

Rogues Against the State

Some Notes on the Current Movement

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February 27, 2007

Contents

Revolution is still possible — yet hardly inevitable	3
Against Activism	4
Beyond Activism	6
Creating Autonomous Space	7
In a Sea of Alienation	8
Affinities of Desire	9

“We do not assume that our world is inevitably heading toward a libratory transformation of social relations. [However], if there is a choice between cynicism and hopelessness or a determined and focused attack on the present institutions of domination, we choose the latter.” — A Murder of Crows, Issue #1, March 2006

Revolution is still possible — yet hardly inevitable

1. As those of the oppressed and excluded we must abolish class society and work. This is our project. We must reject the idea of building a mass movement directed by a single line of thought or ideology, group or organization, and instead think about how we can participate in (let alone foster) a complete social transformation. The desire to create one monolithic anarchist organization reflects the same desire as that of the Marxist-Leninist version of “the Party”, even if it is veiled under the description of “directly democratic” and “decentralized”. This is a desire to direct, convert, and manage “the mass”, as opposed to existing and acting within our class, community, or bioregion, (with other proles and militants) towards a self-organized existence. To me however, a rejection of the approach of ‘activism’ doesn’t mean that we should exclude ourselves from daily life and those around us, hiding in little ghettos to become masters of what Makhno called, the “paper revolution”. Far from it, we need to realize that we are of the oppressed and excluded and of those apart from the ruling elites. We need to act along side and with the oppressed for we are of them and show through our actions and relationships what our anti-politics are. It is through struggle and personal affinity that we will gain more people interested in our ideas, spaces, and projects. It is also through struggle that we will find more in common with others that may have the same desires and be engaging in a similar praxis, yet not with the same set of labels. Our task is to be able to act within various social tensions that exist within society and connect with others, to create and maintain autonomous zones so we can grow, build, learn, stay sane, and also to be able to defend and expand ourselves and those zones by any means necessary. Let our tendency spread like a virus, leaving dead authoritarians (of all stripes) in it’s wake.
2. The grouping of all oppressed people into one set organization may have made sense when it was thought that the only thing necessary for revolution was taking over the means of production. However, since industrial capitalism (or if you prefer ‘civilization’) is a threat to a wild healthy planet, people’s lives, other species (and all the other nasty and alienating things that come from the industrial workplace) then we should abandon any hopes of “self-managing” it through our own labors. Many ‘class struggle anarchists’ have also forgotten that living in cities, working in factories, the creation of private property and the imposition of class society in general was all done to subjugate people into a division of labor (and thus classes) for the sake of gaining surplus, capital, and power. Organizing around class lines is a possible strategy for social revolution, but if we aren’t against the basic foundations of class society in general, then what is the point?
3. The current infrastructure (which constitutes the present technological apparatus) was meant to serve capital, not us. Decentralization of production and increased technological automation has in part been implemented to halt the possibility of workers revolting at a

centralized point of production and hurting the flow of capital. Therefore, using the same infrastructure that is meant to keep the gears of capital and state humming should be totally abandoned. Also, production for things like computers is based around ‘harvesting’ resources that are found in certain geographic regions throughout the world. In a future society of various autonomous regions, production and resource abstraction would require the destruction of certain areas to provide the materials for things like cell phones and computers, even if it was done collectively and via self-management. We cannot continue to warp our world around industrial culture, it is as un-ecologically sound as it is non-congruent to anarchy.

4. There are some against civilization who think that a “collapse” will lead to everyone being Robinson Crusoe, (or at least just the cool anarchist kids), this is as misguided as self-managing the current death culture. Even if the lights go out or the top soil goes bad, the global elite will not stop being the global elite. Even now, many of them are trying to figure out how they can ‘save our economy’ and ‘stop global warming’, realizing that complete ecological disaster is a threat to capital’s hold over the world. It is quite possible that ecological collapse on some level could happen, (peak oil, dead oceans, etc) and it is also possible that the elites will take major steps to make sure that some of the damage is reduced (as so much damage has already been done). Whatever the outcome, it remains clear that any environmental problems will not signal the end of the elites hold over the earth and those living on it. Moreover, as ecological and social problems become greater and more open social tensions occur, the chances of the left launching some sort of thrust for power is greater and we need to be able to be strong enough to push for a total social transformation. Unwillingness to engage in a revolutionary struggle against state and capital (and the authoritarian left) will only signal a bleaker future with more of the same.
5. Any modern class struggle needs to be against class itself and for the total abolition and destruction of work (or wage labor, a division of labor, industrialism, the format of the city, etc), even if our actions occur in and around the workplace itself. Many ‘green anarchists’ have failed to take any heed to the possibilities of the revolt against work (sabotage, wild cat strikes, actions outside of the unions) and instead perceive that anything existing in or around the industrial workplace is nuts (even if it’s the people inside struggling). Within struggles such as these there is a ‘selfish class desire’ that exists because people are more willing to struggle for things that affect them directly. However we need to take this thinking a step further and realize that it is desirable to destroy work and the civilization that has produced a society where all life must be bent around it. By this I mean that the struggle against industrial society can be one of motivated class interest and not just a desire to “save the earth”, (as well intended or valid as that may be). The question now, as always, is how do we proceed?

