

# **Anarchist Squatting and Land Use in the West**

**Direct Action and the Critique of Real Estate**

Anders Corr

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# Introduction

'Squats' are growing as a form of resistance within the anarchist community. In many North American and in most major cities of Europe, anarchists see squatting as a practical way of subverting current dominative constructs of real estate while at the same time creating a space for the growth of community forms which prefigure the sought-for anarchist utopia. This current activity continues an anarchist project against spatial property, that is, the commodification of land and housing, over the last several centuries which have included anarcho-agrarian occupations of land, agrarian uprisings, and rent strikes.

The basic societal construct which anarchist squatting challenges is the ownership of land. Land is the ground upon which we walk, the element from which our food grows, and the object for which generations of anarchists have struggled and died. Land is essential to survival, for every moment that we live we rely on its presence. A 1985 *Green Anarchist* editorial indicates the importance which anarchists place on the reorganization of dominative land tenure:

The land is the source of all wealth, the source of all freedom and we want back the land. Without land we are condemned to the servility of employment to earn the necessities of our life; we are condemned to Blind Obedience legally implicit in all job contracts; without land our small caring communities are destroyed; without land we can never be self-sufficient; without land we must doff our caps to the landowners and bosses. Without land there can be no freedom. (8)

From the seventeenth century Diggers to squatters in New York City today, land has occupied a central position in anarchist ideology and praxis. In Noam Chomsky's recent film *Manufacturing Consent*, for example, he mentions the need for a movement that challenges the distribution of resources, pointing to feminist and civil rights movement which has made strong social change. An important area which is not sufficiently addressed, according to Chomsky, is the distribution of natural resources. The number of anarchists who have concentrated on land tenure are many. Most of Joshua K. Ingalls' (1816–1898) anarchist activity in North America revolved around land and Charles Fowlers' (1851–1889) Kansas City paper *The Sun* committed a significant proportion of its space to the inequitable distribution of land (Reichert 509–512). Several anarchist books and journal issues are solely devoted to land issues, squatting, or housing. George Woodcock's *New Life to the Land*, written in World War II England, calls for autarchy in the production of food, saying that this would contradict the domestic food deficit needed to balance industrial capitalist exports of manufactured goods. Revolutionary societies, he maintains, must be self-sufficient in that they will be faced with economic boycott by remaining capitalist powers, a theory born out by the economic blockades of Cuba and Nicaragua by the United States. He goes on to outline a system of federated agricultural collectives doubtless patterned on Spain's anarchist collectives of a few years earlier, and ends by calling for action in the realms of 'pan-occupation,' rent strikes, boycotts of the wartime centralized marketing organization and large capitalist farmers, and the organization of mutual-aid societies. Colin Ward's books on housing promote user-control and development. "The Land" issue of London's *Anarchy* (7/64) makes an initial stab at what anar-

chists think about land in the introduction, and the articles cover agriculture, soil conservation, and resistance to eviction. The "Use of Land" issue of *The Raven* (No. 17, 1992) covers matters of property and expropriation, intentional communities, the Spanish collectives, the land question in nineteenth century English politics, the right to communal recreational paths through private property, and the nineteenth century radical land politics, environmentalism, and land war in Scotland. Finally, *Green Anarchist's* "Land Issue" (1993), covers radical environmental actions, inequitable land distribution, the history and politics of land in Britain, and the compatibility of property and land.

Books on anarchist squatting abound, including Ron Bailey's *The Squatters*, which gives a history of squatting in England and outlines the London squatter scene which he took part in during the 1960s. New Anarchist Review's *Ideal Home* is a 'how to' book on squatting in London for the 1980s. Hooligan Press' *Squatting in West Berlin* provides pictorial as well as textual history of an extremely militant squatter struggle during the 1980s. Two issues to date of Shadow Press' *Squatter Comics* feature cartoonists' vision of the squatter scene of New York's Lower East Side, and the Hackney Community Defense Associations' pamphlet "Squats 'n' Cops" covers some of London's squatter struggles in 1993.

It is not surprising that anarchists are concerned with land issues given that a plethora of problems facing them are caused, at least in part, by inaccessibility to land. Many anarchists walk the line between homelessness and squatting. Without land on which to house themselves or even grow gardens, many are forced to prostrate themselves before an employer for their livelihood. Depending upon a person's sex, race, international location, and class, people are accorded differential access to land (Corr forthcoming 1996). Many, especially in the third world, are plagued with malnutrition. Eviction of individuals and entire communities engenders severe distress and cultural destruction.

Because of the growing importance of land and housing among anarchists, the following is an attempt to compile anarchist literature, current practice, and pertinent non-anarchist literature to form an exposition of anarchist philosophy regarding land and housing.

# Critique of Land and Housing Ownership

An easy way of understanding anarchist land and housing direct action is to examine the critique which forms its basis. Egalitarianism is a foundational component of an anarchist critique of land ownership. Once society is ready to struggle for equality, the ownership of land is doomed to dismissal. “Land ownership is an injustice,” states Ana, an anarchist squatter in Mexico, “because there is maldistribution of land instituted against the will of the people.” (Ana and Gustavo 1) Ana’s impression is congruent with existing studies on the distribution of land. Of all private land in the world, nearly three quarters is controlled by just 2.5% of all landowners (NI 11/87). An average of 71.6% of rural households in Africa, Latin America, the Near East and the Far East (excluding China) are landless or near landless (Sinha 16).

These statistics are commonly presented as if top-heavy land ownership patterns are unique to the third world, when in fact similar statistics exist for North America and Western Europe. In England 1% of the population owns 75% of the land and 30% is owned by 1,700 individuals – of whom 300 are peers and 700 members of old families of the landed gentry. The 400 richest individuals in the country own 4.4 million acres between them and 103 of them are members of the aristocracy. In 1974 33% of Portuguese families lived in shantytowns or houses with more than one family. For the working class, rent accounted for 40% of the family budget in the Lisbon area (Mailer 204). “The general pattern of large-scale land tenure has changed little in the last few centuries,” writes Francis Reed, “what have been sacrificed are the small proprietor and the Common Rights of the majority, in the cause of Empire and enormous gains for the few.” (30)

Statistics and scholarship on the distribution of land within the United States also reveals a dramatic concentration of wealth and widespread impoverishment. According to the publication Geodata (Hartzok 2), 3% of the United States population owns 95% of all U.S. private land. 568 companies control 301.7 million acres of U.S. land, which is more than 22% of all the nation’s private land. Totaling up the worldwide land interest of these same companies, their holdings consist of a total area larger than that of Europe – almost 2 billion acres. International Paper for example, the largest U.S. landowner, controls 8 million U.S. acres and 20 million worldwide, roughly two-thirds the size of England (Riker 43). The bottom 78% of U.S. landowners own only 3% of private land, and when taking into account inter-familial hierarchy, 80% of U.S. residents own no land at all (Lewis 1980). Excepting the 1930s depression, homelessness is greater in the early 1990s than at any other time in U.S. history. The National Union of the Homeless estimated that there are from three to five million homeless people in the United States, and social service agencies and local governments claim that the number is growing (Aulette 253) The situation seems to be worsening as the poor lose land to the rich. Geisler points out that “real estate constitutes 55 percent of the total net worth of all U.S. households (up from 48% in 1963) and the share of all real estate held by the nonrich is falling over time. The shares held by the rich (top 10 percent of households in wealth terms) and the very rich (top 1%) are increasing ... Not only is real estate highly concentrated, but it constitutes a major wellspring of future wealth, an inauspicious situation for the poor and near poor.” (forthcoming in Geisler, 1995)

The above U.S. statistics illustrate the distribution of land held privately. Land owned by the U.S. government, 42% of the national land mass, largely benefits middle and upper class citizens as well. Geisler points out that public land policy routinely subsidizes the wealthy through “one sided access to timber, grazing, water and mineral rights for well-endowed interest groups, lucrative commercial concessions to US and foreign corporations, and private recreational complexes on or near national parks, forests and seashores.” Geisler maintains that land is controlled for the advantage of the rich on a governmental level through zoning and land use planning. “Through much of the current century, those in power have used land use control to benefit themselves and to advance their plans for growth or no growth.” The losers in this equation are invariably people of color and low-income communities.

## Eviction

In order to enforce this inequity, anarchists note, absentee landowners evict those who cannot pay for the land they need to grow food, do business, or construct shelter. Forced eviction of the poor from land or space they desperately need is repeated over and over throughout the centuries in communities across the globe. Writes Shelley in *The Mask of Anarchy*:

Asses, swine, have litter spread,  
And with fitting food are fed,  
All things have a home but one, —  
Thou, Oh Englishman hast none! (Anarchy 23: 9)

The pain of eviction experienced by communities in early anarchist history continues today. Philadelphia anarchist Aisha tells of her experience being evicted by a landlord:

At first he said I couldn't use the phone anymore. Then he kept yelling at me for leaving the lights on. I used to toast bagels in the oven. I was really dumb, I used to turn the oven to 400 degrees, put a bagel in and forget. I did that one day and he said I had to get out. Where can you find a place to live if you make fifty dollars a week? My last week there I was already evicted, he said I could stay one more week. My last day he said get out. I toasted a bagel again that day, forgot and left the oven on. He called the cops, and told them that I had turned on the gas and was trying to kill him. I was downstairs and these cops came in with a flashlight and they said 'Are you Aisha --? We hear you are turning the gas on ...' They were cool but they threw me out immediately. I had to give them back my keys. To get my stuff out of the house I had to have a police escort. I had to call the cops to come and get my stuff out of the house when I was ready to move. This lead into my next squat. (personal interview)

As would have been the case if Aisha did not join a squat, many recent evictees become homeless when they cannot find housing. Anarcho-punk band A.P.P.L.E. sings the “Shantytown Blues (Homelessness)” in a 1987 45 release:

See a man lying in the street  
He has no home  
He lives in the streets  
Asking passing people  
what they could spare?  
But they don't reply  
they only stare  
And I ask you  
Why we let this be?  
"Cause it doesn't concern me"  
Living in a park  
Living in a box  
Living in the subway  
Can you close your eyes  
so you just don't see  
they are human beings  
just like you and me?  
And I ask you  
Why you do not see?  
"Cause it doesn't concern me"  
Another Shantytown  
rises from the ground  
Has the great state forgotten?  
Or is it that the state  
just doesn't care?  
A sensitive fascist  
is very rare  
Ask the state  
why they let this be?  
"Cause it doesn't concern me"

The essence of eviction is the dispossession of a user by someone more powerful than they through the use or threat of force. According to anarchist philosophy, eviction wastes human life and energy when the user/evictee has less access to resources than the evictor. Flora Park in Hamburg, Germany was designed and tended by squatters and autonome in an abandoned



construction site. “It took a lot of work but the results were worth it,” according to one participant. “All kinds of people went into the park each day to relax, communicate, etc.” (PE early 1992) In the summer of 1991, it took a small battle to evict the squatters:

Altogether 12 demonstrators and six cops were injured that morning. Directly after we were kicked out of the park the bulldozers arrived and turned the park back into a bomb crater ... In the afternoon 1500 people made a march to protest the closing of the park. A huge fence was built around the back of the Flora and special national police arrived to protect the construction site. (PE early 1992)

Eviction occurs on the macro level as well. The process of city-wide gentrification is particularly widespread, as middle class, and then rich communities displace lower-class neighborhoods. *Midnight Notes* (Fall 1990) illustrates this process in an almost war-like cartographical representation of bank expansion in Zurich (see figure 1). Indeed, international wars are often the conflict between groups of people vying for control over land and natural resources. The conflicts between Israel and Palestine, British control of Irish territory, the Western invasion of Kuwait and Iraq and the United States invasion of Panama were largely fought to control natural resources and the populations dependent upon them. These are the evictions that North Americans see in the media. What do we not see? According to Ed Emory,

The point I would make is that the Palestinians, when they are driven from their land, have world support and solidarity. But the Egyptian farm labourer who is driven from his land, driven away from his family, driven to other countries, has no face. He just moves, as part of that faceless mass of millions who are uprooted by economic imperatives. It's almost as if he doesn't exist. He doesn't make history, or make culture, or leave his name in lights. His archaeological remains in a few hundred years time will be virtually nothing – just bones and rags. But without him nothing would be built, nothing made. He, and millions like him, from every nationality. (Emory 29)

## **Cultural Destruction**

When eviction occurs on a community level, as for example in the highlands of Scotland, the Sanrizuka airport development in Japan (AM 1977), Native American societies, and gentrification, individuals within those communities are dispersed. Adam Bergman points to gentrification as a factor in the Los Angeles riots of 1991:

The hispanic community near Vermont was forcibly pushed to the East to create Korea-town. The 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Promenade in Santa Monica, the new hangout of Westside liberal yuppies, was created after small hispanic stores were bought out and the homeless were kicked out. In Venice and Oakwood artists and minorities are forced out of their homes and business by yuppies and developers who come in and raise property values and gentrify the area. (7)

Culture inheres in the people; when they are uprooted en masse by eviction, the reinforcement of culture provided by community is destroyed, a process which anarchists have long-recognized.

The first three stanzas of punk lyricist Jello Biafra's song "That's Progress," on the *Last Scream of the Missing Neighbors* album, describes the loss of culture when long-term residents are evicted to make way for affluence, and gives insight into the critical consciousness of urban punks:

Scuse me  
Pardon my greed  
You're evicted, time to leave  
Don't matter if your family's lived here 30 years  
We're tripling the rent  
Times up, the sheriff's here  
Too bad for you if you freeze out in the street  
The croissant and cookie palace  
Downstairs will symbolize  
The old neighborhood whose soul has slowly died  
Been gentrified

The fight to retain land and thereby protect culture is a concept championed by indigenous resistance to the expropriation of their lands. Voice of the early 1970s Chicano movement El Grito del Norte states in an editorial "Their struggle is not for what the white man calls 'property,' 'real estate,' but for the land as part of a whole way of living and relating to other human beings." (GN 12/7/70). Aboriginal Australian Robert Kelly similarly associates land with culture:

Land provides my physical needs and my spiritual nurture. It is a regeneration of stories. New stories are sung from contemplation of the land. Stories are handed from parent to child, and are phrased in the language of the sacred place. When we lose a sacred place, we lose our past, our ancestry, our memory. In a very real, almost final sense, we lose ourselves. (NI 11/87)

In agreement with these and other indigenous understandings, some anarchists have also recognized the connection between land and culture. In their position on land tenure, Green Anarchy states:

The land is not only the provider of the necessities of life. It is the stronghold of the small caring community. Without land the community dies, to be replaced by the ersatz care of the welfare state. (5/85)

Likewise, p.m. writes in connection with Zurich struggles that mass evictions are an attempt by landlord and government interests to repress radical culture:

Strength comes from the land, from touchable history, from old and new places and possibilities of cultural exchange, from diversity, from "strangeness," and from certain "idiotic" fantasies of being somebody special. All these factors are lacking in newly constructed, rationalized, de-historicized projects in the suburbs and even

more in areas of single family houses. This process is not a pure accident of the expansion of the city, but also an implicit plan of capital to disarm the proletariat (be it “rich” or “poor”). So from the point of view of struggles, land is much more than just housing, it is part of our identity. Historical, mythical, traditional and magical elements are essential and you still don’t have to lose your wits because of this. (p.m. 79)

English anarchists similarly trace the destruction of positive English cultures to invasive landownership. By the sacrifice of the small proprietor and common lands to a landed aristocracy, writes Francis Reed, “much of the indigenous culture of England was destroyed ... What Orwell described as the ‘restless, cultureless life’ of light industry and arterial roads, has become the fantasy world of Theme Parks, ‘Heritage Experiences,’ gambling arcades and video tape, used to block the pain of separation from the intimate connection between land and culture.” (30–31)

As in Zurich, cultural destruction in the Lower East Side of New York City is not only incidental to land ownership, but a concentrated effort by developers, landowners and government to diffuse the culture of insurrection. A Latino squatter, excommunicated Catholic priest and anarchist notes that:

The Mayor has a panel on the parks called the Blue Ribbon Panel on the Parks and the Constitution. It is an attempt to do the necessary background work as far as clearing the land for gentrification. Some ruling class type names, Cyrus Vance for example, heading it up. I can show you the thing. And they’re studying questions around curfews, part of the same effort of spatially deconcentrating the cities, of depopulating the cities of people who would pose a threat — a revolutionary threat to their control. (MN Fall 1990)

## Unemployment

Aiding in the destruction of radical cultures according to anarchists, landed property creates unemployment because land is one of two requirements for productive work. Everything, including capital, is made possible by labor and land. If one does not have access to land, one does not have access to the material necessary to produce. This creates a ‘reserve army’ of labor according to one of the useful Marxist theories, an unemployment that is absolutely essential to capitalist production in that it provides a variable proportion of the labor force that may be employed when capital needs labor and fired when the need declines (Dixon et al 50). Constant unemployment creates competition and individualism between workers, who must vie for the pleasure of employers. Thus, the dispossession from land, which is an important aspect of the means of production, is a crucial element to unemployment, competition, and the support of capital’s labor needs. In the newly industrialized world, traditional land-based employment remain widespread. “Even though the American economy is often characterized as service-based and ‘post-industrial,’ land remains a productive resource and source of employment,” writes Geisler. “In addition to the construction of real estate, a key sector of the economy, lobbyists for the timber industry and for agribusiness often draw attention to the fact that the occupations indirectly dependent on their respective land bases are extensive. The same could be said for mining, tourism and recreation sectors. Many additional jobs directly tied to the land in support of the U.S. economy are invisible

because they are abroad, relocated there to reduce domestic labor costs.” (forthcoming in Geisler 1995)

The connection between landed property and unemployment is widely recognized by radical agricultural groups. The Portuguese Red Committee of Alentejo (non-partisan Marxists) representing 1,000 workers, writes in November 1974: “The rich say we can’t all be full-time because there isn’t work all the year round. But whose fault is that? Who is it who keeps thousands of hectares in poor condition, just so they can go and hunt? Who puts fierce bulls to graze, where wheat should be planted?” (Mailer 159) In 1974 Leftist Portuguese military officers orchestrated a successful coup and instituted many positive reforms. Two years after redistribution of land, acreage under cultivation almost tripled in Alentejo, and many new jobs were created in an area previously plagued with chronic unemployment. The number of people employed in agriculture jumped fourfold after land reform (Lappé 1984: 200).

## Poverty

The condition which follows unemployment and landlessness is poverty and hunger. Writing in the early 1940s, Gerald Brenan notes in *The Spanish Labyrinth* that the primary demand of Spanish anarchists is to defeat hunger and unemployment by the cultivation of large idle agricultural tracts:

For the advantages of communal ownership of land are enormous. Under present conditions one has agricultural laborers dying of hunger on estates where large tracts of corn-growing land lie fallow because it does not pay to cultivate them. If the villagers could cultivate their land collectively, using modern machinery, they could feed themselves and sell the surplus. Hunger would disappear and, without injury to the State, their anarchist ideology, or all that matters to them of it, would be satisfied ... (quoted in Mintz 7)

But today the option Brenan speaks of, communal ownership of land, is barred by the landowners, forcing the unemployed to work for low wages under grueling conditions in order to survive; the only other options being charity or starvation. Where there is no charity, millions are doomed to a slow death from lack of food and shelter. Approximately 60,000 people die each day of hunger or hunger related disease (Oxfam America). That is two people every three seconds. Tolstoy similarly points to a root cause of this hunger as land deprivation. “With whomsoever one talks, all complain of their want and all similarly from one side or another come back to the sole reason,” he writes. “There is insufficient bread, and bread is insufficient because there is no land.” (1920) Most hunger-related deaths are needless in a society where the poor are denied access to the abundant land and food-producing resources available. Francis Moore Lappé of Food First writes:

Hunger exists in the face of plenty; therein lies the outrage. Right now the earth is producing more than enough to nourish every human being, both on a global level and even within the very countries we all associate with hunger and starvation. (1982: 7)

The current distribution of land and the construct of ownership is the way in which this plentiful supply of food is maldistributed. When I was in close proximity to the hungry in Kenya, a country burdened by exceedingly high land concentration, it became obvious that land ownership creates a disparity of wealth, but it is the creation of an all-encompassing economic inequality between the landowners and the landless that is land ownership's *raison d'être*. Maldistribution of land engenders economic inequity by channeling rents from the poor to the landowners and a ready labor force (the unemployed) to capitalists. Even if a landless person buys a piece of land they often have to mortgage in order to afford it and are little better off than the renter.

The fear induced among employers by the prospect of giving the unemployed land is evident in the statement by an 1842 English committee on the 'Labouring Poor (Allotments of Land).' They recommended that allotments to the laborer "should not become an inducement to neglect his usual paid labour." (Reed, F. 19) In the dynamic between wage labor and the concentration of land employers and anarchists tend to agree. Punk band Citizen Fish's song "Big Big House" similarly alludes to the impetus to work for all who find themselves landless:

Picture a scene and pull it apart  
Who built this house at the very start?  
Who was forced to work for some food in their hand  
And some space in a corner of the master's land?

The allusion to slavery by Citizen Fish in describing land and housing relations is a telling example of anarchist attitudes. Aisha, who was renting a room at the time I interviewed her, reminisces on her squatting experience and the way in which renting forces her to work:

When I squatted I thought I could never pay rent. I compared it to taking money and throwing it out the window. Spending all this time to get money and handing it over to someone for a place to stay when you can break into a building. Every once in a while I stop and realize that I am paying two or three thousand dollars a year for a place to stay. That seems pretty silly. (Aisha 13)

The entire mass of non-landowning peoples, or those who own mortgaged land (easily two-thirds of the world, if not more) pay, at nearly every moment of their lives, for the simple right to exist on the spot upon which they find themselves. When you sleep you pay rent to your landlord, when you are in a café you pay in heightened coffee prices due to the merchants' and farmers' rent, you even pay when you eat broccoli. Unless you are able to resist, you pay at every moment of your life, but not only that, you pay in decreased wages due to the landowners' cut of the total intake of your work. Add these cuts together and the laborers' real wages decrease drastically (Morris 153; Hellinger 35). They charge us coming in and going out. We are over a barrel and they are emptying our pockets at every moment. And then a friend tells me he has a good landlord, because the rent is lower than market value. Yes, you may, relatively speaking, but your landowner is the great-great grandchild of the good master who never whipped his slaves on Sunday. On the subject of 'good' landlords, Ybarra states:

Yes, an exceptional person here and there manages to retain a bit of decency despite acting as a landlord, but even in the best situation a master-slave relationship

prevails, or is present as at least an undercurrent, and its erosive ebb gnaws faintly but surely at the possible friendship and spontaneity, i.e., the equality, that might otherwise exist unchecked between the two parties. (4)

This unequal relationship between landowners and tenants has led many anarchists to describe land ownership as a form of theft, pointing out that both activities use force and threat to extract goods and services from productive workers. The primary difference, according to this line of thought, is a legitimization or codification of land ownership in order to make its particular form of theft highly efficient. For example, Errico Malatesta observes that:

Landowners and capitalists have robbed the people, with violence and dishonesty, of the land and all the means of production, and in consequence of this initial theft can each day take away from the workers the product of their labour. But they have been lucky thieves, they have become strong, have made laws to legitimate their situation, and have organised a whole system of repression to defend themselves both from the demands of the workers as well as from those who would want to replace them by the same means. And now the theft of the former is called property, commerce, industry, etc.; whereas the term robbers in common parlance, is reserved for those who would wish to follow the example of capitalists but who, having arrived too late, and in unfavourable circumstances, cannot do so without rebelling against the law.

The only landowner who does not dominate others, and is thus not a thief, is the one who uses no more than their fair share of land, and who receives no payment for other people's use of land. Indominative landowners, or those who do not dominate, by the very fact that they had to pay for the land they use is oppressed like others who pay for land in the form of rent. This is recognized, among other anarchists, by promoter of a 'rent and mortgage boycott' Marco Grandino. While renters and mortgagors significantly differ in their class positions, he advocates the mobilization of both groups because among other things, each pays a similar percentage of their income for housing.

