the sake of a national bourgeoisie or simply for the sake of a supposed "consensus," nations are dangerous and not to be trusted. One way to test for this balance of representation and distortion is to assess how power within a nation is centralized or decentralized, and how it is structured. Considered this way, I am sympathetic to nationalist models that prioritize community-based, democratic models of decision-making, while I am critical of versions of nationalism that prioritize a nation-state.

There is no purity in this analysis: most nationalisms with which I am familiar (including all the forms of Puerto Rican nationalism I have encountered) contain a mix of both these tendencies. And so I remain supportive yet critical of the forms of Puerto Rican nationalism espoused by my independentista comrades. Despite the fact that they do not share my outright rejection of the state, my work with Puerto Rican independentistas is principled and not based merely on strategic or tactical alliances. That is to say, anarchism leads me directly to the work I do with the independence movement in Chicago. This is a different sort of "principle" than that espoused by white anti-imperialists, but at least as valid, from my perspective. I do not demand a comparable stance from all anarchists; I simply offer this as a potential way for anarchists to navigate the confusing waters of Puerto Rican status issues and nationalism. Anarchist perspectives on Puerto Rican status are perhaps best reached in dialogue with radical movements within Puerto Rican communities, coupled with a principled anarchist analysis of these movements. The answer to these issues isn't up to me—it's up to all of us. It's about time we got started figuring them out.★



RAF: R.I.P.

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tion often got pushed off or talked away by us. Revolutionary war also produces alienation and structures of authority, which are in contradiction to liberation. Dealing with that, so that it does not become established as a structure, is only possible if there is consciousness about it. Otherwise it goes without saying that new structures of authority will arise, as well as a hardening in both politics and relationships. That fact showed itself during the often changing hierarchical structures of the front in the 1980s and the authoritarian tendencies during the split in 1993. And it showed itself during the relapse into mainstream analysis and thought, which, in the history of the RAF, led to many people who struggled here no longer being able to see a justification for total revolt any longer.

IT WAS A STRATEGIC MISTAKE NOT TO BUILD UP A POLITICAL-SOCIAL ORGANIZATION ALONGSIDE THE ILLEGAL, ARMED ORGANIZATION

In no phase of our history was an out-reaching, political organization realized in addition to the political-military struggle...

The RAF based its strategy on armed struggle, in different ways during different phases, but at no point did it arrive at the point where militant actions aim at: The tactical option of a comprehensive liberation strategy.

The End Of The RAF Comes At A Time When The Whole World Is Confronted With The Effects Of Neo-Liberalism - The International Struggle Against Displacement, Alienation, And For A Just And Fundamentally Different Social Reality Is In Opposition To The Entire Development Of Capitalism

Global and inner-societal relations are becoming heightened in the turbulence of the historical developments following the end of real existing socialism. Nevertheless, it is not a contradiction for us to end our project while still recognizing the necessity

that everything which is useful and possible must be done so that a world without capitalism can come about, one in which the emancipation of humanity can be realized. Considering the devastating effects of the collapse of real existing socialism world wide, and the mass poverty of millions of people in the former Soviet Union, it's not enough to talk today of the chances which have been brought about by the end of real existing socialism. Nevertheless, we recognize that true liberation was not possible under the model of real existing socialism. It is possible to draw consequences from the anti-emancipatory experiences with the authoritarian and state bureaucratic concepts of real existing socialism and to recognize future paths to liberation.

With the collapse of real existing socialism, the competition between systems ended, meaning that the proponents of the capitalist system no longer feel the need to make their system appear to be "better". In the absence of an ideological check on capital, a process of global unleashing of capital has resulted: All of humanity are to be subjected to the needs of capital...

The RAF always stood in contradiction to the conscious mentality of a large segment of this society. That is a necessary moment in the process of liberation, because it's not only the conditions which are reactionary, rather the conditions produce reactionary character in people, and this continually suppresses their ability to become liberated. Without a doubt, it is a matter of existence to resist and fight against racism and all forms of oppression. Future outlines for liberation must be measured according to this, and they must find a key to unlocking the closed, reactionary consciousness and awakening the desire for emancipation and liberation.

The global wave of revolt, which the RAF arose from as well, did not succeed, which does not mean that the destructive and unjust developments up until today can't still be turned around.

