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Two Decades of Disobedience: A retrospective on Green Anarchist's first twenty years

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March 2004

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selfpolicing that is keeping reality and any admission of error on his part at bay — meltdown time, baby!

In this, Booth is like the ossified anarcho-Left as a whole, which already knows all the arguments about ‘the iron law of oligarchy’ that will lead to its supersession because they are applied exclusively to criticise other, like organisations and never used to criticise their own. This state of affairs can only be maintained by the most rigid ideological double-think, Booth’s sectarian ‘ins’ and ‘outs’. They know they are an obstacle to revolution but can never, ever even whisper it. Because we consistently say the unthinkable and encourage others to — ”more goad than guide” as one lot hilariously put it — GA has been anathematised by such groups year on year, and we’d be disappointed if we were not. We don’t matter, organisations don’t matter. All that matters is the love and rage of the people, a flame that will burn away all this old world.

My future vision, then, is of a universal, all-consuming, passionate, liberating inferno. As to myself, I wish I spent more time smashing and burning (as I once did), less on writing, but more even of that than nothing. Whatever — GA or something like it will continue if I write for it or not. However big a part it’s been in my life, it is a small thing indeed in the grand scheme of things. It is a great pleasure to me to see other pro-AP groups and tendencies springing up all over the world, as it makes my — and GA’s — role all the more dispensable.

Readers of this account may no doubt be offended by the way GA’s internal politics are conducted — as if some other, more bureaucratically ‘democratic’, ‘representative’ system might work ‘better’. Reputedly, when asked on his deathbed who should inherit his empire, Alexander the Great’s dying words were that it should go to “the strongest”. Beneath the transparent tissue of civilised lies, when has this ever not been so — and gladly, honestly so, at that?

Press or (in pre-movement Cold Warrior mode) Communism once did. For those who have seen only the ‘reasonable’ face Booth puts on for public consumption, it is instructive to read him rant and rave in his anti-AP pamphlet, literally contradicting himself page by page, never mind such errors of fact as accusing John Zerzan, author of *The Catastrophe of Postmodernism*, of being a postmodernist just because Booth doesn’t like post-modernism either! You won’t know it to read *Primitivism: An Illusion with No Future* (free off the Net) that Booth was around as early as Ian Bone’s 1993 *Anarchy In The UK* festival when John Moore and Leigh Starcross bought out the AP latent in Hunt’s adoption of Sahlin’s ‘primitive affluence’ thesis or had read and distributed over a dozen issues since with specific AP core themes and even (hard for a hermit like Booth) met a few of them over the years, all without a word of objection and then — bang! — as soon as he breaks with revolutionism, AP is the world’s greatest evil. Those given to psychological analysis would point out here that Booth has no issues with AP, just with whatever I happen to advocate but more substantially, from his current perspective Booth has every reason to take issue with this sort of analysis. From its inception, Camatte’s critiques of ideological ‘gangs’ and Perlman’s satirical *Manual for Revolutionary Leaders* unequivocally rejected the sort of conventional manipulative power politics Booth has now adopted, insisting we trust the people’s own instinct for selfliberation over any that choose to ‘represent’ (dominate) them. And, of course, AP criticises the totality, the fundamentals of Civilisation and Empire, of symbolisation and separation and this, too, is poison to the partial, mediated, reformist approach. But I think what really scares Booth in his current state of mind is AP’s critique of domestication. A jazz fan, there was a time when Booth could let himself go. All that is no mystery to him, for all his petit bourgeois background. But currently, any loss of control might force him to break out of a rigid circle of selfdelusion and

Few anarchist publications survive to their 20th year, and then typically spoil it by resounding triumphant about their minuscule ‘great achievements’. At risk of sounding pious, it is not our role as revolutionaries to holiday from criticism — especially essential selfcriticism — or to publish propaganda, which implies an unequal, manipulative relationship between writer and reader. Like the Trotskyites of yore, there are ‘Walter Mittys’ in the movement that go over the in-house press with a fine-toothed comb for any portent — however tiny or obscure — of their imminent ‘achievement of historical destiny’, a tendency that actually only emphasises their risible, self-deluded megalomania and pathetic insignificance. For all the postSeattle myth-making, Leviathan’s enemies have achieved little on global terms, so it is more appropriate to present ourselves with modest humility, as learners rather than teachers.