## **Inefficient Production**

Not only does a concentrated distribution of land remove from the worker a substantial portion of what they produce, according to anarchists, but it prevents the worker from producing to their fullest capacity. Kropotkin writes:

Today the land, though it owes its value to the needs of a ceaselessly increasing population, belongs to a minority who can hinder the people from cultivating it, and which does so — or at least does not permit the people to cultivate it in a manner accordant with modern needs. (quoted in Eltzbacher 110)

Because land is distributed according to profit as opposed to equity and need, many workers must settle for land which is ill-suited for their purposes, while much better land is idle or used unproductively in the speculative wait for higher prices. This affects the individual in their place of habitation as well, observed in the checkerboard urban sprawl created by speculation, forcing people to go many miles from the center of town or their work to find affordable housing.

One process which causes inefficiency is insecurity of tenure. Once an individual finds a spot upon which to produce or live, and begins renting from a landowner, it is likely in some regions of the world that after the lease runs out, any permanent improvements which they have made to the property, and which they can not bring with them, will be absorbed by the landowner without recompense. Writes the editor of London's *Anarchy* in introduction to their issue dedicated to land (7/64):

The idea of continuity, whether or not it has a foundation in fact, is the key to good husbandry. For from it springs the concern for conservation and improvement of the soil, which is certainly weakened by impermanence of tenure. This is the basis of the "land problem" in many parts of the world. If a man improves his land and only his landlord benefits, why should he bother? (195)

This appropriation of fixed or unmoveable tenant labor is by no means a relic of the past or limited to the third world. A 1993 lease that I signed states that "All alterations, additions or improvements upon the premises, made by either party, shall become the property of Landlord and shall remain upon, and be surrendered with said premises ..." As the writer for *Anarchy* noted, nobody is going to spend a lot of time improving their residence with such a legal provision for its loss. Those without a lease, being liable for eviction with an even shorter notice, are at an even greater disadvantage.

Some theoreticians of land ownership have tried to turn this critique on its head, claiming that the inefficiency associated with insecurity of tenure is precisely why land ownership is important. If they were to then promote the ownership of land by those who work it and the ownership of houses by those who live in them, many anarchists might strongly agree, but instead these theoreticians use this argument to justify the abstract principle of landownership and the concentration which it maintains. For them, the juridical concept of property in land is inseparable from 'occasional' concentrations and hierarchies. In order to have efficient use of land, one must endure the concentration which 'naturally' accompanies its organization along the lines of ownership. Anarchists have exposed this argument as a simple justification for hierarchical land tenure. Tolstoy writes:

History shows that property in land did not arise from any wish to make the cultivator's tenure more secure, but resulted from the seizure of communal lands by conquerors, and its distribution to those who served the conquerors. So that property in land was not established with the object of stimulating the agriculturists. Present-day facts show the fallacy of the assertion that landed property enables those who work the land to be sure that they will not be deprived of the land they cultivate. In reality just the contrary has everywhere happened, and is happening. The right of landed property, by which the great proprietors have profited most, and are profiting, has produced the result that all, or most, i.e. the immense majority of the agriculturists, are now in the position of people who cultivate other people's land, from which they may be driven at the whim of men who do not cultivate it. So that the existing right of landed property certainly does not defend the rights of the agriculturist to enjoy the fruits of the labour he puts into the land, but, on the contrary, it is a way of depriving the agriculturists of the land on which they work, and handing it over

to those who have not worked it; and therefore it is certainly not a means for the improvement of agriculture, but, on the contrary, a means of deteriorating it. (Tolstoy: 1900, 36)

## Environmental Degradation

Another detrimental aspect connected to insecurity of tenure is that the worker attempts to extract a maximum amount of produce from a piece of land in the amount of time allowed by the lease. This lends itself to unsustainable yields and environmental degradation, a dynamic which anarchists link to the exploitation of land which is encouraged by concepts of property. Anarchists have often noted that the philosophy of property in land embodies a moral and legal right to destroy the environment. Says Proudhon in *What is Property?*:

The Roman law defined property as the right to use and abuse one's own within the limits of the law — *jus utendi et abutendi re suâ, quatenus juris ratio patitur*. A justification of the word abuse has been attempted, on the ground that it signifies, not senseless and immoral abuse, but only absolute domain. Vain distinction! invented as an excuse for property, and powerless against the frenzy of possession, which it neither prevents nor represses. The proprietor may, if he chooses, allow his crops to rot under foot; sow his field with salt; milk his cows on the sand; change his vineyard into a desert, and use his vegetable-garden as a park: do these things constitute abuse, or not? In the matter of property, use and abuse are necessarily indistinguishable. (Proudhon 42)

The legal definition of “property” used by Proudhon remains substantially unaltered in the contemporary United States. According to *American Jurisprudence*,

As a matter of legal definition, “property” refers not to a particular material object but to the right and interest or domination rightfully obtained over such object, with the unrestricted right to its use, enjoyment and disposition. In other words, its [sic] strict legal sense “property” signifies that dominion or indefinite right of use, control, and disposition which one may lawfully exercise over particular things or objects. (228)

The right of landowners to destroy their little piece of the environment is made obvious in laws common around the world which offer monetary compensation in exchange for landlord agreement not to violate environmental codes. In Britain, for example, upon agreement not to destroy “Sites of Special Scientific Interest,” landowners are entitled to compensatory payments. One wealthy Scot was awarded nearly one million pounds, which was more than the initial cost of the land shortly after its purchase (Nichols 95). As even *American Jurisprudence* admits, property is dominion. It does not ask whether or not that dominion is just or unjust. The status of property can be applied to children, workers, women, air, the seas, space, you, or me. When applied to land, the philosophy of property confers an absolute right to the use of what could be common forests, rivers, air, seas, soils, and hills upon an individual or corporate entity to the exclusion of all other species and generations present and future. It is insensitive to the independent ‘desire’ of plants



and animals to the enjoyment of their own lives, treating them, within the definition of property, as unworthy of consideration, and it embraces the maxim 'one may do with one's own what one wills,' a justification to environmentally disenfranchise the future. One anarchist farm worker from Sussex quotes Edward Hyams' *Soil and Civilisation* in order to buttress his view that the present system of land ownership contributes to the degradation of soil and harms agriculture generally:

“Agricultural slavery leads inevitably to the abuse of soil: the actual labourers on the land have little or no interest in its condition, while its owners look upon it merely as a source of personal not communal wealth.” I would go further and say that wage slavery, interest and commerce accelerates abuse of the soil, perpetuates a divided community of privileged and underprivileged, divides a huge insecure industrial proletariat from the source of its life and debases values. Agriculture is too serious a matter to leave in the hands of politicians, industrialists and profiteers, and the soil heritage left from the depredation of militarism, ignorance and greed, is too precious to be squandered by the wastefulness of a consumer society. At the moment the agricultural system that provided the initial surplus value that was the basis of the industrial revolution is being refashioned to commercial needs and on the pattern of modern industrial production. It is, in Hyams' expression, ceasing to be a soil-making agriculture and is becoming a soil-consuming agriculture. (Albon 199)

In addition to impoverishing soil according to anarchists, inequality of distribution impedes the worker — who by nature of her or his work has an individual and personal relationship with the land, air and water — from making decisions regarding the best way to treat the environment. Profit-driven orders issue forth from a class of owners who can have no visceral understanding of the amount of environmental destruction that their policies, often decided far away in corporate headquarters, actually perpetrate. But even when corporate heads are cognizant of the destruction which they cause, they have less access and motivation to stop the destruction. “The potentiality of environmental disaster is always recognizable first at the local level,” writes George Woodcock (1992: 121). “Indeed, centralized administrations are more likely than decentralized ones to ignore environmental danger signs in the interests of so-called national welfare or even of openly-admitted corporate interests.” Were the laborer the decision maker and steward of natural resources, the responsibility and benefits of environmentally sustainable industry and agriculture would be squarely on the shoulders of those with the closest relationship to the land (Plant).

# Government and the Origins of Land Ownership

The final and crowning condemnation of the current system of land ownership for anarchists is its inextricability from their central problematic and its close correlation to their areas of concern. Although since the new social movements emerged in the 1960s, anarchism as a philosophy has paid increasing attention to the issues of race, gender, sexual preference, and international hierarchies, their origins and unique contribution to social movement is a radical and intractable opposition to both government and social change which is orchestrated by working within a governmental framework. This is what originally defined anarchism as distinct from Marxism in the 1872 split of the First International, and what defines it from the mainstream of other ideologies of liberation such as feminism, anti-imperialism, and anti-racism. Because land ownership has its historical origins in government, and engages in mutual support with the same, anarchists have reserved an especial antipathy towards the institution.

Government is only one part of an apparatus, according to anarchist thought, which serves to maintain political, economic, and social domination over the worker, an apparatus which includes many dominatory constructs, one of which is the ownership of land. Other systems include slavery, gender hierarchy, serfdom, and taxation, all of which are at least partially interchangeable. When one system is overthrown or proves inefficient, another method of extraction often continues the hierarchical flow of labor, a trend anarchists often note. Nineteenth-century American anarchist Joshua K. Ingalls, who was primarily concerned with issues of land, could not understand why it was not obvious to reformers that the system of land ownership largely replaced acquisitions of labor through slavery (Martin, 146). After abolition, the importance of land ownership as a philosophy increased for those who needed justification to forcefully acquire the labor of others, leading to a tightening of economic constrictions on former slaves. During the American Civil War 550,000 acres were confiscated and redistributed among blacks in 40-acre parcels as the keystone of African-American reparations. As soon as the war ended, however, and black soldiers were no longer needed, President Johnson rescinded all redistribution proclamations and ordered the immediate restoration of confiscated lands to their former owners (Boston 447). Furthermore, postbellum Southern planters reclaimed the labor of ex-slaves by legally restricting their mobility, alternative employment opportunities, and access to the means of production and subsistence, thereby tying them to the land as a propertyless work force (Hahn 37). The January 1992 issue of anarchist journal *Love and Rage* notes:

When slavery was abolished 4 million people of African descent were ultimately dispossessed of the land they had tilled for centuries and that was by any measure rightfully theirs. The promise of 40 acres and a mule for every former slave family unit that was to be the basis of Reconstruction was broken and the Black worker was forced to accept the continuation of his or her status as a colonial laborer: overworked, underpaid, politically powerless, and subject to the abuse of any white man.

While slavery and landownership were interchangeable, the disciplinary effect of the two systems are, according to many anarchists, ultimately of the same type. ‘Bob,’ a writer for Green Anarchy’s land issue, equates dispossession from the land with slavery, and delineates the instruments of coercion as cold, starvation, and massacre:

We, the masses of dispossessed had no greater legal right to British soil than did black slaves. Like slaves, if we refused to work for the boss, we were doomed to die of cold and starvation. Those of us who claimed vacant land to try communal self-sufficiency were massacred by the State, as was done to the Diggers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. (7)

As occurred during colonialism, some anarchists foresee the exportation of this relationship into any new geographical realms which might host human activity. As governments explore the extremities of this solar system and other extraterrestrial spaces and bodies, they have already begun the ideological exportation of spatial property and the coercion which it entails. The untitled poem appearing on the first page of *Midnight Notes* (7/81) points out that space “is lusted for not because of the minerals on Mars — no more than the gold and silver in the rivers of the Caribbean isles was — but for what they can do to you on Mars when they get you there.”

All hierarchical labor-extractive systems, from slavery and serfdom to the twentieth-century computerized, assessed land parcel, have taken from the producer the product of their labor. Notwithstanding the illusion of affluence Western nations have surrounded themselves with, little has changed for the world’s poor, who are kept in conditions of nineteenth century slavery through the power of property.

## **Violence Secures Title to Land**

Title to land is often traced by anarchist theorists not to a social contract, the agricultural revolution, or Locke’s labor theory of property, but to the violent coercion of an oppressor or conqueror. Ricardo Flores Magón writes in a 1910 issue of his paper *Regeneración* of the discrepant origins of land and land titles. Consistent with his belief that “the Earth is the property of all,” he states that previous to life on the planet, nobody owned the land. Neither, according to him, did the Earth have an owner when humanity was “converting every old tree trunk and every mountain cavern into a dwelling place and refuge,” or during the pastoral period, in which “there were pastures wheron the tribe, with herds in common, settled.” Landownership, according to Magón, materialized much later.

The first owner appeared with the first man who had slaves to work his fields, and who, that he might make himself master of those slaves and of those fields, found it necessary to take up arms and levy war against a hostile tribe. Violence, then, was the origin of private property in the land, and by violence it has been upheld to our own days.

Invasions, wars of conquest, political revolutions, wars for the control of markets, and acts of spoilation carried through by governors or those under their protection — these constitute the titles to private property in land; titles sealed with the blood and enslavement of humanity. (Magón 44)

Land ownership, according to these theories, exists when an individual has the violent forces necessary to evict or subdue the inhabitants of a given piece of land and claims 'ownership.' Title to land is secure to the extent that the violence which enforces title is unchallenged. Individual landowners band together in governmental form to acquire, hold, and defend land. In Alexander Berkman's *The ABC of Anarchism*, he invites us to imagine we are shipwrecked on a fertile island. One of the ship-mates suddenly claims ownership of the island and demands tribute from the rest. They laugh at him and continue collecting fruits for free. Berkman continues the analogy:

Suppose further that we ourselves and our forefathers had cultivated the island and stocked it with everything needed for life and comfort, and that some one should arrive and claim it all as his. What would we say? We'd ignore him, wouldn't we? We might tell him that he could share with us and join us in our work. But suppose that he insists on his ownership and that he produces a slip of paper and says that it proves that everything belongs to him? We'd tell him he's crazy and we'd go about our business. But if he should have a government back of him, he would appeal to it for the protection of "his rights," and the government would send police and soldiers who would evict us and put the "lawful owner in possession."

That is the function of government; that is what government exists for and what it is doing all the time. (183-184)

The real arbiter of landownership then, is government, and thus government is the greatest landowner, the one which parcels ownership rights among its lesser cousins. In order to attain this position, governments must utilize violence against competing macro-landowners in the arena of international conflict. As the power of a particular government expands and contracts, so does their ownership of land. In fact, this is the history of the expansion and contraction of politico-geographical bodies. Anarchist Max Stirner writes:

When the Romans no longer had any might against the Germans, the world-empire of Rome belonged to the latter, and it would sound ridiculous to insist that the Romans had nevertheless remained properly the proprietors. Whoever knows how to take and to defend the thing, to him it belongs till it is again taken from him, as liberty belongs to him who takes it. (332)

England takes Ireland, Israel takes Palestine, the United States takes Panama, Grenada, Kuwait, South/east Asia, ad nauseam. The world is in a perpetual dispute over all land claims, and will remain that way inasmuch as the system and ideology of spatial property is the salient inter-human relation to land. Frank Bardacke wrote the following position paper, published in *Fifth Estate*, for the People's Park protest in Berkeley. It highlights the pervasive relationship of violence to the transfer of legal title to land.

A long time ago the Costanoan [more specifically, the 'Ohlone'] Indians lived in the area now called Berkeley. They had no concept of land ownership. They believed that the land was under the care and guardianship of the people who used it and lived on it.

Catholic missionaries took the land away from the Indians. No agreements were made. No papers were signed. They ripped it off in the name of God.

The Mexican Government took the land away from the Church. The Mexican Government had guns and an army. God's word was not as strong.

The Mexican Government wanted to pretend that it was not the army that guaranteed them the land. They drew up some papers which said they legally owned it. No Indians signed those papers. The Americans were not fooled by the papers. They had a stronger army than the Mexicans. They beat them in a war and took the land. Then they wrote some papers of their own and forced the Mexicans to sign them. The American Government sold the land to some white settlers. The Government gave the settlers a piece of paper called a land title in exchange for some money. All this time there were still some Indians around who claimed the land. The American army killed most of them. The piece of paper saying who owned the land was passed around among rich white men. Sometimes the white men were interested in taking care of the land. Usually they were just interested in making money. Finally some very rich men, who run the University of California, bought the land. Immediately these men destroyed the houses that had been built on the land. The land went the way of so much other land in America — it became a parking lot. (Bardacke 1)

As is evident from the above, once a government or group of landowners has secured a piece of property from the original inhabitants and rival governments, they search for submissive settlers who they can tax, charge rent, and in the above example, exact parking fees. In the following passage, Kropotkin uses the example of feudalism to illustrate this process (Kropotkin 1970: 163).

A feudal baron seizes a fertile valley. But as long as the fertile valley is unpopulated our baron is not rich. His land brings him nothing; he might as well possess property on the moon. Now what does our baron do to enrich himself? He looks for peasants!

But if every peasant-farmer had a piece of land, free from rent and taxes, if he had in addition the tools and the stock necessary for farm labor, who would plow the lands of the baron? Each would look after his own. But there are whole tribes of destitute persons ruined by wars, or drought, or pestilence. They have neither horse nor plow. (Iron was costly in the Middle Ages, and a draft horse still more so.)

All these destitute creatures are trying to better their condition. One day they see on the road at the confines of our baron's estate a notice board indicating by certain signs adapted to their comprehension that the laborer who is willing to settle on this estate will receive the tools and materials to build his cottage and sow his fields, and a portion of land rent free for a certain number of years. The number of years is represented by so many crosses on the sign board, and the peasant understands the meaning of these crosses.

So the poor wretches swarm over the baron's lands, making roads, draining marshes, building villages. In nine years he begins to tax them. Five years later he levies rent. Then he doubles it. The peasant accepts these new conditions because he cannot find better ones elsewhere; and little by little, by the aid of laws made by the oppressors, the poverty of the peasants becomes the source of the landlord's wealth. And it is not only the lord of the manor who preys upon him. A whole host of usurers swoop down upon the villages, increasing as the wretchedness of the peasants increases.

That is how things went in the Middle Ages; and today is it not still the same thing? If there were free lands which the peasant could cultivate if he pleased, would he pay fifty pounds to some “Monsieur le Vicomte” for condescending to sell him a scrap? Would he burden himself with a lease which absorbed a third of the produce? would he — on the métayer system — consent to give the half of his harvest to the landowner? But he has nothing. So he will accept any conditions, if only he can keep body and soul together, while he tills the soil and enriches the landlord.

So in the nineteenth century, just as in the Middle Ages, the poverty of the peasant is a source of wealth to the landed proprietor.

## Land Ownership as Government

As in the example of feudalism mentioned by Kropotkin, in which an authority controls a people, land ownership parallels government closely, and can be analyzed as a form of government in and of itself. The same justification serves land ownership and government: an individual or group of individuals has a right to control natural resources to the exclusion of all other beings. The status of ‘landowner’ confers the legal right to tax others (calling this tax rent) and make decisions as to who gets to live on a certain area of land, and powers over the manner and length of time they live there, a relationship humorously illustrated by the comic “Audience with a Landlord” (see figure 2; reprinted from SL summer/93)..After federal, state, county and city governments, propertied land can be seen as the smallest territorially-governed body in Western society. As are other levels of government, it is subject to the regulations of its superiors.

The coextension of land ownership and hierarchical government is commonly recognized by anarchists. Young Russia, a proclamation issued May 1862 in the context of Russian anarchist activity, did not distinguish landowners from government, but divided society into two classes, members of the czarist party (which included landowners), and the nonpossessing revolutionaries. Historian Thomas Masaryk paraphrases the proclamation: “The existing order was based solely upon private property; the czar was merely the man standing on the highest rung of the ladder, whose lower rungs were occupied by landowners, merchants, and officials — all alike capitalists.” (Masaryk 466) About 60 years later Peter Arshinov, the Ukrainian Makhnovists’ organizer of cultural and educational activities, and several Makhnovist proclamations, similarly drew connections between landownership and government by mentioning their enemies in the same breath as the “landowners and Austro-Germans,” (48), the “bourgeois landlord authority” (265), the “generals and landlords,” (277), the “tyrants and landlords,” the “State apparatus of landowners and private capitalists,” (37) and by calling the invading Polish Army the “Polish landlords” (277, 282, 284). Battling the White Army of Denikin, Makhno was described as the “peasant hero of the Ukraine, proudly opposed to the landowners.” (Berland 471)

This anarchist observation of landowner-government osmotic symbiosis is not limited to the nineteenth century. ‘Bob,’ a writer for Green Anarchy in 1993, adopted and parodied the voices of industrialists, landlords, and government, conflating them into a singular entity:

“Work hard in my factory, pay rent to live in my house, pay for food in my shop, pay tax to keep my armies, pay subsidies for my farm, keep off my land and then maybe, if I like the look of you, I’ll allow you to live in my country.” (7)

The landlord-government similarity is also perceived in the London squatters guide of 1986, *Ideal Home*: “We can see that the world’s been carved up into various sized chunks — from huge unworkable nation states down to tiny square footaged plots.” (6) This conflation of landowners and government is at least somewhat justified after the examination of government forms throughout history which explicitly defined themselves as landowners by limiting the voter franchise to owners of real estate. Such was the case with the Roman Republic and the government of England following the Revolution of 1688 (Hyams 1969: 46).

The similarity is further illustrated when one is reminded that the primary criterion to be a government, like that of being a landowner, is control over activity upon a certain piece of territory. There is no place in this schema for the use of land without hierarchical and codified boundaries. When a squatter has used a piece of land for seven years, title reverts to her/him in U.S. law. When a government seizes control of a piece of territory, the conquered government gradually loses its title as the proto-government forces its neighbors to recognize its de facto existence as the governing body.

Land ownership and government use exploitation and manipulation in a similar manner. Where a landowner builds a fence, the government erects a boundary. When a landowner charges rent, a government levies taxes. Where a landowner advertises a vacant house, so as not to waste it as an income-producing property, a government encourages migration to those of its territories which are not producing adequate revenue. Where a landowner evicts a tenant, a government wages war against a population.

When government is unable to maintain the requisite standard of living in order to stave off revolution, the last option for governmental survival, and thus the survival of land ownership, is to force upon property holders the obligation of providing that standard of living by reducing rents, giving charity, or providing military force. The only other option for the landowner is to face the prospect of losing control of their property to an insurrectionary situation. In Spain of 1931 for example, when agricultural production fell and governmental aid to the destitute was insufficient, the mayor of Casas Viejas placed the burden of supporting the populace on the landowners by forcing them to pay wages for workers they did not want. (Mintz 134) In times of crisis for authority such as the above, land ownership and government are mutually reinforcing. “Private property is at once the consequence and the basis of the State,” writes Bakunin (quoted in Eltzbacher 86). The government protects the landowner from both outside and internal armed threat and the landowner maintains local order and collects revenue for the government, which it forwards through taxes. This symbiotic relationship is similar to that of local and federal governments. The Hackney Community Defence Association finds these concepts elementary in their 1992 pamphlet “Squats ‘n’ Cops:”

It’s only natural that the cops should hate anyone they can identify as a squatter (although there’s plenty of squatters who wouldn’t stand out in a crowd) — you don’t need a degree in politics to know that property is the cornerstone of this society, property is power, and the need to own is what keeps us in line — particularly the need to pay for a home. (7)

Anarchist agreement on this point seems widespread. “The origin of the State,” writes Kropotkin “and its reason for existence, lie in the fact that it interferes in the favor of the propertied and to the disadvantage of the propertyless.” (quoted in Eltzbacher 110) The propertied, in

effect, pay the state to protect their property, through taxes and at times through direct bribes to the judiciary, police and army. If governmental protection was not available, land ownership would atrophy. Ybarra puts it bluntly:

The slogan of the National Association of Landlords, as shown in the tabloid, is the comma-less “We Shelter You America”. The truth of the matter, however, is that landlords shelter no one, while in fact the LAW shelters THEM ... from the immediate expropriation that would occur if there were no force of gun and jail to back up this phoney, abusive, so-called property right. (Ybarra 13)

Tolstoy writes in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*:

If there did not exist these men [the police and army] who are ready to discipline or kill any one whatever at the word of command, no one would dare assert what the non-laboring landlords now do all of them so confidently assert — that the soil which surrounds the peasants who die off for lack of land is the property of a man who does not work on it ... (quoted in Eltzbacher 173)

Even with centralized government protection however, landlords seem compelled to hire private paramilitary forces to stave off land occupations by the landless. Large landowners in the third world become the undisputed dictators of their locality and in an oligarchy often hold direct control of the national state apparatus. This undue influence by landlords on supposedly democratic governments is not limited to the third world or the West previous to the twentieth century. “In Britain,” writes the editor of *New Internaitonalist*, “where about 1,700 individuals own one third of the country, you only have to look down the list of landholdings of Oxbridge-educated Members of Parliament to see the persistent connection between land and power.” (11/87) It is here that the distinction between landowner and government blurs to a graded wash.