The fact that we still don't see sufficient answers to these developments weighs more heavily upon us than the mistakes which

we made...

Attacking people in their capacity as functionaries for the state is a contradiction to the thoughts and feelings of all revolutionaries in the world - it contradicts their notion of liberation. Even when there are phases in the liberation process when this is viewed as necessary, because there are people who desire injustice and oppression and who seek to defend their own power or the power of others. Revolutionaries desire a world in which no one has the right to decide who may live and who may not. Nevertheless, our violence upset some people in an irrational way. The real terror is the normality of the economic system.

THE RAF WAS NOT THE ANSWER FOR LIBERATION - IT WAS ONE ASPECT OF IT

Although many questions remain open today, we are sure that from the liberation ideas of the future the seed of free relations can arise, if it truly does embrace the variety which is needed to overturn the conditions. It is useless to speak of "the correct line," the aspect of life outside of which everything else seems inefficient, just as it is to seek a revolutionary subject. The project of liberation in the future will know many subjects and a variety of aspects and content, and this had nothing to do with being random. We need a new proposal in which seemingly very different individuals or social groups can be subjects, and yet still be together. In this sense, the liberation project of the future will not contain the old concepts of the German left since 1968, not those of the RAF or other groups. The joy of building an encompassing, anti-authoritarian, and yet binding organizing project of liberation lies before us still, sadly too little attempted up until now. We see that there are people all over the world who are trying this, to find ways out of the vacuum.

Our decision to end something is the expression of our search for new answers. We know that we are joined with many other people around the world in this search.

There will be many future discussions until all the experiences have been brought together and we have a realistic and reflective picture of history.

We want to be part of a joint liberation. We want to make some of our own processes recognizable, and we want to learn from

others.

This excludes the notion of a vanguard which leads the struggle. Although the concept of being the "vanguard" had been dropped from our understanding of the struggle for years, the old concept of the RAF would not allow this to be actually done away with. That's another reason why we had to cut ourselves loose from this concept.

The Guerrillas In The Metropoles Brought The War Back Into The Belly Of The Beast, To The Imperialist States Which Waged Their Wars Outside Their Own Centers Of Power

Despite everything which we could have done better, it was fundamentally correct to oppose the conditions in West Germany and to seek to wage resistance to the continuity of German history. We wanted to open up chances for revolutionary struggle in the metropolises as well.

The RAF took up its own social terrain of struggle and sought to develop it for more than two decades, a terrain which historically knew little resistance, lacked a movement against fascism, and which was characterized by a population loyal to fascism and barbarism...

There are nine former militants from the struggle of the RAF still in prison. Although the struggle for liberation is far from over, this conflict has become part of history. We support all efforts which seek to get the prisoners from this conflict out of prison upright.

At this time, we'd like to greet and thank all of those who offered us solidarity on our path for the past 28 years, who supported us in various ways, and who struggled together with us in the ways that they could. The RAF was determined to contribute to the struggle for liberation. This revolutionary intervention in this country and in this history would never have taken place if many people, not organized in the RAF themselves, hadn't given a part of themselves to this struggle. A common path lies behind all of us...

The revolution says:

I was
I am
I will be again

Red Army Fraction
March 1998 ★

Rumors, Cont'd.

continued from previous page

in Ireland, Africa and Asia. "counter-insurgency warfare" was put to the test in the 1980s in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala and is now taught to Latin American military personnel in the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia and in counter-insurgency training in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Fort Bragg is the home of the First and Second Battalions of the First Special Warfare Group and the Seventh Special Forces Group. The Seventh Special Warfare Group has a particularly illustrious career ranging by their own account from "advising the South Vietnamese Army in 1961," to having "drafted the initial plan for US Military trainers in El Salvador," and playing "a critical role in helping the Salvadoran military grow ... to a counter-insurgency force of 55,000 men under arms."

In 1996 Mexican troops began training at Fort Bragg. These troops are destined for placement in Mexico's Special Forces Airborne Group (GAPE). According to Special Warfare magazine out of Fort Bragg, a "particularly heavy emphasis is being placed on those forces that will be located in the states of Chiapas and Guerrero, where 'special airborne forces' will be set up."

