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# Willful Disobedience Volume 2, number 7

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it is made of little single cells for each prisoner. The Turkish state wants to move the prisoners in to these prisons in order to dissolve the prison resistance movement. Therefore, this prison, also called the “coffin yard”, is the symbol of present resistance. This is a little information about the general issue.

However, here is the most important thing; we would like to share with our comrades something about the anarchist prisoners in Turkey. They are under oppression from two powers. On the one side are the Turkish authorities, on the other side is the Leninist-stalinist left. These leftists build an “inner prison”. They are in power inside the prisons and negotiate with the prisons’ authorities. A few months ago, one of the anarchists was killed by them in the prison. Two other anarchists were killed by DEV-SOL (revolutionary left) outside prison. Inside the prisons anarchist comrades need solidarity and help for their basic need and treatment, some of them heavily ill.

For more information about the situation of Turkish anarchists contact the 5<sup>th</sup> May Group, P.O. Box 2474, London N8, England. E-mail: [cemilebahar@hotmail.com](mailto:cemilebahar@hotmail.com).

for the release of prisoners with incurable illnesses is simply the demand that they be allowed to die with dignity.

On December 7, Michele Pontolillo, an anarchist prisoner started a hunger strike in solidarity with the other prisoners. His statement is printed elsewhere in this issue. On February 19, 14 prisoners in the Puerto I prison began a hunger strike to protest the beatings and tortures that occur in Spanish prisons.

On February 12, the prisoner, Francisco Maduro Delgado was beaten to unconsciousness by 13 jailers armed with sticks. He received no medical attention. On February 16, two more prisoners, Antonio Berbel Torres and Jesus Maria Uribechebarria Bolinaga, were beaten in the prison. The hunger struck was begun in solidarity with those beaten. They call for outside solidarity in their struggle against the prison system and the brutality they experience daily.

Prison only allows limited forms of resistance. The hunger strike is one of the few self-organized forms of revolt possible within the prison walls. These hunger strikers deserve our solidarity in its strongest form — total revolt against the society that makes prison possible.

## **Hunger Strike and Anarchist Prisoners in Turkey**

(The following text is based on a statement issued by the 5<sup>th</sup> May Group, Turkish anarchists in exile in London)

Hunger strikes and death fasts have continued for more than two months in prisons in Turkey. 15,000 prisoners went on strike. More than 35 prisoners were killed in a police raid. The total number of deaths has increased. The principle aim of the action is against the “F” type of prison. The main feature of this type of prison is that

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autonomous movement with the clear intent of building public support for state repression.

Estafania, who was originally arrested with Eduardo, though released, is still facing charges of conspiracy with regard to the bombings, and other charges as well. A third person is also being sought by the police, but has evaded arrest so far.

## **Prison Hunger Strikes in Spain**

On December 1, 2000, about 50 prisoners in different prisons started an indefinite hunger strike. Another 150 prisoners are taking part through solidarity actions.

There are many reasons to combat the reality of life behind the walls, but the prisoners have opted to fight for three demands: 1) the end of the FIES and isolation; 2) the end of dispersion; 3) the release of prisoners with incurable illnesses.

FIES (Fichero de Internos de Especial Seguimiento) was introduced by the Penitentiary Institutions in 1991 to ensure their security and good order. It was sold to the public as a sort of database for classifying the most dangerous prisoners. In reality the FIES is a lot more than this. Prisoners who fall under the FIES regime are basically isolated; spending 23 hours a day in their cells with one hour outside in the courtyard. Their communications with family and friends and their access to books and paper is greatly restricted. The only physical contact they get is the beatings from the guards. There can be no pretense that such a regime is intended to “rehabilitate” the prisoner.

Dispersion — moving the prisoner to a prison far from her family and frequently switching him from one prison to another — is not just used against political prisoners. More than 52% of the prisoners in Spain are serving their sentence outside of the province where their friends and families are, making visits difficult. The demand

# Prisoners

## Update on Eduardo Garcia and Estafania Maurete

Eduardo Garcia, imprisoned since November, is facing up to 20 years in prison in Spain on charges of terrorism. An active anarchist in Madrid, he has been very much involved in anti prison struggles. His frequent visits to prisoners helped to facilitate communication among prisoners, which is necessary for the development of concerted struggle, as well as communication between the struggles in the prisons and those in the streets. With the growth of the struggles inside the prisons, the authorities feel the need to cut off such communication. Eduardo's arrest is one attempt to do just that.

Eduardo is accused of sending letter bombs to six journalists known for attacking prison struggles and one politician. The following facts indicate that this is a frame-up: 1) The "proofs" offered for the charges are his relationships with "dangerous" anarchist prisoners and 40 grams of firework powder that was supposedly found at his parents' house, but witnesses of the search say that there was no powder, and a video recording of the search (that was conveniently lost by the cops) apparently did not show any powder being found. 2) His public activity would make such apparently clandestine activity impossible.