# Anarchist Critique of Competing Ideologies Regarding Land

Radicals of different colorations have attempted various reforms of hierarchical and dominative land tenure throughout history, some of which succeeded, and most of which have at least made small (reformatory) improvements. These movements, which include Marxism, Georgism and land reform, have had an egalitarian influence on land distribution, and should therefore be applauded. There are, however, certain aspects of these ideologies upon which an anarchist viewpoint is well-situated to critically comment. Many successful worker-initiated land occupations have existed under a Marxist banner, and the critique presented here is a critique of party structures that forcefully impose their control and ideology on a grassroots movement, not of the actual movements, a critique which can be doubtless applied to anarchists as well. An example of this dynamic is the Portuguese Communist Party, which denounced land occupations by agricultural workers following the left-wing coup of 1974 as ‘anarchistic,’ calling on all future occupations to be managed by unions which it controlled (Mailer 164). Whether perpetrated by Marxists or anarchists, it is certainly dangerous when political ideologies oppose the grass-roots social movements which operate under the influence of differing parties.

## Socialism

A major objection that anarchists raise against Socialist conceptions and formations of land tenure is the control wielded by centralized state agencies or social movement organizations over independent producers and collectives. Though distribution of land under a Marxist government is preferable to our present state of inequity, the governing body maintains control over the land, who uses it, for how long, and in what manner. In the 1964 land issue of London’s *Anarchy*, the editors write that the political philosophy of anarchism is “opposed to the social and economic injustices implicit in capitalism and landlordism, but it is equally mistrustful of the state control which is the standard socialist remedy.” (193) The editorial also notes that “In Russia the enforced collectivisation of agriculture resulted in famine, misery and death on a frightful scale and in a decline in productivity which is still one of the regime’s problems.” The anarcho-egoist Stirner denounces “collective” ownership just as he denounces individual ownership, observing that neither affords individual autonomy from an individualist perspective. “For me, the individual,” he writes, “there lies no less of a check in collective wealth than in that of individual others; neither that is mine, nor this: whether the wealth belongs to the collectivity, which confers part of it on me, or to individual possessors, is for me the same constraint, as I cannot decide about either of the two.” (340)

The government’s ownership of land alluded to by Stirner is obscured under authoritarian socialism’s use of the classic justification of the state: ‘the government is the people.’ Socialists have told anarchists that because the government controls land, and the government is the people,

by transitive deduction the people control the land. In contradiction to this reasoning, anarchists have pointed out that the individual is beholden to approach an authority for permission to use land, which, within the concept of equality, should be her or his birthright, independent upon contract with governmental entities. Where individuals disagree with the socialist governments, they are evicted and have no control over a crucial aspect of their lives. Domination over the use of land changes its name from capitalism to socialism, but leaves itself intact.

Communists, who “feared the radicalisation of the countryside because of global political considerations” (Oved 53), exhibited their ideology of centralized control when they attempted to nationalize autonomous anarchist collectives in Makhno’s Ukraine and during the Spanish Civil War. In June of 1919 Trotsky sent Communist troops to destroy the Rosa Luxemburg Commune, but was only partially successful. This in retaliation for the refusal of Makhno’s local soviets and Insurrectionary Army to honor the Red Army’s banning of their congress. A few days later the Bolsheviks purposefully opened the front to the czarist army of Denikin, which wiped out all the communes in the area, destroyed villages and killed much of the population. Throughout the struggle, Arshinov estimates 200,000 noncombatant peasants and workers executed, with at least the same amount deported by Bolshevik authorities (Arshinov 126–127; *Fighting the Revolution* 12). He critiques the Communist ideal of centralized control:

The peasants made good use of the land of former pomeshchiks, princes and other landlords. However, this well-being was not given to them by the Communist power, but by the [Makhnovist] revolution. For dozens of years they had desired the land and in 1917 they took it, long before the Soviet power was established. If Bolshevism marched with the peasants in their seizure of the pomeshchiks’ lands, it was only in order to defeat the agrarian bourgeoisie. But this in no way indicated that the future Communist power had the intention of furnishing the peasants land. On the contrary. The ideal of this power is the organization of a single agricultural economy belonging altogether to the same lord, the State. Soviet agricultural estates cultivated by wage workers and peasants – this is the model for the State agriculture which the Communist power strives to extend to the entire country. (72)

This goal of centralized administration manifested itself during the Spanish Civil War as an aggressive intransigence towards all those outside the ambit of communist influence. Members of the Spanish communist organizations were instructed not to join anarchist collectives, but to remain individuals holding private property or to join nationalized, communist-controlled farms. Beginning in March and July of 1937, a coalition of Republican and Communist forces attacked anarchist agricultural collectives with tanks and soldiers, destroying some, and severely limiting economic activity in others (Dolhoff 44). According to Yaacov Oved’s “*Communismo Libertario and Communalism in the Spanish Collectivisations (1936–1939)*,”

In August [1937] a battalion under the communist Enrique Lister was transferred to the region and ordered to abolish the Aragon defence council and the anarchist collectives. On August 11<sup>th</sup>, the action began. The Aragon council was dissolved and its anarchist members arrested. It was replaced by Jose Ignacio Mantecon, who was appointed governor general by the central government. Immediately he ordered Lister’s brigades to start actions against the collectives. A third of all collectives were

affected; about 600 office-holders were arrested, some executed and others exiled never to return to the region. The governor appointed committees to manage the communities and to abolish their collective framework. Land, cattle and machinery were to be returned to their former owners. Those who were responsible for this policy, were convinced that the farmers would greet it joyfully because they had been coerced into joining the collectives. But they were proven wrong. Except for the rich estate owners who were glad to get their land back, most members of the agricultural collectives objected and lacking all motivation they were reluctant to resume the same effort in the agricultural work. This phenomenon was so widespread that the authorities and the communist minister of agriculture were forced to retreat from their hostile policy. (1992: 53)

The tension between ideologies of anarchist and socialist land tenure has continued during modern revolutions. The introduction to Midnight Note's "New Enclosures" critiques Third World Marxists, claiming that the perpetuation of a land tenure which is not controlled by workers denies national self-sufficiency and ultimately endangers what revolutionary gains are made:

"Third world" Marxists accept the notion of the progressivity of original accumulation. Consequently, even though they officially fight against the New Enclosures, they envision their party and state as carrying out their own Enclosures on their own people even more efficiently and "progressively" than the capitalists could do. They interpret communal ownership of land and the local market exchanges as being the marks of "petty bourgeois" characteristics they must extirpate. Their revolutionary action aims to nationalize land and wipe out local markets as well as kick out the IMF and the "comprador" ruling elite. Yet the first goal is an anathema to many of those people attracted by the struggle against the New Enclosures in the first place! The confusion thickens at victory where there is a tendency to create or continue the two "advanced" forms of land tenure — state plantations (Mozambique) or capitalist farms (Zimbabwe) — at the expense of communal possibilities and actualities. Inevitably the conditions for counterrevolution ripen while the impossibility of carrying out autarkic economic measures becomes clear, since the very structures that might have sustained autarky and denied land to the "contras" have been destroyed by the revolutionary forces themselves. (7)

What anarchists seem to argue against is not collective organization or the redistribution of land from the landowners to the workers, but the centralization of power among a managerial elite. The anarchist Latin American newspaper *Accion Libertaria* (Buenos Aires) criticizes Cuban agrarian organization in their article entitled "Cuba: Revolution and Counter Revolution."

To seize the lands for those who work them, organizing them in free peasant communities — THAT IS REVOLUTION. But to twist the Agrarian Reform, exploiting the guajiro as an employee of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform — THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION. (reprinted in AN 9/67)

## Georgism

Another reform which has come under anarchist critique by Joshua Ingalls, Benjamin Tucker (Martin 147), William Charles Owen's *Land and Liberty* (founded 1914) and the English section of Ricardo Flores Magón's *Regeneration* (Reichert 513), is Georgism, also known as Geonomics, the Land-value tax or the Single tax. Georgism is an ideology which was popular in late-nineteenth century English-speaking countries, and is experiencing a resurgence in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet republics. Though obscure to most readers, it deserves mention because of its present small but dedicated following and because it is one of the only Western political groupings besides anarchism and communism whose critique of land ownership is foundational to its ideology. Developed by Henry George in his exceedingly popular *Progress and Poverty* (1880), Georgism advocates the appropriation and collection of all land-rent through the state's power of taxation, and attempts to achieve this through legislation. A laudable goal, anarchists maintain that the Georgist method of attainment, like that of social democrats, mistakenly assumes that government would allow so radical a change without a revolution and major struggle for power outside the acceptable parliamentary means of legal change. Kropotkin raises the example, pertinent though not directed against Georgism per se, of a land nationalization bill which was to be passed in the context of massive Irish rent strikes. "It is evident that such a bill will never be voted by the British Parliament, since it would at the same time deal a mortal blow to landed property in England itself. Thus there is no reason for us to assume that the conflict can peacefully be brought to an end." (1992: 106) An unnamed Mexican anarchist writes:

The fatal weakness of Democracy, and of all such movements as Political Socialism and the Single Tax, which pledge themselves at the start to follow Democratic principles, is that they promise the impossible. Either of the movements named may cheer its followers with the assurance that it is adding steadily to its army of adherents, that it is permeating thought, and so forth. But all the eloquence in the world cannot conceal the fact, that, so far as action is concerned, it has taken the vow of perpetual impotence, since the basis of its programme is that no new departure shall be taken until the majority is on its side. (Poole 58)

Despite their commitment to polite electoralism and a few victories in some Pennsylvania counties and New Zealand, where they have won higher taxes on land than buildings, Georgist thought has remained outside the mainstream political arena. Even in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet republics, where popular Georgist movements have recently had access to governments in an attempt to persuade them to maintain control over the rent of land, they have won no major victories, in part because of opposition by the immensely powerful International Monetary Fund.

Even if a Georgist society were to be successfully voted into existence however, it would rely on a centralized state power of taxation, against which anarchists would likely raise objections similar to those against socialism. Errico Malatesta, for example, notes that Georgism "pre-supposes the continuation of the bourgeois order, apart from the growing power of the State and the governmental and bureaucratic powers with which one would have to contend." (98) Anarchists tend to eschew the granting of power to a state, even if that power is meant to equalize the use-value of land.

Another critique of Georgism by anarchists is its use of the liberal-capitalist market mechanism of land distribution. According to the Georgist ideal, he or she would receive the land who offers the collectivity (embodied by the state), the largest rent in the market mechanism. The state would then distribute this revenue, which is based upon collective ownership of the land, to the collectivity by means of social services or per capita dividends. While this is an ingenious and relatively practical way of distributing the social benefit of land, anarchists have indicated a desire to distribute land not on the basis of the greatest rent, but on the basis of the greatest social good, which can be calculated not by a market mechanism, but by diverse and constant community dialogue. In her essay "Impressions of an Anarchist Landscape," Myrna Breitbart of Clark University promotes land utilization for community need rather than profit.

The use of agricultural land under anarchy would be determined by, on the one hand, its suitability to particular uses, and on the other by local or regional needs. Land would be used not for the purpose which yields the highest money rent, but rather, for that which offers the greatest social utility. (48)

While from an anarchist perspective the Georgists have introduced an important observation of landed property in that they attempt to equalize the differential value of land, anarchists tend to prefer the distribution of this value without the use of government and market mechanisms, or to bypass the need for this distribution altogether by working on an anarcho-communist or collective basis.

## Land Reform

Land reform is another radical ideological orientation which anarchists have found less than ideal. Except in the period immediately following a revolution, government-initiated land reforms have proven unable to serve as an effective vehicle for radical social change. From Brazil to the Philippines, modern land reform has proven a miserable failure. Columbia's first agrarian reform law, passed in 1936 by the liberal Party, was a "pile of legal loopholes" which only succeeded in checking unrest. Peasant groups committed to a legalistic stance were forced to wait endlessly and saw their energy dissipate according to ANUC, a radical peasant association.

As in Columbia, many anarchists perceive the purpose for government land reform, when it is enacted, as a palliative measure to a revolutionary situation in order to maintain government control. In an essay whose title, "On Its Knees Government Offers Agrarian Reforms," says everything, Mexican anarchist Antonio. de P. Araujo elaborates:

In the heart of the Mexican proletariat there are beating today anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist sentiments, and they will not allow themselves to be deceived as they have been in the past. They will not swallow the hook of a repartition of the lands at the hands of the government. (Poole 51)

The goal of land reform as bait and political quiescence as hook is illustrated by the intentions of a land reform act passed by Madrid politicians in September 1932 on the footsteps of a failed military coup. The government was weak and had opposition from the left and right. The measure was an attempt to garner popular support, but their plan backfired when the reform proved too

weak to make change, and the land that was distributed remained under government control. The Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI), who advocated a revolutionary solution, took advantage of this situation and benefitted when the failed reform created discontent (Kern 113).

The anarchist critique of land reform has also occurred in the United States. Joshua Ingalls criticized the Homestead Act of 1862, which was billed as a free distribution of federal land to frontier farmers. He considered the act “so emasculated by political trickery,” that it did little to alleviate the conditions of the increasing numbers of the landless, while politicians had voted enough land to railroads to have furnished a farm of 25 acres to every family in the country (Martin 141). Even if this reform had succeeded in distributing land to the landless, its utility to the United States government, like the *ager publicus* of the Roman Empire (Weber 267–268), was the colonization and subsequent dispossession of indigenous communities.

On the few occasions when anarchists have acceded to state power, their land reforms proved no more effective, being unable to maintain gains within a system designed for hierarchy and domination. Pi y Margall, a Spanish anarchist, became President of the Spanish Republic in June of 1873. Among other anarchistic programs, he made an unusually sincere attempt to introduce expropriation of uncultivated lands and the establishment on them of communities of peasants. Agrarian credit banks were to be set up and all short-term leases changed to an *enfiteusis perpetua* (perpetual holding) (Horowitz 373). When the political will to carry out radical change is present however, government easily sheds its own: Pi y Margall was forced to resign after less than two months in office.

To the extremely limited extent that land reform does redistribute land, it often imposes hierarchical principles on communally-oriented land tenure and disenfranchises women in favor of individual male holdings. According to feminist analyst Barbara Rogers,

Land registration and reform is almost everywhere concerned with replacing systems of co-ownership with the concept of individual title to land, bestowed on the person seen as the ‘head of household’. This is invariably a man unless the household in question is ‘headed’ by a widow, single mother or other manless woman. The hierarchical principle whereby even a family has to have a ‘head’ is deeply entrenched in development thinking, data collection and planning. (101–102)

It is apparent that anarchists have rejected a reliance on government or authoritarian revolution to make the desired changes in the realm of land tenure. In his essay “If Fight You Must — Fight for Realities, Not Shams!” Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón writes,

... we must bear in mind that no government, however honourable, can decree the abolition of misery. The people themselves — the hungry and disinherited — are they who must abolish misery, by taking into their possession, as the very first step, the land which by natural right, should not be monopolised by a few but must be the property of every human being... Be not deceived! What you need is to secure the well-being of your families — their daily bread — and this no government can give you. You yourselves must conquer these good things, and you must do it by taking immediate possession of the land, which is the original source of all wealth. Understand this well; no government will be able to give you that, for the law defends the “right” of those who are withholding wealth. You yourselves must take it, despite

the law., despite the government, despite the pretended right of property. (Magón 1977: 61)

José María González, a prominent Mexican anarchist of the mid-1870s follows in the same line of thought with a poem (Hart 63):

The Social Revolution.

What is the Object of that revolution?

To abolish the proletariat.

Then, cannot the government pass laws to bring about this goal?

The government is unable to do anything.

Why?

Because it is the first enslaver.

## Envisioning Anarchist Land Tenure

An accurate description of land tenure after so revolutionary a change as anarchy is impossible. Imagine someone before the industrial revolution attempting to describe the present. Max Stirner writes in the *Ego and His Own*, “Of what sort is the settlement to be? One might as well ask that I cast a child’s nativity. What a slave will do as soon as he has broken his fetters, one must — await.” (344)

Nevertheless, in order to facilitate the destruction of the old structure, anarchists have made an attempt to paint a picture, however two dimensional, of the new social relationships for which they strive. “The question of land refuses to go away.” writes Hakim Bey in *T.A.Z.* “How can we separate the concept of space from the mechanisms of control? The territorial gangsters, the Nation/States, have hogged the entire map. Who can invent for us a cartography of autonomy, who can draw a map that includes our desires?” (64)

Different anarchists have different answers to this question. The Kingsgate Squatters and Rent Strikers Cooperative for Self-Management poses the goal of “territory organised for the joy of living.” (AN 1975). In his book *On Common Ground*, Francis Reed looks to idyllic pastoral paintings which he claims compensated the ‘national psyche’ for common lands lost to enclosure during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Reed posits the images as a template for a future anarchist society that will “stand as a record of ‘a world of pastoral beauty that could be ours, if we did but desire it passionately enough’; icons to be carried through the desert on our exodus from the land.” (44–45) These vague imaginings of the future are important, but they raise more questions than answers.

In the following pages I review some of the stated goals which anarchists have alluded to in their writings or speech, and a few of the actual experiments undertaken in the realm of land and housing. Briefly, anarchist land tenure as outlined by these clues is one which attempts to organize the use of land and housing on autonomic, egalitarian, and nondominative principles. As a land tenure which fits into the larger framework of a modern anarchism which is cognizant of the new social movements, it is likely to attempt conscious provisions against gender, race, colonial, and international hierarchies as well as its foundational provisions against class stratification and government. An equitable system of land tenure, according to anarchists, must be built upon the foundation of an end to all oppression, and is itself a part of that foundation.

Anarchist land tenure has as its basis an end to domination and the distribution of land according to need and equality. The holding of land and houses will be based on use (usufructuary) or planned use, and the producer on land will receive the entire product of her/his labor, leaving none for extraction by landowners. This will have the effect of leveling wealth and ending malnutrition, landlessness, and homelessness. With access to presently unused lands and the entirety of their product, workers will be empowered in economic relations with employers due to the option of self-sufficiency. Individuals will have complete freedom to work for themselves with their own capital, work by contract with the capital of others on free land, or join collectives. While certain anarchists want to simplify their lives by deindustrializing production, others have



exhibited a desire to promote and utilize advanced technology. For radical environmentalists, anarchist land tenure will include sensitivity to the needs of animals and plants, and thus a balance will have to be struck between humans, as one species, and the millions of other species that exist. In any case, anarchists look forward to a land tenure marked by higher efficiency due to worker control, equitable distribution, and a reward to the worker (whether it be individuals or a collective) of the entire product of their labor.

## **Anarchist Land Tenure in History**

Anarchists have written a good deal about land tenure and liberated small areas of land for short periods of time, giving them a chance to demonstrate, in however imperfect a way, some of the arrangements they desire. "The extent to which theories are valid," writes historian of anarchist Spain Sam Dolgoff, "can be determined only by the extent to which they are practical. Theories that do not correspond to the acid test of real life are worse than useless as a guide to action." (129)

In an imperfect world, attempts at anarchist land tenure is sporadically discernible. Makhno's Ukraine during the early twentieth century, Spain during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, and on a much smaller scale anarchist communes following the revolutions of France, the United States and Brazil (Oved 58). More recently, anarchist land tenure is evident in squatting communities throughout Europe and the United States in, among other places, Amsterdam, London, Berlin, Rome, New York and Philadelphia. All of the above anarchist incidents tend towards impermanence, a la Hakim Bey's temporary autonomous zone (TAZ), one example of which was the ten house Mainzerstrasse squat in Germany during 1990. While for a time it functioned as an anarchist community within the shell of a dying industrial militarist society, it was eventually evicted after a two hour battle between 500 squatters and German riot police (SH 12/90). But eviction did not destroy the anarchist autonomy which only temporarily inhabited the Maizerstrasse zone. According to TAZ theory, anarchist actions are designed to be highly mobile and impervious to massive and cumbersome state apparatus of control. Most of the Mainzerstrasse squatters simply relocated to other squatted buildings in the area.

Even with limited success, there are cracks in an anarchist land tenure situated in a violent world. Where small pieces of land are liberated through purchase or violence, the very means used to secure the land are often in contradiction to the pacifist goals of anarchism. In the case of nineteenth and twentieth century anarchist intentional communities, which were often based on communal ownership of land, they were forced into coexistence with larger and often antagonistic populations and legal systems. Revolutionary anarchist armies subjected themselves to authoritarian and time-consuming wars which made inroads on their ideals, energy and the ability to construct new social relationships. In the anarchist Ukraine for example, the Second Congress of the people met on February 12, 1919, but was unable to devote itself to the problems of peaceful construction because sessions were entirely occupied by questions of defence against invaders (Voline 461). Cultural and political theoretician and active participant in the Makhnovist army Peter Arshinov believed the basic shortcoming of Makhnovist movement to be its unavoidable concentration on military activities.

Three years of uninterrupted civil wars made the southern Ukraine a permanent battlefield. Numerous armies of various parties traversed it in every direction, wreaking

material, social and moral destruction on the peasants. This exhausted the peasants. It destroyed their first experiments in the field of workers' self-management. Their spirit of social creativity was crushed. These conditions tore the Makhnovshchina away from its healthy foundation, away from socially creative work among the masses, and forced it to concentrate on war – revolutionary war, it is true, but war nevertheless. (252)

Though anarchists have never experienced utopia, and their communities are constantly subjected to a politico-economic atmosphere not of their choosing, ideals were dreamed of and some achieved. During the revolutionary upheaval after 1917 the anarchist army of Nestor Makhno destroyed the power of government and landlords in a significant area of the southern Ukraine, freeing lands for use by the peasantry.

In the rural areas, followers of Makhno expropriated farm lands, livestock and implements from the landed estates as well as from wealthy small holders, leaving their owners, according to Makhno “two pairs of horses, one or two cows (depending on the size of the family), a plough, a seeder, a mower and a pitchfork...” With this expropriated property the peasants organised communes... Makhno reports that there were four of these communes within three or four miles of Gulyai Polya and many more in the surrounding district. A commune apparently had from 100–300 members, each being allotted sufficient land by “district congresses of land committees”. (Barclay 108)

In addition to experiments in land tenure that label themselves anarchist, theoreticians of anarchy have used non-explicit anarchic communities to illustrate their goals. Colin Ward quotes William Mangin and John Turner's research on the Peruvian squatter shanty towns as an example which anarchist land tenure might emulate.