According to the December 29, 1997 *New York Times*, 3000 Mexican soldiers will have been trained by the US military as of next fall. Of these, 328 officers are receiving special training so that they can "in turn train air-mobile special forces units" in Mexico. In addition to Fort Bragg and Fort Benning Mexican soldiers are getting trained at more than ten other military bases in the US according to the Spanish daily, *El Pais*. As Mexican law prohibits the training of whole military units outside of Mexico, so troops are taken from different units in Mexico and officially regrouped in special elite units only upon their return. Ninety Mexican military

officials are also currently undergoing intensive training with the CIA under the pretext of forming a new anti-narcotics force.

In an ominous first step toward more direct US military involvement in Mexico, the School of the Americas has also begun training Mexican military officers in Mexico through the Personnel Exchange Program. According to a Defense Department report acquired by Nuevo Amanecer Press, 59 Mexican officers took the course in 1996. US Embassy officials have also acknowledged to the Mexican daily, *La Jornada*, that US "defense attachés" have made periodic and routine visits to "all parts of Mexico, including Chiapas."

Sales of US military equipment to Mexico has also increased dramatically. According to the March 15 *La Jornada*, government sales of US military equipment to Mexico increased by 600% last year to \$28 million and commercial sales are expected to triple again over the next year to roughly \$47 million. These sales are on top of "excess" equipment that the Pentagon has provided to the Mexican military for free. Last year these transfers included, for example, 73 Huey helicopters which are likely to be very useful in counter-insurgency operations in Southern Mexico.

GETTING RID OF THE WITNESSES

The Mexican government has welcomed the flow of US intelligence officers, US-trained military personnel and US weapons. But toward US citizens and other foreigners in Chiapas who have contradicted official government accounts of events, its hostility is growing. Anti-foreigner agitation by the government is nothing new, but the most recent incidents have been particularly severe. On February 13, a white Mexican military helicopter landed in the strategic Zapatista community of La Realidad carrying Lola De la Vega, a TVAzteca reporter married to a PRI-affiliated Mexican Senator. The helicopter



ripped the roof off the community's school and wounded two children. International observers who stay in La Realidad's international civilian peace encampment to monitor military actions against the Zapatistas and deter human rights violations confronted De la Vega and asked her to identify herself. Two days later on her news show "Hablemos Claro" (Straight Talk) Ms. De la Vega claimed that the foreigners were giving the Zapatistas orders. In the days and weeks following this incident the government carried out a series of high profile expulsions of foreigners from Chiapas and dramatically increased the level of repression against international observers.

Maria Darlington from North Carolina was among the first to be expelled. She was followed by Tom Hansen, former director of Pastors for Peace and Robert Schweitzer. Tom Hansen's deportation began with his being kidnapped by unidentified Government agents; it included a stay in a shit-covered jail cell and ended with his being put on a flight to Miami despite a court order barring his deportation. Michel Henri Jean Chanteau, a French priest who had worked for 32 years in the municipality of Chenalhó, which includes the village of Actéal, was next. On March 12 Massimo Boldrini, an Italian photographer, was kidnapped by members of Los

Chinchulines, a paramilitary organization, who handed him over to the regular Army before he was finally released. On March 16 three more international observers were ordered to leave the country: Jennifer Pasquarela of the US, Claudia Meyer of Switzerland, and Helen Kopolnek of Germany.

The Mexican Government has justified a number of the expulsions on the basis that the people in question were acting as human rights observers while carrying tourist visas. At the same time they have made the already difficult process of obtaining an FM-3 visa (the kind used by Non-Governmental Organizations) effectively impossible for anyone going to Chiapas. The Mexican Government is now demanding that applicants for FM-3 visas provide a detailed itinerary including the names of everyone they intend to interview. Such a requirement makes any serious human rights investigation impossible. The government has also announced that they will now only grant visas to Non-Governmental Organizations recognized by the United Nations, a tiny fraction of the groups that work in Chiapas.

The campaign against foreigners has two objectives. The first is to play on the racist

continued on the next page

Killing CUNY

Continued from page 1

reaction to the latest attack on CUNY. A few years ago, when it was called SLAM! (Student Liberation Action Movement), members proposed a structure to make the coalition more democratic and efficient. Each campus would elect four delegates who could vote in the city-wide meetings. Each delegation had to have at least two women, and at least two people of color. The delegate structure was meant to cut down on honcho-ism and make the city-wide group accountable to the people actually doing work on the campuses. It was hoped that this would also limit the influence of the various opportunist sectarian organizations.

