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What We Do

Christopher Day

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shaken my commitment to building a serious anti-authoritarian revolutionary organization no matter what it takes.

work for the benefit of the whole organization. The theoretical issues that really matter would push aside those that don't.

All of these suggestions are focused in some sense on the development of our politics and yet none of them are suggestions directed at our mass work. This is not because I don't see that as important. Obviously I do. I believe that we need to be engaged in some sort of common mass work, if only some sort of campaign that we can carry out in the different places where we are already working. I think we also need to be discussing much more seriously what it means to truly root ourselves in oppressed communities and take some collective steps in that direction. But both of these things must come out of the sort of collective process of reassessing our politics that I've described above. We can't seriously discuss where we need to go if we don't know where we are and where we've been. The process of collective self-criticism is about figuring out where we've been and the process of writing thorough individual political reports is about determining where we actually are right now.

Conclusion

In this paper I've tried to raise a number of the deeper issues that I think underlie the current crisis in Love and Rage beyond the immediate questions raised by "What We Believe." I've put forward some principles of revolutionary organization that I've seen modeled by the Zapatistas and some concrete suggestions for rectifying some of the weaknesses of our own organization. I intend to flesh some of these ideas out into more concrete proposals before the upcoming conference, but I'm eager to know what people think of the ideas put forward here before I do so. I've found the current crisis in Love and Rage personally painful and profoundly challenging to some of my longest held convictions. But none of this has

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among university adjuncts, at UPS, and in organizing service workers. One Love and Rage member is involved in a workplace safety struggle involving Black women workers who are routinely exposed to dangerous chemicals on the factory floor. There are Love and Rage members involved in the defense of old growth forests. Several Love and Rage members are involved in Zapatista solidarity work in several cities. One Love and Rage member is interning at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. Another is organizing to throw the DARE program out of the school she teaches at. Love and Rage members are involved in an ongoing way in the fight to free Mumia and in organizing for the Jericho '98 March on Washington. Love and Rage members are involved in welfare rights struggles in three different states. There is one Love and Rage member active in anti-police brutality work. Several members are working in Anti-Racist Action. Love and Rage members continue to play an important role in the struggles at CUNY in defense of open admissions. Two Love and Rage members are working on organizing a winter seminar on revolutionary theory. Two local groups have study groups going.

If the few dozen activists who are keeping Love and Rage alive were each to write a thorough, reflective, critical report on the work they've been doing, the problems they've encountered, and the lessons they've drawn from those experiences the whole character of the organization would change. Debates that seem stupid or overly abstract that have dominated some recent discussions would be drowned in a discussion of our real problems. The false but demoralizing sense that nobody is doing anything real would evaporate. This is not to say that some of the questions that currently divide the organization would disappear but rather that they would be cast in a whole new light and their practical importance in our actual work would be much

clearer than is currently the case. By a political report I don't mean just an account of all the meetings and demonstrations a person has attended, but rather an attempt to critically analyze the

in Brooklyn. There are collectives like STORM and FIST that don't include anarchists but that seem to be oriented towards developing a new revolutionary politics. There are the various non-sectarian (though often reformist) Marxist groups that have opened up to criticism in response to the "crisis in socialism" like Freedom Road, Solidarity, and even the Committees of Correspondence. I would expect discussions with different groups to fulfill different functions for us — in some cases opening the way for closer collaboration and in others clarifying our differences. The important thing is that we understand the value in both developments and that we have things to learn from everybody even if we find we have fundamental philosophical differences.

Three, we need to be engaged in organized collective study and discussion. The New York local has begun to meet again to study and discuss the political questions that have been raised by the current crisis in the organization. But we need to be engaged in this kind of study and discussion across the organization so that we don't talk past each other when we use terms and references that have different meanings for different people or that just aren't understood. The *Fed Bull* should become a vehicle for Federation-wide collective study and the Coordinating Committee (CC) should be delegated to develop a study program to appear in installments in the *Fed Bull* to broaden the base of common knowledge of revolutionary theory and history within the organization.