Against Activism

6. For most of my existence as a conscious anarchist, I was an activist. Most of the organizing work that I did in my local area was through the anarchist collective Direct Action Anti-Authoritarians, or DAAA Collective for short. Most of our activity revolved around our

collective doing projects that largely repeated themselves and sought to “build mass” by trying to get more people into the group. Meaning, we wanted to be “the movement” as opposed to participating in an autonomous social movement of various projects, individuals, and groups. Really Free Markets, Food Not Bombs, literature distribution, Copwatch, etc, drew in and ‘touched’ many people, but these projects often didn’t reflect our direct needs and desires (other than to be active and to do something as anarchists, but see the article in Modesto Anarcho #2 on “Against Anarcho-Charity” for more on this subject). While these projects gained us a lot of respect and notoriety as an activist organization, we largely were seen as another charity that busied itself with giving out food, clothing, and other needed items. This view of the group as a charity meant that many people’s understanding of us was that we were simply a resource to draw from and this meant that people created connections with us not through physical struggle, but because we had something that they needed. Energy and time was largely spent toward keeping the collective simply alive, generally through the continuation of a set checklist of repeating projects. Our time and resources went into continuing these few set projects that we became very good at continuing over the years (mainly literature distribution with Anarchist Café, and variations of Food Not Bombs) and for many of us, did not want to become critical of. The better we got at being an activist group, the more distanced we got from those that we wanted to revolt with and the more we became specialists in projects that did little to actually challenge power.

7. Towards the end of DAAA Collective, I felt that our approach did somewhat change as we worked to include ourselves in various local struggles that were going on. This ranged from things like helping out at strikes, to participating in Copwatch organized by migrant farm workers. While all of this was great stuff, and I would do it again, because we wanted to gain recognition to DAAA Collective as an organization, we often were uneasy in trying to help various struggles by doing anything more than just general support. This uneasiness generally meant that we often did not try and find ourselves at odds with left, union, church, or other set bureaucracies that were often active in set struggles we were supporting, but instead tried to seek their approval. Why were we even interested in their approval in the first place? We should have been wheatpasting posters over town calling for a general strike and autonomous resistance outside of the unions — instead of talking to ALF-CIO leaders about how we could help. We should have been fighting Nazis in the streets — instead of seeking approval from churches that were vandalized by racists for a thumbs up about our anti-politics. We should have been kicking in doors of abandoned houses with friends to open squats — instead of wasting gas driving across town to get vegetables for Food Not Bombs. In short, we should have acted like our ideas meant something, instead of acting like just a bunch of...activists.
8. To be against activism and for a complete social transformation means that we desire the destruction of hierarchal society and openly desire its abolition. We seek anti-politics, meaning the rejection of representative forms of struggle and a praxis of insurrectionary attack, or the use of actions which seek to destroy any existence of the state and capital and allows for the self-organization of revolt and life. This does not mean that people shouldn’t use activist approaches from time to time (for instance organizing events to fundraise for

political prisoners). But in general we need to find a strategy that exists outside of going from protest to protest and from issue to issue. We are in the middle of a social war, not a disagreement between various sides that can reach a compromise.