The SLAM! structure passed, but it never actually functioned, because most campuses couldn't get four people to a meeting, and decisions always ended up being made by one-person-one-vote like before. And on top of that, the sectarian left groups kept starting arguments opposing the idea of the structure which had been passed but not put into effect, calling it undemocratic. In a similar self-serving fashion, these same groups would argue that SLAM! was no longer a coalition but an organization of its own, because it had highly developed radical politics that went beyond the immediate crisis and built for struggles against workfare, police brutality, and in support of political prisoners. SLAM's politics already offered a vision of an alternative to the present oppressive system, so an organization (like the ISO or other Trotskyite groups) that hadn't proved itself through good, principled organizing work couldn't easily recruit people who were interested in revolutionary politics and saw no other option.

This year, activists who identify with SLAM! have decided to build a broader coalition with SLAM! as a group within that coalition. SLAM! is now a radical multi-racial caucus of predominantly women that is looking to recruit newer activists and further develop its revolutionary politics. The coalition has passed a proposal by SLAM! activists for a coordinating committee which now functions under a delegate structure similar to the original SLAM! structure. It is made up of two delegates from each college, which means that the meetings are relatively small, so that new activists from under-represented campuses find it easier to participate, and decisions are made more efficiently.

GIVING HELL TO THE TRUSTEES

The CUNY Coalition for Open Admissions has held five demonstrations this semester, in addition to educational events on various campuses. The first protest, on February 23, brought approximately a hundred people to CUNY Central Headquarters, where the

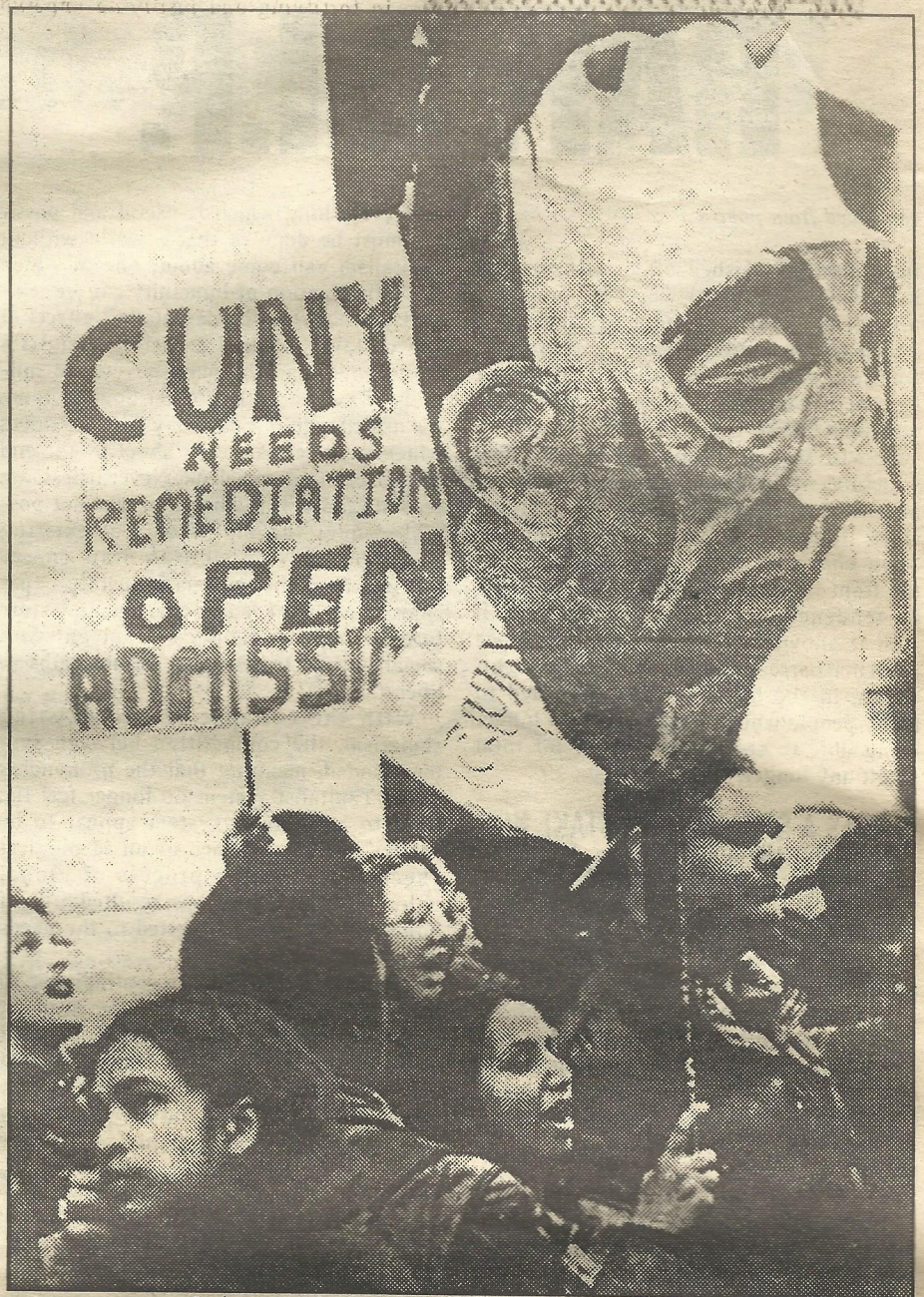
Board of Trustees was meeting. Although it was cold and the rain poured down, students kept up an energetic spirit and made rousing speeches. About twenty students got inside, and several denounced the Board members for dismantling open admissions. Two activists were arrested for leaping onto the Board table and shouting "No educational apartheid!" They were both tackled and dragged out. The meeting was then illegally closed to the public by Board Chair Anne Paolucci.