Our Origins

London Greenpeace presented the Easter 1984 Stop the City (STC) as a forerunner to such anti-globalisation spectacles as J18. With hindsight, this is nothing to boast about and GA’s role in it less so. As others were penned outside the Bank of England trading smoke flares with the Met, veteran Freedom columnist and owner of the Keveall Farm organic commune Alan Albon and a young Green CND herbalist Marcus Christo met in a nearby pub, quietly agreeing to found a “green” anarchist publication to join the Green wave of the time. Donations from one Poison Girls benefit later, they did so. The first issue featured articles by Colin Ward, London Greenpeace’s Dave Morris and a cringe-inducing cover portraying the wished-for coming together of two dissident youth counter-cultures — hippies and punks — but was a pretty mixed bag.

The first cover was by one Richard Hunt, bought in as GA’s artist and record-keeper. An odd customer even by movement terms, Hunt had been variously a SIGINT operative during his na-

tional service in Hong Kong and a torture victim of the psychiatric establishment ('aversion therapy'), but most relevantly here had quit both the Green Party and John Carpenter's dissident splinter, Green Line, for failure to adopt what he portentously described as "my economic analysis".¹ He was one of the first to latch onto Richard Lee / Marshall Sahlins's 'primitive affluence' thesis, that whilst band-societies are typically commodity-poor, they are time-rich and use their leisure to live full, harmonious, egalitarian lives. Despite Sahlins also noting agriculturalists were worse off in all respects than forager bands, Hunt's mid-1970s pamphlet *The Natural Society* argued in terms typical of that decade's utopianism for the decentralisation of society to the level of small, self-sufficient communities (tweely rendered as "villages"), with any losses in technology and high culture written off as inevitable, if not desirable.

The Hunt Years

Hunt's extreme dogmatism led him to demand the informal GA adopt his analysis as "policy" and then, come 1986, to use his control of the zine's records to force the other editors out when they would not. He later claimed the sticking point for his blatant take-over was "violence", the peace movement dominating the protest milieu and the minds of the other two editors at the time. In this, Hunt — fresh from crawling through a hedge to escape a battering at the battle of the Beanfield, where Thatcher's rompersuited storm troopers trapped and physically smashed the Peace Convoy — was probably more in touch with social reality. Lacking coworkers, in 1987 he formed an editorial collective from prominent Stonehenge Campaign veterans, Oxford students and the odd local pagan, but

¹ Hunt's full biographical details can wait for his obituary, surely not far off following a mentally debilitating stroke two years ago.

ical prosletysing tactics, in fact. This approach is flawed because whilst there are 101 reformist publications out there, all more established and better resourced than Booth's, there is only one GA, a unique voice (not counting Booth's GA, of course, which is unique only in its residual demented conspiracy theorising!). Revolution is not made by halves — without challenging the totality, radically and totally, nothing will ultimately change, something we all know deep down. A 'populist' approach can't even touch on these fundamental areas in case (its advocates patronisingly assume) it 'scares the horses — and the proles'. Rather than having deep appeal, such propaganda touches on deep insecurities. It is Booth and not us that is "elitist" inasmuch as we demand full, open dialogue whereas Booth feels only some ideas are fit to be fed to his 'limited, weak-minded' readers as *The Answer from Upon High* whilst others must be rigidly censored and excluded from his publication, despite references to "free speech" on its mast head. The result is an unattractive, uninteresting monologue, and all readers hear is the drone of a wannabe boss-in-waiting lording it over them intellectually — as in the rest of the Left and anarcho-Left press.

Booth stupidly argues that an absolute position achieves nothing, as if we were a political party recruiting members according to certain criteria, with only those 'in' allowed to do anything politically meaningful. Sadly, perhaps Booth does now see politics in such conventional terms — but I do not. Whoever acts in an unmediated way for their own liberation is 'in' as far as I'm concerned and my 'party' — if one can so name something that does not and should not exist — is the total liberation of all, human, animal, plant and rock by the tearing down of all separation and alienation. One moment of piercing, epiphanic love or of well-directed anger outweighs any thousand petitions addressed to the waste paper baskets of the already powerful as far as I'm concerned.