3) After his capture, four more bombs of the same sort have appeared. The press, playing its role as servant of the state, launched a campaign against squats and against the anarchist and

# A Few Words

The changes occurring in the way capital functions today present a difficult challenge to all of us who reject and seek to destroy the present social order. We are living in a world in which existence is increasingly precarious, in which possibilities for a relatively autonomous existence are narrowing, in which our physical and mental beings are increasingly attacked by the poisons this system spews out, and in which the democratic state no longer feels the need to disguise what a state is but rather complacently garners citizens' support for the most repressive measures through propaganda about "violent crime" and "terrorism". To dream of finding individual freedom outside of the terrain of social struggle — of class conflict — is not adequate. Capital has permeated all but the tiniest crevasses of the globe and its poisons pollute even these. Our so-called "autonomous zones" are nothing more than marginal projects for survival within the present order — possibly necessary in the present precarious situation, but by no means a sufficient means for confronting the reality that surrounds us with the rebellious spirit that springs from our desire for a full and vibrant existence. Now individual freedom can only exist in the struggle to destroy the present social order — a struggle that is social, that involves the violent confrontation between those who are exploited and ruled and those control the conditions of our existence — because only in this context of struggle do our decisions and actions become one, ceasing to be a choice among the options offered by this society and becoming rather our own self-determined projects.

In this light, all easy answers must be held suspect. Whether it be so-called “revolutionary gardening” or “anarchist” free food distribution, the uncritical veneration of the EZLN or of the recent mass demonstrations against global capitalism, the acceptance of the official dogmas about AIDS or about mental illness (and the consequent acceptance of medical expertise), the simplistic generalizations about gender and sexuality put forth in so much feminist ideology and the equally unanalyzed (and often subtly racist) conceptions of race many “anti-racists” embrace, every easy answer silences the questioning essential to revolutionary struggle and individual freedom and leaves us impotent before the present horrors. If those of us who want to bring the state, capital and the entirety of this civilization down are to be strong in our attack, we will have to turn a pitiless and savage eye of critique on all the givens and commonplaces not only of the world of power, but also of the so-called radical movements that have failed to give us the powerful weapons we essential to our project of destroying this order. We can expect no saviors to come save us, no miracles to drop our revolution from the sky, no panaceas or wonder drugs to cure our ailing world. It is up to us to develop our tools, to hone our weapons, to create a revolt that is strong, intelligent and fierce. In the face of the present reality anything less becomes a prop for the present toxic reality.

hands of the state and of stalinists and leftists both inside and outside the prisons.

an enclave of luxury homes on the edge of the preserve, have found the newly built houses being burnt to the ground before anyone can move in. Damage estimates have surpassed \$5,500,000.

The arsonist(s) are clear about their reasons. They wish to stop suburban sprawl and have chosen to act directly in order to accomplish this. Development has always been an essential part of capitalism. This social system cannot survive unless it expands, and it is beginning to nibble away at the last of the earth's wild spaces.

Demanding that the state curb the developers' activities is absurd since the state itself is a capitalist and is thus dependent upon the expansion of capital for its own continued existence. Thus, the battle against development must become the battle against the state and capital as a whole. These unknown individuals do not ask for dialogue with power; they do not try to move those in power to do what is impossible. Rather, they act for themselves to destroy that which is itself destroying the living world. Thus, the potential exists within these actions to move beyond this particular battle, to expand this critique in action to a critique of the totality of a civilization based on the commodification and the destruction of wildness, untamed beauty and life.

THESSALONIKI, GREECE (January 8, 2001) — Anarchists occupied the offices of Amnesty International in Salonika in solidarity with Nikos Maziotis whose appeal trial began in Athens on January 8. Solidarity was also expressed with Greek anarchist prisoners K. Kalaremas and Simos Seisidis, hunger striking prisoners in Turkey and Turkish anarchists who suffer at the

## Against the Logic of Submission: Realism

“Be realistic: Demand the Impossible!”

This famous slogan, which graced the walls of Paris in May, 1968, was truly revolutionary in its time, turning every common sense conception of realism on its head. Now artificial, virtual “realities” have come to dominate social relations. Life is not so much lived as watched, and anything can be seen with the new technologies. Considering this, it is no surprise that a slogan once so challenging to an entire social order has now become an advertising slogan. In the realm of the virtual, everything is possible for a price. Everything, that is, except a world without prices, a world of actual, self-determined, face-to-face relationships in which one chooses one's activities for oneself and concretely acts upon reality within the world.

The circuses that we are offered with our bread present us with spectacles like none ever seen before. Exotic places, strange creatures with magical powers, fantastic explosions, battles and miracles, all these are offered for our entertainment, keeping us glued to the spectator's seat, our activity limited to occasionally flicking a button — not unlike the primary activity in increasing numbers of jobs. So “the impossible” this society offers us is nothing more than spectacular special effects on a screen, the drug of virtuality numbing us to the misery of the reality that surrounds us, in which possibilities for really living are closing down.

If we are to escape this miserable existence, our revolt must be precisely against social reality in its totality. Realism within this

context becomes acceptance. Today when one speaks sincerely of revolution — of striving to overturn the present reality in order to open the possibility of concrete, self-determined human activity and individual freedom — one is being unrealistic, even utopian. But can anything less put an end to the present misery?