On March 19, students picketed Board Vice Chair Herman Badillo's law office. Badillo is the mayor's mouthpiece on "standards" at CUNY, and he has been criticizing open admissions for years. About 100 students demonstrated and then marched to Hunter College, after enjoying some fiery speeches, call-and-response chants, and shouts of "Shut 'em down!" whenever the next Board of Trustees meeting was mentioned. Needless to say, the police were not thrilled with the level of passionate anger and unity that they were seeing. On the way to Hunter, they attacked the marching students, claiming that the sound permit had been violated. Cops shoved protesters into the glass doors of a ritzy Upper East Side boutique and arrested five students. The rest of us reached Hunter College only to discover that a horde of police were waiting for the students to come outside, and that undercover officers had found their way onto campus to look for students who had been targeted for arrest during the march. Students managed to round up the undercover cops and kick them off campus.

Almost two hundred students gathered outside the Board of Trustees meeting on March 23. Many newly active students came to the rally and shared the spirit of united fury by making lots of noise for open admissions. Protesters celebrated our first victory when it was announced that a milder version of the proposal to end all remedial classes at the senior colleges had been defeated by the Board.

One month later, on April 27, over 800 students, faculty and community members protested outside the Trustees' meeting. Student leaders who had been recently trained in demonstration security by two former members of the Young Lords (a 1960's Puerto Rican revolutionary organization) maintained a high level of organization and kept the police from attacking the lively crowd. Inside, the Trustees voted to postpone the decision.

On Tuesday May 26, students, faculty, and community members crowded into the Board room and heckled Trustee Badillo as he announced his proposal, shouting, "Harvard has remediation!" "Yale has remediation!" The Trustees were still split on the issue, but Badillo knew that he now had enough votes to pass the proposal. As



Students at a February 23 demonstration with a puppet of Giuliani

Chairwoman Paolucci closed the meeting to the public, police arrested 20 demonstrators outside for blocking traffic: students crying with frustration and loss, professors in academic dress robes, and one state assembly-member.

By the time protesters returned from the precinct, the Board had voted to wipe out remediation at all of CUNY's four-year colleges. Students tried to get into the Board room; four more were arrested. Defenders of CUNY are now planning the next stage of the struggle to block the dismantling of open admissions.

TO BUILD A LASTING MOVEMENT

One of the most valuable lessons that CUNY student activists have learned over the past three years is that we need to build a real base of support on each campus - a base of students from diverse backgrounds who enjoy working together and

are committed to the struggle at CUNY in the long-term. Campus groups will only lose by trying to cut corners and focusing all their energy on getting people out to one off-campus rally each year. It is vital to ask ourselves how we are using each rally to build the group on campus itself, instead of thinking our end goal is simply to get a high turnout for the rally.