Four, everybody in the organization should write a thorough political report on the work they are doing. The most important thing that Love and Rage has is a few dozen good activists. This is not always apparent because a lot of the activism that Love and Rage members are engaged in never gets reported either in the pages of the newspaper nor in reports to the *Fed Bull*. One only finds out about it if one is able to talk with lots of members one-on-one. Yet the fact remains that Love and Rage members are active participants in a wide range of social struggles in three countries. There are Love and Rage members involved in workplace struggles

Introduction

In this paper I attempt to stake out some of the questions that are going to confront Love and Rage after we resolve the immediate crisis precipitated by "What We Believe." I look critically at the ten-year long project of building a serious revolutionary anarchist organization and try to identify the elements in anarchist theory and our initial conception of this project that might be responsible for our failure to achieve that objective. I then argue that in order to move forward, we need to stop identifying ourselves as within the anarchist tradition but rather view ourselves as something new that takes significant things — like anti-authoritarianism and anti-statism — from anarchism. I then look at the Zapatistas as a model of an organization that was able to conceive of itself as something new, while taking things of value from older traditions that have failed. I also look at several principles of revolutionary organization that I see in the theory and practice of the EZLN. These include a level of commitment that involves being willing to make serious sacrifices, rooting ourselves in oppressed communities, and the construction of revolutionary culture. I then briefly discuss the importance of maintaining our commitment to becoming a cadre organization in opposition to the idea that we retreat to a looser network structure. Finally, I make a number of practical suggestions for things we need to do as an organization to get out of our current predicament including a collective, public self-criticism in the pages of the newspaper and organized political discussions with other groups and individuals.

The Historical Failure of Love and Rage

Ten years ago a handful of mainly young anarchist activists set out to build a serious revolutionary anarchist organization by establishing a continental anarchist newspaper. We understood

that it would take time to build the kind of organization we wanted: a politically coherent and disciplined organization of organizers, what I would call a revolutionary anarchist cadre organization. We understood that there was little in the way of anarchist theory or historical practice to guide us in this project and that we would have to struggle with people against the powerful anti-organizational tendencies that exist within anarchism to make it happen. We believed that people could be won to the need for such an organization in a step-by-step fashion and that is how we proceeded. First, we won people to the value of having a continental newspaper. Then we won people to the idea of cohering the various people involved in writing, producing and distributing that newspaper into a loose network. Then we won people to the need for formalizing that network into an organization with a defined structure and politics. Then we won people to raising the expectations of membership.

After ten years of work on the project of building a revolutionary anarchist cadre organization, we still don't really have one. We have accomplished many things which we should be proud of, but we have not built the organization we set out to build. We need to honestly confront the reasons why. As I see it, there are three main ways we can explain this failure. First, we can blame the people involved and their individual failings. Second, we can blame the times and the adverse political conditions under which we have attempted to build the organization. Third and finally, we can examine the philosophical foundations of our original project.

There is enough truth in each explanation that we should take them all seriously. As the main original advocate of this project, and as a person who pushed for many of the twists and turns we have taken over the years, I feel a high level of personal responsibility for many of the errors the organization has made. I think we would all benefit from self-critically evaluating our personal roles in the successes and failures of Love and Rage. The conscious incorporation of a process of criticism and self-criticism into the

and Rage the organization we want it to be overnight. We need to be much more serious about the collective development of both our theory and practice. This will take time. But there are several things we can do now.

One, we need to carry out a collective and public self-criticism in which we analyze our history as an organization, acknowledge our errors, and attempt to identify why they happened. The special issue of *Class War* that appeared last summer is a good model for the kind of thing we need to do. There are two reasons to do this. First, it is important to clarify these things for ourselves so that we can move forward without repeating the same mistakes or feeling responsible for defending things we did that were mistaken. Second, it is an important step in initiating discussions with groups and individuals outside Love and Rage. It enables us to acknowledge specific criticisms others may have of us and, more importantly, establishes that we are open to hearing criticism,

Two, we need to initiate organized political discussions broadly with the various groups and individuals we work with and respect. The membership of Love and Rage alone is too narrow a group for us to satisfactorily carry out the important discussions that have emerged within the organization. This needs to happen on all levels. We need to use the newspaper to draw people from outside of the organization into these discussions. We need to use conferences and other public events. And we need to sit down face-to-face with other groups. There are two main reasons to do this. First, there are too damn few of us and we need to cast our nets wider if we want to be part of a broader revolutionary movement and not just an isolated sect. Second, organized political discussion will force us to clarify our own politics in a way that we have manifestly failed to do in the past ten years. There are a lot of groups and individuals we should be talking to. There are other explicitly anarchist formations like the Anarchist Communist Federation and the ABC-Federation. There are a number of revolutionary collectives that include anarchists like Fireworks in the Bay Area and R'n'B

have been carrying out precisely these sorts of network functions by publishing the newspaper, organizing conferences, maintaining the listserv, and publishing the *Fed Bull*. These are all things that need to continue. But the idea of a cadre organization is not hostile to these things. On the contrary, it says that the network functions will be carried out more consistently and that the contacts between people that are maintained by these functions will be stronger if there is an organization of the most serious and dedicated activists committed to doing that work. The history of the anarchist movement in the US is littered with networks and federations that have come and gone precisely because they did not understand this elementary fact.