Increasingly, in the face of the juggernaut that is civilization, our present social reality, I hear many radicals say, “It’s necessary to be realistic; I’ll just do what I can in my own life.” This is not the declaration of a strong individuality making itself the center of a revolt against the world of domination and alienation, but rather an admission of resignation, a retreat into merely tending one’s own garden as the monster lumbers on. The “positive” projects developed in the name of this sort of realism are nothing more than alternative ways of surviving within the present society. They not only fail to threaten the world of capital and the state; they actually ease the pressure on those in power by providing voluntary social services under the guise of creating “counter-institutions”. Using the present reality as the place from which they view the world, those who cannot help but see the revolutionary destruction of this reality in which we live as impossible and, therefore, a dangerous goal, so they resign themselves to maintaining an alternative within the present reality.

A more activist form of realism also exists. It is found in a perspective that ignores the totality of the present reality, choosing instead to see only its parts. Thus, the reality of alienation, domination and exploitation is broken down into categories of oppression which are viewed separately such as racism, sexism, environmental destruction and so on. Although such categorization can indeed be useful for understanding the specifics of how the present social order functions, it usually tends instead to keep people from observing the whole, allowing the leftist project of developing specializations in specific forms of oppression to move forward, developing ideological methods for explaining these oppressions. This ideological approach separates theory from practise leading to a further

and rail lines and beat security personnel. Several hundred people who were sent back to Zurich rioted, breaking windows, overturning garbage containers and burning cars. Damage was “massive”.

SWITZERLAND (January 27, 2001) — Protesters were turned back by police when they attempted to get to Davos where the World Economic Forum was taking place. In response, people blocked roads and rail lines and beat security personnel. Several hundred people who were sent back to Zurich rioted, breaking windows, overturning garbage containers and burning cars. Damage was “massive”. MOUNT SINAI, LONG ISLAND, NY (December 29, 2000) — Individuals using the name Earth Liberation Front (ELF) claimed responsibility for burning down four new luxury homes at Island Estates in Mount Sinai. Damages were estimated at \$2,000,000.

GLENDALE, OR (January 1, 2001) — Individuals using the name Earth Liberation Front (ELF) torched the administrative offices of the Superior Lumber Company causing \$400,000 in damages.

MIDDLE ISLAND, LONG ISLAND, NY (January 14, 2001) — Individuals using the name ELF hopped a fence at Melo’s Construction, took a gas can from the bed of a pickup and set fire to the truck and to a front-end loader. The truck was full of expensive saws, tools and other equipment. Damages were estimated at between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

FLAMES OF REVOLT IN ARIZONA Unknown individuals have taken up the torch in the battle against encroaching development in the area around the Phoenix Mountain Preserve. Developers, attempting to create

# News

## Immigrant Struggles in Australia

The struggle of undocumented immigrants against the detention centers in Australia continues. In January, more than 180 detained immigrants armed with bricks and iron bars battled police at the Port Hedland detention center. The detainees temporarily took the center over until the police suppressed the revolt. A few days later, on January 24, a group of seven people scaled the roof of the Maribyrnong detention center, beginning an occupation to demand its closure. This action was taken in support of detainees protesting conditions in the centers. The purely symbolic nature of this action was shown when the group came down at 10 pm that night to face charges.

Detention centers such as these exist all over the world. The worsening conditions for those at the bottom of the present social order have forced many into migration in the attempt to find a reasonable way of surviving in the present world. The requirement of documents is a way of criminalizing these poor immigrants, justifying their interment into camps. Revolt is the only reasonable response.

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breakdown into issues upon which to act: equal wages for women, acceptance of gays into the military or the Boy Scouts, protection of a particular wetlands or patch of forest, on and on goes the endless round of demands. Once things are broken down to this level, where any analysis of this society as a whole has disappeared, one is once again viewing things from a place within the present reality. For the activist realist, also known as the leftist, efficacy is the primary value. Whatever works is good. Thus emphasis is placed on litigation, legislation, petition to the authorities, negotiation with those who rule us, because these get results — at least if the result one wants is merely the amelioration of one particular problem or the assimilation of a particular group or cause into the present order. But such methods are not effective at all from a revolutionary anarchist perspective, because they are grounded in acceptance of the present reality, in the perspective that this is what is and so we must use it. And that is the perspective of the logic of submission. A reversal of perspective is necessary to free ourselves from this logic.

Such a reversal of perspective requires finding a different place from which to perceive the world, a different position from which to act. Rather than starting from the world as it is, one may choose to start from the will to grasp her life as his own. This decision immediately places one into conflict with the present reality, because here the conditions of existence and, thus, the choices of how one can live have already been determined by the ruling order. This has come about because a few people manage to take control of the conditions of everybody's existence — precisely, in exchange for bread and circuses, survival graced with a bit of entertainment. Thus, individual revolt needs to arm itself with an analysis of class that expands its critique, awakening a revolutionary perspective. When one also begins to understand the institutional and technological means through which the ruling class maintains, enforces and expands this control, this perspective takes on a social and ludic dimension.