As tuition rises and financial aid is cut, students have to work longer hours to stay in school. We need to build a movement that is worth people's time - a movement that is rich in culture, both in the many musical, artistic, and historical traditions and languages that people bring with them to the movement, but also in the culture of resistance that we build. If we can create a student movement at CUNY that fulfills these human needs for people and inspires us to stick together and grow in the years to come, we will be much harder to defeat. ★

Mexico - Rumors of War

continued from the previous page

belief that the indigenous people are incapable of creating a movement as effective as the EZLN and therefore must be being manipulated by somebody. The second, and more obvious, purpose is to clear Chiapas of the inconvenient witnesses who have been able to focus the world's attention on the struggle there and to expose the lies of the government. This was effectively admitted when the Interior Ministry deported Father Chanteau because "he has publicly expressed that the massacre of Actéal was a government plan to destroy the bases of support for the Zapatistas." Repeating an obvious truth is in this manner transformed into the crime of interfering in the internal political affairs of Mexico.

SHOWDOWN?

It seems that the Mexican Government is preparing the ground for some sort of offensive against the EZLN. With its "peace initiatives" it is seeking to portray the Zapatistas as uncooperative. With its continued support for paramilitary operations it is trying to break the Zapatistas from their supporters. With its campaign against foreigners it is attempting to eliminate potential witnesses to whatever crimes it is planning. With its massive

weapons purchases and elite military training in the US it is preparing for war. And with all these things rumors of war spread like pink-eye in preschool. Accusations that the Mexican Government is paving the way for war are coming from many quarters and many forces are in motion to resist that drive.

The fourth Congress of the left-wing Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) issued a strong condemnation of the government's moves and then called on "members of the armed forces to not become involved in an irresponsible strategy of confrontation between Mexicans promoted by the governing group and its allies and to comply with article 129 of the constitution." Article 129 explicitly states that in times of peace, the military should be confined to military bases outside of populated areas. With the PRD's direct appeal to the rank and file of the armed forces over the heads of the PRI (if only for the army to remain neutral) the struggle over the San Andres Accords becomes an open struggle for state power between the PRI and the PRD. On its own the PRD doesn't have the power to impose its will. The question facing Mexico is whether other forces, ranging from the new independent union federations, to campesino organizations, to armed organizations like the EZLN and the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) see in this moment the same opportunity to strike against the PRI

and assert their own demands. There lies the potential to build real power to the people from below—in the urban barrios, the countryside, in the factories and on the campuses. For this reason revolutionaries around the world need to be watching Mexico.

Perhaps most important among the independent forces is the National Indigenous Congress, a broad umbrella of indigenous organizations from all across Mexico who have called for an "uprising for peace" in the form of a national indigenous march on Mexico City in opposition to the government's moves on April 10, Emiliano Zapata's birthday. While the Zapatistas have inspired broad sectors of Mexican civil society to support their demands and to struggle for themselves, that inspiration has been most powerful among Mexico's 56 indigenous ethnic groups. For them the Zapatista uprising and the promises of indigenous autonomy raised by the San Andres Accords clearly represent something worth fighting for. And the indigenous have little to lose by fighting.

Mexico has appeared on the brink of a major showdown more than once in the past four years; each time a nation-wide confrontation has failed to materialize. But previously the government has offered some sort of concession. They have held out the hope that the demands of the excluded would be heard primarily in their willingness to negoti-

EZLN
Communique

Navigating the Seas



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Words of the Zapatista National Liberation Army

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ate with the EZLN. The powers that be no longer seem willing to tolerate the continued presence of the EZLN as a major player on the national political stage. The question now? When will the long-suffering audience—Mexico's downtrodden majority—demand to be part of the show themselves. ★

Letters

"SO CALLED" JEWS

Greetings Comrades of L&R,

I do not see L+R often (I hope to be added to your subscription list); the January/February issue I was sent because you printed part of our interview with Laura Whitehorn, David Gilbert and me, Marilyn Buck - anti-imperialist political prisoners. Thank you for your solidarity and support for political prisoners by printing this piece. Hopefully the readers will find our history, observations and analysis useful to understand the past in order to build for a better future.

While reading L+R, I saw a letter from New Afrikan comrade Mangwiro A. Sadiki, imprisoned in Indiana. I agree with the brother's analysis that there is a deliberate program of genocide aimed at the Afrikan nation. It is up to our progressive and radical women and men who have lived white privilege to understand this history, and current reality to support this struggle to end colonialism and genocide.