If Love and Rage is to survive and flourish, it must become a cadre organization even if that means we end up being only a few dozen strong. This does not mean we should become a sect nor that we should cut off the relations we have with people who can't or don't want to be in a cadre organization. On the contrary, by making a clearer distinction between those who have committed themselves to the work of building Love and Rage and those who are sympathetic with our political outlook we enable ourselves to relate to those people in a more principled way and to carry out the work of expanding the network that exists around the organization by doing our work more consistently, more deliberately, and more strategically.

To Rise on New Foundations

So far, I have argued for certain general principles that I think need to inform Love and Rage's future work. The current crisis in Love and Rage means we cannot continue functioning as we have in the past, that we need to make a radical break and reconceive our project. But what does this mean concretely? We should not imagine that there is some sort of quick fix that can make Love

political life of the organization would also do a lot to make us a healthier organization. It is also true that the period in which Love and Rage has sought to establish itself has been a bad one. Love and Rage was founded with the expectation that the 1990s would be a period of heightened activity for the social movements that most of the founding members of the project came out of. Instead, we have witnessed the almost complete decimation of the pale shadow of a radical movement that existed in the US at the end of the 1980s.

At the same time, there is a real danger that in emphasizing either of these things, we will avoid confronting some of the deeper causes of our failure. Any attempt to build a revolutionary organization must deal with the personal limitations of the people involved and errors in judgment. We are all damaged goods, products of a fucked-up society. A conception of a revolutionary organization that can't accommodate that fact and figure out how to confront it is no conception at all. Similarly all revolutionary organizations have to figure out how to get through bad times as well as good, if they hope to succeed. On the whole, the '90s have seen the decimation of the left in the US, but some groups have adapted to the actual conditions of the times and figured out how to grow. We may not want to model ourselves directly on any one of those groups but we should seriously look into what it is about their perspectives and approaches that enabled them to thrive where everyone else has shriveled up or just hung on to what they already had. In other words, taking seriously the limitations of individuals and the nature of the period we've been in should still force us to examine the philosophical foundations of our original project.

Love and Rage is the child of a critique of Leninism and a critique of the prevailing politics of anarchism. When the people who founded Love and Rage began to coalesce as a group in the late 1980s, it was on the basis of a limited set of common notions. First, we were revolutionaries. Based on our experiences in the social movements of the 1980s or earlier, we had come to the conclusion that the changes this society needs to see can only be achieved

by revolutionary means. Second, we saw the importance of building a revolutionary political organization as one part of the larger revolutionary process. Third, we rejected the two key concepts of Leninism: the vanguard party and the revolutionary state. Fourth, we identified, critically to be sure: with the revolutionary libertarian tradition in general and anarchism in particular. Fifth, we also saw ourselves as drawing insight and inspiration from anti-colonial struggles, women's liberation, queer liberation, Black liberation, and radical ecological struggles. We patched these general ideas together and called them "revolutionary anarchism." This was a term that was deliberately conceived of as enabling us to distinguish ourselves from reformist (or "evolutionary"), individualist, and anti-organizational tendencies within anarchism without aligning ourselves with any of the other already historically defined tendencies in anarchism (collectivism, anarcho-communism, syndicalism, the Platformists, etc.). We did not view any of these tendencies as offering an adequate basis for our politics and conceived of ourselves as charting our own course and redefining what anarchism meant in important ways in the process.

Underlying this whole project then, was a fundamental faith that an effective organization could redefine anarchism and give it a theoretical coherence and contemporary relevance that we all knew it didn't have in the late 1980s. WWB's attempt to inscribe in stone some sort of anarchist orthodoxy to guard against outside influences is therefore a repudiation of the spirit that originally animated Love and Rage. In many respects, Love and Rage has succeeded in redefining anarchism in the US — at the very least, by carving out more space for ideas that were previously very marginal within the anarchist movement. This is clearest on the question of race. Love and Rage aggressively challenged the prevailing class reductionism and liberalism in the anarchist movement on the question of race in US society and completely shifted the center of debate on questions of race to the point that people entering the anarchist movement in 1998 take for granted a whole series of

to creating revolutionary culture. Every successful radical social movement in US history has done so. Whether it was the songs of the IWW or of the Civil Rights movement or the creation of new holidays like Mayday or Juneteenth, the conscious deliberate creation of a new culture (often employing many existing cultural elements) has always been present. Without such a culture as a counterweight, the often heated arguments that inevitably characterize any genuine revolutionary movement will tear the thing apart before it can even get off the ground,