Anarcho-primitivism occupies the same place of universal evil in Booth's wonky worldview as perhaps Searchlight, Freedom

In full auteur mode, Booth wouldn't budge an inch, of course, so I had to deny him access to GA's Monomarks box and activate the mag's back-up editorial collective, those prepared to edit it had the entire 4th collective gone down as a result of the GAndALF trial. Since the dark days of mid-2000, we have produced half a dozen new issues of the 'original and best' GA,¹⁵ addressed comrades as far afield as the US, Italy and Turkey, seen AP gatherings in UK, Spain and the States and outsold Booth's pseudo-GA two to one with more frequent publication. It is a source of particular satisfaction to me that now Booth has to go to the bother of publishing and selling the mag himself, his "trees of Reason" have been dealing him some harsh blows as to economic and movement realities that he should have been alive to four years ago. We (i.e. the new editors, largely involved as Booth is not) were especially amusing to hear he was reduced to impersonating a vegetarian so Lancaster Animal Rights Group would take him to a SHAC demo to streetsell his wretched little reformist rag there.

Of course, whilst this publication is not produced solely to spite Steve Booth, satisfying though that might be (the opposite, when it comes to his pseudo-publication, might not be the case however), it's worth paying some attention to his "difference of approach" just to illustrate where GA is going in future.

Like Sax Wood before, Booth felt that by weakening GA's content and consciously adopting a 'populist' (i.e. propagandistic) format, he'd win more readers and influence — conventional polit-

¹⁵ This joke appropriation of Irn Bru's ad line — a traditional Glaswegian beverage I am partial to — met with an especially humourless, self-righteous response from Booth, who wasted considerable bandwidth spouting Sax Wood-style about Alan Albon's primordial soup on the Net. Particular satisfying, then, to see a later contributor to the list note that the 'original and best' GA at least pre-dated his and had the additional merit of not being pissboring. Not that this will make the slightest impression on Steve, of course, who assumes all adverse comment is the result of a global anarcho-primitivist conspiracy to prevent him achieving 'deserved greatness' rather than just being what it obviously is to the rest of us, fair comment.

this fell apart after one issue, largely as they were unwilling to subordinate themselves to Hunt as his 'mere mouthpieces'.

Ploughing on regardless, Hunt halved GA's already feeble circulation gratuitously attacking pacifists, theists and workerists — though the latter with considerable provocation. With the Reykjavik accords and the end of Soviet power in sight, the peace movement was failing and a Leftism that shared his dogmatism — if not his non-analysis of class conflict — was filling the vacuum. At this time, many of the workerist high-ups were unashamedly sectarian Leftists and Platformists, fetishising (their) organisation and ideology. Many of their followers were ex-vegan/peace police asserting their new proletarian Cause with convert zeal, despite their professional parents and public school educations (i.e. they themselves were the "middle class wankers").

Despite this, Hunt formed a second 'collective' the next year, consisting of Chris Laughton, a libertarian who made a living as the test subject of medical experiments rather than draw the dole, and Paul Rogers, an expeace camper and Peace Studies student disillusioned with all that following Peace News' denunciation of direct action by Autonomous Peace Action. Laughton left for Keverall Farm following his failure to establish Earth First! in the UK, being replaced by our resident doctor of programmes geekery, ANSLIM's Kevin Lano (Anarchist Sexual Liberation Movement), someone Hunt evidently found inappropriately disturbing.

Hunt wanted to leave GA to them so he'd have more time to expand The Natural Society to book length, finally published as a result of an inheritance from his unbeloved mother in 1998 as To End Poverty. He left sooner than intended in 1991 when his confused support for the first Gulf War saw him criticised in print by the other editors, who had been repeatedly arrested for actively opposing the war. To this day, Hunt takes massive umbrage at this 'peasants' revolt', being treated as he treated the original editors. He went on to edit what he hoped would be a rival publication, Alternative Green, on which sadly more below.

The 4th Collective

As Lano left for computer business in Australia, Rogers had to get out GA29 on his own before being joined by fourth editorial collective. This included a young Camberley punk whose brother was involved in animal rights, Saxon Wood, who did the distribution; obsessive ALF / ELF list-keeper and editor of Rabbixian Anarchist Times (RAT, later Ecovegan) in the West Country, Noel Molland, who did the direct action listings; and ex-RAF helicopter maintenance man Steve Booth, a former anti-poll tax bailiff buster who also edited the Lancaster Anarchist Bomber. All were to become the 'GA' portion of the GAndALF defendants, but this was only the culmination of a Stateorchestrated campaign of spookery directed against GA from 1992 or so.