Beyond Activism

9. One of the joys of realizing that class and social struggle is everywhere is being able to see this as a social war, (or a violent confrontation between hierarchal and autonomous forms of social interactions). Modern society creates various tensions within it and these are tensions that we can act within and work to expand into wider attack and critique. We can see (historically and presently) that there are tendencies within oppressed and exploited people's struggles towards self-organization and a desire to fight for their own interests through insurrection, sabotage, direct action, and self-activity. In fact, many of the historical reference points for the current anarchist movement have all been social uprisings in which almost hardly any anarchists were involved. Hungry 56', Paris 68', Argentina, Oaxaca, Albania, Algeria, etc. This is not to say that anarchists didn't play a part in this struggles, but that overall these examples showed largely anarchist tactics in action without them being first "taught" to the 'awaiting masses'. Sometimes self-organization can happen in small groups like with rent strikes, wildcat strikes, appropriating land and goods, killing cops, etc. Sometimes this happens in mass, as in the anti-HR 4437 student walk outs. If we are active participants within these struggles and are approaching them in the context of revolutionary solidarity (and not seeking to absorb them into an existing organization or represent them), then we have a starting place for possible action.
10. Some actions did take place over the years while I was involved in DAAA Collective in the local area that did fit other patterns outside of activism. For instance, during the SBC strike in Modesto several years ago, anarchists vandalized an SBC corporate office with slogans like, "Off the Boss", and "We Don't Need the Bosses — They Need Us!". Although this was a small action, the desire was to push for a greater critique of the situation beyond simply a desire for higher wages. During a recent rally called by local rent strikers, anarchists showed up and passed out stickers (reading: Rent is Theft, Solidarity with all Rent Strikers), passed out flyers (see the article in Modesto Anarcho #2) and also distributed food and herbal medicine. While our message was way more radical then anything that the rent strikers had put forth, many of them were extremely glad that we had shown solidarity with them and taken the time to come out with materials and supplies. Many of the protestors stuck the 'Rent is Theft' stickers on their shirts and passed out our flyers. Conversations were struck up, and new relationships were made. When asked if we were an organization, we replied that we were a group of friends that was organized and wanted to help and expand the strike. They respected our position because it was one of genuine desire and respect. We were fellow people facing the horrors of everyday life and we were trying to find ways to change that. This should be our heading. Connections with real people building real relationships through struggle and personal affinity.
11. A point needs to be made that applying more insurrectionary tactics to various struggles as opposed to more activist variants is not 'vulgar vanguardism', as some would put it.

Meaning, we do not seek to create a vanguard of “the most militant” or to steer struggles out of the hands of those who initiate them in the first place. In the case of the rent strikers in Ceres, it probably would have served no one if we had shown up in ski masks and started breaking things during their protest. However, if groups on the other side of the country took initiative and conducted actions against the firm that owns the mobile home park where the rent strikers are currently struggling in, (a company which was raising their rent, causing them to go on strike), those actions could have the possibility to lead to very positive results. It is through action (and the propaganda work of explaining the anti-politics behind those actions) that we wish to use to push various isolated revolts into possibly wider open war.

Creating Autonomous Space

12. The creation of autonomous space is crucial if anarchist and revolutionary anti-authoritarian ideals are going to survive and create what many of us desire: a multi-generational movement. By this I mean a movement that can replicate itself again and again and retains the older generation while creating the next one. In some countries this has meant squats and social centers, in the U.S. infoshops and collective houses (to a certain degree). Autonomous space allows for a variety of participation within movements from people with various degrees of comfort and ability when it comes to action and allows more individuals to plug into social movements that just a core group of people. It also allows ‘drop-out’ counter-culture to form. By this I do not mean the negative “lifestylist” escapism that is rampant within the anarchist subculture, but I mean autonomous masses of people who reject the current society and instead try and build their own “within the shell of the old”, in defiance and resistance to authoritarian society. The more people that drop out, the more energy people have to put into destroying the current frameworks of domination.
13. I do not mean to fetishize one specific form of autonomous space, be it the infoshop, collective house, squat, forest village, what have you. I simply mean a self-organized area (or liberated zone that radicals inhabit) where people can unplug from the current system and work towards abolishing it. This could be a hang out spot, your room, a back yard garden, or whatever you have in your abilities. In this sense, I think that it is impossible to separate creating autonomous space from creating a revolutionary “culture”, (or perhaps “folk culture” to use CrimethInc. terms). How you go about creating a culture I don’t know and to some degree an anarchist culture already does exist, although the common reference points are only to those existing in the current milieu. This is largely the “culture of the scene” and often is simply full of punk, vegan, and activist reference points that seem to keep others out and isolate us in our own little ghettos. If industrial culture produces individuals which recreate the current society, we must create a revolutionary culture which seeks it’s total destruction and yearns for a new liberatory one.
14. Creating insurrectionary communities I think is also part of a crucial revolutionary process. This goes beyond just setting up collective houses, squats, and such. Meaning, to create social groupings that can expand themselves out and conquer more space (thus more

autonomous breathing room) and also use that space to attack the forces of hierarchy that are in turn attacking it. We need to use the islands of autonomy as the (decentralized) command centers for attack. This is the real 'dual power' in my opinion, not just a set standard organization, but really alive and vibrant communities of living beings that are standing strong together, active in revolt, and are supporting each other (mentally, physically, and as revolutionaries). We cannot separate insurrection (or the creation of moments where state power and authority disappear, and the situation becomes ungovernable) from the creation of autonomous spaces. In fact, the very act of insurrection creates autonomous space, so why not use autonomous space to foster insurrection? The state will not allow us to build without trying to destroy us and our projects. At this point, we must either defend ourselves or be demolished. Community gardens, squats, and other communal collective projects have all learned this the hard way over the years. We must be prepared to defend our movement from the forces of repression. We must also seek to create and perpetuate a culture of permanent conflict with the systems of domination, so as to not allow our autonomous spaces to be co-opted by the left or agents of recuperation.