Instead of chaos and disorganisation, the evidence instead points to highly organised invasions of public land in the face of violent police opposition, internal political organisation with yearly local elections, thousands of people living together in an orderly fashion with no police protection or public services. The original straw houses constructed during the invasions are converted as rapidly as possible into brick and cement structures with an investment totalling millions of dollars in labour and materials. Employment rates, wages, literacy, and educational levels are all higher than in central city slums (from which most *barriada* residents have escaped) and higher than the national average. Crime, juvenile delinquency, prostitution and gambling are rare, except for petty thievery, the incidence of which is seemingly smaller than in other parts of the city. (1973, 69)

Ward then analyzes his quote:

The poor of the Third World shanty-towns, acting anarchically, because no authority is powerful enough to prevent them from doing so, have three freedoms which the poor of the rich world have lost. As John Turner puts it, they have the freedom of community self selection, the freedom to budget one's own resources and the freedom to shape one's own environment. (1973, 70)

## Distribution by Equity and Use

Perhaps the most common spatial ideals of anarchists is a call for the distribution of land and housing on the basis of equity and use. José Vega, an anarchist worker and organizer in the Spanish Civil War gives his opinion as to why each person has an equal claim to use land and other natural resources:

I believe that God created the light, created the water, created the earth and the air for all equally. Nobody should have a right to usurp a part of these things, these substances. If they are usurped by anyone, it is to the detriment of the rest. (Mintz, 4)

Joshua Ingalls, a North American anarchist of the nineteenth century who dedicated much of his work to the question of land, took a similar position. Laurence Moss paraphrases his writings:

In his pamphlet, *Land and Labor*, Ingalls argued that the productive powers of the soil were indestructible and did not owe to any man's individual efforts. Therefore, no man had a legitimate right to establish his perpetual dominion over what in actuality belonged to men in common. Among modern anarchists, Hakim Bey draws inspiration from the eighteenth century pirate Republic of Libertatia, which he claims held land in common (119), and in the prolix and erethistic writings of situationist Guy Debord can be found, if one does a lot of sifting, the desire to "subject space to living experience," and promote the rediscovery of autonomous places "without reintroducing an exclusive attachment to the soil." (25)

Even in the most adverse of situations, these concepts are extremely important to anarchists, as is illustrated by the tragi-comic example of Carlo Cafiero. A financial supporter of Bakunin who played an important role in the International Brotherhood, Cafiero was hospitalized in a mental institution after being found in 1883 wandering naked in the hills near Florence. Writes historian of anarchism Robert Suskind, "He died nine years later, obsessed with the thought that he was getting more than his just share of sunlight through the windows of his room at the asylum." (107)

The desire for an equitable distribution of land and housing among anarchists has focused much of their attention on the denunciation and expropriation of absentee landowners. Those who have little need to use land are commonly told that they have no right to charge rent; holding of land will be for those who use it only. The first point of Bakunin's "National Catechism" (1866) states: "The land is the common property of society. But its fruits and use shall be open only to those who cultivate it by their labor; accordingly, ground rents must be abolished." (1972: 99). Late nineteenth century French anarchist Elisée Reclus explains:

Thus we shall take the land — yes, we shall take it — but away from those who hold it without working it, in order to return it to those who do work it ... what you cultivate, my brother, is yours, and we shall do everything in our power to help you keep it; but what you do not cultivate belongs to a comrade. Make room for him. (Fleming, 146)

In an introductory proclamation to Ukrainian peasants, the Makhnovists made clear their position against absentee landlordism as well. “The lands of the service gentry, of the monasteries, of the princes and other enemies of the toiling masses, with all their live stock and goods, are passed on to the use of those peasants who support themselves solely through their own labor.” (Arshinov 266) According to Arshinov, these principles were put into practice by Makhno in 1917 as president of the regional peasants’ union during the period of the Kerensky government, and in the October days of the same year:

... in August, 1917, he assembled all the pomeschchiks (landed gentry) of the region and made them give him all the documents relating to lands and buildings. He proceeded to take an exact inventory of all this property, and then made a report on it, first at a session of the local soviet, then at the district congress of soviets, and finally at the regional congress of soviets. He proceeded to equalize the rights of the pomeschchiks and the kulaks with those of the poor peasant laborers in regard to the use of the land. Following his proposal, the congress decided to let the pomeschchiks and the kulaks have a share of the land, as well as tools and livestock, equal to that of the laborers. (54)

Resentment towards absentee landlordism motivated many during the Spanish Civil War as well. An anonymous anarchist writer stated the principle simply:

One man wouldn’t be able to live off the work of another. It was the wish that each man work and not desire to live in luxury. One wouldn’t be able to suck another’s produce, and we would all eat. (quote Mintz, 5)

## **Individuals, Collectivity, and the Redefinition of Property**

With the product of her or his labor assured to the worker, anarchists theorize, the need and desire for exclusively-held property created by a hierarchical economy will dissipate and the individualistic clutching of goods that we observe in today’s society will cease. As the boundaries between individual and collective property fade, a mix of individualists and collectivists will emerge as people gradually and voluntarily join collectives which hold wealth and goods in common, moving society closer and closer to anarcho-communism.

Some anarchists, however, did not always follow this template. Bakunin, who always considered himself a disciple of Marxist economics, promoted absolute control of land by the collective instead of allowing for both collective and individual agriculture. This led him to depict the future anarchist land tenure in a way identical with the essence of the communist ideal (Pyzim 41), which maintained control of production by the collective in order to gain members. In point XVIII part III of his *Social and Economic Bases of Anarchism* (quoted in Horowitz 141) he promotes the “Appropriation of land by agricultural associations, and of capital and all the means of production by the industrial associations.” In his explanation he goes on to state:

Freed from the tutelage of society, they [the workers] are at liberty to enter or not to enter any of the labor associations. However, they will necessarily want to enter such associations, for with the abolition of the right of inheritance and the passing

of all the land, capital, and means of production into the hands of the international federation of free workers' associations, there will be no more room nor opportunity for competition, that is, for the existence of isolated labor.

Bakunin's scenario depicts the control of individual production by the collective, a method adopted in many areas during the early stages of the Spanish civil war, when anarchist militias used coercion to collectivize peasants. According to historian Yaacov Oved,

Forced collectivisation was justified, in some libertarian eyes by "the need to feed the columns at the front ... One must remember that a war was going on and that coercion was not always to be avoided." (1992: 49).

Sixty percent of anarchist land in Spain was quickly brought under collective cultivation (Dolgoﬀ, 6), hosting about 2,000 anarchist agricultural collectives involving approximately 800,000 people (Oved 40). Only a small percentage of these collectives were subject to force in the collectivization process, as those who advocated forced collectivization seemed to be a minority. Much more common, especially in the latter stages of the war, was the dual acceptance of individual farmers and non-coercive encouragement of collectives. Says Augustin Souchy, one-time international secretary of the FAI (Kern 184), "Economic variety, for example coexistence of collective and privately conducted enterprises, will not adversely affect the economy, but is, on the contrary, the true manifestation and the indispensable prerequisite for a free society." (Dolgoﬀ, 134) Sam Dolgoﬀ writes of this principle put into practice in anarchist collectives during the late civil war (while conveniently eliding examples of anarchist forced collectivisation during the early period):

... collectivization was not (as in the Soviet Union or Cuba) imposed from above by decree, but achieved from below by the initiative of the peasants themselves. Nor did the libertarian collectives, like Stalin, adopt disastrous measures to force poor peasant proprietors to surrender their land and join the collectives. On the contrary, the collectives respected the rights of individual proprietors who worked their land themselves and did not employ wage labor, relying on persuasion and example to convince individual peasant owners to join the collectives. By and large this policy was remarkably effective (Dolgoﬀ 111).

Spain is the only instance I know of where anarchists forced collectivization on an unwilling population. With this exception, they have generally advocated a more pluralist approach. "The squabbling ideologues of anarchism and libertarianism each prescribe some utopia congenial to their various brands of tunnel-vision," writes Bey, "ranging from the peasant commune to the L-5 Space City. We say, let a thousand flowers bloom — with no gardener to lop off weeds and sports according to some moralizing or eugenical scheme." (46) Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta concurs, stating that decisions regarding the formation of anarchist production can only occur as expropriation takes place.

What forms will production and exchange assume? Will it be the triumph of communism (production in association and free consumption for all) or collectivism (production in common and the distribution of goods on the basis of work done by each

individual), or individualism (to each the individual ownership of the means of production and the enjoyment of the full product of his labour), or other composite forms that individual interest and social instinct, illuminated by experience, will suggest? Probably every possible form of possession and utilisation of the means of production and all ways of distribution of produce will be tried out at the same time in one or many regions, and they will combine and be modified in various ways until experience will indicate which form, or forms, is or are, the most suitable. (104)

Vinoba Bhave, a mid-twentieth century pacifist whose thought some liken to anarchism (Ostergaard 1971; Bhave 1964; Dootor 55), voiced similar sentiments over fifty years later in India. He prescribes what he calls “also-ism” for the distribution of land:

You can have big schemes of co-operative farming if you want to or you may also not have them if you are so inclined. In gramadan, I believe in “also-ism” and not in “only-ism”. In other words, this also would be permissible, and that also would be permissible. It would be decided according as the villagers think it best. Gramadan is as it were a voluntary declaration of Grama-Swarajya, the commencement of real village self-government. Therefore, that system alone will prevail which the villagers after mutual discussions and understanding approve of. No system or arrangement would be thrust upon them from outside. If each of them prefers separate individual cultivation of the land, he can do so; and if two, four or even more persons want to come together or even if the whole village wants to have collective farming they are welcome to follow their inclination. All will, however, work with complete unanimity. If the opinion seems to be divided, both the experiments would be undertaken. (quoted in Hoffman 1961; Ram 1962)

In a system of land tenure based upon anarchist principles of plurality, though individuals will be completely free to remain apart from collectives, it is expected that joining will be in their self-interest. Four small communes in the anarchist Ukraine, all located near the center of Makhnovist power, serve as an example of collectivity freely chosen by the peasants. Arshinov writes that though they were not numerous,

... what was most precious was that these communes were formed on the initiative of the poor peasants themselves. The Makhnovists never exerted any pressure on the peasants, confining themselves to propagating the idea of free communes. The communes were not created on the basis of example or caprice, but exclusively on the basis of the vital needs of peasants who had possessed nothing before the revolution and who, after their victory, set about organizing their economic life on a communal basis. These were not at all the artificial communes of the Communist Party, in which people assembled by chance worked together — people who only wasted the grain and damaged the soil, who enjoyed the support of the State and thus lived from the labor of those whom they pretended to teach how to work. These were real working communes of peasants who, themselves accustomed to work, valued work in themselves and in others. The peasants worked in these communes first of all to provide their daily bread. In addition, each found there whatever moral and material support he needed. The principles of brotherhood and equality permeated

the communes. Everyone — men, women and children — worked according to his or her abilities. Organizational work was assigned to one or two comrades who, after finishing it, took up the remaining tasks together with the other members of the commune. It is evident that these communes had these traits because they grew out of a working milieu and that their development followed a natural course. (87)

In most anarchist villages during the Spanish Civil War, the number of individualists voluntarily decreased over time, due to a feeling of isolation which encouraged them to join the collectives (Guérin 133) Speaking of the relationship between the collectives and individuals in the liberated zones, historian Jose Peirats states:

Small landlords more or less opposed to collectivization, who were called “individualists,” found the going tough, especially around harvest time, because they could not hire wage laborers, and because their holdings were too small to use machinery (which they couldn’t afford anyhow). In some towns or villages the “individualists” would cooperate by helping each other with the work, but the crops were small and of poor quality. Most of the collectivists treated the “individualists” well. In Monzon the collective loaned them machinery and certain necessary supplies. Some “individualists” distributed their produce through the collective’s cooperatives. And some finally joined the collective ... (Dolgoff 112)

Once one joined, groups or individuals had complete freedom to resign, but the right of resignation, where the benefits of the collective were so great, was seldom invoked (Dolgoff 136). Guérin analyzes the propaganda and class factors influencing an individualist decision to collectivize in Spain:

... libertarian education and a collectivist tradition compensated for technical underdevelopment, countered the individualistic tendencies of the peasants, and turned them directly toward socialism. The latter was the choice of the poorer peasants, while those who were slightly better off, as in Catalonia, clung to individualism. A great majority (90 percent) of land workers chose to join collectives from the very beginning. (131)

Although collectives seemed to offer an egalitarian alternative to the capitalism which it replaced, they too were subject to difficulties. One problem which manifested itself during the Spanish Civil War was an income differential due to varying qualities of the anarchist collectives’ resource base. Oved writes:

The growing differentiation between affluent and poor collectives signified a severe deterioration. In 1938 many anarchists criticised the emerging ‘neo-capitalism’, due to the collectives’ different points of departure. Some had started on rich estates, productive land and high income produce, while others were poor to begin with and deteriorated rapidly. According to these critics: “Instead of solidarity and mutual aid, collective selfishness prevails and the poor collectives are exploited by the richer ones”. (55)

Not all anarchists exclusively emphasize common ownership, with the provision for personal farming as only an afterthought or exception to the rule. In their July 1964 issue devoted to land, editors of London's *Anarchy* use Proudhon to point out that anarchist movement is not necessarily to confiscate the small home or farm, and may even allow for slightly altered concepts of property.

The one thing that most people know about the 19<sup>th</sup> century French anarchist Proudhon is that he coined the slogan "Property is Theft" and later in life modified this to "Property is Freedom." This always raises a laugh, but Proudhon was in fact talking about two different kinds of property. The property of the man who draws an income from thousands of acres, or from the ownership of an oilwell or a factory, or from speculation, is obviously different from the property of the peasant cultivator. There is a difference between owning your means of livelihood and owning ICI. (41: 194)

Russians affiliated with Land and Liberty in the nineteenth century envisioned a system whereby land belongs to the whole people in an abstract sense, but is parcelled individually for practical farming. Land which was hitherto held privately was to be held only on terms of usufruct, and after the usufructuary's death would accrue to the village for redistribution (Masaryk, 466). North American anarchist of the nineteenth century Joshua Ingalls, who dedicated much of his work to the question of land, took a similar position. Laurence Moss paraphrases his writings, which provide for a right of temporary exclusion by the user to replace concepts of heritable absentee property:

In his pamphlet, *Land and Labor*, Ingalls argued that ... the only claim an individual had to fencing off a portion of land for his own was that he occupied the land and made use of it in the satisfaction of his individual needs. Upon his death or departure the individual's tenure ends and the next occupant, who employs the land productively while living on it, acquires a similar but temporary right to exclude others from the land. At all times the right of exclusion is temporary and not absolute. (11)

An anarchist praxis, or theory into action, occurred when the Whiteway Colony adopted these principles at their intentional community in turn of the century England. According to historian Tom Keell Wolfe,

In 1899 the title deeds were burnt with some ceremony and the Colony's basis was laid down — there should be no private ownership of land — control of the land and any business to do with it should be in the hands of the Colony Meeting — individual plots of land were held on the basis of use-occupation. Plots were allocated by the Meeting, which had no power to take it away. Where the occupier left Whiteway the land reverted to the control of the Meeting, and could be reallocated. (Wolfe 34)

The uninheritability of land in this ideology indicates that, like the Maoris of New Zealand, many anarchists demand not only that land be shared equally among the present population, but that living persons will share the earth with future persons in an infinite extension of time. In an extrapolation of this not made explicit in the above instances, some anarchists might even



demand that none will use the earth's resources in a way that is unsustainable, or for which an alternative would not be available when the resources are exhausted, for to do so would deprive future persons of equal access to the land.

But even by sharing the land with all future generations of humans, the concerns of eco-anarchists such as constitute the members of Earth First! are not fully addressed. They demand that land and the animals on it be respected in their own right, not mistreated as resources for exploitation (even if by anarchist modalities).

Clearly, anarchists have not yet resolved the multitude of problems and issues which have arisen in the attempt to actualize the goal of 'an equal right to the earth' and collective production. The tension that accompanies the interaction between individualists and collectives, anthropocentric anarchists and eco-anarchists, and a multi-collective stratification of wealth is likely to reoccur in future and current anarchist societies.

## **Resolution of Conflicting Needs**

In this anarchist society, different people with different needs may wish to see a given piece of land used in different ways. One group might want it as a neighborhood park while another wished to build an open-air market. One person might want to build a home where another wishes to put a bicycle-repair collective.

A central tenet of anarchism, hard for many to grasp, is the eradication of authority in favor of autonomy, or self-rule. In the context of a land dispute, anarchists might encourage those individuals who are concerned with the outcome, not an outside authority, to resolve the conflict amongst themselves. Of course, where an entity used violence to flaunt community standards and prevent others from using their 'fair share' of land, which is tantamount to the present system of land ownership, individuals would surely cooperate with outside forces in liberating themselves, much as anarchists cooperate in their own liberation today.

As noted above, it is likely that many anarchists will choose to work and consume collectively, as they have in the past, and as current examples of anarchist organization such as the squatting and popular kitchens like Food Not Bombs in the United States illustrate. On a larger scale however, it is likely that many will want to produce privately and consume their own product. In the latter instances it may be useful to selectively adopt concepts and systems of land tenure developed by Marxists and Georgists.

Marxists do well to divide the rent we pay for land between 'absolute rent' and 'differential rent' (Dwyer 18). Absolute rent is the monopolistic cost of land, created by an artificial scarcity orchestrated by landlords and the government, who deprive the population of large areas that could be used to decrease demand for land and thus make it cheaper. This monopoly is fostered by governments which are loyal to landowners by keeping land scarce through public land, zoning, and planning policies.

Added to 'absolute rent' in the rent that you pay periodically is 'differential rent,' which is created because some lands are desired by the tenant over others for reasons such as its better location, natural resources, fertility, or any other feature that makes one piece of land more desirable than another. In an anarchistic society the monopolistic 'absolute rent' would disappear because it is based on domination and violence, but the differential rent would only disappear in

an anarcho-collectivist, or anarcho-communist society. Individualist anarchists might choose to utilize the concept of differential rents in the distribution of land.

If there are two pieces of land, one of which is not as desirable as the other, and two people who wish to use these lands, individualists can equalize the benefits of the land with a variation of the system popularized by Henry George, alluded to earlier. He used the classical economist David Ricardo's theory called the 'law of rent,' which states that the margin of production is the amount produced (given equal productive capacity) on the least productive land in use. George stated that whatever is produced under the margin of production should be given to the producer, not the landlord. Whatever individuals produce above the margin of production, in order to equalize the benefits of differently-valued land, should be combined, divided on a per capita basis, and equally distributed. Explained with Marxist language, absolute rent should be abolished, and differential rent should be combined, divided on a per capita basis, and equally distributed.

I know of only one actual experiment in which anarchist and Georgist philosophy was combined. According to William Reichert:

The Vale, an intentional community at Yellow Springs, Ohio, implemented the basic teachings of Ingalls, Fowler, Owen, [all anarchists] and Henry George in their system of allocating the use of their lands in leaseholds rather than individual ownership and control. As each family of the community is assigned an acre or more of land which it may work for its own living, rent is based not on the improvements made to the property but its intrinsic worth, and the monies thus derived are devoted to the support of libertarian projects selected in common by the members of the community. (1976: 529)

In a similar manner to the members of Vale, current individualists who do not wish to consume produce collectively can equalize the benefits of different qualities of land by the distribution of produce collected as 'differential rent' to all those who forego, to their detriment, the use of land from which differential rent is created. As an example we have Emma the anarchist orange grower, who moves to a region in which no settlers yet live. There are several areas in which she can plant orange trees, but she chooses the best, which will yield her 200 bushels of oranges a month. Ricardo, another anarchist orange grower, then moves into the area and chooses the second best land for oranges. It produces 100 bushels of oranges a month with the same amount of work that Emma does to receive 200 bushels from her field. Ricardo and Emma are both, for the sake of this discussion, identically hard-working and capable orange growers. If both work the same length of time, and both are equally hard-working and proficient laborers, both should receive the same amount of produce in an egalitarian society. However, Emma arrived in the region first, understandably planting on the superior land, and receives more in produce from the same amount of work as Ricardo. Because by anarchist land ethics Emma has no greater right to land based upon first arrival, she has no greater right to the superior land. Realizing this, Emma and Ricardo arrive at an agreement which will equalize the amount they receive from their labor and thus equalize their right to land. Emma gives Ricardo 50 bushels of oranges a month, thus equalizing the amount of oranges each receives at 150 bushels per month.

This scenario could be depicted in an infinite number of ways depending upon the needs of the conflicting parties. For example, Maria wants to start a shop near the cultural downtown of a large city to trade in queer zines, sex videos and set up a printing collective. George wants to start

a photography studio and gallery at the same site. They each have an equal right to the space, but there is room for only one of them. There are many ways to resolve this, but they choose what seems most appropriate for them. George agrees to arrange the studio a few blocks away in an industrial district that has space available. Maria will give him free zines and videos and agrees to find someone who will permanently display the photography in the cultural downtown as well as providing wall space within the zine shop itself.

The other option, of course, is for Emma, Ricardo, George, and Maria to share all goods communally. This is particularly true in the case of orange-growing, where Emma and Ricardo could tear-down the fence between their respective orange groves and keep each other company while communally working and consuming. As the example describes the case of George and Maria, however, they might already be in a collective, which illustrates that even in the idyllic collectives of which so many anarchists dream, competing land and housing needs will need to be addressed.

## **Efficiency of Production**

According to many anarchists, the new systems of land tenure that they advocate will render production more efficient due to equitable distribution of land, worker control, the advantages of collective work as opposed to individual, and an absence of an idle and wealthy class. When the landless unemployed or underemployed of today have access to land, and when formerly unproductive elements of society such as landowners join the work force, they reason, net production will increase. Worker control, in which the individual closest to a given production problem is empowered to make decisions, also contributes to efficiency (McEwan 179). Users are better able to invest time and energy into an object for which they have 'ownership,' or responsibility. Colin Ward reveals the difference in house maintenance between the owner-occupier and the tenant:

Just one of the many predictable paradoxes of housing in Britain is the gulf between the owner-occupier and the municipal tenant. Nearly a third of the population live in municipally-owned houses or flats, but there is not a single estate controlled by its tenants, apart from a handful of co-operative housing societies. The owner-occupier cherishes and improves his home, although its space standards and structural quality may be lower than that of the prize-winning piece of municipal architecture whose tenant displays little pride or pleasure in his home. The municipal tenant is trapped in a syndrome of dependence and resentment, which is an accurate reflection of his housing situation. People care about what is theirs, what they can modify, alter, adapt to changing needs and improve for themselves. They must be able to attack their environment to make it truly their own. They must have a direct responsibility for it. (Ward: 1973, 73)

Congruent with Ward's observation of housing in modern England, the agricultural transformation from landlord-owned to user-controlled collectives during the Spanish Civil War similarly saw a rise in productivity. Despite the loss from many Spanish libertarian collectives of up to 40% of the labor force as soldiers mobilized to the front, increased production and improved infrastructure relative to pre-collectivisation was almost always achieved (Guillen 7), Guérin claiming an overall yield increase of from thirty to fifty percent (134). Anarchists in Aragón claimed a 30%

increase (20% according to official data) in production following collectivization, while in the same period Catalonia, which had not collectivized to the same extent, registered a decrease in production (Thomas 515; Oved 50). Leval relates the astounding increases of production in Graus and Carcagente:

Through more efficient cultivation and the use of better fertilizers [in Graus], production of potatoes increased 50% (three-quarters of the crop was sold to Catalonia in exchange for other commodities ...) and the production of sugar beets and feed for livestock doubled. Previously uncultivated smaller plots of ground were used to plant 400 fruit trees, ... and there were a host of other interesting innovations. Through this use of better machinery and chemical fertilizers and, by no means least, through the introduction of voluntary collective labor, the yield per hectare was 50% greater on collective property than on individually worked land. (Dolgoﬀ, 138)

It is worth noting that in one year the area [in Carcagente] seeded with wheat increased from 1,938 to 4,522 hectares (one hectare is about 2 1/2 acres), and with barley increased 323 hectares to 1,242 hectares. There were even greater increases in wine production. The value of melons jumped from 196,000 to 300,000 pesetas, and of alfalfa from 80,000 to 250,000 pesetas... The collective installed splendid facilities for raising rabbits and new pigsties for 100 animals, as well as a foodmarket serving 800 persons. (Dolgoﬀ 151)

With increased output in Graus, anarchists estimated the standard of living to have increased from between fifty and one-hundred percent. The new economic system was able to raise family wages by 15%, reduce gas and electric rates by 50%, provide free housing and health care, and give full pay to men over 60 and the unemployed (Dolgoﬀ 138–139). Guérin attributes this rise in production to technical improvements, rational division of lands, and collective cultivation:

The cultivated areas increased, human, animal, and mechanical energy was used in a more rational way, and working methods perfected. Crops were diversified, irrigation extended, reforestation initiated, and tree nurseries started. Piggeries were constructed, rural technical schools built, and demonstration farms set up, selective cattle breeding was developed, and auxiliary agricultural industries put into operation. Socialized agriculture showed itself superior on the one hand to large-scale absentee ownership, which left part of the land fallow; and on the other to small farms cultivated by primitive techniques, with poor seed and no fertilizers. (135)

As already alluded to, technical improvement was only part of the contribution to greater production. The “social revolution” ensured an entirely new and as yet untapped source of labor. “This miracle is due not only to collective enthusiasm,” says CNT member Gaston Leval, “but also to a better and more economical use of productive labor and resources... Bear in mind that 40% of the work force, formerly engaged in socially useless activity, is now directed to useful projects for the benefit of all.” (quoted in Dolgoﬀ, 150)

While these fledgling economic units were able to flourish despite the adverse atmosphere of civil war and the hostility of communist and republican factions, the experiment of Spanish collectivization would likely have registered even greater results had the war not crushed the budding movement. The most stable collective lasted only two and a half years.