With Booth came his fellow NW bailiff busters Ray Hill and Tim Hepple, both fascists-turnedSearchlight assets. Because Hunt was even then making disturbing noises about "not Left or Right, but centralist or decentralist" — he invariably spoke axiomatically, further illustrating his ideological rigidity — we were more open to the 'gruesome twosome's blandishments than was wise, even publicising Hill's 'Creating a Community' scam about readers sending money to buy a Scottish island (we were later told he was a notorious fraudster, something he grudgingly admitted himself in his autobiography). With Hunt's resignation, Searchlight had no need to infiltrate GA to spy on the far-Right (quite the opposite in fact), so we can only assume it was to fulfil some State agenda.

With huge Green Party gains in the Euro elections and GA principally reporting EF!UK,² we were a natural target for infiltration and manipulation. When the BNP finally cottoned on to Tim

² In fact, GA was first to interview Jake Burbridge and Jason Torrance, Earth First!'s founders in UK, when they were still out painting dumpsters around Hastings at night. At this time, they hadn't met exRainforest Action's George Marshall, who had peacenik contacts that gave them numbers enough for inter/national headlinegrabbing spectaculars.

alive, that they never pay for themselves. One odd consequence of the massification of the movement is that outlets for alternative publications have plummeted.

A key reason I had to work in London from summer 2000 — and continue to work now, nights and / or in shit call centres — despite being opposed to work as a matter of temperament and general principle was that this was the only way remaining open to me to finance the paper. Booth — who at that time was living in a fantasy world of an ever-expanding movement and where nothing ever had to be paid for — simply couldn't understand why he was being asked to do more of GA's admin, only having 8+ hours a day more free time to do it than I then did. I had no objection in principle to him editing the paper fulltime, leaving me time to write and finance GA, but when I saw the first and only prebreak issue he produced, I knew there was just no way he should be allowed to ever produce another under the Green Anarchist mast head. Despite access to a perfectly good printer, he had halved its size and doubled its price, making it cheaper for readers to photocopy than buy, which I guess proofed them against further rip-offs. All mention of direct action and even prisoners listings had been dropped, replaced by diatribes in triplicate on the worth of unity with statist organisations like the Green Party, trivial reformist calls to lobby politicians for more easily recycled packaging and renationalisation of the railways, and off-the-wall conspiracy theory of the sort that so endeared O'Hara to Booth. Despite his level (indeed, strangely flat and humourless) tone, the weakening of emphasis was so pronounced that I concluded this new GA was either written by a different person from that who'd versified

Fluffy wankers make me chunder / Soon you'll all be
six feet under

(the original perhaps replaced by pod people from Invasion of the Body Snatchers...) or one in the grip of a profound mental illness (perhaps some sort of obsessive-compulsive reformism!).

He was happy to believe and / or do anything O'Hara told him, whether it made sense or not. Despite repeated public and private challenges to provide any evidence of his agentbaiting BS, none has been forthcoming with Booth himself admitting in private correspondence that his risible amalgam of paranoid surmises are "not proof". This didn't stop him from a covert campaign of unsubstantiated, hostile whispers and mail interception (given our precipitate move, we had to route our mail via his home before we knew of his 'aberration' and until a more secure alternative was available), ultimately setting up his own spoiler publication, also called Green Anarchist, 'to save it'. Needless to say, Booth could hardly publicly admit the true reason for his 'split' without deserved ridicule, so he first pretended it was to do with Kintz trying to sell a second Kaczynski interview to porno mag Penthouse (surely a matter principally between Ted and her) and then later, when that didn't get sufficient reaction in these post-feminist times, claimed it was due to "differences of approach".

Current Issues

As early as N30 (by which I mean my time in the Euston pig pen), we at GA have been warning that the antiglobalisation movement would revive massified Leftism and that would swallow the autonomous direct action initiatives where real hope for a similarly autonomous future lies. That prediction has sadly proved largely true, militancy (if we can call it that) being largely confined to 'mile wide, inch deep' 'here today, gone tomorrow' demos that satisfied the more complacent type of liberal in the 1980s — but even then were augmented by a hard edge of clandestine ALFers, base busters, saboteurs and street fighting anti-fascists which I'm relieved to say the complacent liberals didn't approve of. Fredy Perlman said that anarcho zine publishing represented a "reappropriation of capital" inasmuch as you always have to put money into them to keep them

Hepple's infiltration of their infamous Welling bookshop by early-1993,³ he insisted GA publish a hit list of fascists he claimed were involved in Combat 18, a neo-Nazi street gang given endless sensationalist and lucrative publicity in Searchlight for publishing their own hit lists in Target magazine, something Hepple also knew suspiciously too much about. Needless to say, this would have been legally and physically dangerous, but what really set alarm bells ringing was Hepple's claim that details of antifascists had been supplied to C18 not by him but by an ex-NF figure then prominent in Class War, Tim Scargill. As we'd been building bridges since the Hunt years,⁴ we knew Scargill personally and meeting him through the auspices of Searchlight's most single-minded foe, the spook-obsessed anti-fascist researcher Larry O'Hara, it was obvious to us he was being framed to create a three-way street war between GA, CW and C18 and — not incidentally — slap Class War for their reversing their Searchlight-sponsored expulsion from Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) on absurd smear grounds in 1985.