The logic of submission tells us to be realistic, to limit ourselves to the ever-narrowing possibilities that the present reality offers. But when this reality is, in fact, marching toward death — toward the permanent eclipse of the human spirit and the destruction of the living environment — is it truly realistic to “be realistic”? If one loves life, if one wants to expand and flourish, it is absolutely necessary to free desire from the channels to constrain it, to let it flood our minds and hearts with passion that sparks the wildest dreams. Then one must grasp these dreams and from them hone a weapon with which to attack this reality, a passionate rebellious reason capable of formulating projects aimed at the destruction of that which exists and the realization of our most marvelous desires. For those of us who want to make our lives our own, anything less would be unrealistic.

to increase their influence. By the same token, the leftist must make dishonesty, fear and irrationalism their main way operating. The gulags of Soviet “communism” are a good model of fully developed leftism. For the abolition of capitalism, militantism and moralism.

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## What is a Militant?

What is a militant? What is the left? Leftists altogether could be defined as the international association of specialists in oppression. From racism to sexism to ageism to class oppression to looksism to homophobia and so forth, leftists study, quantify and aspire to own each different sort of oppression. A racial nationalist who presents him or herself as the only authority on the feelings, ideas and aspirations of black or latino people is one classic example of a leftist. A feminist academic who presents her or himself as the only authority on the feelings, ideas and aspirations of women is also a classic leftist.

As specialists in oppression, leftists are oriented towards noticing, intensifying and managing feelings of powerlessness. From welfare workers to unionists to national liberation armies, leftists seek to establish themselves as the sole representative of one or another type of oppression. They then sell the control of this oppression to the highest bidder. Professed feminists work in the child-service agencies which terrorize poor families by stealing their children.

The leftist militant derives their need for constant action from their cultivation of guilt. The need for action and the cultivation of guilt soon overwhelms any consciousness of the larger purpose of their action. Soon the domination of leftism, of guilt politics, becomes more important than any positive outcome of the activity.

Since the leftist specializes in particular oppressions, their focus is on spreading the awareness of the feelings of oppression. From christian twelve-step programs to maoist “criticism, self-criticism sessions”, leftist use a feeling of powerlessness as the driving force

## The EZLN is not Anarchist: Or Struggles at the Margins and Revolutionary Solidarity

*In a future revolutionary period the most subtle and most dangerous defenders of capitalism will not be the people shouting pro-capitalist and pro-statist slogans, but those who have understood the possible point of total rupture. Far from eulogizing TV commercials and social submission, they will propose to change life...but to that end, call for building a true democratic power first. If they succeed in dominating the situation, the creation of this new political form will use up people's energy, fritter away radical aspirations and, with the means becoming the end, will once again turn revolution into an ideology. — Gilles Dauve*

The current restructuring of capital and its global expansion intrudes to an ever greater extent in to the lives of those on its margins. Peasants and indigenous people in non-Western, so-called “third world” nations, who have maintained some level of control over their subsistence up to now, are finding themselves forced to leave their lands or conform their activities to the needs of the world capitalist market simply to survive. It is, therefore, not surprising that movements of resistance against the various aspects of capitalist intrusion have arisen among these people in many parts of the world.

In previous issues of Willful Disobedience, I have written about the West Papua Freedom Movement (OPM). This movement of the indigenous people West Papua, many of whom continue to live as they did for centuries before any colonial powers arrived, against their Indonesian rulers is quite clear about refusing “modern life” — that is, the state, capital and everything that industrial civilization imposes. Or as they have said in communiqués: “We want to be left alone!” But this is the one thing that capital and the state will never grant. Although the OPM has sent delegates to demand talks with the Indonesian government, the West Papuans are increasingly aware of the futility of such negotiations. Recent communiqués talk increasingly of fighting to the death if necessary. After all, succumbing to the intrusion of capital would mean their spiritual death in any case. Their clarity about what they do not want has probably played an important part in guaranteeing that this movement, though armed, has never developed a separated military body, but rather has fought using methods traditional to their cultures. On the other hand, they have not completely escaped the ideology of nationalism, or at least its use in an attempt to have some credibility before world opinion. Still, this movement stands for having very few illusions about what the civilized social order and its institutions have to offer.

Another struggle at the farthest fringes of capitalist expansion is that of the people of Bougainville, an island about five miles west of the Solomon Islands, which has been under the rule of Papua New Guinea (not to be mistaken for West Papua) since 1975. The people of this island were pushed to revolt when CRA, an Australian subsidiary of Rio Tinto Zinc, installed a copper mine, causing hundreds of locals to lose their homes, lands and fishing rights, as well as destroying much of the jungle. The mine expanded until it was a half kilometer deep and seven kilometers in diameter. Protests, petitions and demands for compensation proved ineffective. So in 1988, a handful of islanders stole explosives from the mining company and began to destroy its structures and machinery. When

Faced with a scenario one can define, without too much dramatics, as Dantesque, there are only two options: either blind and devoted submission to the domination of capitalism, or the spontaneous and passionate rebellion against all that oppresses and exploits us.

- The closing down of the isolation units and abolition of the FIES
- An end to all dispersions
- Immediate release of all incurable prisoners

DOWN WITH THE PRISON WALLS!! VIVA LA ANARQUIA!!