## Gender and Race

Anarchists made many improvements during the Spanish civil war in regards to land tenure, but it was mostly men who were liberated from the landowner, while inter-anarchist gender hierarchies were ignored. The poem by Herbert Read "A Song for the Spanish Anarchists," (Woodcock: 1977, 256) illustrates this dynamic well.

And men are men who till the land  
and women are women who weave:  
Fifty men own the lemon grove  
and no man is a slave.

Despite what this poem might indicate, women did make some gains, according to Liz Willis' *Women in the Spanish Revolution* (1975), "in their way of living, their degree of alienation in work and leisure (if they had any leisure), their state of mind, [and] the attitudes of others to them ... but the transformation was a long way from being total, even in areas where libertarians had the greatest control over their own situation." Oved corroborates:

In the Aragon collectives there ensued a process of women's liberation. Apparently they enjoyed the same status as men and they were relatively independent. Women now enjoyed an option to work outside the home or in it; many volunteered to do community work in addition to seasonal jobs and their chores. This contributed to their sense of being equal partners, yet former traditions tended to hamper the full realization of equality. For example when family wages were fixed, women received less (Oved 52).

Willis gives statistics on wages following collectivization to prove women's continued position of inferiority. In the retail trade in Puigcerda, men earned 50 pesetas a week, and women 35. In the Segorbe agricultural collective, men earned 5 pesetas a day compared with 4 for a single woman and 2 for a wife. In Muniesa, men received 1 peseta a day, women and girls 75 centimos, and those under 10 years got 50 centimos. "There is clear evidence," according to Willis, "of a widespread assumption, based on the concept of the patriarchal family, that women did not require equal pay." (3) In the Alcora collective wages were paid to the male 'head of household,' as opposed to individuals, putting women under male economic power (Dolgoft, 144). In Magdalena de Pulpis goods were rationed according to gender. "Every adult was entitled to a 'ration' of 1 peseta, 50 centimes for men, 1 peseta, 10 centimes for women ..." writes Leval (quoted in Dolgoft 156). This inequality was not taken lightly by feminist anarchists, at least one of which, Julian Casanova Ruiz, protested in the book *Anarquismo y Revolucion en la Sociedad Rural* against the gap between egalitarian theory and a reality in which women were binded by their household chores (Oved 52).

Gender hierarchy in anarchist direct action and utopian experiments seems to have posed a recurring problem. Kropotkin writes of European anarchist intentional communities that,

the women and the girls remained in the new society as they were in the old — slaves of the community ... while every community dreams of having the most perfect

agricultural or industrial machinery, it seldom pays attention to the squandering of the forces of the house slave, the women. (Ward: 1992, 104)

Though some of Kropotkin's writing may be an exception, anarchist domination of women is not surprising given that the philosophical foundation of anarchism has largely neglected the liberation of women, and at times, as in the case of Proudhon's pamphlet entitled "Pornocracy," taken an explicit position against the emancipation of women (Hyams 1979: 16). But even those who paid lip-service to the demands of women could not be relied upon. Margaret Marsh writes in *Anarchist Women*:

While most anarchist men claimed to believe that once anarchism had been achieved, sexual equality would eventually follow, very few felt that immediate action was wise or desirable. Both Communist-anarchist and Individualist men joined in urging that the Woman Question be subordinated to other economic and political issues.

The gender hierarchy with which male leadership infused the early anarchist movement has by no means disappeared in the present. Incorporation of feminist theory into male anarchism is most often won only through feminist struggle against the male-dominated movement. This is true for much of my own thought around issues of land and anarchism. Of thirty authors in an early draft of my edited anthology on squatting, occupations, and rent strikes (forthcoming in 1996), I included one woman of color, two white women, nine men of color, and eighteen white men. Anarcha-feminist friends pointed out this discrepancy, to which I replied (without doing the research) that there wasn't much writing on this subject by women and men of color and white women in existence. A few days later I was confronted by a slogan graffitied in large green letters in front of my house: "Landownership is unjust — by an anarchist woman."

At the 1992 Long Beach Anarchist Gathering there was one workshop on sexism which consisted largely of an attack on domination of women considered to be outside the anarchist movement such as child sexual abuse. The workshop itself had no facilitation, allowing those with the strongest voices to dominate the conversation. More than one woman holding her hand up waiting to be recognized was jumped by men who were oblivious to the speaking order and the fact that they were interrupting. While the attendance of men was roughly equal to that of women at the workshop, by my count, men spoke twice as many times as women during the course of the conversation, causing several women to stop participating and others to leave the room.

Male domination of decision making processes alienates and drives women away, as is the case with Judy Kolloch, who left the anarchist-inspired Homes Not Jails squatting movement in Oakland:

We had a bunch of Homes Not Jails meetings a few months ago that really fell flat. They were dominated by loud-mouthed men, to be rather blunt, who really didn't want to make room for opinions other than their own, not just women's, they were misogynous, but they were inconsiderate of anyone not themselves. We had meetings and there were ten or fifteen people coming. They did not allow space for other people and couldn't listen. There were a number of women who came to the meetings and we networked among ourselves and talked about having a women's squat. None of us wanted to squat right then. We still know each other. If I decide that I

definitely want to squat and am going to go make that move, I will contact those women. It is rapidly apparent that for women to be in a good squatting situation, we need to do it ourselves. Men are really difficult, if not impossible, to work with. (personal interview)

While the eradication of gender hierarchy in the anarchist movement would certainly benefit men, as is apparent by the above, anarchist women are not waiting around. As of this writing in January of 1995, Judy is squatting alone in a cabin she built herself on a beachfront property overlooking the San Francisco Bay. All-women squats seem to be a growing phenomenon, and many feel them to be particularly liberating. In 1992 seven South African women had their own squat in London, two of whom, Miranda and Pixie, extolled the experience:

Miranda: It was an excellent squat. It was really nice to see women getting it together and doing it and breaking into the house and changing the locks, holding the fort. When the squat was broken and all the locks had been changed, because it was an enormous three-story house, we were all exhausted and really scared. It was a dark and dingy house. We all went into one bedroom and laid down and went to sleep. We hadn't been asleep for more than half an hour when we heard this banging on the roof and scampering around. We thought, 'Oh, God, who is here?' What has happened in the past is heavies have come in, bashed down the door, beat you up and ejected you. Who knows who they are working for and why they are doing it. That is a danger. We didn't know what was happening and we sat upright and there was a guy on the other side of the door who happened to be squatting the house completely alone, a lone ranger. We spoke through the door, negotiated, and agreed to let him into his own home which we had taken possession of. We ended up living with him, which was really cool because he was a Londoner and he knew the ropes. [He was a real squatting-man. -Pixie] He had been squatting for years and years. He has five squats going at a time because he is on the run from the cops. He has different homes to go to, so he was delighted to have one of his homes brought to life. It was a really good community. He taught us a lot and we taught him a lot and we were really busy with womanly workshops and spirituality in the house. It was nice. [What kind of stuff? -Anders] We explored the Gnostics at the time, we were going to a workshop in a place in London and we were trying as a group to apply what we heard. [All philosophical readings, Tarot, I-Ching, Crystal reading. -P] Exploring lots and lots of things. [Things that we didn't have access to in South Africa. There was more reading matter and people working in London. South Africa is a bit behind. -P] We didn't interact with men at all. [We used to draw on the walls and play together. We were right next to a park and we played tennis, showered and danced and went to Stonehenge together, yoga. It was actually brilliant. -P] Wasn't it wonderful? All women. [Yea, it was completely wonderful. -P] It was really nice because there was no one to tell us how to do it except Stan-the-Man. [He didn't really have much to do with it. I think when men came there they were quite intimidated. It really felt like a clan of witches. The energy in the house was very witch-like. This is our space. It was nice. -P] Bloody nice. (AY fall/93)

While women have found community and a refuge from gender hierarchy in women-only squats, they have also learned to transform gender hierarchies in mixed residences. Aisha relates her experience of gender dynamics in the Philadelphia squatter scene:

With sexism, there was a lot of this dynamic where the men knew how to do most of the renovation. There were some guys who were really skilled like the guy who put in the electrical system. There was a guy who found air-conditioners in the street and would fix them. Kana [a squat] had an air-conditioner. One guy put a stained glass window in Kana. We had these men with very high levels of carpentry and electrician work to make money. Most of the women didn't know how to do very much at all.

A lot of the women became sex workers. You had a dynamic where the women had the money. Karen did sex work. She was a prostitute. She started a squatting paper called *Life is Free*, and she got two editions out and paid for five-hundred copies out of her own pocket. She paid bail money for people and money for materials came from the women because they had money from sex work. Guys knew how to do all the technical stuff.

All the women who squatted were really strong and incredibly vocal. They were really good at calling men on their sexism, saying 'I think this is sexist and fucked up.' There was definitely some sexism, but I can't think of any times that something incredibly sexist happened or something that one of the women felt like they couldn't handle and just say 'Fuck you.'

It was uncomfortable being dependent on the guys for anything technical. Some women complained that it was hard to get the guys to show them how to do stuff. Sometimes I wanted to know how to do stuff but I never spent as much time as I could have on it. The sex industry immerses people so all the women who were doing sex work got really immersed in it. (personal interview)

While anarchists pride themselves in 'smashing racism,' they have much work to do within their own communities. For example, the Long Beach workshop on racism which I attended, failed to address race hierarchies within the anarchist movement. It was an ad-hoc affair, organized by a man who was not an anarchist himself. It did not have a strong focus, but discussed the primarily textual work of the white convenor's organization People Against Racist Terror, the growth of the 'nazi skin' movement, and the U.S. invasion of Somalia. The two recognizable people of color present did not speak at all during the discussion. Aisha talks about racism and a way that Philadelphia squatters began to overcome it:

The houses were pretty much all white except for me, Lemont and Tia. When people first started squatting on Baltimore Avenue they were really resented by the neighbors who felt like 'We have to pay rent and these white kids just move in and don't pay rent.' People didn't relate well to the neighborhood. At Billville there were several episodes of people coming home drunk. One night Colby got really really drunk and she comes home, staggering down the street yelling at some people 'You people are so stupid, don't you know you're being oppressed?' People doing stupid shit



like that, getting drunk and throwing bottles at the neighbors. It finally got so hot and heavy between us and the neighbors that people started talking 'We aren't getting along with the neighbors, it's uncomfortable to live in this neighborhood and not get along, what should we do?' It was a big change and very exciting. Talking about doing stuff in the neighborhood and interacting changed the attitude of the neighborhood a lot. The neighbors started accepting us and not looking at the other people in the squat as all these white people who had moved into the neighborhood. People in the squat decided to go and clean up the street and the cops came and started bothering them because they knew they were squatting. The neighbors came and said leave them alone, they are cleaning up the block. It felt better being there when we interacted with the neighbors more.

Mexican anarchist Ana speaks of a school she helped begin in a squatter settlement near Mexico City, another example of anarchists working with neighborhood residents. "Let's not worry about squatting anarchists," she says, "but about being a part of the larger movement and sharing our experience as anarchists." She goes on to speak of a group of students who started Zapata High School:

Two or three of the student/teachers, mainly women, are anarchists. They started to give classes to teach the boys. More and more people came to take their classes and then the community built a space for the students to take their classes. They then said that there was a need for more space. The community built the school.

The anarchist teachers who approached the settlement were punks and had conspicuous clothes and brightly colored hair, a style which initially provoked alarm and mistrust among the squatters. As a working relationship between the teachers and squatters deepened however, the residents came to trust the punks to such a great extent that children now call any punk who enters the settlement, whether they are involved with the school or not, maestro, or 'teacher.' (personal interview)

## **Eco-Anarchists and Land Use**

Most anarchists are primarily concerned with the equitable distribution of land among people, and do not address the sharing of land with other species. Like any capitalist, in 1942 George Woodcock pushed for the agriculturalization of wild bracken and hundreds of square miles of "scandalous deer forests" (17) in his 1942 anarchist pamphlet "New Life to the Land." For some however, anarchist land use requires the recognition of natural resources and animals as worthy of existence in their own right, not necessarily for the sole use of humans (Albon 198). "When we say that land belongs to God, it really means that it should be free for use for all the men in the world," says Indian pacifist Bhava. "It should be open for the beasts and the birds also." (Hoffman 1961; Ram 1962) According to these eco-anarchists, people will have no more right to use a given piece of land than the organism that is using it already. This might mean that a person would vacate a particular parcel to secure the equal claim of organisms from another species to use the earth.

The ideology of an anarchist and hunt-saboteur acquaintance who lives in a Santa Cruz squatter community is formative in my mind of the eco-anarchist land-use ethic. He has striven over the past years to ensure that his dwellings have the least impact on the surrounding habitat. For example, on a hike to one of his earliest squats, an Ohlone cave on the Central Coast of California, we crossed a stream and he forced us to avoid stepping on the ferns, even though it meant traversing extremely slippery, and mildly dangerous rock. For his next dwelling of three years, he guided the construction of a tree-house in a squatted Redwood tree along environmental principles. The roost, as some referred to it, utilized a complicated design of cables which suspended the structure of scavenged lumber without piercing the trunk with bolts or nails. After authorities discovered and destroyed the tree-house, he built a modest 100 square-foot cabin hidden in a thicket of bushes reachable only on foot by a circuitous and purposefully obscured trail. On a recent visit he proudly claimed to have displaced only one small plant with the structure.

## **Change**

The radical change which anarchist conceptions of land use will have upon society and the need to completely revolutionize the present is a daunting task. Many authors who wished to change the system of land ownership, writing over a period of several centuries, optimistically predicted change in the few years following that in which they wrote, yet we, far later than the prophesied golden-age of liberation, are still saddled with domination. I will not, as have others, hazard a guess as to when the present might change. The hierarchical distribution of land has deep roots in history. We can expect land ownership to be with us for a long and indefinite period of time. It is impossible to know what an anarchist land tenure will look like in the future, and it is most certainly an evolving proposition. If it is implemented by a significant part of the population, and at the same time remains user-developed, it will be subject to massive transformation. By the time we get there, if in fact a there exists, it will probably no longer be called anarchism.

# Anarchist Land and Housing Direct Action

The equal use of land is not a right. It will not be granted to anarchists by government, the church, or an abstract system of ethics, but must be fought for, on an ideological and physical level. What follows is an account of anarchist activity designed to change the system of landed property to a libertarian land tenure. Taking place on an individual as well as group level, using violence and non-violence, change has pushed forward for centuries, in a chaotic and disjointed fashion, receding, disappearing and reappearing around the globe.

## personal change and education

One of the primary tactics used in the transformation of land tenure by anarchists is the eradication of personal complicity with the present system. “The way we’ve lived is because there is no ownership” says Pixie, an anarchist squatter (AY fall/93). Anarchists tend to scorn the dogoodism of rich liberals, whose wealth rests on the exploitation of those they would help. Tolstoy states in a religio-moral idiom uncommon to modern anarchists:

... to argue in various committees and assemblies about the improvement of the conditions of the peasant’s life without surrendering one’s own exclusively advantageous position growing from this injustice, is not only an unkind but a detestable and evil thing, equally condemnable by common sense, honesty and Christianity. It is necessary, not to invent cunning devices for the improvement of men deprived of their lawful right to the land, but to understand one’s own sin in relation to them, and before all else to cease to participate in it, whatever this may cost. Only such moral activity of every man can and will contribute to the solution of the question now standing before humanity. (Tolstoy: 1920)

Ceasing complicity has a different meaning for different anarchists. As did Tolstoy, Enrico Malatesta, anarchist-son of wealthy landowners in Italy, deeded all of his inherited houses and land to the sharecroppers who occupied them (Suskind 108). Abraham Guillen gives an example of the rich voluntarily parting with their wealth in Spanish anarchist collectives:

The great merit of the Jativa collective is that in a voluntary fashion, with no coercion, the owner of an olive oil factory, who was an important member of the local bourgeoisie, became a member of the collective with his family and gave the collective all his wealth. One of his sons, also very privileged under the old system, handed over all his money along with his wife’s. Finally, the Secretary of the collective, of bourgeois origin, also gave all his money and property to the collective. (13)

When landowners and other upholders of dominative land tenure do not spontaneously redistribute land on egalitarian principles, education is an indispensable part of encouraging them to

do so. A major source of education in contemporary grass-roots anarchism is punk music. An acquaintance of mine (who gave me all the punk lyrics cited in this essay) settles down with lyric sheets in hand to immerse himself in 'punk' for the entire evening, as seriously as he reads political journals and books. Says Roberta, a member of the band Attrito which squats in Rome: "Being in a band for us is trying to express our own feelings, ideas about the world surrounding us, the system oppressing us, or about ourselves, what we feel inside." (Roberta 5) Most of the North American anarchists I know personally were introduced to anarchism through punk music.

This educational work aimed at the transformation of land tenure has garnered extremely high rates of return in India, where the work of pacifist Vinoba Bhave is an example of how change can be brought about through the power of communication:

A man's heart, we must understand, is always good at the core. It may get rusted on the outside on account of various internal factors but its goodness remains always the same, whatever the outward appearance. It is like the head of a cabbage whose outer layer may be bad but the inside layers retain their freshness. The workers should have firm faith in this internal goodness and strive to reach for it undismayed by the outward appearances. (quoted in Hoffman 1961; Ram 1962)

In 1961 the severe maldistribution of land in India caused a violent uprising to flare in the Telengamali district of western India. Bhave held a huge meeting in the region for landowners and peasants to discuss the problem. When he asked the peasants why they were troubled, the resounding reply was a need for land. This had a tremendous effect on the landowners present and at the end of the meeting one of them stood and offered land to the peasants. Inspired by this direct method of change, Bhave began the Bhoodan (land-gift) movement that was to fill the next 13 years of his life and take him on a walking pilgrimage for more than 40,000 miles.

Everywhere Bhave went he called a well-attended meeting and encouraged landless peasants to speak to the landowners. He then gave a speech in which he requested that all landowners give one sixth or more of their holdings to the landless.

When all the people in a village come together and act as one family they create a moral force which has an effect on other people including the absentee landlord. The absentee landlord will be 'impelled' by inner conviction or sense of social guilt. He will not be subjected to any violent pressure. (quoted in Hoffman 1961; Ram 1962)

Bhave collected over 4.5 million acres of land for distribution to the rural poor — an unparalleled success for voluntary redistribution of land. Out of this movement grew the Gramdan movement in which whole villages were donated and held in trust for the community. By 1969, 20% of all Indian villages had declared in favor of Gramdan. Even when a particular individual seemed intransigent, Bhave did not abandon his 'cabbage' ideology. "There may be some who may not part with their land immediately," says Bhave, "But I have every hope that even they will give land, if not to-day, to-morrow."

A problem that Bhave faced in the context of a legal system that would expropriate for the government any unregistered land was the identity of the new owner. To address this difficulty, Bhave had donors deed the land in his name, but this method was terribly unwieldy because he and his agents were unable to keep up with the massive amount of legal work needed. Community land trust activists in the United States have developed another approach to this question

which employs a more democratic, manageable and decentralized solution. This form of land tenure uses donated capital to disengage land from the speculative market for use as a common asset of the entire community, usually leasing to individuals below market rates. At least 150 land trust groups exist in the United States at the time of writing (the number is growing), an example of which is the Oregon Women's Land Trust, described by two visitors named Elana and Blackberry:

The Oregon Women's Land (OWL) trust is a non-profit organization, founded to acquire land collectively for women and preserve it in perpetuity. Recognizing that most women are confined to cities with limited financial resources, OWL gives women the opportunity to have access to land for homesteading and farming, camping and retreats. Women need time and space to reclaim their culture. To hold land in trust eliminates owner/tenant power divisions and insures the protection of land from exploitation and speculation. (WI 8/12/76)

While OWL is not an explicitly anarchist project, some anarchists have envisioned similar systems. Graeme Nicholson outlines what he calls a 'mortgage collective':

... consider what kind of work today would be the sort that might lead to expropriation, abundance and anarchy. Of the many things that can be tried, I would like to single out just one for a brief mention, a variation on the housing co-operative. We are acquainted with the skyrocketing prices of land, especially in the big urban centres in Canada, which are putting home ownership beyond the means of middle income earners as well as low income earners, and we have reason to fear skyrocketing rents as well. The sanest answer to the hysteria that this situation is inducing, fanned by speculators, mortgage companies and newspapers, is the expansion of the co-operative sector of housing. And in particular, it may well be possible to create a new sort of structure that is more properly called a mortgage co-operative to arrange financing for a property a family might buy. The family then would hold title to the property, but if they were to sign an agreement to enter the mortgage co-operative they would waive their right to sell the property later on in the real estate market, but instead would oblige themselves to sell the property back to the mortgage co-operative, and the price for which they would sell it back would be the original purchase price, plus allowance for inflation as measured, e.g., by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, not as measured by the real estate market. They would have waived the opportunity to make money through buying a house. In return, the mortgage co-operative would offer this family a far more favourable rate than they could get on the free market. The co-operative would need to be financed itself, and this, I think, could be by the same means that have allowed all other kinds of co-operatives to find financing, including the provisions whereby Central Mortgage and Housing offers beneficial mortgage rates to housing co-operatives in Canada. Such a mortgage co-operative (or for that matter, a full-fledged housing co-operative) would be brought into existence by people who already own homes too; it could buy up the mortgages now held by trust companies or mortgagors, and from this base it could begin to expand. By buying up properties now offered on the market, and offering

them to purchasers under the sort of terms described above, the co-operative could increasingly make housing available, and increasingly cool down the market (no doubt other measures to crush speculation will be needed too). The goal — a community in which property in land would be no more thinkable than property in outer space. (19)

This goal was at least in part the subject of an anarchist experiment in the early twentieth century. Editor of *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* Joseph J. Cohen and members of anarcho-syndicalist groups from cities of the Eastern United States, established the Sunrise Co-operative Farm, instituting the collective ownership and management of land from 1933–38 in Michigan and from then until 1940 in Virginia (Reichert 525–526). Like Cohen, there are contemporary anarchists who believe a prefigurative politics of the possible is required to prove the practicality of a future anarchist land tenure. “Things like this won’t change society overnight” writes one English anarchist of communes, “but will at least open up some degree of freedom from industrial society, can act as a basis for future projects and — most importantly — can become really enjoyable.” (GA summer/93)

Nevertheless, there is much scepticism among urban anarchists as to the efficacy of utopias, or strategies of delinking in the country. Scrawled in pen in the squatter manual *Ideal Home*, put out by Hooligan press in 1985 are the words:

“Warning: Before you ‘leg it’ into the hills don’t expect the worlds problems not to touch you. You will not be immune from the bomb, inflation, police, governments, sexism, racism, authority, ETC... be ready to fight the state because it wont forget you! Anarchy.” (104)

According to some anarchists, idealistic farming is not a challenge to the system of landed property. Only people with economic resources are able to buy land and become self-sufficient. Utopianism satisfies the ‘back to the lander’ because they have land to construct their isolated utopia, and it satisfies the landlord because they are receiving money, but those who do not have money for country land are left in the same position as before, paying rent or fighting eviction. There are, of course, country anarchists who squat land upon which to build their experiments. Most urban anarchists would probably agree that what are called “Land-squats,” in England are excellent because they not only live on the land, but take it back. Green Lane in Salisbury is an example of a successful land squat in England which lasted from 1880 until 1980 when 330 people were evicted.

When the effort to make social change through education, pleading for donations, and creative financing stalls because a landowner or official will listen no longer, many anarchists believe that action is imperative to keep communication dynamic. Resistance at this point promotes resistance among the ‘oppressed’ and re-vitalizes the attention of the ‘oppressor.’ “If the landlords do not respond,” says Bhava, “we will have to ask the peasants to stick on to their land, whatever be the consequences.”