The Organization We Need

It is tempting to reconsider the value of a looser, less demanding network structure in light of the difficulties involved in making Love and Rage a tighter, more disciplined organization. It probably seems to many that the only way we can hope to survive at all is by reverting to the network structure and that since we've never really been able to put into practice the vision of Love and Rage as a cadre organization, we aren't really giving up anything by abandoning that conception.

A network implies an organization that doesn't demand as high a level of theoretical unity because it isn't attempting to establish a high level of practical unity. A network implies that the primary function of the organization is to share information rather than to coordinate action, because once you try to coordinate action the theoretical differences that can coexist in a loose network become practical differences over which course of action to follow.

The idea of retreating to a network structure is based on the belief that a network can keep people in touch even if it is not currently possible to carry out coordinated activity and that the structures for such coordinated activity will emerge out of a network when they are appropriate. There are some truths in all this. Some of Love and Rage's greatest contributions to the movement

ing a new revolutionary culture. A revolutionary movement cannot simply be built around a political line. It is not sufficient to have the correct analysis of imperialism or the class struggle or whatever. A revolutionary movement stands in a particular relationship to the culture of the people it seeks to organize. A revolutionary movement that doesn't sing, dance, eat, and write poetry with the people cannot hope to win them to revolutionary politics. But beyond this purely instrumental view of culture, a revolutionary movement that is not immersed in the culture of the people cannot hope to understand their actual conditions and what it will take to win. Culture is a vehicle for the accumulated experiences of a people. Subcommandante Marcos talks about the importance for the EZLN, not just in learning how to speak the languages of the indigenous peoples, but in learning their folk tales and what they symbolized and how in this process of translation, their politics were transformed and given new meaning. At the same time that the culture of the indigenous communities was transforming the politics of the EZLN, they were transforming the culture of those communities by introducing new practices and customs, revolutionary songs and celebrations that injected new ideas and values into the lives of the people. In other words, it is not sufficient to just adopt the culture of the people as if it is in itself revolutionary. It is necessary to draw out the revolutionary aspects, to strengthen them, and to consciously create a revolutionary culture.

Love and Rage is culturally tied to the white middle-class and academic origins of most of its membership. It is a culture that values rigorous and rational argument (which is good) but that puts little value on the things that actually hold communities together. So we are really good at arguing with each other but really bad at doing the things that express our love for each other and that remind us that we have to hang together. It should hardly be a surprise then, that we have such difficulties holding our organization together let alone broadening its appeal. If we are going to immerse ourselves in oppressed communities, we need to commit ourselves

things about the existence of and the nature of white supremacy in the US that were quite literally the views of only a handful of people in the anarchist movement in 1988. It would be possible to point to a number of other issues on which Love and Rage has dramatically shifted the terms of debate within anarchism, and we should be proud of these accomplishments. But for every point on which we have had such success, there is another on which not only have we not made headway with the rest of the anarchist movement but where we have been bogged down by our anarchism.

The areas where we have had the most success in reshaping anarchism have been largely limited to the critique of this society. This has been a historical strength of anarchism — its ability to a) adopt critiques of various features of this society from sources outside of anarchism and b) integrate them into a larger anti-authoritarian framework. From Bakunin's embrace of Marx's critique of capitalism to the willingness of many anarchists today to integrate an analysis of white skin privilege into their politics, the search for a deeper and more radical analysis of the existing society has been a hallmark of anarchism. This is in keeping with the deeply moral character of anarchism. Where anarchism has not been able to integrate ideas from outside the tradition has been precisely on questions of organizational methods, strategy, and tactics — on a positive program or plan of action for getting from this society to where we want to go. And it has been on these sorts of questions that Love and Rage has completely failed to redefine anarchism. Instead we have had to fight tooth and nail just to establish on paper the most elementary organizational norms which have in practice been largely ignored.