Nevertheless I was struck uneasy by bro. Mangwiro's use of the term "so called Jews." Why "so called", comrade? I can only infer that you might doubt that a great majority of the victims of the Nazi death camps were Jewish? Or Jewishness is bestowed on some other group of people not massacred because of their religious and cultural heritage?

What do you mean?

Such a verbal formulation concerns me gravely it smacks of prejudice and distortion of the history of Jews as a people. On the one hand, white supremacist forces and Nazi-neo or otherwise, have issued declarations that there was no holocaust, no death camps where millions of Jews along with communists, gay people and Gypsies from Europe and Russia were systematically starved and worked to death and murdered en masse. On the other hand, there is a tendency to scapegoat Jewish people as the leaders of white supremacy and oppression of Afrikan peoples in the U.S. Likewise, many confuse Zionism and its genocide and racism with being Jewish. It is incumbent that we who are internationalist, anti-colonialist, anti-imperialists and militants of liberation and justice not to fall into such ideological traps. We must be clear-eyed, objective and materialist to analyze the issues and real-world contradictions. There is truth and reality, despite all the historical revisionism and rewriting going on. The evidence of deliberate genocide against Jewish peoples is real and concrete; the evidence of genocide against Afrikan peoples is real, concrete, and ongoing. One being real does not lesser one iota the reality and horror of the other.

To be clear: White supremacy and its role

in fortifying and justifying imperialism, colonial oppression and genocide was led by European Christians. Christianity was used to justify genocide, chattel slavery and torture from Africa to the Americas to Asia. Dumping this crime on Jews is a red herring, at best.

Would it not be more forward-moving and just to acknowledge the history of injustice and oppression and genocide wherever and however it occurred; understand that because one has been oppressed and has survived does not mean that in another historical one may become the oppressor or enjoy the privileges of the oppressor nation; and from there go forward with a strategy to end oppression and open the doors to liberation and justice. (I am reminded of a point the Vietnamese stressed during their war of national liberation against the US: The people of the U.S. were not the enemy; the system and the state were. However, whoever participated in that war with weapons raised received return fire, irregardless of class, national origin or religion and that those soldiers were there as cannon fodder.)

forward to liberation and justice,
Marilyn Buck
anti-imperialist political prisoner

SECTARIAN TOWARDS SIERRA

Dear editors,

The last issue of L&R contained an article by Scott from Los Angeles' Anti-Racist Action which presented a shallow and grossly inaccurate analysis of the Sierra Club's now recently won battle against the anti-immigrant Right.

The "more radical than thou" arrogance exhibited in the article reminded me of many sectarian-style rants except for the fact that the sectarian socialist groups usually do some research before attempting to smear another organization.

The article describes a protest by ARA-LA against the Sierra Club over a ballot initiative in their April mail-in election which called upon Sierra Club members to reverse the Club's long-standing neutral policy on immigration and instead advocate for a reduction in US immigration levels. The article falsely accuses the Sierra Club of "legitimizing" the faction that is sponsoring the proposal, and characterizes them as liberal sell-outs who "have always favored the recreational use of wild areas over other ecological concerns."

An even cursory investigation into the Sierra Club and its April election would have revealed some striking facts which contradict these claims. First, the entire Sierra Club board of directors not only actively opposed the anti-immigrant initiative (Alternative "A") but also put on the ballot a second initiative (Alternative "B") which condemned Alternative "A" and eventually won by a 20% margin! The decisive defeat of the anti-immigrant proposal may be a surprise to Scott, who seemed sure that the Sierra Club was full of racists who "cloak themselves" in positive imagery to "mainstream their [anti-immigrant] agenda."

The truth about proposition "A" is that it was sponsored by a number of racist, right-wing organizations existing outside the Sierra Club with clear white-supremacist connections. Scott makes a mere passing reference to only one of these organizations ("Population Environment Balance") and inaccurately refers to them as a "Washington, DC think tank." In fact, these groups solicited the very signatures that got the anti-immigrant proposition on the ballot. They sent out mass mailings to Sierra Club members to persuade them to vote for the anti-immigrant position, and they even lobbied non-members to join the Sierra Club in order to stack the vote.