## Occupation and Expropriation

In the face of Philadelphia housing occupations in the 1970s, City Council President George Schwartz astutely warned: “when a person takes the law into his own hands and commits such

illegal acts, then this is the beginning of anarchy.” (quoted in Hartman et al. 68) Occupations are one of the most common forms of resistance to land ownership, and one of the most popular direct actions among anarchists, who tend to spurn crisis-oriented and reactionary politics exogenous to their daily lives, and those which focus on changing government policy. According to historian of English anarchism David Stafford, the decline of the ‘Ban the Bomb’ campaign strengthened the ranks of anarchists who were skeptical of revolutionary action on any ‘macro’ issue, one of whom said “Our preoccupation with crisis-oriented projects will only lead to our defeat in the long run if not in the short run.” (Stafford 100)

Thereafter, the main focus of English anarchist activity in the sixties was directed at issues such as housing, which became a main example of successful anarchist action. A focus on housing direct action is also evident among U.S. anarchists. In September of 1990, after a national march on Washington, squatters and homeless people disillusioned with mainstream homeless organizing occupied an abandoned school on the Lower East Side.

The community applauded and thanked us. Drawing on the richest resource — the talents and skills of the people of this community — ABC soon established a referral network for homeless people, providing medical care, drug counseling and classes in job skills, language, political education, the arts and preparation for the high school equivalency exam. Free clothes and a free meal were available to anyone who walked through its open doors. More than just food and classes, ABC was a direct response to the violence and alienation of living on the streets. It wasn’t just a symbol, it was the real deal to many people. (Free I 8)

Homes Not Jails, an anarchistic (but not explicitly so) squatting organization, was begun in October 1992 in San Francisco, and explicitly disavows government lobbying:

Homes Not Jails’ primary goal is housing for homeless people. They have little belief in the fickle promises of councils, business or charities. HNJ follows in the tradition Emma Goldman started: “If they won’t give you work, ask for housing. If they won’t give you housing, take it!” (Homes Not Jails 17)

As in the example of Homes Not Jails, many land and housing direct actionists consider themselves anarchists because the theoretical attraction to real politics and the occupation of land and housing exists in the earliest annals of anarchism. Bakunin promoted the theory of expropriation at a speech to the Basle Congress, in which he called for social liquidation of social wealth. “By social liquidation I mean expropriation de jure of all current property-owners by the abolition of the political and juridical State, which is the protector and sole guarantor of present property and of all so-called juridical law; and expropriation de facto, by the very force of events and circumstances, wherever and to whatever extent possible.” (131)

These theories, however, were put into practice long before anyone actually called themselves an anarchist, by those who expounded anarchist ideals, and who current anarchists look to for inspiration. The earliest known ‘anarchist’ land occupation was carried out in 1649 by a group of 20–50 anti-authoritarians in Britain who occupied a piece of land owned by an aristocrat Member of Parliament on St. Georges Hill. The occupiers were called ‘Diggers’ because they grew grains and vegetables on the land they recovered, and because their action was associated

with earlier revolts against enclosure. The Midlands Revolt of 1607 first brought the terms 'Levellers' and 'Diggers' into common usage. During this time, large landowners formed enclosures against common grazing by planting hedges on mounds formed by the excavation of ditches. Members of enclosure riots were called Levellers and Diggers because they dug up the hedges and levelled the mounds (Martin 168; Tate 74–75). Like many third and old-world occupations, the mid-seventeenth century Digger movement was initiated after a disastrous harvest which caused massive price hikes, an acute scarcity of commodities and widespread hunger. They built modest dwellings, planted crops, and kept several cows. The landowner brought trespass charges against the Digger venture, and Cromwellian troops repeatedly destroyed their houses and crops and scattered their cattle. Many members served prison terms and some were physically beaten. The landowner finally dispersed the Digger colony when he established a 24 hour guard on the common in the Spring of 1650, threatening death to anyone who might return. Today St. Georges Hill is a golf course and private housing estate where prices start at £600,000.

As should be clear by the fate of St. Georges Hill, squatting is an important form of anarchist direct action in modern society as well. An important aspect of contemporary squatting is homelessness and landlessness, the nature of which many anarchists have maintained, through experience if nothing else, is revolutionary in that it signifies no legal abode or landed workplace. This subaltern status challenges the system of property because in order to survive, the homeless and landless must illegally use land and housing. Hakim Bey notes that:

The negative refusal of Home is “homelessness,” which most consider a form of victimization, not wishing to be forced into nomadology. But “homelessness” can in a sense be a virtue, an adventure — so it appears, at least, to the huge international movement of squatters, our modern hobos. (130)

While some may dismiss the above as a theoreticians manipulation, one Philadelphia anarchist I interviewed pointed out that the nature of politics changes when one is homeless. “Not to sound pretentious, but your whole existence is more political,” Aisha notes regarding a time when she squatted. “Living day to day and worrying about the cops is a different kind of politics than paying rent and going to a meeting.” (Aisha 10) The conflation of homelessness and squatting here is deliberate, as one is the legal or conventional term used by mainstream observers such as governments and academics, and the other is a term used by the politicized ‘homeless,’ who by calling themselves squatters, recognize their own agency and the transformative portent of their daily direct action.

This type of politics, which engages in land recoveries and urban squatting, is frequently successful in holding onto entire housing projects and huge tracts of liberated land. Urban anarchists and autonomists are occupying buildings in most major European cities and are scattered throughout the rest of the world in New York, Vancouver, San Francisco, Lima, Mexico City, and in 1985, Rio de Janeiro. The need to keep the locations of ‘squats’ secret, and the paucity of accurate studies, keeps the extent of squatting extremely difficult to quantify. Although occupations are supported by large communities, the taking of resources is usually occurs without publicity. An early anarchist example shows the importance of secrecy. Proudhon’s grandfather Tornési was a skillful poacher on the lands of the nobility. Says Proudhon in *Carnets*, December 17, 1847 “Tornési ... was celebrated in his village for his audacity in resisting the pretensions of the landlords ... and for his struggles with the foresters, agents of the seigneurs, who would ruin him with fines.” (Vincent, 14)



Nevertheless, there are certain squatter-regions which scholars and activists have attempted to quantify. According to the Hackney Community Defence Association, in 1993 there were 17,000 squatted properties in Britain (personal communication). This number has dropped slightly in recent years due to greater repression and a strengthening of anti-squatting law. In London alone there was an estimated 22,000 squatters in 1975 (Kingsgate Squatters and Rent Strikers Cooperative 7), and 30,000 squatters in 1986 (Ideal Home 44). In the Netherlands there are squatters in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Groningen, Leewarden, Den Haag, Leiden, Dordrecht, Alkmaar, Eindhoven, Haarlem and more (Amsterdam Report 15).

The fact that squatting is not more widespread does not indicate that the general population rejects squatting on an ideological basis, only that real conditions disallow massive squatting at the moment. When political or legal conditions change, squatting rises dramatically. During the 1974 leftist coup in Portugal for example, 35,000 houses were squatted and one fifth of all agricultural land (Mailer 346), 2.87 million acres (Colligan 9), was occupied by over 15,000 workers (Mailer 284). Many of these occupations were non-party or autonomous. After two years of offensives against the land seizures following the right's seizure of power, they were able to evict only 2% of the total acreage originally seized (Colligan 9). The popularity of squatting among the general population has even allowed a few anarchist aspirations to electoral office. In 1970 the Dutch *Kabouters* called for a collectivization of all property as a part of their "Orange Free State," a fictional governmental entity meant to challenge the exclusive power of the Netherlands within their own boundaries. According to historian Peter Marshall (1992: 555),

Among the "people's departments" they established was a Housing Department, which proceeded to take over empty buildings in Amsterdam and make them available to the homeless; this activity proved unpopular with the authorities but drew considerable public support. In June 1970 the *Kabouters* ran in the municipal elections in Holland, winning seats on the city councils of several towns and capturing five of the forty-five places on the Amsterdam city council. Such political activity would appear to contradict the anarchist element of the movement, but van Duyn's views manage to combine reformist tactics with the aspiration to a wholly new society embodying anarchist principles. (Shatz 570)

Those are just the few anarchist or autonomist-inspired actions and geographical locations gleaned from anarchists and squatters with whom I am acquainted and a non-exhaustive reading of the literature. Of course, not all the squatters in each of these cities is anarchist. On the contrary, the squatter population of any given locale consists of a wide variety of individuals and political ideologies. In an interview with queer squatters in East Berlin this is made exceedingly evident:

J: Do People in the squat identify themselves politically as anarchists or autonomen, etc? T: Oh, we've got Catholics, Protestants, Vegetarians, Alcoholics, Drag Queens, Machos, everything. Anti-imperialists, Autonomen, Anarchists, Reformists. J: So there's no one dominating political ideology? T: Left-wing radical (laughter) (Cain 45)

According to Cain's interviewees, there were about 5 squats in West Berlin and 100 in East Berlin in 1991 (46). East Berlin squats revived in 1989 after a period of dormancy since 1981, but

the Mainzerstrasse squats, in which the above interviewee took part, were evicted shortly after the interview took place.

Another example of a European squat is the one mentioned earlier in which the punk band Attrito lives. It demonstrates the collectivist ethic which exists among many anarchist squatters:

Our house was squatted last year, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, and we've almost twenty people living in it. We've squatted as individuals and we live a collective life in the house; in fact on the first floor we have all collective rooms (kitchen, bathroom, video room, etc.) and on the second floor each one has a room. We also have a library, a room where we have books and many political materials, zines, something to distribute, an archives, etc... (Roberta 5)

This collectivist ethic often extends to benefit people beyond one household and its members. Anarchist squatting is generally a part of the larger anarchist community, which supports it ideologically through media such as punk music, amateur magazines called 'zines,' and squatter organizations such as Homes Not Jails in San Francisco. This squatter collectivity was theorized by early anarchist theoreticians such as Max Stirner in the nineteenth century. Within an anarchist theoretical framework peculiar to Stirner, he speaks of diverse individuals combining to form a group with common goals, goals which exhibit a conspicuous absence of morality, a growing hallmark of anarchism and other post-structuralist politics:

If we want no longer to leave the land to the landed proprietors, but to appropriate it to ourselves, we unite ourselves to this end, form a union, a *société*, that makes itself *proprietor*; if we have good luck in this, then those persons cease to be landed proprietors. And, as from the land, so we can drive them out of many another property yet, in order to make it *our* property, the property of the — *conquerors*. The conquerors form a society which one may imagine so great that it by degrees embraces all humanity; but so-called humanity too is as such only a thought (spook); the individuals are its reality. (Stirner 329)

This *société*, or squatter collectivity, is an important component of anarchist success. New York City is the location of a well-publicized squatter struggle, where a coalition of punks, the homeless, and ghetto tenants have involved themselves in an ongoing and decentralized struggle since 1985. Tactics include building seizures for living and organization, confrontations with the police, and the mass occupation of Tompkin's Square Park (MN fall/90). *Profane Existence* describes the dispersed and complimentary elements of organization and ideology at work in the anarchist/punk community on the Lower East Side:

I will define the 'alternative scene' here in NYC as one in which individuals, bands and organizations are working for positive change, outside of the system; people working and struggling against the cruel exploitative and oppressive way of living that we've all been taught and that has been pounded into our brains from day one. (New York City 18)

As the above indicates, many anarchist squatters find it important to look beyond their individual housing situation, or even the squatter struggle in general, to struggle for social change

in the larger society, and find that squatting is conducive to this goal. Aisha states that squatting allowed her political community time with which to immerse themselves in politics:

In all the squats except for the first one they were all sort of like intentional communities where we had some political ideas in mind and we were doing work in the community and going to actions together. There was the squat, but there was also our political thing. The squatting and not paying rent gave us all this free time to do politics. (Aisha 7)

To address politics on a larger scale often means coalition with other groupings who are not necessarily anarchist. Alliance and cross-germination has occurred between British squatters and 'new age travellers,' for example, who tour the country living in their vehicles, going to festivals, creating alternative culture and camping on vacant and public land. This alliance is relatively unknown in the United States, where hippy culture, embodied in the 'Deadheads' and 'Rainbow Tribe' is spurned and looked down upon by most anarchists. One of the reasons for this English-North American divergence is that U.S. hippy culture's involvement in politics is minimal, while this is certainly not the case in England (AY fall/1993), as is evident by a comic published in *Green Anarchy* (summer/93; see figure 4), and the following passage which describes the radical ideological orientation of new age travellers and their adverse relationship to the police:

The Stonehenge Free Festival is a modern day symbol of resistance to private property. The State and its organs spare no effort in putting down our hippy rebellion. Even if those of us involved had short hair, clean clothes, scrubbed fingernails and well controlled dogs, we would still get our heads kicked in by the pigs. (Bob 7)

As in the case of new age travellers, anarchist squats are often carried out publically in order to gain community and media attention in the hopes of swaying public opinion, a tactic which is often successful in gaining important concessions. One example of squatting aimed at informing the public took place in Philadelphia, and is related by Aisha:

There was the time when we did a shanty-town on Penn campus because they did a lot of gentrification and they promised to turn a building into a homeless center. Tim worked with University of Penn and they went back on their promise so we built a shantytown and lived there for a month. This type of 'public squatting' seems to be quite common. I recently involved myself in a small-scale land occupation aimed at informing public opinion around issues of homelessness. The Santa Cruz Union of the Homeless organized an occupation of state-owned land in the middle of the city, with three large family tents, 10–30 people illegally sleeping on the land each night, and 3 communal free meals every day. The encampment lasted four days with extensive community and media support, before the state police arrived and arrested myself and five others for trespass. The action was short and did not achieve our demand for an end to the Santa Cruz City 'no camping' ordinance, which outlaws sleeping in public between eleven at night and six in the morning. Nonetheless, it was extremely effective in that it received widespread radio, television and newspaper coverage. Food Not Bombs Santa Cruz was formed out of the occupation and in the summer of 1993 a garden was illegally planted on the land (Corr: 1993, 8).

## Rent Strike

Another form of direct action with which anarchists have involved themselves is the rent strike. George Woodcock promoted rent strikes in his 1942 pamphlet “New Life to the Land” (30) and Kropotkin’s “The Agrarian Question” describes the rent strike activities of the Land League in Ireland:

Half the country is in revolt against the landlords. The peasants no longer pay their rents to the owners of the land; even those who wish to do so dare not, for fear of being targeted by the Land League, a powerful secret organization that extends its ramifications through the villages and punishes those who fail to obey its dictate: “Refusal of Rents.” The landowners are powerless to continue demanding rent. If they wanted to recover the rents owed to them at this moment, they would have to mobilize a hundred thousand policemen, and this would provoke a revolt. If some landowner decides to evict a non-paying tenant, he has to hurl into the fray at least a hundred policemen, for it will become a matter of resistance, sometimes passive and sometimes armed, by several thousand neighbouring peasants. And if he succeeds, he will not find a farmer willing to take the risk of occupying the property. Even if he should find one, the latter will soon be forced to decamp, for his cattle will have been exterminated, his crops burnt, and he himself condemned to death by the League or some other secret society. The situation becomes untenable for the landowners themselves; in certain districts the value of land has fallen by two-thirds; in others the landowners are proprietors only in name; they can only live on their own land under the protection of a squad of police camped at their doors in iron pillboxes. (1992: 105)

It should not be perceived, by the quotation here of academic anarchists, that grass-roots, or more activist-oriented anarchists, do not also theorize land and housing direct action such as rent strikes. As in the case of squatting, numerous anarchist or punk ‘zines’ are produced which are partially or solely concerned with the advocacy of squatting and rent strikes. The author of *Cometbus*, a contemporary punk zine out of the San Francisco Bay Area, often speaks of his one house ‘rent-strikes’ in which he does not pay rent for several months until he is evicted to squat or ‘rent’ another house. Another guy, who is involved in the Santa Cruz anarchist community, has written extensively on rent boycotts. In a self-published and photo-copied pamphlet entitled “Pledge to Boycott Rent & Mortgage,” he proposes that activists begin the organization of a large city-wide rent strike that would use principles of critical mass to mobilize tenants. He estimates that:

When 1,000 households pledge to boycott rent and mortgage we will have approximately \$700,000 in the first monthly budget of the boycott organization. In the beginning people will continue to pay their rent and mortgage money but not to the

landlords or banks. It will go directly into the secured budget of the boycott organization. This money will be used for only two purposes: to expand the boycott and to prevent eviction. (Marco Mysterioso 1)

While theorizing rent strikes has occupied an important position in anarchism from Kropotkin to the present, the direct action from which it is inspired is also embedded in anarchist history. One of the earliest explicitly anarchist-inspired rent strikes, presented in Nick Rider's "The Practice of Direct Action," (1989) occurred in Barcelona, Spain shortly before the Spanish Civil War, and was one of the largest rent strikes ever to occur in Europe. The Economic Defense Commission of the CNT Construction Union, Formed in Barcelona on April 12, 1931, demanded an immediate 40% decrease in rent, security deposits abolished, and free rent for the unemployed. If a landlord did not comply with the demands, 100% of rent due was to be withheld. In a town of just over one million, the rent strike was extremely successful, organizers claiming 45,000 renters on strike after a month and 100,000 after two months. Militant community demonstrations deterred evictions by intimidation of police and workers hired by landlords. When evictions succeeded, dispossessed tenants were either re-installed or new housing was located for them by the strike organization.

The Barcelona strike was suppressed through a variety of enforcement measures. Over 350 activists were held in jail. The strike organization was heavily fined and forced underground. The police presence was intensified at evictions and belongings of the evicted were confiscated or destroyed. The landowners association, called the Chamber of Urban Property, began to hire their own guards and workers and the army was used in evictions starting during the third month. Morale sagged once rent strikers perceived that the government was able to, and in fact did arrest large numbers of people that resisted.

## Theft

At times squatting and rent strikes are impractical methods of land and housing struggle, for reasons varying from the difficulty of organizing to the extreme repression often visited by landowners and government upon direct actionists, as was the case in Barcelona. In these instances, and even when the environment might be more conducive to occupations and rent strikes, anarchists often choose to engage in what is considered by society 'theft.' This activity is justified by anarchist theory which perceives this act of theft as the only option open to the poor for the return of goods unjustly taken by the propertied class through legalized processes of wealth maldistribution. Malatesta, for example, writes that when one must provide for oneself or ones family that which they need to avoid hunger, "theft (if it can be so called) is a revolt against social injustice, and can become the most sacred right and also the most urgent of duties." (168-169) This theory was frequently carried out by impoverished agriculturalists in early anarchist history. For example, Andalusian peasants stole food in the latter nineteenth century during periods of high unemployment or government repression, making it impossible for the rich to live on their country estates (Kaplan 28). Emiliano Zapata, who I already mentioned is a hero to current anarchists, and his brother Eufemio, were highwaymen who took especial interest in robbing the rich long before the name of Zapata was famous throughout Mexico as a revolutionary (Stevenson 30). During the 1880s, an Italian anarchist named Pini carried out a number of robberies in Paris and the countryside and revived the discussion as to whether or not

theft is advisable for revolutionary means. In answer to several anarchists, including Kropotkin, who were against theft, Elisée Reclus writes:

1. Does the collectivity have the right to recover the products of its work? Yes, a thousand times yes. This recovery is the revolution and nothing can be done without it. 2. Does a proportion of the collectivity have the right to partial recovery of the collective products? Beyond question. When the revolution cannot be total, one makes it to the extent that one can. 3. Does the individual have the right to personal recovery of his part of the collective property? How can there be any doubt? Since the collective property is appropriated by a few, why would he acknowledge this property in detail, when he does not recognize it in toto? He has the absolute right, therefore, to take — to steal, in common language. The new morality must develop in this respect, it must enter into the spirit and into the mores. (Fleming 151)

The historical legacy of theft continues in current anarchist community. In none of my contact with anarchists, primarily within the communities of San Francisco and Santa Cruz, California, and at national and international conferences, have I met an anarchist who opposed ‘stealing from the rich.’ Most of the anarchists with whom I am intimate carry out acts of theft on a routine basis, if not always against landlords, then against the class of which they are a part.

## **Sabotage**

When it is impossible to steal from landlords, anarchists have often used the tactic of sabotage. The philosophy behind what some may view as wanton and needless destruction is, by anarchist accounts, quite rational. If one increases the social and economic cost of absentee ownership, then one decreases its value, making ownership by the occupier or agricultural worker a greater possibility, if only infinitesimally so during the beginning stages of direct action. In any case, it is a quite common anarchist response to land and housing issues. During the early 1870s in Andalusia, groups of the rural poor such as the Disenherited Ones targeted landlord assets by setting fire to crops and haylofts, killing watch dogs, injuring cattle, cutting grape-vines, burning wheat fields and olive groves, and trying to destroy some of the farmhouses (Bookchin 103; Kaplan 28). In the early 1930s, anarchists in small Spanish towns such as Casas Viejas, Alto Llobregat, and Gijon burned property registers when they declared ‘comunismo libertario,’ disrupting the ability of the propertied to resume title after retaking control (Guillen 7). Malatesta theorizes the efficacy of destroying title deeds: “What we are concerned with is the destruction of the titles of the proprietors who exploit the labour of others and, above all, of expropriating them in fact in order to put the land, houses, factories and all the means of production at the disposal of those who do the work.” (103) If anything, the use of sabotage has grown in the contemporary anarchist movement. Aisha, an anarchist squatter in Philadelphia during the late 1980s, put toothpicks and glue in the locks of her neighborhood police station. During a peak of land speculation in Germany, anarchist and member of West Berlin’s urban terrorist ‘June 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement,’ Bommi Baumann suggested that people “bomb the offices of a man like Mosch who makes outrageous speculations and land reclamations, so-called, at the expense of the people.” (88) In early-1980s Zurich, construction firms connected to the housing problem were sabotaged with firebombs. A man involved with the movement explains that “This, the most secret level of the movement,

causes millions of dollars of damage. They have no mandate, they do it on their own, you don't know who's doing it. But they leave leaflets on the place saying, 'This is because you raised the rents.'" (MN 7/81)

Anarchist theory posits these acts of sabotage as useful in that they dissuade domination and the acquisition of profit through land ownership, because any gains so held are liable to be destroyed. Below is an example of the justification and mechanics of sabotage against real estate development from a contemporary English anarchist. It stresses the 'right' of local communities to control their environment over the profit-driven demands of propertied interests and the government.

You have a right to defend your community and your quality of life whatever the bureaucrats decide. You're going to have to live with the mess the developers made — they won't. This leaflet explains how you can stop the developers — if they won't. You can stop the developers by sabotage. Just because it's not legal doesn't mean it's mindless violence or vandalism... Dooming construction means secreting rock salt (used for gritting roads) into sand or cement on site. Once the development is finished, ring the Council's Engineering Department anonymously from a public call box saying what you've done. The development will have to be bulldozed as structurally unsound as dissolving rock salt will create voids in the cement and degrade it. (Green Anarchist 11)

Besides putting direct pressure on landowners, sabotage has proved effective against elected officials who have control over public housing. When the Lambeth government in England declared an intention to evict squatters and sell their older houses, squatters attacked the party responsible. The following appeared in *Ideal Home*, a how-to book on the practical aspects of squatting:

In anger, unknown groups and individuals attacked homes and businesses of tory councillors. Mainly it was just graffiti and damage to cars, except in the case of Gordon Leigh (who had defected from the labour party [party], giving the tories the one vote they needed to take control of the council). Leigh's home, shop, and lorries were continuously attacked. Eventually this non-principled shit rejoined the labour party and with his vote gave the lefties power again, thanks to us! (48)

## Violence

A much more dangerous mode of social change, both to the actionist's personal welfare and to the anarchist ideal of future society, is that of violence. It is commonly agreed among anarchists that violence is detestable, and should only be used as a last resort when human life is in direct danger. Education is the essential element of long-term change, and though violence does create the discussion which leads to education, it is not nearly as educationally effective as nonviolence, which is a theory specifically designed for conscious change on the part of the 'oppressor.' Too often we have seen the stated goals of violent revolutions transformed into systems which are little better than their predecessors.