Michele Pontolillo, Italian anarchist prisoner imprisoned in the extermination center of Villabona (Asturias).

bombs to journalists in the service of the most reactionary Spanish newspapers. The operation is designed and executed, as is usual in such cases, by the offices of the ministry of interiors, the provincial brigade or, which comes to the same, the political police, which assures that the accused be brought before the judicial authorities charged with opening the doors of prison where one will learn the significance of pain, suffering and powerlessness. Proofs? Maintaining relationships with anarchists and imprisoned rebellious proletarians. Nevertheless, to make sure that the judicial constructions produce the wanted results it is necessary to bring in essential elements such as public lynching, the personal and political discrediting of the suspects, and the moral condemnation of their acts, their ways of being, of feeling, of thinking. The communication media of the State play a crucial role in this aspect and prepare the ground so as to enable the repression to act unpunished, they charge themselves with criminalizing and slandering the individuals, groups and collectives considered inconvenient and embarrassing for those in power. The game is really perverse: the journalists give the signal and accuse, the courts condemn and the prisons execute.

This education of the consciousness of the masses, always occupied with demonstrating the unprovable, that is, that this world as it is organized now is the best of all possible worlds, excellent manipulators of reality and unequalled artists of distortion; they call lying and slander “freedom of expression”, media lynching “right of information”; they mark as “terrorism” the active solidarity with the political oppressed imprisoned for life in the extermination centers of capitalism, cover the tortures and assassinations committed every day in the police stations and prisons, the annihilation of rebellious proletarians in the isolation wings under the FIES label, the dispersion, the slow and painful death of the incurable and terminal sick prisoners, all this while appealing to the omnipotent “Constitutional and Democratic State”.

the Papua New Guinea (PNG) government sent in its armed forces, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) was formed to battle the PNG military and their Australian advisers. Armed only with homemade guns, dealing with a total blockade of the island by Australian boats and helicopters and largely ignored by the outside world, the people of Bougainville have nearly achieved autonomy. A peace process began in 1997 and those PNG soldiers still on the island have been confined to their barracks. An independent governing authority has begun to develop – certainly to give credibility in the eyes of the states of the world to an autonomous Bougainville – and this will likely have a negative effect on the reconstructing of the community and the environment, making it easier for Bougainville to be drawn into the world economic order. As was said in *Terra Selvaggio*: “The history of rebellion is much too full of liberators who transform themselves into jailers and radicals who ‘forget’ their programs of social change once they’ve seized power.” Nonetheless, the small dimensions of the island combined with the absence of any urban centers makes the process of construction of state power difficult. And the determination of the people not to allow the mine to reopen is their best protection against the expansion of capital on the island.

While the indigenous people of West Papua and Bougainville have not really yet been integrated in to the capitalist market at all – giving them certain advantages both in terms of clarity about what they have to lose and in terms of knowledge of the still mostly wild terrain on which they fight – other indigenous people and small-holding peasants who were already involved in the market economy to some extent, but have maintained some real control over their subsistence, are now seeing this last bit of self-determination eaten away and are responding.

In India, groups of peasants have organized to attack genetically engineered crops. Recognizing the genetic engineering of seeds and the and the patenting of genetic structures as methods for finalizing the control of multi-national corporations over food pro-

duction, even on the subsistence scale, these groups have attacked GMO fields and the property of corporations like Monsanto. But by no means do these groups have a clear critique of capitalism or the state. So alongside these direct attacks, the groups also petition the Indian state to make laws protecting them and preserving their place within the present social order. Their movement in its present form remains a movement for anti-global reform.

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criminal, whatever liberal or democratic ornaments it is clouded in. The methods the State uses to end the proletarian revolts are known by all of us, its hands are drowned in innocent blood. We remember the infamous GAL, the bask-spanish battalion and other armed gangs organized by the state, destined to sow fear and terror within the population, inert and stunned when one after the other those who had the courage to question and to struggle against the system fell. Let's remember also in Italy the bombs at the Plaza Fontana in Milan or in the train station of Bologna, which caused the death of hundreds of people. Till today, these atrocities have still not been completely resolved; the Italian State merely recognized the implication of some men of its secret services in these barbarian and criminal acts. But as much as they want to cover up, we know the truth: the attacks were planned and ordered at the highest regions of power; it was state terrorism which, in a desperate attempt to counter the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat, is responsible for hundreds of innocent deaths.

More recently, the Italian State brought numerous anarchists before its Holy Courts of inquisition on the accusation of being members of an incredible, if not to say grotesque, hierarchical, armed organization, with leaders, lieutenants and action commandos. All this went hand in hand with a criminalisation campaign which incited to a real hunt for anarchists. All those who declared themselves for the revolution and libertarian communism or had whatever relationship with anarchism were systematically persecuted and imprisoned. The hunt soon had some results and did cost the lives of two anarchist comrades, Soledad and Eduardo, dead thanks to the State when they found themselves locked up in its vile prisons.

Things haven't changed since. The State continues to use political-judicial constructions as weapons to suffocate the centers of the proletarian resistance which arise everywhere where the social contradictions are most harsh. As in the case of the three anarchist comrades from Madrid accused of having sent letter

gether with an obsessive and paranoid insistence on the perfecting of its “war on terrorism” machinery and on “law and order”, political euphemisms for the control and elimination of all dissidence, real, potential, or imagined. Whether the repression uses its instrument of war (police, rubber bullets, lead bullets, frame-ups, arbitrary detentions, etc.) or not depends on the level of the class struggle. Today, it is before the eyes of the whole world that the State deploys and boasts about its coercive and repressive means of power, undoubtedly a sign of the fact that the conflict between exploited and exploiters has risen considerably.