The question that confronts us is not whether it might be possible to develop a serious and coherent organizational theory and practice while remaining within the anarchist idiom. I think it is possible. While there are only a few of them, and while none of them achieved lasting success, there are some historical examples of revolutionary anarchist cadre organizations: the PLM in Mex-

ico, the Platformists, to some extent the FAI, and even more the Friends of Durruti in Spain. One can patch together some lessons and analyses of these experiences and say one has an anarchist theory of revolutionary organization. But the question is: Is this the best way to construct a theory that speaks to our needs on the eve of the 21st century? What the WWB document has made clear to me is that by defining ourselves as an organization within anarchism, rather than as an organization that takes significant things from anarchism, we have found ourselves constantly having to re-argue the most elementary questions of organization. By defining ourselves as within anarchism we sabotage any serious study of the positive as well as the negative lessons of revolutionary experiences outside of anarchism (which means the vast majority of the revolutionary experiences of the 20th century).

Love and Rage has always occupied a somewhat heretical place in the anarchist movement. We discuss issues that other anarchists ignore and we take positions that other anarchists view as beyond the pale. If we have succeeded in redefining anarchism in the US on certain questions the inherent contradiction in our project is probably most clearly reflected in the absence of any similar project that defines itself as anarchist outside of North America.

No More Tradition's Chains Shall Bind Us

I want to be part of a serious and effective revolutionary organization that is committed to an anti-authoritarian vision of the new society we are fighting for, and that clearly understands the historical failure of "state socialism" in its myriad forms in the 20th century. For ten years, we have sought to build such an organization and have defined that project within the anarchist tradition. It seems clear to me now that we overestimated our ability to re-define that tradition and underestimated the amount of baggage that comes with it. At the same time, I think the anarchist critiques

ingly white, disproportionately middle class, and whose members are closely tied to either white youth subcultures or academia, this means some big changes. We can not hope to really make revolution if we are not willing to live and work in the ghettos, barrios, housing projects, and poor rural communities of the US. People are going to be understandably reluctant to make those kinds of changes without some assurance that others are doing it with them, and that assurance can only come from a group that has the high level of commitment to a collectively formulated common project. But no revolutionary project can promise success and that means that there must be a certain amount of individual will to do whatever it takes to build a revolutionary movement. Individually, some of us have already gone further down this road than others. But so far ALL OF US have failed to turn this into a collective process. The personal decisions we have been making about where we live, where we work, whether or not to go to college or graduate school, have all had political consequences for the organization but have all been made as personal decisions without even a shred of collective accountability to the people we are working with. This individualist approach reinforces existing class inequalities in the organization and turns what should be political discussions of where we live and work into moralistic arguments. The result of this is that collective bonds that are needed to hold a revolutionary organization together are corroded and theoretical rigor and coherence are sacrificed on the altar of an anti-intellectual caricature of the working class.

Revolutionary Culture

Finally, I want to mention the importance of culture in the success of the Zapatistas. The founders of the EZLN understood the importance both of respecting the traditions and customs of the communities they were seeking to root themselves in and of creat-

fight over this and that piece of land that had been going on for decades and centuries if a hard core of a dozen determined individuals hadn't decided to give up everything in order to found the EZLN in a remote corner of the Lacandon Jungle in 1983. The hard core must have some common politics but much more important than total ideological uniformity is a commitment to collective participation in the struggle. The founding members of the EZLN included people with a variety of political backgrounds: Guevarists from the armed organizations of the 1970s, veterans of Maoist initiated campesino organizations, catechists versed in liberation theology, and those who identified primarily with the long traditions of indigenous resistance to the European conquest. What united them was a high level of commitment to a common project — building the EZLN — and an acknowledgment that not one of them had all the answers and that they would have to learn from each other and from the process of carrying out their work collectively.

A second principle that the experience of the Zapatistas has to teach us is the central importance of rooting ourselves among the oppressed. For the middle-class members of the group that founded the EZLN, this meant patiently winning the trust of the people, learning their languages and customs, placing real faith in the people, and not pretending to know what was best for them. It also meant giving up undoubtedly promising professional careers in academia and medicine and elsewhere in order to spend long years going hungry, getting sick, being bitten by bugs, and feeling completely cut off from the comforts and pleasures of the life they had left behind. It meant immersing themselves in the lives of largely illiterate peasants.

A genuine revolutionary organization must be an organization of people who live, work, study, and play among the oppressed who are most likely to be won to the need for revolution. In the US, I would argue, this means poor and mainly people of color communities. For an organization like Love and Rage that is overwhelm-

of other traditions (particularly Leninism) remain fundamentally correct, and I have no interest in embracing any other existing historical trend. Basically, I think all existing revolutionary theory is out of touch with the world we live in. This has to do both with weaknesses in the theory that have been there from the start, as well as important changes in the world itself that the theory has failed to keep up with.

