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CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective Humbly Requests Clearance to Resume Activity

CrimethInc.

November 9, 2007

*submitted by CWC supernumerary B. Traven, on behalf of the
Far East cell*

Inveterate comrades and enemies—

It's been a full three years since our last outlandishly ambitious project, and you may be wondering what became of us. Sure, we started a magazine and did a couple Green Scare benefit projects, but that hardly compares to the high-water mark of our activity in the past. Have we finally accepted that we will not change the world? Are we out of ideas?

We're excited to report that over the past year, while we seemed to be slowing down, we were actually preparing a new wave of activity—which will commence at the end of this month with the publication of our next book. The projects we are about to debut are by far our most ambitious yet... but first, let's discuss what happened last time we initiated a wave of activity.

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Remember the bitter and messy controversies of 2001–2003? Every CrimethInc. project that appeared was greeted by thoughtless accolades and torrents of abuse. CrimethInc. was a herd of trust fund brats bent on draining all content from the anarchist movement, an army of wastrels wrecking radical institutions from one coast to the other, a bunch of street thugs determined to endanger peaceful protesters, a single sexist middle class white boy who had apparently never heard the word “privilege” before. The defenses this slander provoked from the party faithful were often just as off-base. All you had to do was say the word “dumpster” and the aspersions commenced flying.

There are several ways to interpret all this negativity. Maybe it was the inevitable turn to infighting that followed the decline of the anticapitalist movement, or the consequence of a new influx of inexperienced participants into the anarchist struggle, or backlash from stodgy veterans who feared they were being outshined. Perhaps it’s inevitable that those who offer themselves to the public as a projection screen receive every kind of unconstructive criticism and misdirected praise.

With the benefit of hindsight, it was a tempest in a teapot—a waste of energy. Those who wished to pull us kicking and screaming from the stage of history only made us more notorious; people who had much more important things to do were dragged into the fray; and we, who wished to use all our time and creativity to contest hierarchy, squandered them defending ourselves from fellow would-be revolutionaries. Internal critique and debate are essential to building communities of resistance, but name-calling and misinformation are equally disabling.

Let’s hope it’s easier to discuss this now that the smoke has cleared and tempers have cooled. Stalwarts who were as loath to accept us into the anarchist fold as we were to join it have now become our friends; others are at least resigned to putting up with us. We’ve learned a great deal, no thanks to all that

bidden things; nothing is more seductive than transgression. The class war anarchists in question, doubly bound by the repressive property laws of capitalist society and the moral and theoretical prescriptions of their organization, could not help but be drawn to *Evasion*—just as the dropout who had helped publish it regarded it as utterly mundane. Because they never dealt with the political implications of their fascination with the book, their lives remained comically divided into competing sectors: permissible versus impermissible, responsible versus pleasurable, public versus private.

Such divisions are redolent of the Protestant morality that has propped up capitalism for so long. If the class warriors had been able to affirm the excitement they experienced in reading *Evasion* and find ways to make their political work similarly seductive to others, would that not have been better for everyone? Far be it from us to argue that embracing CrimethInc. literature is the solution to every class war anarchist’s difficulties—the point is simply that it doesn’t pay to heap up prohibitions and antagonisms. We would like to see more overcoming of divisions in the anarchist community generally, in hopes that it will help us ultimately bring down capitalism and Protestant morality alike. It is in that spirit that we initiate our new round of activity.

The following is a true story, though you'll have to take our word for it as we are not authorized to name the protagonists. A certain dedicated class war anarchist, who distinguished himself in local organizing and mass mobilizations around the turn of the century, was among that era's most outspoken critics of CrimethInc. projects. In his chapter of a well-known anarchist federation, he told his comrades that it was up to them to fight CrimethInc. for the future of the anarchist movement.

Years later, he admitted to one of us that he'd secretly obtained a copy of *Evasion* when it was published in book form and, though he considered it politically execrable, became obsessed with it. He'd bought it to study the propaganda of the enemies of the working class, but it turned out it was one of the most thrilling action stories he'd ever read! Worse yet, he passed it around to friends, and they all had similar reactions—they became a sort of secret reading group, since they had to hide their passion for the book from their anarcho-communist comrades. At one point they even got themselves into a messy situation trying to imitate the narrator of the book, when they attempted a heist from a grocery store without abiding by any of the security tips that pervade CrimethInc. literature.

The ex-worker to whom all this was confided found it perplexing, to say the least. In his view, *Evasion* was not particularly well-written or exciting; the humor compensated for the lack of plot and character development, but the subject matter was positively banal. The point of printing it had been to undermine materialism and timidity in a readership infected with bourgeois values, not to produce a great work of literature—let alone offer a universal model for anarchist struggle, as the anti-CrimethInc. camp framed things. The class war anarchist's urgent inquiries as to when an *Evasion* sequel might be published were amusing—wasn't this the same person who had decried the book with such vitriol?