The first “victims” of the repressive beast of the State are of course the rebellious proletarians who have become conscious of their situation as exploited and oppressed and who struggle in the first lines against the power and all its expressions. In the midst of this insurgent proletariat are the anarchists, declared opponents of the imposition of State and Capital, and standing for a political and social project close to the socialist ideas, according to which it is the workers who are the one and only producers of social wealth, and who can and have to liberate themselves from the domination of the capitalist bourgeoisie so as to be once and for all masters of their lives and of their future. Even those who only have the slightest knowledge of the principles which animate anarchism, know that anti-authoritarianism and anti-capitalism are the foundation of anarchist theory and practice. The anarchists are sworn enemies of all hierarchies, of whatever imposition or domination, wherever it comes from or whatever one may call it; fierce defenders of life and freedom, of self-determination and independence of the individual and the people s/he belongs to, desiring a self regulated society as the only base on which we can build a more just, equal and free world.

It is at that moment, when the proletariat prepares itself to take the initiative and its longing for freedom has awoken, as happened numerous times in the course of its existence as a class, that the State throws off its mask and shows its real ugly face, violent and

GMO fields and the property of corporations like Monsanto. But by no means do these groups have a clear critique of capitalism or the state. So alongside these direct attacks, the groups also petition the Indian state to make laws protecting them and preserving their place within the present social order. Their movement in its present form remains a movement for anti-global reform.

Probably the best known of the indigenous struggles is the one happening in Chiapas, Mexico. This struggle came into the light of day with the uprising of January 1, 1994. The strength of the insurrection, the preciseness of its targets and the general situation from which it arose aroused immediate sympathy among leftists, progressives, revolutionaries and anarchists throughout the world. The uprising was led by the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN). The sympathy for this struggle is understandable as is the desire to act in solidarity with the indigenous people of Chiapas. What is not, from an anarchist perspective, is the mostly uncritical support for the EZLN. The EZLN has not hidden their agenda. Their aims are clear already in the declaration of war that they issued at the time of the 1994 uprising, and not only are those aims not anarchist; they are not even revolutionary. In this declaration, nationalist language reinforced the implications of the army’s name. Stating: “We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation”, they go on to call upon the constitutional right of the people to “alter or modify their form of government”. They speak repeatedly of the “right to freely and democratically elect political representatives” and “administrative authorities”. And the goals for which they struggle are “work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace”. In other words nothing concrete that could not be provided by capitalism. Nothing in any later statement from this prolific organization has changed this fundamentally reformist program. Instead the EZLN calls for dialogue and negotiation, declaring their willingness to accept signs of good faith from the Mexican government. Thus, they send out calls to the legislature of Mexico, even inviting

members of this body to participate in the EZLN march to the capital, the purpose of which is to call on the government to enforce the San Andres peace accords worked out by Cocopa, a legislative committee in 1995. So we see, regardless of the fact that they are armed and masked, the EZLN is a reformist organization. They claim to be in the service of the indigenous people of Chiapas (much as Mao's army claimed to be in the service of the peasants and workers of China before Mao came to power), but they remain a specialized military organization separate from the people, not the people armed. They have made themselves the public spokespeople for the struggle in Chiapas and have channeled it into reformist demands and appeals to nationalism and democracy. There are reasons why the EZLN has become the darling of the anti-globalization movement: its rhetoric and its aims present no threat to those elements in this movement who merely seek more national and local control of capitalism.

Of course, the social struggles of exploited and oppressed people cannot be expected to conform to some abstract anarchist ideal. These struggles arise in particular situations, sparked by specific events. The question of revolutionary solidarity in these struggles is, therefore, the question of how to intervene in a way that is fitting with one's aims, in a way that moves one's revolutionary anarchist project forward. But in order to do this, one must have clear aims and a clear concept of one's project. In other words, one must be pursuing one's own daily struggle against the present reality with lucidity and determination. Uncritical support of any of the struggles described above is indicative of a lack of clarity about what an anarchist revolutionary project might be, and such support is most certainly not revolutionary solidarity. Each of our struggles springs from our own lives and our own experiences of domination and exploitation. When we go into these battles with full awareness of the nature of the state and capital, of the institutions by which this civilization controls our existence, it becomes obvious that only certain methods and practices can lead toward the end

world countries, the dismantling of the welfare-state on which the already precarious social pact between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was based, these are all decisive aspects of a reality which allow us to foresee, not only an uncertain future for all those who take part in the production process and are trapped between the slavery of work and the fear of joining the ranks of the jobless, but also a radicalization of the class struggle. The uncertainty and insecurity of the future, the rising numbers of those excluded from the production process and pushed to the margins of a life of misery and mere survival, put this system of exploitation into question.