In a Sea of Alienation

15. In the "glory days" or anarchism, everyone was only oppressed by class (or at least, that's mostly what the white men tell us). The negatives of class society was simply that of a physically impoverished existence (poverty, hunger, etc). However, modern life is much more complicated than that. We have become alienated beyond (or on top of) class. We have become alienated to simply being individuals in a sea of other alienated isolated individuals. Capitalism has separated us into classes, yet divided us again and again into service workers, blue and white collar, sex workers, professors, social workers, state workers, middle managers, supervisors, union and non-union workers, teachers, etc. Many of us now work with some sort of control over others. Micromanagement and the modern workplace has made many of us some sort of boss, whether it is over animals, other workers, children, ecosystems, or groups of people. This society separates us again into genders and rigid sexuality, and again into races; reinforcing a systematic set of white privilege, and pitting racial groups against each other. This is not to say that the young white woman driving to work at Starbucks is in the exact same boat as a black Katrina survivor, but what it does mean is that while physically the system may attack us differently, we are all alienated for our very existence by modern life. The destruction of natural community and genuine systems of social interaction has made millions flock to mega churches to find values, meaning, and a place to raise kids, and billions to internet social networking sites, to find love, life, and friendship. As the situationist slogan goes, "Even those that escape physical poverty, can not escape the emotional poverty of everyday life". Modern existence has destroyed real social bonds and meaningful relationships, yet recuperates this desire back to us.
16. While whole communities may be affected by capital and the state in largely different ways (Mexicano immigrants vs. homeless people), the thing that we all have in common is that we all suffer from the totality. We are all affected by industrial capitalism in various ways (some benefiting more or less, or hurting more or less) but we are all affected. If those exploited and excluded from the system can see their commonalities and common desires

and base that into action, then as Barry Pateman says, “Hey, anything is possible.” This of course is not to say that it is likely the elites (ruling class) will see ‘the error in their ways’ and come over to our side, but that various groups within the exploited and the excluded have a common self-interest (although they may not realize it) to stop the current state of affairs.

Affinities of Desire

17. The modern facets of domination reduce us down to mere individuals, poked, prodded, destroyed, and broken in a million ways by race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, education level, and whatever else, then we can start fighting back as individuals. We will start as militants on the search for other individuals that we can share affinity with and form the basic building block of the social war: the affinity group. Or perhaps, the crew, the gang, your friends, your posse, or perhaps just yourself acting in concert with the overall all social war. We say we desire a life of real affinity and free association, well this is it. If our vision of a world that is comprised of autonomous communities of free association organized without hierarchy, then we should not separate the ends from the means. When I say that we should express ourselves through action, I mean that in a million different ways. Opening up autonomous space, general propaganda work, fostering anarchist community, carrying out militant actions, engaging in solidarity work, etc. Our resistance should take the same organizational structure of the society that we wish to create.
18. We will exist in contradictions and live through action. We will be workers against work, with as much contempt for the boss as for the union bureaucrat. We will love and fight for the wild earth and we will tear down and sabotage the city. We will reject wage slavery and industrial production yet spend hundreds of (wo)man hours on projects that will benefit ourselves and those around us. We will try and physically arm our desires in a real sense, to except our plans for existence as real and meaningful and network with others doing the same. We will respond with action when it is needed, sabotage when it is possible, and revolutionary solidarity when it is called for. Our anti-politics will be clear as day through our actions and relationships with others. We will be irresistible because we will live like we want, fight like we give a d**n, and show that our ideals are not an abstraction, but a way to live. We will be race traitors, gender benders, ex-workers, ex-students, a mass of anti-mass, a movement of autonomous zones. We will support those behind bars, so possibly more will do the things that make people wind up there in the first place. We will create a resistance so enticing and wonderful that the reformists and leftists will look like the dinosaurs that they are. We will blur the line between revolution and actually living our lives, until they are one and the same. While we are forced to live under kings, cops, bosses, we will never relinquish our disgust for them or their system and continue to sharper our knives for the moments when they turn their backs. We will defend what we have and create what we don't. A new anarchist history is waiting to be written, go out and make it.

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Retrieved on 12th August 2021 from anarcho209.proboards.com
From *Modesto Anarcho* #3

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