That said, many anarchists, both in history and recent times, have felt the weight of land and housing conditions to be so extreme as to justify the use of violence. This choice is not an easy one, and usually occurs only when all other methods of change fail and the actionist is willing to undergo the incredible risk which violent action entails. Nevertheless, many early anarchist theoreticians have reserved an important role for the use of violence, seeing it as a primary, if not the main vehicle of social change. Stirner saw violence, almost to the exclusion of other methods, as the answer to existing conditions and the way to achieve liberation: "Crime, then, — so the individual's violence is called; and only by crime does he overcome the State's violence when he thinks that the State is not above him, but he above the State" (Stirner, 258) Likewise, Kropotkin pointed out in the nineteenth century that change of property in England would only be achieved through the use of force. "One thing is certain, that England is proceeding in the direction of the abolition of individual property in land, and that the opposition encountered by that idea on the part of the landowners will prevent the transformation from taking place in a peaceful manner; to make its wishes prevail, the people of England will have to resort to force." (1992: 111)

Because anarchists rarely attempt to capture state apparatuses, a method of change which requires a large and organized army, their choice of violent means is often more selective, and thus less destructive. This method of violence, namely assassination or political murder, is on the other hand delegitimized by almost all sources of information, and every political location on the spectrum, as is clear by the literal meaning of the word 'assassin,' which is from the Arabic 'hashish-eater.' In contradiction to this hegemonic criticism, anarchists have consistently considered the use of assassination as a viable, and even preferable mode of social change to that of conventional army-based revolution. If violence in self-defence is justified, why, according to the dominant understanding of political ethics, must violence only be directed at people who are actually attacking you at the moment? These aggressors, while actually wielding the violent implement, are not the ones to benefit from the violence. They are more commonly the working class who must bear the humiliation and danger of the actual deed while being paid very low wages as infantry or police. Roland Gaucher quotes a justification of assassination from Stepniak's *Underground Russia*, which highlights the way in which the subaltern 'oppressor' is only a pawn controlled by an economic and military hierarchy.

If you decide to kill a spy, why shouldn't you punish the policeman who encourages his base profession and who profits from his information by making more arrests? Or even the chief of police who directs the whole thing? Finally and inevitably comes the Tsar himself, whose power spurred the whole gang to action. The logic of things forced the revolutionaries to take all these steps, one after the other. (10)

The earliest and theoretically-oriented anarchists praised groups which used assassination against landlord hierarchies. For example, Bakunin fervently supported the Russian revolutionary society Zemlja i Volja (Land and Liberty), if not in deed, at least with rhetoric. Active from 1862–1863 and mentioned earlier as dividing the population into the czarist party (which included all landlords) and the non-possessing revolutionaries, Land and Liberty desired to bring about the revolution through direct action, and if need be, but not admittedly, czaricide. In 1862 a related group called Young Russia issued the following proclamation:

Inspired with full confidence in ourselves, in our energies, in popular sympathy, in the splendid future of Russia, predestined to be the first of all countries to realize



socialism, we shall sound the clarion call, "Seize your axes." Then we shall strike down the members of the czarist party, shall strike them unpityingly as they have unpityingly struck us, shall hew them down in the squares should the rout venture forth into the open, hew them down in their dwellings, in the narrow alleys of the towns, in the wide streets of the capitals, in the villages and the hamlets." (Masaryk, 465)

In the fall of 1879 a later group (1877–1879) also named Land and Liberty split into the terrorist group Narodnaja Volja (People's Will) and a moderate group advocating nonviolence and education. Plekhanov was one of the principle critics of assassination during the split, and became the first major Russian Marxist, and the primary theoretician of the Social Democratic Party (Gaucher 12). The purpose of the People's Will was to terrorize the government and the reactionary elements of society, and they did so by attempting to assassinate the czar four times (Masaryk 478). A year after its creation, the program of the People's Will defines the role of terrorism as follows:

Terrorist action means liquidating the worst government officials, defending the party against espionage, and punishing the most outstanding acts of violence and despotism that the government and the administration commit. It aims to compromise the prestige of governmental power, to give constant proof that it is possible to fight the government, to strengthen thereby the revolutionary spirit of the people and its faith in the success of the cause, and finally to form capable cadres trained in the struggle. (Gaucher 12)

Assassination is a recurrent theme in anarchist history, and was used by other anarcho-agrarian movements in the nineteenth century. Bookchin writes of the anarchist Desheredados of Andalusia, who operated during the late 1870s and early 1880s, a time marked by near famine conditions and land occupations.

Although there may have been more talk than actual violence among the Desheredados, the Jerez district had already experienced many acts of incendiarism and a number of assassinations. The victims of the assassinations were mostly informers for the police and occasionally landlords. It is quite possible that the Desheredados, together with other secret societies in the area, were involved in some of the murders. The twilight zone in which these groups operated makes it impossible to distinguish fact from myth. (Bookchin, 106)

The ethic of politico-economic murder directed against landlords has survived into modern anarchism. One of the earliest North American punk bands, the Dead Kennedys, sing "Let's Lynch the Landlord" on their album *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, outlining the frustration held by urban anarcho-punks. During a live performance, lead singer Jello Biafra states previous to singing "Let's Lynch the Landlord" that "This is a song for people who squat and make it good." (Dead Kennedys 1982) In the song itself, Biafra refers to several core anarchist justifications regarding assassination, including the permeability of government and landlords, symbolized by the buying of City Hall, the unbearableness of social conditions, and the ineffectualness of milder forms of social change such as requesting routine upkeep by the landlord.

The landlord's here to visit  
They're blasting disco down below  
Sez, I'm doubling up the rent  
Cos the building's condemned  
You're gonna help me buy City Hall  
But we can, you know we can  
But we can, you know we can  
Let's lynch the landlord man  
I tell them 'turn on the water'  
I tell'em 'turn on the heat'  
Tells me 'All you ever do is complain'  
Then they search the place when I'm not here  
But we can, you know we can  
Let's lynch the landlord  
Let's lynch the landlord  
Let's lynch the landlord man  
There's rats chewin' up the kitchen  
Roaches up to my knees  
Turn the oven on, it smells like Dachau, yea  
Til the rain pours thru the ceiling  
But we can, you know we can  
Let's lynch the landlord, man

An English variant on the same theme by anarchist writer 'Bob' in the summer 1993 land issue of *Green Anarchist*, points to other reasons for the use of assassination. Like the Russian anarchists of a century earlier, Bob finds the targetting of armies and the police as relatively ineffective. He prefers rather to target the forces which employ these armies, namely, the "monarchy and aristocracy," by which he means those who, "generation after generation, have inherited our soil."

... the destruction of governments, economies and police forces leads only to temporary anarchy. The Monarchy and aristocracy soon find new ways of paying armies to enforce governance. If we want to free ourselves once and for all from the tyranny of Governments, capitalism, slavery and private property, we need to cut heads off. The heads that generation after generation have inherited our soil — poisoning it in this one for all future generations. The monarchy and aristocracy need to go. Madame Guillotine or otherwise. (7)

These violent sentiments arise from actual occasions of targeting landlord interests which are often quite successful. For example, when Berlin Mayor Walter Momper ordered the eviction of squatted houses in the Mainzerstrasse (former East Germany), squatter resistance forced him to arrest 370 after 500 people fought 3,000 riot police equipped with special vehicles and water cannons for two nights. In reaction, but falling short of actual assassination, a group of masked youths hit Momper's several times on the head with a stick, and in another instance, paint was publicly thrown onto his car (Berlin 1, Squatters 1, 4). The general upheaval caused by the squatter resistance, of which these attacks were a part, caused the Momper government to disintegrate. "His fragile coalition government" fell apart, reports Chris Flash of the Shadow, "when leftists walked out in solidarity with the squatters." (12/90) Another successful instance of attack on an individual occurred in Zurich during a struggle to dissuade development in the context of squatting, handcuffing oneself to employees, and the incineration of a McDonald's. Although the attack was not fatal, when major real estate investor Victor Kleinert's residence was bombed in 1983, the development was immediately discontinued (p.m. 80).

## Insurrection

While land and housing struggles have at times spawned isolated attacks on landlord interests, at other times these attacks have grown to become a generalized phenomenon resulting in insurrectionary armies. Andalusian anarchists in Spain have repeatedly risen in insurrection against agrarian conditions, movements whose regularity, while not necessarily succeeding in capturing state power, has at least defined the outside limit of landlord oppression. In 1892 five to six-hundred anarchist peasants, most of whom were landless laborers, marched on Jerez, a small town in Southern Spain, with the object of overthrowing the local government. This was coordinated by anarchist communities in Ubrique, Lebrija, and Arcos. They were quickly quashed, most imprisoned, and the entire population was harassed for five years following (Kaplan 173).

About a decade later in 1903 an agricultural strike in the regions of Jerez and Alcalá del Valle ended — as many late nineteenth century Andalusian strikes did — in community insurrection (Kaplan 203). The revolt was short-lived, and Andalusian anarchism was forced underground.

The next reemergence occurred as a string of events shortly before the Spanish Civil War in rural areas of Andalusia, Catalonia and Aragon between 1932 and 1933 (Oved 43), one example of which took place in the small Andalusian town of Casas Viejas. Spanish landlords had tremendous power during this era. In 1914 over one half of the 50,000 hectares of Medina Sidonia, of which Casas Viejas is a part, was owned by twenty-two men. In nearby Cádiz, 500 people owned 74% of the land in 1930. Charcoal burners paid from 15% to 50% of their product for the permission to gather wood — the taking of which benefitted the land's productivity. Wages were low relative to the cost of produce, and in 1913 more than 50% of infants died before the age of three. The four-person civil guard in Casas Viejas was used to deny freedom of speech and access to surrounding vacant lands. Gradations of social scale usually corresponding to the amount of land owned.

The hegemony of landowners did not go unquestioned. "The land that all of us work," states Miguel Pavón, a charcoal burner, "belongs to all of us." The anarchist critique of land ownership was promulgated by papers such as *La Tierra*, and the FAI journal *Tierra y Libertad*, published in

Barcelona. In a popular fictional piece about twenty years previous to the uprising, José Sánchez Rosa writes:

Those who are called *amos* [owners] are in possession of the riches that belong to all men. They usurp, retain, and exploit treasures that are not theirs. Still worse, they rob the rest of mankind of their natural and social rights. And I say that the lands and other treasures do not belong to them because the land should not be the exclusive property of anyone. It was not made by anyone. It is a natural element and ought to be for the common benefit of all the children of nature, just as we have the benefit of the air when we breathe in the free countryside and the heat of the sun. And though secular laws and customs favor him — he will be condemned by natural law, each time louder and louder. (Mintz 58)

These sentiments were put into practice in 1932 when *comunismo libertario* in Casas Viejas was declared after revolutionaries killed two civil guards in a firefight. The vineyard lands were the focus of anarchist attention during the uprising, where workers on the edge of starvation occupied hundreds of acres. As in other areas, the armed period of the Casas Viejas experiment ended relatively easily. A modest national invasion force overwhelmed the small arms of the participants in only a few hours, followed by the execution of twenty-eight resisters. While the various Spanish revolts of this period may have lasted only a short while, they raised standards of living by widening access to land. One hundred and forty families in Medina Sidonia maintained control of land they occupied after the insurrection was crushed, and the possibility of further unrest inspired a brief period of government-sponsored.

Another anarchist rebellion, this time in Mexico, was led by Ricardo Flores Magón, who held particularly adamant views on the land issue. He was the president of the anarchist Mexican Liberal Party (PLM) which fielded troops for the Mexican revolution during the early twentieth century. Their flag was emblazoned with the traditional anarchist slogan *Tierra y Libertad*, (Land and Liberty) which Magón got from the Spanish anarchists who inherited it from the Russian terrorists mentioned earlier, *Narodnaja Volja*. Though finally routed by forces under the control of President Madero in 1911, the fluctuating PLM army of 100 to 500 men and women managed to fly their flag for four and a half months over Mexicali, and for one and a half months over Tijuana, the two largest population centers in Baja California. Magón was captured by federal officials in the United States and then murdered in prison, possibly by the warden, while serving a twenty-year sentence for a manifesto that he had written and published addressed “to the members of the party, to the anarchists of the whole world, and to the workers in general.” It made a general appeal to intellectuals demanding that they prepare the masses for the eventual downfall of the present economic and political system by revolution. Magón writes in an essay entitled “To Arms! To Arms for Land and Liberty!”

Slaves! Take the Winchester in hand! Work the Land, but only after you have taken it into your own possession! To work it now is to rivet your chains, for you are producing more wealth for the masters, and wealth is power, wealth is strength, physical and moral, and the strong will hold you always in subjection. Be strong yourselves! Be strong and rich, all of you, by making yourselves masters of the Land! But for this you need the gun. Buy it or borrow it, in the last resort! Throw yourselves into the struggle, shouting with all your strength “Land and Liberty!” (Magón 46)

The views of Emiliano Zapata and the Zapatistas, while not explicitly anarchist like his contemporary Magón, are commonly considered in accordance with anarchist philosophy (as are their predecessors in the 1990s, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, or EZLN, in Chiapas). George Woodcock notes this in his 1964 treatment of Latin American anarchism:

The philosophy of the Zapatista movement, with its egalitarianism and its desire to re-create a natural peasant order, with its insistence that the people must take the land themselves and govern themselves in village communities, with its distrust of politics and its contempt for personal gain, resembled very closely the rural anarchism that had risen under similar circumstances in Andalusia... his movement seems to have gained its anarchic quality most of all from a dynamic combination of the leveling desires of the peasants and his own ruthless idealism. (Woodcock: 1964, 484)

Perhaps the most popular hero of the Mexican revolution in contemporary Mexico, Emiliano Zapata led indigenous farmers of southern Mexico in guerrilla warfare under the Plan de Ayala, which called for, among other things, "expropriation of the lands for the sake of public utility, expropriation of the property of the people's enemies, and restitution to the towns and communities all the domains of which they have been despoiled." (Stevenson 40) This goal achieved some definite successes. Title deeds to more than 500 haciendas were destroyed and the terrain occupied by three to four million Indians. (Stevenson 37) The Zapatistas spent their time plowing and reaping newly won lands and took up arms only to repel invasion (Woodcock: 1964, 484).

Another anarchist rebellion which centered on demands for the redistribution of land was that of Nestor Makhno, who began his revolutionary career modestly with the leadership of a small band of peasant raiders to expropriate the estates of local Ukrainian gentry in the summer of 1917 (Sonn 66). He used classic guerilla tactics: rapid movement, lightning attacks and withdrawals, and merging with the peasantry when cornered (Miller 102) in his fight against various forces including the Bolsheviks, the White Army of Denikin, Ukrainian nationalists led by Petliura, the Austro-Germans, and the army of Trotsky. Even though he was faced with this impressive array of forces, Makhno's army boasted some impressive, if limited, achievements. For half a year in 1919, Makhno's army controlled a roughly circular area of 480 by 400 miles in the Southern Ukraine, within which lived 7 million inhabitants (Guérin 98). Wherever they could, the Makhnovists redistributed land and instituted the agricultural cooperatives mentioned earlier. During this period the army was twenty to fifty-thousand strong, with three-thousand cavalry and five-hundred machine-guns. A huge black flag led the ranks, with the slogans 'Liberty or Death, Land to the Peasants, Factories to the Workers' embroidered in silver. With the growing power of the centralized revolutionaries, however, the Makhnovists lost ground. Trotsky dispersed Makhno's army and shot his commanders in November of 1920.

While contemporary Western anarchists have forgone the traditional rural army formations of their predecessors, anarchist squatter settlements in Europe and New York tend towards insurrection when they reach a certain critical mass embodied by political awareness, numbers, and organization. In Germany for example, I have already mentioned that the struggle has involved protracted week-long street battles between entire neighborhoods of squatters, their national supporters, and the police. In New York City, the squatter organization called Eviction Watch can be called to institute an immediate 24-hour guard, fortify and barricade the squats, and resist

police intrusion with piss buckets, molotov cocktails and bricks. This type of community creates a situation from which insurrectionary sentiment is fostered. One New York squatter states:

There is a network of people who are connected already. I would say like three hundred, four hundred people, who are connected up, who share a similar feeling that it's really time to try to take the whole historical project a little further, who are talking, although sometimes they don't use the same language, they're talking insurrection, evicting the police, the representatives of the state, out of the neighborhood. They're talking localism — a very radical kind of localism. (Land, Wealth, and Self-Determination 74)

## **Solidarity and Coalition**

Organization, solidarity, coalition, and the power which comes in their wake is the foundation of successful anarchist actions, as should be evident from instances of insurrection mentioned above. Before organizing an army after his release from prison in 1917, Makhno organized peasants of his village. He founded a farm-workers' union, organized a workers' commune and a local peasants' soviet. "The problem that concerned him most," writes Arshinov "was that of uniting and organizing the peasants into a powerful and firm alliance so that they would be able once and for all to drive out the landed gentry and the political rulers and to manage their lives." (53) During East Berlin's squatting of the early 1990s, about 80 squats federated with each other. They were able to use this organization to collectively negotiate with the government (HO 2/91). The squatters' guide *Ideal Home* listed squatter organizations, crediting them with the huge success of squatting in London. "The long running ADVISORY SERVICE for SQUATTERS (ASS) has played an excellent encouraging and co-ordinating role in developing squatting, not only in London, but throughout the country," they write. "Its got to be said that without ASS the present day squatting scene would not be where it is today." (43) London's squatter solidarity is not only noted within England, but is legend among the international anarchist community. Two white South Africans who have squatted in several parts of the world, Miranda and Pixie, emphasised that:

Miranda: If someone goes to prison or gets nicked [arrested] for something by the cops all the people are with him completely. They go to the jail and wait. The Earth First!ers call it an 'affinity group.' If a person is in trouble, you're completely there for them. If they get nicked for shoplifting or anything, immediately someone gets the word out and it brings the energy and they work with the people. Two weeks before we left, which was about a month ago, they were having a party and there were a lot of French and Hungarian people there illegally. The coppers came and tried to break in. We said 'You can't break in, we're having a party. We'll turn the music down if that is what you want.' They called back-up and stormed the house and hectically beat up the squatters. They arrested about eighteen of them and kept eleven in custody. They beat up the squatters and then accused them of assault. They had to stay in prison and then give the police two thousand pounds to get parole and they had to check in every single night at the prison to sign on. They weren't allowed out of the Brixton area. They were fucking with these people with laws.

Pixie: One British person and eleven people from Czechoslovakia and France were kept in the system. The British person was set free, but he had to sign in at the Brixton police station every day, which means you can't leave London at all, because you can't go anywhere in one day. You aren't allowed out anyway. All the others had a thousand-pound bail in order to come out. The court case was set for six months time. They were going to be held in remand for six months if they didn't get a thousand pound bail. We knew only a few of them personally. We squatted only with the one guy, who was a really good friend of ours, but he is chased by the police everywhere he goes. The other people we didn't know so well, but everyone in the whole area was pooling. There were benefits every weekend. The people we were squatting with wrote up pamphlets and passed them around at demos. The amount of money raised was unbelievable. At every festival they sold beer or cider and profits were donated. Suddenly all their energy went to saving their people, all ten of them. [Ten thousand pounds was raised by people who have nothing. -M] If they had wanted to go travelling, they wouldn't have made the money because they wouldn't have had the passion to do it. They didn't do it for themselves, but they suddenly put out all this energy and got the people out of prison, which was absolutely phenomenal. They have one set of clothes, don't have cars or houses, but they have money to get people out of jail. (AY fall/93)

Although coalition with anarchists and even non-anarchist groups is an essential part of squatter organizing, anarchists do not join with others indiscriminately. The queer contingent of Class War Santa Cruz released a flyer at an A.I.D.S. march, which shunned their loyalty to rich queers in favor of solidarity with the homeless and other marginalized groups.

As poor and working queers our interests do not lie with those who own our community, those who put on little shows to make us feel like they're doing something about the very situation they're profiteering off of and doing everything in their power to perpetuate. Our interests are more in common with immigrants, welfare mothers, the homeless, and other groups stigmatized and baited by the media and the ruling elite.

As I already noted, one of the groups with which many North American anarchists feel it is useful to coalition is Native American activists. If anarchists are not currently in armed insurrection, it aids our cause to ally ourselves with those who are. Native American activist, 'Indigenist,' and Colorado chair of the American Indian Movement Ward Churchill notes that the support of Indian land recovery serves to subvert core dominatory constructs against which anarchists struggle:

Everything the state does, everything it can do, is entirely contingent upon its maintaining its internal cohesion, a cohesion signified above all by its pretended territorial integrity, its ongoing domination of Indian Country. Given this, it seems obvious that the literal dismemberment of the nation-state inherent to Indian land recovery correspondingly reduces the ability of the state to sustain the imposition of objectionable relations within itself. Realization of indigenous land rights serves to undermine or destroy the ability of the status quo to continue imposing a racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, militaristic order upon non-Indians. (1993, 422)

## Land Ownership as Fiction

The transformation of land and housing from a commodity to something which more closely resembles a community resource takes not only the military prowess of direct action, but a shift in our modes of understanding. In order to achieve an anarchist organization of housing and land, anarchists have often posited the present system of spatial property as fictive in nature. “It is only the abstract mentality which sees space as a commodifiable resource,” writes Francis Reed, “to be let by the square metre, a void to be filled, that has thrown the relationship out of balance and spawned a rigid formalism completely lacking in habitable space.” According to these theories, land and housing ownership is a juridical construction with roots in, among other things, the warrior clans of pre-imperialist Rome, feudal monarchies, the Napoleonic Code, English Common Law, and European imperialism. As an imaginative method of domination it has worked well in forcing us to believe that the land upon which we stand belongs to this fictive concept of an ‘owner,’ but by acts of will it is possible to transcend ourselves and, to use an anarchist conception, the ‘cop in our head.’ When you are clear that the present system of ownership is deeply flawed, when you have a vision of, and act in accordance with a land and housing ethic based on your desire, the system of spatial ownership, according to anarchists, will be demoted to the status of a fiction. “Private property lives by grace of the law,” writes Stirner. “Only in the law has it its warrant — for possession is not yet property, it becomes ‘mine’ only by assent of the law; it is not a fact, not un fait as Proudhon thinks, but a fiction, a thought.” (332)

Change thought and a revolution takes place. In a world where fictional paradigms continue, a path is open to action and resistance for those who think outside the structuralist bounds of property. Rather than passively accept the hegemonic norm, anarchists continue to use a wide variety of action, including violence, non-violence, squatting, land occupations, education, theft, sabotage, and insurrection in their creation of new organizational bases for land and housing.



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## Periodicals

- AM AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review
- AN Anarchy (England)

AY Anarchy (United States)  
GN Grito del Norte (New Mexico)  
MN Midnight Notes  
NI New Internationalist  
PE Profane Existence  
SH Shadow (New York City)  
SL Slingshot (Berkeley)  
WI Win  
HO Homocore  
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Index

## Discard

I.R. Ybarra exposes the human cost of eviction in the context of modern North America:

Tenants Ernie and Pauline, who were living together, split up in the stress of the dislocation. Elderly Mrs. Cruzon, who'd lived in her apartment for over 20 years, managed to find a cheap rooming house where she lived in cramped conditions with little privacy during the remaining few years of her life. Because of the necessity of paying deposits and utility connection fees, initial expenses are far higher than month-to-month expenses in an established situation; therefore, almost all the former tenants of Mrs. E.'s were at once reduced to severely inferior living conditions when new landlord Neff tripled the rents and thereby forced them to move. Fred found a small stone shack, while Larry wound up in a violent and foul-smelling slum building with one toilet for 25 people, no shower, and no running water in his room. (Ybarra 8)

Many anarchists link capitalism Bob Sipe writes:

Capitalism is more than a system of economic exploitation; inherent in its development and operation is the ability to destroy non-capitalist cultures, to reshape their disbursed people in its own image, and to engender profound alienation and unhappiness for individuals under its yoke. Psychological and cultural colonization is an inevitable companion to economic colonization. (110)

The rape of the environment, a somewhat familiar metaphor, can be further illustrated by the parallels between land ownership and marriage. "Marriage laws sanctified rape" states feminist scholar Andrea Dworkin "by reiterating the right of the rapist to ownership of the raped." (quoted in Kramarae 253) As the marriage certificate creates a property in the woman, "providing a legal qualification that a husband cannot rape his own wife," (Clark and Lewis 1977) so the title deed creates a property in the land, providing a legal right to the rape of the environment.