The French writer Jacques Attali describes with poignant realism this new scenario that comes to reality at an accelerated speed in the opulent West:

“Europe hasn't changed really, only in a certain way of conceiving social order, a totally new capitalism is coming up, a global capitalism which will modify profoundly the role of the States and nations in the world. A capitalism driven by new forces where a new elite will emerge and where the totality of the traditional classes will be proletarianized. Very soon, in the place of the wage-earner there will be but a huge declassed proletariat; a triumphant superclass will float in the muddy waters of misery and the price of success of a tiny minority will be the marginalization of the majority and the violence of the underclass”.

Faced with this disturbing social radiography the States have enormous difficulties conserving the consensus about its institutions and about the growing popular protests, some of which take a clear distance from the officially approved mode of actions of the parties and “labor” unions domesticated and loyal to their friends the bosses, instead developing autonomous and self regulating forms of struggle.

So, what will be the formula the States adopt to contain the general discontent and radicalization of the social struggles within acceptable limits? No more nor less than give full powers to its oppressive institutions to make an end to this rising situation, to-

# **A Letter from Michele Pontolillo, anarchist prisoner in struggle**

I announce that at 12 o'clock on December 7 2000, I will start an indefinite hunger strike. Given the situation of growing repression in which we live inside as well as outside prison, and departing from the inalienable right of every individual to revolt against the omnipotence and arrogance of those in Power, I announce that at 12 o'clock on December 7, 2000 I will start an indefinite hunger strike for the reasons I would like to expose here.

Starting some years ago we have been able to observe a considerable aggravation of the repressive activities of the imperialist European States designed to criminalize and diminish the activism of the social and political movement, including the anarchist movement which is well rooted in those countries where the proletarian and revolutionary struggles continued, as in Spain, Italy or Greece.

Wherever we look, the view is desolate. The restructuring of capitalism incited by the massive use of communication technologies led to new contradictions which are much more difficult for the governments to handle through a policy of consent. The States, and by extension society as a whole, have but to adapt themselves to the new demands of capitalism which are ever more exclusive.

The reduction of the costs of production, the rising unemployment rates, the flexibility and precariousness of work, with as immediate consequence the proletarianisation of social layers previously close to the middle class, the attraction of cheap labor from third

we desire. With this knowledge, we can clarify our own projects and make our awareness of the struggles around the world into a tool for honing our own struggle against the present social order. Revolutionary solidarity is precisely fighting against the totality of an existence based on exploitation, domination and alienation wherever one finds oneself. In this light, revolutionary solidarity needs to take up the weapon of unflinching, merciless critique of all reformist, nationalist, hierarchical, authoritarian, democratic or class collaborationist tendencies that could undermine the autonomy and self-activity of those in struggle and channel the struggle into negotiation and compromise with the present order. This critique must be based in a lucid conception of the world we must destroy and the means necessary to accomplish this destruction.

## I Dream in Colors

Black and white—these two colors have defined so much of the American social landscape, casting their shadow over social struggles. If today on official documents and in academic studies “diversity” and “multi-culturalism” are recognized, at bottom, the dichotomy between “white” people and those who are not white remains the predominate definition of “difference”, because it is an all too useful tool in the hands of those who rule us.

It is quite easy to condemn white supremacists—blatant racists and bigots purveying a small-minded, narrow view of the world that impoverishes all it touches. For these nasty and ignorant people, the situation is simple: those who are not white are dangerous and must be dealt with as such. So out come the clubs and crowbars and the hunt begins. Or, more frequently, out come the laws and cops and the prisons fill up.

But what of the anti-racists, those good white people who have nothing against their black, brown, yellow or red sisters and brothers, who are even willing to defend them? These are quick to demand that those who are not white should not be mistreated, that their rights should be protected, because they are really “just like us”, they are our equals. These good, “broad-minded” people are ready to subsume everyone under that great, unified *human* race, blinding themselves to all that might threaten their abstract magnanimity.

But whether one chooses narrow-minded bigotry or broad-minded magnanimity, the result is the same: the different is made to disappear, because it must not exist; it is too frightening, too challenging. In fact the bigotry of the racist feeds on the rhetoric

fullest sense — of creativity, imagination, joy and wonder, and ultimately of our physical being as well? In reality, chatter about citizen’s participation and more democracy is an absurdity in a world in which more and more people are pushed from their homes and pushed into undocumented migration in the attempt to survive — thus, finding themselves excluded from citizenship and “humanity” as recognized by the state — precisely by the actions of the democratic states. Attempting to make the present social order more just and more ecological is equally absurd when one considers that it must expand in order to survive and such expansion means the increasing dissemination of the poisons necessary for economic production, the increasing spread of misery, disaster and death. In light of the present conditions of existence, the World Social Forum was a farce. Alternative methods of exploitation and domination guarantee the destruction of any life worth living as surely as the present forms do. Ultimately nothing short of the total destruction of the present social order can put an end to the death march that is our civilized reality, and all those who seek to merely restructure the methods by which this death march advances are as much my enemy as those who presently direct it. Anarchist and revolutionaries would do well to avoid being taken in by such absurdities as the World Social Farce. We have better things to do.