The role of the dead weight of orthodoxy in the recent debates in Love and Rage convinces me that we have to make some sort of radical break with how we've conceived ourselves. The last thing we or the embryonic revolutionary movement of the 21st century needs now is a dose of that "ol' time anything, whether it is anarchism, Leninism, Presbyterianism, or whatever. We need fresh blood, not formaldehyde, coursing through our veins. If there is going to be a coherent anti-authoritarian revolutionary theory and practice in the coming period, it must be made anew by people participating in real social struggles on the new terrain of the post-colonial, post-industrial, post-modern, Post Raisin Bran world we actually live in,

I believe that the Zapatistas currently represent the most significant attempt to construct a new revolutionary politics that sums up the failures of the past century and moves on. I don't think the Zapatistas have all the answers and, to their credit, neither do they. Confronted with the historical failure of the old formulas of the left, they were willing to break new ground. That didn't mean that they lost contact with the things that had originally animated them or the historical traditions from which they came (Marxism-Leninism, traditions of indigenous autonomy and resistance, the Mexican Revolution, etc.) but rather that the content of those traditions would have to be transformed in light of new conditions if it was to remain of any value. The EZLN was founded by a dozen members of one of the many guerrilla groups that sprung up in Mexico in the late '60s and early '70s that mainly took their inspiration from Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution. They found themselves in a situation in which their ideology could not answer

the problems of the indigenous people of Chiapas but where their increasingly desperate situation was driving them to increasingly revolutionary conclusions. Not knowing exactly where it would lead them, the Zapatistas decided to put their faith in the struggles of the people rather than in the pre-fabricated ideology they had brought with them to the jungle. While they have rejected both the pursuit of state power and the idea of the vanguard party, the Zapatistas did not choose to define themselves as anarchists (even though anarchism has a much richer history in Mexico than in the US).

Without falling into the trap of blindly aping the Zapatistas, I think we should take a similar attitude towards our own project. Anarchism has a different complex of strengths and weaknesses than the Guevarism of the founders of the EZLN. But in the broadest sense, there is an important similarity — both ideologies are largely the products of an earlier period and both have failed to recapture the imagination of new generations because they are inadequate for new circumstances. If anything, these features are more pronounced in anarchism. The point is not to opportunistically abandon everything we have stood for in the hope of latching onto something more popular, the point is that it is only in the actual lives and struggles of the people themselves, under new conditions, that we can hope to find the answers to the problems that established ideologies have proven unable to answer. If we want to develop a coherent revolutionary politics that speaks to those new conditions we can't chain them to a political tradition that has effectively been in a coma for half a century.

Based on our experiences as an organization over the past ten years and on our knowledge of the historical accomplishments of the anarchist movement around the world since the Second World War, on what foundation can we base the hope that a significant number of people in the US, let alone the millions of people it will actually take to win, are going to be won to a revolutionary politics that calls itself anarchist? I would suggest that there is exactly

no evidence to support this hope and that it is, for all intents and purposes, an act of religious faith. I'll go even further. Revolutions are life and death struggles. People are right not to put their life on the line in the name of an ideology that can't answer some of the most basic questions that people know they will face in such a struggle.

I believe that Love and Rage should be a revolutionary cadre organization that remains committed to a fundamentally libertarian perspective without narrowly defining itself within the anarchist tradition. It should be an organization that is theoretically open and flexible enough to take the lessons there are to be learned from other traditions and, more importantly, to develop new theory and practice in response to new conditions. For the moment, the best model of such an organization we have is the Zapatistas and I think we should look much more closely at their experience to see what it has to teach us. (I've been reading a lot about the Zapatistas but most of the information I use here can be found in *El Sueño Zapatista* and *La Rebelión de las Cañadas*.)

Some Lessons of Zapatismo

I would suggest that there are a handful of basic principles that can be derived from what we know about the history and development of the Zapatistas. Some of these are particular to the Zapatistas in that they are advances on the theory and practice of other revolutionary trends. Others are elementary lessons that have been learned over and over again by every even moderately successful revolutionary movement.

The first principle is that to be a revolutionary and to build a revolutionary organization can not be a hobby or a part-time thing. All of the conditions for building a revolutionary movement in the mountains and jungles of Chiapas existed in the 1980s, but the struggle would never have gone beyond the interminable