Land ownership has a detrimental effect on the environment through the large unemployed landless or semi-landless population created by its characteristics of artificial scarcity and inequality of distribution. Denied access to agricultural land, families must seek survival in the fragile soils of native forests. Brazil is an especially glaring example of needless destruction, a country in which maldistribution of land is the leading cause of deforestation. Only one fifth of the potentially productive land was being worked in 1986 (Silverstein 10). Catherine Caufield's *In the Rainforest* states:

Brazil has 2.3 acres of farmland per person, which is more than the United States, the world's greatest exporter of food. Taking potential farmland into account but still leaving aside Amazonia, each person in Brazil could have 10 acres. Instead, 4.5 percent of Brazil's landowners own 81 percent of the country's farmland, and 70 percent of rural households are landless. (Caufield 39)

Many of Brazil's landless, facing starvation, clear the rain forest which in 1988 was 8 to 10 percent smaller than its original size (Hecht 232). It is ironic that the amount of Brazilian rainforest left, 3.8 million square kilometers (Repetto 1988: 273), is nearly equal to the amount of agricultural land that is being held out of production for speculative reasons by a few powerful landlords and the government. If utilized and distributed in an equitable manner, this 3.35 million square kilometers (Amnesty International Publications 1988: 5) would virtually halt Brazil's destruction of the Amazon, the world's largest tropical moist forest.

Dominative land tenure, that is, land tenure which is organized by hierarchy and domination, is a part of the larger dominatory construct of territoriality. Territoriality is not exclusive to the human race or western culture. Many animals, though not most, are territorial in their behavior.

Although societies that have not been influenced by Western culture are often presented as being without territoriality or landownership, this claim is often baseless upon close scrutiny. Tribes claim and fight for exclusive access to hunting or gathering grounds, village areas and water sources. Individuals within tribes often have exclusive rights to salmon streams, root patches, berry bushes, ocean waters, acorn trees and land of spiritual significance. One reason for Euro-American ignorance surrounding Native American property rights is that the belief that 'all Indians didn't believe in land ownership' lends itself to the justification of North American expropriation and colonialism.

Though territoriality occurs in many cultures and historical periods, this essay focuses on the Western form of land ownership, as the one with which I am most familiar and which is primarily in use throughout the world.

## **Forced Acquisition of Labor**

Territoriality is deeply ingrained within humanity. Origins of territoriality include the learned and biologically ingrained characteristics of material acquisition and competition. Survival for the purpose of procreation is the primary biological concern of the individual human, even when that means the destruction of other individuals. This leads to forced acquisition of the products of other people's labor when it is beneficial for an individual to do so. In early human societies this might have meant taking food or tools from a neighbor's cave by brute force. An occasional robbery, always successful, might evolve into periodic robbery so as not to destroy the productive

capacity of the 'host.' As the intellect advances and society takes on greater significance among humans, the early robber might find it expedient to confuse the robbed by offering a justification of their robbery. This might be 'God says I own you, and thus have power over you and your produce,' or 'God says I own the land upon which you depend, and therefore I own your product.'

Land ownership is only one of many justifications used throughout history for the forced acquisition of labor. Citizen Fish sings:

This exploitation based on class Is here in the present like it was in the past  
History builds an image that we never look behind Someone giving orders while the rest are  
kept in line

Perhaps the earliest example is slavery, which has existed in various forms throughout recorded history. Asia, Europe, Africa and many indigenous North and South American tribes practiced slavery. Slavery was mostly ended by the nineteenth century and was made illegal in its last holdout, the Arabian Peninsula, in 1970.

Serfdom, where peasant farmers were bound to a manor owned by their master, is another example of the forced acquisition of labor. Most common between the fifth and fourteenth centuries A.D. in Western Europe, peasant uprisings in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries contributed to Serfdom's demise. Serfdom was also a major part of Russian and Chinese history.

Feudalism, in which all the land of a kingdom is held in fief by vassals from lords, who in turn get rights to the land directly from the king, is a system of land tenure that was current from approximately the eighth to the fourteenth centuries. Feudalism existed in Europe, Japan, and the Philippines.

Simple land ownership was the successor to feudalism. There have been various forms of land ownership, called many different names according to how payment is made: through money, days of labor, or in the type of crop produced on the land, whether a lease is involved, and what seems to be a limitless combination of these variables. Each system was used and then discarded for a slightly different system that served the same basic purpose, the forced acquisition of labor.

The United States and its economic demand for labor is a good example of the exchangeability of landownership and slavery. Unlike Europe, in which land was scarce, North American colonies had an unlimited supply of land for Europeans, who were able to drive Native Americans off the land. Writes William Gottlieb:

Because land was easy to obtain, wage labor was relatively scarce and consequently wages were higher than in Europe. This encouraged the use of semislave and slave labor in the colonies. The demand for African slaves and their status as a pariah class in the "land of the free" has its origins in the great abundance of almost free land.  
(15)

Scholar of the postbellum South Steven Hahn explains the strategy of planters to retain the labor of former slaves:

Reeling from the twin jolts of military defeat and abolition, though having avoided general land confiscation, they moved to reclaim the labor of ex-slaves who hoped to farm for themselves or, at least, to escape the rigors of plantation life. In the South, as in other post-emancipation societies, the fists of coercion and repression came down

in efforts to restrict the freedmen's mobility, alternative employment opportunities, and access to the means of production and subsistence, tying them to the land as a propertyless work force. (Hahn 37)

Brazil serves as a useful example of the similar effects of slavery and land ownership:

Brazil abolished slavery 100 years ago. It was the last of the countries in South America to do so, but for almost half of its 145 million inhabitants — those who are of black or mixed race — there is little to celebrate. For thousands of slaves the 'golden law' brought emancipation in name only: it released them from the senzala or slave house into the shanty towns...

A popular refrain in Brazil this year, 'cem anos de abolição, realidade ou ilusão', ('One hundred years of abolition — reality or illusion'), takes on ironic force when one looks at the situation in the countryside. According to the 1980 census, 21 million people work on the land, most of whom earn less than the official minimum wages. According to government statistics, there are about 10 million landless peasants. This means that there is an abundant pool of desperately poor labourers available to work for the 4% of the population who own 70% of the land. (Feeney 13)

The Earth is the property of all. When, millions and millions of years ago, the Earth had not yet separated itself from the chaotic cluster, which, as time passed on, was to dower the firmament with new suns; and when, as the result of gradual cooling, planets became more or less fitted for organic life, this planet had no owner. Neither did the Earth have any owner when humanity was converting every old tree trunk and every mountain cavern into a dwelling place and a refuge from the inclemency of the weather and from wild beasts. Neither did the Earth have any owner when humanity, having advanced still farther along the thorny path of progress, had reached the pastoral period, in which there were pastures whereon the tribe, with herds in common, settled. Errico Malatesta is one of the major anarchist theoreticians who addresses Georgism.

A government by nationalising the land and renting it to land workers could, in theory, resolve the problem by a tax, which would go to the State, what economists call the economic return (that is, whatever a piece of land, given equal work, produces in excess over the worse piece). It is the system advocated by the American Henry George. But one sees immediately that such a system pre-supposes the continuation of the bourgeois order, apart from the growing power of the State and the governmental and bureaucratic powers with which one would have to contend. (98)

Anarchists are not the only ones to claim the efficiency for production of the redistribution of land to workers. In the book *Food First*, Frances Moore Lappé records production increases in Vietnam, China, Cuba and Portugal following land reform (196–200). In 1979 even the conservative World Bank concluded that agrarian reform would lead to production increases varying from 10% in Pakistan and 20% in Malaysia and Columbia to 80% in north-eastern Brazil (Baird 6).

All nationalisms, however, are not liberatory. A problematic example of indigenous nationalism is that extant in England, which is used by the dominant Anglo-saxons to exclude immigrants from loci of power. In Susan Smith's *Politics of 'Race' and Residence*, she writes of nationalist in

England, “By stressing the reasonable concept of difference rather than the uncomfortable facts of inequality, modern authoritarianism depicts ‘cultural’ boundaries, even when drawn along ‘racial’ lines, as benign expressions of identity, not as supremacist assertions of power.” (128)

Many anarchists would agree that egalitarian land tenure is preferable to the present system of landed hierarchy, and others take the position that humanity is constantly striving for a society which is better suited to its needs. By combining these concepts, a conclusion is reached that an anarchist land tenure may be achieved in the future. Leo Tolstoy states:

Humanity advances continually toward the enlightenment of its consciousness, and to the institution of modes of life corresponding to this consciousness, which is in process of enlightenment. Hence in every period of life and humanity there is, on the one hand, a progressive enlightenment of consciousness, and on the other a realization in life of what is enlightened by the consciousness. At the close of the last century and the beginning of this, a progressive enlightenment of consciousness occurred in Christianized humanity with respect to the working-classes, who were previously in various phases of slavery; and a progressive realization of new forms of life — the abolition of slavery and the substitution of free hired labor. At the present day a progressive enlightenment of human consciousness is taking place with reference to the use of land, and soon, it seems to me, a progressive realization in life of this consciousness must follow ... (Tolstoy: 1899, 415)

I receive monetary support from my grandfather, who became wealthy through real estate. A major contradiction in my life is that I have accepted this money. One of my first tasks, if I choose to follow my own principles, is to refuse that money because of the iniquity of its origin.

An anarchist landowner (yes, they do exist) may have to cut rent drastically and return to his or her tenants the rents collected in the past. After this the landowner may relinquish control of the property by giving it to a land trust, which will ensure that it is used in a way that benefits the entire community as opposed to certain individuals.

As a soldier or police officer who wishes to live your life without depriving people of equal access to land, you may refuse to follow orders when that requires enforcement of land ownership or territoriality. As an educator you may have to provide an alternative viewpoint to that of land ownership. Only you know the many ways in which you are complicit in the continuation of unjust systems. In order for societal change to occur, we must first change ourselves.

Around the world the landless and homeless are forced into land or building occupations by hunger or the need to acquire shelter. In Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa, thousands of peasants at a time orchestrate land ‘recoveries.’ In October of 1985 8,000 Brazilian landless peasants secretly ‘invaded’ a 20,000 acre farm which had lain idle for 13 years (Baird 6). Mexican anarchist Ana states: “In Mexico there exists a squatting movement, but not like anarchist squatting. Most of the movements and people squat land, not buildings” (Ana and Gustavo 1).

Miranda and Pixie, two South African anarchist squatters who spent about a year in England, termed the conflict between new age travellers and government as one of the most important socio-political struggles..

A large proportion of my anarchist friends have squatted in forests or lived in cars. One of them has been squatting land in a tree-house for two and a half years. I

have been able to live rent-free for one year myself through clandestine squatting, a modest amount of time relative to the perennial and constantly-shifting squats and rent strikes practiced by anarchists, such as the one described by Aisha below. One place I squatted was at the border of Oakland and Berkeley, a rough neighborhood. There was a hundred year old water tower there which a bunch of crack people lived in. Seeds of Peace were in the neighborhood and moved in. They turned the place into a squat and built these lofts. After they left a series of other people squatted there. I only lived there for a week or two after I got thrown out of the first squat. It was kind of a cool place. It lasted for two or three years. (Aisha 5)

When viewed collectively, squatting in Europe and the United States is infinitesimally small relative to the housing market, but nevertheless a real decrease in demand, bringing housing costs for everyone down. If enough people were to squat unused houses and land which are off the market, non-squatter rents would decrease appreciably due to a lower market demand. These actions also educate a broad spectrum of people about a root cause of homelessness while promoting the idea of collective radical action to change societal ills. Stirner says:

On the subject of destruction, the imagination goes wild to think of all the ways that sympathetic bureaucrats could employ themselves, if only they read Sprouse's Sabotage in the American Workplace, in undermining the power of landowners — falsifying title deeds, misplacing them, changing title over to the tenants, etc. etc. The Dutch Kabouters promoted nonviolent sabotage: The revolution is in a hurry. The new society will therefore have to use all its knowledge about sabotage techniques to speed up the change from an authoritarian and dirty society to an anti-authoritarian and cleaner one. Actually the existence of an autonomous new society in the midst of the old order is the most effective kind of sabotage. But whatever the techniques the people's army of saboteurs uses, it must always realize that it may not look like the armies of the old world in any respect. The non-responsible soldier in the old army is the symbol of what has to be overcome by the responsible saboteur of the anti-authoritarian people's army. His sabotage will be selective because of that and by means of a persistent striving towards non-violence.

An anarchist friend of mine writes of a Homes Not Jails demonstration in Santa Cruz, which serves as an example of the tactic of disruption:

After checking out future squat possibilities and listening to what people had to say about how this city mistreats poor folks, we all headed back to let the city council know just what we thought about their classist housing and sleeping policies. We hung out inside the council chamber for a while and got to hear some banal discussion about the rebuilding (gentrification) of downtown. Once we got tired of hearing the capitalists discuss their lame business we began to chant "Homes Not Jails," much to the dismay (but hopefully not the surprise) of the Council. They're just lucky we didn't rush the bastards. It would be only fair considering how their policies have affected homeless people. If you don't think so, try and find anyone who has been homeless in Santa Cruz for a significant amount of time who hasn't been manhandled by police under the guise of enforcing the camping ban. I got tired

of chanting, and happening to be near where the council was sitting I decided to say a little something to them. After exclaiming “Progressive My Ass, Lift the Camping Ban” I was delighted to see that the council didn’t miss what I said. Mike Rotkin (the socialist on the council, no less) asked me whether or not I believed in democracy, to which I replied “What democracy?” He said I would get a chance to speak if I would just wait for thirty minutes and got up to leave after I questioned what my freedom of speech was compared to his middle class privilege. However, when called a “so-called socialist” he turned and sat again, looking quite irate. At this point I and the other activists were being herded out so I couldn’t continue my dialogue with our esteemed socialist councilman any longer. Later we were to find out that he (not the republican or liberal democrats on the council) had called for us to be arrested. And this bastard teaches classes on how cool Mikhail Bakunin is up at the UCSC campus. Talk about hypocrites. Oh well, that’s commies for you. After being herded out none of us were to be let back in, even “scruffy-looking” people who didn’t participate in the demonstration and weren’t even there at the time weren’t let in. One Won Ton Dave, who tried to enter and was refused entrance though he wasn’t present at the demonstration was arrested when making a citizen’s arrest on the pig that refused him entrance... After banging on windows, doors and creating a general disturbance for a couple hours we all went away, but we’ll be back again unless this city changes its classist policies quickly. Homes Not Jails is in Santa Cruz to stay, and we’re going to be at least as successful as our comrades in San Francisco. (Santa Cruz Stylee 17)

The bodies and houses of many anarchists, according to their own understanding, are in direct danger. If the police find a squat, it is likely that the inhabitants will be brought to jail. Their life supporting apparatus, food, blankets, stove, and heater, may be confiscated. Once in jail, if the squatters still refuse to conform (e.g. attempt an escape), they will be sent to prison, where, if they do not conform to inmate social codes and prison regulations, they are likely to be confined in solitary or even murdered. Though not explicitly so, according to some anarchist theory, the state places those who refuse to conform to even the relatively mild laws of property, within reach of death. Those in North America and Europe, of course, are the least in danger from land and housing issues. Mostly in the third world, sixty thousand die of starvation each day, according to Oxfam International, a figure which translates to about two people every three seconds. A primary reason for this starvation is the maldistribution of land. How many have died throughout history due to various forms of territoriality? When used in self defense, violence is justified: it is effective in stopping immediate damage, and causes social change through the education and empowerment which resistance creates. Violence is used for social change most commonly in Indigenous land struggle. Ward Churchill quotes a study:

... in a global survey conducted by University of California cultural geographer Bernard Neitschmann during 1985–87, it was discovered that of the more than 100 armed conflicts then underway, some 85 percent were being waged by indigenous peoples against the state or states which had laid claim to and occupied their territories. (Churchill: 1993, 411)

The insistence, by largely white, male-dominated, middle or upper class peace movements on the exclusive use of nonviolence for social change is problematic in that they (we) make these

claims from a privileged position. The liberal/radical caveat, of course, is 'I insist on nonviolence only in the context of the United States. I can understand, but not necessarily promote, the violence of say, the FMLN.' Armed self-defense of women, black militancy and gangs in the ghetto, Native American armed occupations and violent squatter punks are sometimes incorporated into the 'third-world justified' category, but more often ignored when discussing the use of violence for social change.

There are serious doubts as to whether and/or when social change might be brought about through nonviolence. It is relatively easy for the comparatively well off to insist on nonviolence at the anti-militarist civil-disobedience they attend three or four times a year. This is not to denigrate the enormous power of nonviolent struggle, but to question it as an absolute. For the homeless, the indigenist, and for Eleanor Bumpers, who used a knife to resist eviction from her Bronx apartment (Tobocman 78), some immediate change is needed, even if it is at the expense of long term change. People who are under the bullet (and those people don't only exist in El Salvador), don't always have the time or the patience to wait for society to change through Gandhi's truth force.

Whether anarchists choose violence or non-violence, squatting or land occupation, education or theft, sabotage or insurrection, resist and create if we are to change the present to a land tenure based upon desire. The following is a poem I wrote entitled "His fence, my land" which appeared in Fifth Estate,

i sleep with the land  
there is a man somewhere  
that thinks the land is his  
that he owns the land  
he is wrong  
he owns the fence  
which strangles the land  
with sharp wire  
his land is a piece of paper  
a money figure on an LED screen  
a chore  
my land is the sun  
it heats my face in the morning  
it is the lunar light which guides me  
it is the tall grass within which is my sanctuary  
his land is created by the state  
my land is the gift of the unknown  
what he calls land is a  
real estate rape fantasy

for myself,  
the land is a cradle  
as i drift into a dream  
without boundaries

hereafter is another set of excisions which start at the beginning of this piece

On large landed estates in the Roman Republic were poorly managed, mainly because landlords lived in the city where their time was absorbed by, among other things, politics, and so they were necessarily absentee (Weber 328).

In order to facilitate the discussion of practical and theoretical anarchist land tenures, I will use the words 'anarcho-spatialism' to denote the land tenure for which anarchists strive. Any word or set of words could be used, as these are relatively arbitrary. 'Anarchy,' the first part of our new word, means without rule, government, or domination. 'Spatial' means having to do with space, e.g. land, blank walls for graffiti, and condemned houses for squatting. Francis Reed writes of the importance of space: Space and psyche can be seen as the basic material of a living process which we at once inhabit and which inhabits us; apparent in the 'leylines' or 'songlines' of the landscape, in the myths and symbols embodied in cities where there is space both for nature and our own inner nature (and where the flow of water is particularly important) and in the geometry of buildings and the relations between people. (63) The suffix "ism" denotes an idea, action and condition of being. Thus we have anarcho-spatialism, defined as a spatial system devoid of domination. The struggle for such a system is the same word as the system itself; the means and the end are homonyms.

Anarchist land tenure is not a section of anarchism such as anarcha-feminism, anarcho-syndicalism or anarcho-communism, because anarcho-spatialism has no essential difference from the former distinct and at times contradictory movements; rather, anarcho-spatialism distinguishes a strand of thought and action within existing anarchist movements and can be used to signify the land tenure for which anarchists strive.

Discrimination due to race, sex, sexual preference or ideology must be eradicated. If a system of land tenure discriminated, it could not be labeled as indominative and thus would not be anarcho-spatialism.

Because many of today's anarchists are urban squatters, a status which widely overlaps with the status of homelessness, its abolition as a juridical category to be repressed has become an important aspect of an anarchist land tenure based upon equity and use. The term 'homelessness,' is a status conferred mainly upon landless squatters of Western nations. This status is given to people whose actions are illegal or outside the pale of 'respectable society.' Those who have no legal residence are homeless, not those who live in substandard structures. A person who lives in a tent on their own land is defined as a landowner, whereas the person who lives in a tent on squatted land is defined as homeless. A retired couple who has sold their house to buy a Winnebago and travel the National Parks circuit is not homeless, but touring Deadheads and Travellers in England are 'undesireable transients.'

Most homeless people I have queried exhibit the desire to build a house if given a piece of land. In fact, much of a homeless person's effort is devoted to furnishing themselves with shelter. The reason 'homeless' people's shelter is not of a permanent variety is because by definition homeless tenure is insecure, the homeless being under constant threat of eviction with no warning. Imagine



what it would be like if your landlord could evict you at any moment, without ten minutes notice, and that this form of eviction occurred several times a year. In order to avoid direct eviction, the veteran homeless often advise that you stay mobile and change camp every few months. Give the homeless land and security of tenure and they provide themselves with shelter. No ridiculously expensive social service agencies are required.

For those who are totally unable to produce, and have no access to charity, land will be as free as to those who are top producers. At the very least the homeless person will have a place to go at night, a place where she or he would not be harassed by law officials. Even if the dwelling were only a tarp thrown over a log, that place will be home — safe from the law.

## **Produce to the Laborer**

Unlike Marxist and Georgist philosophies, the word 'rent' in common parlance is associated with the taking of produce and wealth away from the producer in order to benefit a leisure class of landowners. Anarchists tend to promote a society in which the producer will receive the full product of their labor. Egalitarian access to land will erode the powers of the employer in favor of the worker. No longer holding monopolistic control over productive resources, the employer will be forced to give a fair wage to an employee who has the option of going into business for her or himself using free land, the basis of all production. Free from exorbitant rents, the worker will also be in a much better position to withhold labor in the form of strikes. Each worker will be their own master, freely able to join into contract with other individuals in order to produce. In this situation, the line between employer and employee, because of the much more powerful position of the worker, would cease to exist.

It is incumbent upon anarchist ideology not only to share land within collectives, but to ensure that each collective has equal access to land, and where that access is uneconomical, to equalize the benefits of resources through a gratuitous transfer of funds or goods.

In some regions collectivization was even more extensive. The extent of collective cultivation in Aragon and Catalonia for example, was much greater at seventy-five and ninety percent respectively (Woodcock 27). While individualists were allowed to farm in anarchist Spain during the civil war, they could not take more land than they could personally cultivate without wage labor (Guérin 133).

While anarchists generally look on the future formation of collectives as the primary mode of production, and propertylessness as the status of consumables, when pressed they generally make room for individualists, or those who wish to produce without collective association.

Some go so far as to join the Voluntary Human Extinction Society, which calls for the gradual and voluntary withdrawal of all human life on earth.

George uses the word 'rent' in a different way than landlords use the word 'rent.' Even though anarchists have a justified repugnance for this word, and all that it stands for in regular society, economists like George use the word for the purposes of equity. In order to avoid confusion I will use the words 'differential rent' in this section where George and Ricardo use the term 'rent,' to denote 'produce over the margin of production.'

Anarchist land tenure, because it jettisons use of property according to ownership, is conducive to overlapping uses of the same land, such as the example above where George and Maria share commercial space. It would certainly mean greater freedom for hikers and recreationalists to

'roam' over land which today is denied them in Britain (Sculthorpe 76–80), a right which is farther from our consciousness in the United States.

Anarchism can only be a viable movement for social change when it eradicates gender and race hierarchies within its community. This requires, among other actions, an examination and transformation of our interpersonal and community relations.

The incorporation of eco-anarchist thought into this piece of writing and the dominant discourse of anarchism has not yet occurred. To fully accommodate to the theory of eco-anarchism will require a complete overhaul of the anthropocentric anarchist viewpoint.

, for example in Les Hoey's article "The Right and Wrong of Land Rights," (appearing in *Social Alternatives*, 1991) which views the struggle for a separate national identity and territory free from euro-influence as a European, violent, and divisive ideology.

Near the end of his preface Perlman again identifies his target as the modern, radical nationalist project, and then indicates the method by which he will attack. Currently nationalism is being touted as a strategy, science and theology of liberation, as a fulfillment of the Enlightenment's dictum that knowledge is power, as a proven answer to the question "What Is to be Done?" To challenge these claims, and to see them in context, I have to ask what nationalism is — not only the new revolutionary nationalism but also the old conservative one.

Can't anarchists just assimilate these intransigent Native Americans into a just and fair anarchist society, allowing of course for cultural diversity, the occasional craft fair, fry-bread, and a communal sweat-lodge? Why would anarchists want to take a different position from, for example, the United States Indian Claims Commission, which insisted upon payment for stolen land in monetary disbursements and refused to return use of the actual land?

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Anders Corr  
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