## The World Social Farce

As cops brutally drove protesters back from Davos, using state violence to prevent demonstrations in the vicinity of the World Economic Forum, 12,000 “representatives from citizens’ groups” met together in Porto Alegre, Brazil to develop an “alternative” to the economic model of the WEF. This conference, called the World Social Forum, was organized by various parties — including the Partido dos Trabalhadores that holds power in that region of Brazil — and organizations. As is typical of the left, the WSF sought to draw groups from across the radical and liberal political spectrum (and even succeeded in drawing a few anarchist and autonomous groups to participate). Thus, their rhetoric was as bland and non-committal as their practise. Speaking of creating a different design for globalization and developing strategies for laying “the foundations for a fairer economic model”, the forum as a whole emphasized “more citizen involvement”, “more opportunities for democratic participation” in the global economy. While a few dissident voices — mainly from the anarchists and autonomes who made the mistake of attending this forum — called for the end of capitalism, it is clear that primary thrust of this forum was, in fact, to find a way to preserve the present social order in a more humane and democratic form, to preserve the trajectory of capitalism in a way that will allow more people to actively participate.

But let us consider: Is a death march worth continuing because we’ve eradicated the whips and cattle prods? Does the right of the marchers to choose who will direct the march or what the details of its continuance will involve mean anything when the basic reality remains the same, with an end that is guaranteed: death in the

of the anti-racist. The doctrine of the latter, the promotion of “multi-cultural” homogenization and “diversity” as commodity, is really founded on a refusal to see that which should not need to be pointed out—that no individual is equal to any other; it fuels the fear of losing oneself. And if one has learned to define their peculiarity in racial terms, this doctrine will goad her to defend his racial heritage with ever more vehemence. Thus, the blind, abstract generosity of the anti-racist simply pushes the racist to be more narrow-minded and defensive. In the same way, the anti-racist needs the racist to whom she can respond. Without the racist whose attitudes and ignorance he can condemn, thus distinguishing herself, he’d have no way to prove his anti-racist credentials. For she, like the racist, is afraid of the different, and equally afraid of losing herself. Unlike the racist however, he does not express her fear with the club, but rather through self-deception and flattery. He does not see the arrogant and self-serving racism in her claims that “they are just like us; they are our equals”. Such claims are not only insulting and arrogant, but false as well. But the anti-racist won’t understand this. Prey to their own bad conscience about sharing the same skin color as the white supremacists they despise, their anti-racism becomes a symbolic martyrdom, self-deprecation indicative of their inability to step thinking in essential racial categories.

There have been attempts in recent years among revolutionaries in this country to move beyond the pathetic dichotomy that still dominates the discussion of race. Although early attempts to point out the lack of a biological basis for the concept of race have sometimes led to a lazy refusal to deal with the matter at all, there are those who have taken the next step of trying to develop an analysis of the usefulness of the concept of race to the rulers of this order for the maintenance of current social relationships. In particular, the “new abolitionists”, publishers of *Race Traitor*, have made useful contributions to an analysis of how the development of the concept of the white race allowed the exploiting classes to create

significant rifts between different parts of the exploited classes and to manipulate large portions of the latter into identifying with their exploiters. Such analyses indicate that these new abolitionists have moved beyond the simplistic self-righteousness of anti-racism, but there are still elements of anti-racist moralizing to be found in their ideas. Their tendency to still think in black and white (or white and non-white) may be an essential starting point for the development of their analyses that are ultimately attempting to supercede this dichotomous way of thinking. But their slogan, “Treason to the white race is loyalty to humanity”, seems to carry with it the attempt of the anti-racist to subsume all difference under that abstraction, the human race. Correspondingly, the practice to which the writers of *Race Traitor* most frequently call “white” people is the refusal of white privilege, the specifics of which—as described in their writings—seem to have more to do with personal moral righteousness, and thus self-sacrifice similar to that of the anti-racists, than with the development of a revolutionary project that can bring down this society and its concept of race.

A truly revolutionary project—one that can destroy class society, domination and exploitation and open the possibility for the development of free, self-determined relations—is rooted in the desire of individuals to determine their own lives in terms of their own singularity. In this light, I do not consider any individual to be equal to any other. Profound differences abound, and among these differences which make up the uniqueness of each individual are those characteristics that could be called “racial” or “ethnic”, but these are not the most fundamental characteristics. Nor do they make for the superiority or inferiority of any group. Rather they reflect that each of us is a unique being with our own history and our own way of facing the world around us. In order to create ourselves on our own terms—possible in the present only in revolt against the social order—it is necessary to examine the differences that have their basis in socially defined categories in order to overcome them, move beyond them and make them our own, servants to our sin-

gular selves. So I choose to relate to each individual not based on their racial or ethnic identity, but based on who I am and want to be and what interests and desires these individuals evoke in me.

It is this singularity, this very real difference between every individual, that is feared and rejected by both the racist and the anti-racist. The racist seeks to eliminate difference in a homogenized conception of whiteness which justifies the violent suppression of those who cannot be assimilated into this category. The anti-racist seeks to deny difference by assimilating everything into the “multi-culturalism” of commodification, offering only the murky greyness of capitalist pseudo-diversity—the “diversity” of products on the market. To move beyond this greyness requires precisely that we embrace that difference which cannot be commodified—the marvelous uniqueness of each individual. But such an embrace demands that we truly wrestle with those social concepts and categories in which the present world strives to enclose this difference with the aim of destroying these cages. Such an effort is essential if we ever want to dream in colors.