This is a funny anecdote, but at second glance it reads like heavy-handed allegory. Human beings are attracted to for-

drama, and perhaps everyone else has, too. Who knows what drama awaits us ahead—such is our doom, having chosen this path. But while there's still time, here's one more effort to clarify our basic goals, lest our new efforts again be mistaken as attempts to hijack The Anarchist Movement or glorify ourselves at everyone else's expense.

Our essential project is to nurture anti-authoritarian consciousness and desires outside the traditional sites of workplace organizing and identity politics. This does not mean we consider those sites unimportant, or that we wish for everyone to prioritize the sites we have chosen based on our own specific circumstances and means. We're not convinced we have the most or only effective approach; on the contrary, we are grateful others are undertaking other experiments in other settings—it frees us to focus on the ones we've chosen.

If we have any criticism to offer our comrades, it is only that we seem to have been so much more successful in our context than some of them have in theirs. This is strange, given that other contexts should lend themselves to a hundred times more activity than ours does—we're hardly reaching every potential dropout and rioter, but we fear we are doing better at this than others are at spreading anarchist commitments to the entire working class. We leave it to them to sort out how to improve their efforts, and hope our modest achievements can spur them to more impressive ones.

But this is not a contest. If you feel what we're doing is a mistaken use of our apparently inexhaustible energies, please offer useful criticism, while trusting that we're best situated to know what makes sense for us. We are revolutionary anarchists determined to bring about the seizure of the means of production and the abolition of all hierarchy, not bourgeois "lifestylists" as our foes have disingenuously charged. Friendly, constructive criticism will greatly aid us in being better allies to others who desire the same things. The best way to approach this is by making suggestions as to how we could better work

towards our professed goals that take into account our capabilities and preferences.

The constructive critiques we've received thus far have been instrumental in improving our efforts. Unfortunately, there are still many things we would like to focus on that we are not yet equipped to do justice to; if we remain silent on some topics, it is generally because we feel others are doing a better job than we could. We ask that comrades interpret the many glaring absences in our activities simply as endorsements of others' efforts—and work to make up for our omissions where they see fit.

But what if you're the sort of critic who has nothing constructive to offer? In that case, you're welcome to ignore us—if you really think we are a scourge that must be eradicated, don't give us free publicity. If you absolutely can't resist stooping to attacks, please don't sic novices on us who can neither read nor spell, who build and tear apart straw men the way others play with toy soldiers. If such screeds must be written, we request the task be entrusted to Wayne Price from NEFAC, whose intelligent analyses have impressed us—though Wayne obviously has better things to do, as all of you should.

It might also be a good idea to double-check the accuracy of statements before printing them—when making claims about the demographics and nationalities involved in CrimethInc. activity, for example. It beggars belief that people who cannot even be troubled to do a Google search feel entitled to brush off not only the efforts of hundreds around the world, but also the possibility that they even exist—in the course of purporting to represent their interests, no less!

For our part, we don't aim to “represent” anyone. We understand that, given our disproportionate access to the media, many would like to see us tell their stories or focus on their chosen issues, but we maintain that it would be a mistake to saddle any publisher with the responsibility of even-handedly representing the entire anarchist milieu. To take on this task

would only trap us in a role we could not possibly fill—that no one could ever fill, if our critique of representational politics is correct—and effectively prevent us from filling any other role, as well. We are anarchists—we believe in self-determination, not representation, and the only way to secure that for all is to radically decentralize the means of expression. This demands the abolition of mass media as we know it, including most of the formats we have used thus far—not collectives like ours becoming mediators that choose who gets to speak and for how long. In the meantime, we renew our offer to assist anyone with the process of self-publishing.

Likewise, we're not interested in attempting to capture reality—we're not theorists who think we've worked out The Truth and have to explain it to everyone else. As far as we're concerned, such a thing is neither possible nor desirable, and purporting to do so only entraps a person in endless debates with subscribers to other Truths. Anarchist theory as a cockfight with our critiques as extensions of our egos does not interest us. That kind of ideological sparring doesn't seem to aid the participants in bringing about their own liberation—unless reactionaries are correct that one can recognize a zone of freedom by the pointless internecine warfare going on within it. Worst of all, it tends to reduce the discussion of anarchist possibilities to private grudge matches carried out in an inaccessibly abstruse jargon few can—or desire to—understand.

Our sole aim, our *raison d'être*, is to create situations that have liberatory potential. That is the purpose of all the books and posters and convergences. In and of themselves, they are worthless, irrelevant—but if they enable people to live moments of freedom, whether individually for instants or together over the course of decades, then we have succeeded. We ask to be judged by this criterion alone.

Appendix: *Evasion's* Biggest Fan