At the time you printed Scott's article, 27 Sierra Club chapters were endorsing alternative "B" and not one of them supported alternative "A." It would not have been difficult to discover this fact. Also, dozens of Sierra Club leaders and the entire board of directors publicly denounced the anti-immigrant proposal and actively lobbied against it—and this is in total keeping with the Sierra Club's history. Only someone completely unfamiliar with the Sierra Club would believe that they are "one of the most conservative environmental groups." As but one example of their past campaigns, in 1996 the Sierra Club helped organize a lobbying effort in California calling on legislators to stop scapegoating immigrants and instead "support real environmental solu-



tions like water and energy efficiency measures, improved public transportation, and the phase out of dangerous chemical poisons such as the pesticide methyl bromide." Methyl bromide, incidentally, affects disproportionate number of immigrant farm workers.

The article also claims that the Sierra Club supported the racist Immigration Act of 1924, which is simply not true. Scott is probably confusing the Sierra Club with a newly formed group calling themselves Sierrans for US Population Stabilization (SUSPS). SUSPS sent out a mass mailing in January to all Sierra Club members advocating a return to pre-1965 levels of immigration which were established by the overtly racist Immigration Act of 1924.

SUSPS, however, is composed of a small minority within the Sierra Club and is likely supported by the same white-supremacist organizations who attempted to pass the defeated anti-immigrant proposal.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Scott imagined the Sierra Club to be merely compromising NIMBY sell-outs is that he couldn't imagine an anti-immigrant proposition getting on the ballot in an even semi-progressive organization. (ARA would never be voting on such a thing, right?) This is understandable if one is used to working in small consensus-based groups. But the Sierra Club is an organization with over half-a-million members, and in order to operate democratically they use a membership voting structure—and an extremely democratic one at that! For example, it takes merely 1,300 member signatures to get ANYTHING on the ballot. One person could collect that many signatures in a few months. Ironically, it is this democratic structure that allowed outside groups to get the anti-immigrant proposal on the ballot. If this kind of open democratic system is worthy of any criticism, it certainly is not because it isn't radical enough. Consider the simple fact that the Sierra Club votes in their board through a membership-wide election, whereas most other "mainstream" environmental organizations use an appointment process where the outgoing board members choose their successors. Rather than ignorantly accusing them of being conservative just because they are large and "mainstream," anarchists should site the Sierra Club as a model for a large-scale, decentralized, organizational

structure. At their meetings, their members are encouraged to vote, nor that they always take the most radical stance on every issue. However, the fact that the anti-immigrant proposal lost and that none of the board candidates who ran on an anti-immigrant platform won during the recent election is proof that the Club is far from conservative. It's also a good argument against the authoritarian-socialist claim that too much democracy favors reactionary causes. What is worse is that I actually submitted an article for the same issue of L&R explaining the whole topic in great detail (attached below) which you rejected in favor of the ARA article! I understand that the ARA article described an action (even if they chose the wrong target) whereas mine was merely an informative article. Yet even if you chose not to print my submission, a rough read of it should have revealed the glaring inaccuracies of the ARA piece (or at least called into question the correctness of Scott's analysis).

I have been active in anarchist politics for over a decade, and have greatly respected the work of both ARA and Love and Rage during this time. One thing I value most about anarchist organizing principles is its emphasis on building alliances and working in coalitions with other progressive (but perhaps less radical) organizations.

Anarchists are not sectarians. It is therefore surprising and sad to encounter the same "we're more radical than them" arrogance in *Love and Rage* that is usually found in the Spartacist League's *Workers Vanguard*. Running a falsely denunciatory article against the Sierra Club has only assisted the racist right in their efforts to drive a wedge between radical social justice activists and environmentalists, including radical environmentalists in the Sierra Club.

In Struggle,
Emanuel Sferios, Berkeley, CA

The End

A LOOK AT LENINISM

A Look at Leninism is a book by Ron Taber that exposes the authoritarian core of Leninism. Taber's critique is a valuable weapon in the hand of all revolutionary anti-authoritarians. Originally written as a series of articles, **A Look at Leninism** introduces the reader to the key concepts of Leninism and then demolishes the claims of Leninism as an ideology of liberation.

A Look at Leninism was the declaration of Taber's complete break with Leninism, and set the stage for his subsequent series of articles in *Love & Rage* critiquing Marxism.

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