With input from the others being set up, O'Hara published the first of a series of pamphlets exposing Hepple's provocateur tactics, A Lie Too Far, which provoked a campaign of intimidation, smears and threats of violence from those reliant on Searchlight's dubious intelligence to maintain their position in AFA.⁵ Aside from

³ Apparently as a result of a fascist customers officer, Jim White, that Hepple had sacked for involvement in CS gas smuggling insisting on his accuser being named at his industrial tribunal.

⁴ We found Class War had more principle and humour than most work-erist groups — not entirely devoting their whole programme to chasing anarcho-monopolist AK Presses favour and thus Chumba's money — though they were (are!) still publicity hounds full of hot air.

⁵ A Lie Too Far got an absurdly hostile review in Class War as their Leeds group was dominated by Searchlight's Paul Bowman, who Red Action backed to the hilt in one bogus 'inquiry' after another as they were then equally complicit. As GA wouldn't 'toe the line' RA had set on this, their ensuing fatwa meant hassle from their decidedly slow 'street meat' for years even after RA themselves broke with Searchlight. Now, of course, Bowman is a thoroughly nice chap and

transparent Stalinist garbage like Terry Liddle, whose exwife is a Searchlight photographer, this realignment was done by early 1995 or so, though the State were hardly done with GA.

The Gandalf Trial

Although the smear campaign by Stewart Home, Fabian Tompsett and their fans began as early as 1994, I'm leaving that for later. It's noteworthy here that they didn't hesitate to use the same language ("terrorists", etc) as journalists fed anti-GA smears directly by the State – Home even claiming to know one of them personally, Jason Benetto – and when marginalised or desperate enough, used facts (e.g. numbers, personal details) that could only have been available from police surveillance sources.

Having exposed Hepple (and a portion of the State's strategy to demonise the militant Green movement as "ecoterrorists") and refused the arms and communications equipment we would probably have needed to survive the street war he was manoeuvring GA into as a small group, his MI5 masters started planting incredible stories on an "ecoterrorist" theme about GA and EF! in the mainstream media from mid 1993. John Harlow of the Times (and Construction News...), for example, was claiming protesters "threw babies under bulldozers" in his coverage of the Solsbury Hill and M11 protests. It was pretty obvious the journalists were getting a common briefing as all consistently rendered 'ELF' as 'Environmental Liberation

an environmentalist following a mental breakdown as a result of this affaire, though he split Class War and then bizarrely tried to dissolve his own faction before it was resolved. Red Action, of course, have an Irish line of their own to follow. Having tried to dominate AFA for so long through a combination of public rhetoric lauding 'unity' and behind-the-scenes manipulation and thuggery, they've now thrown in with hopeless Socialist Alliance electoralism and Sinn Fein-style community-building through their front, the International Working Class Association (IWCA). I think, to date, they have one local councillor to show for their typically principled volte face.

for a 17 year campaign of antitech Unabombings and at one time Amerika's #1 Most Wanted, Kintz took on an assignment the other largely upper-middle class, liberal editorial group wanted nothing to do with. The Journal wouldn't publish this 'dynamite' material – not least on the insistence of Daryl Cherney, the big money Californian EF! supremo then suing the FBI for injuries caused by their bomb during the Redwoods Summer campaign – who subsequently had her purged from the editorial group. Kintz then left for the UK, both because GA had agreed to publish the interview without any of the official nastiness that might accompany Amerikan publication and because it was possible to write her thesis on radical archaeology and anarcho-primitivism in the British academic climate but not any Amerikan one (nice to live in a free country then...).

Unfortunately after little over a year in UK, Kintz and myself found Larry O'Hara our de facto landlord whilst doing (extended) summer work in London. O'Hara has serious, unresolved problems to do with women, particularly his deceased, adopted mother¹⁴ and it didn't take much prompting from a malicious neighbour (who also happened to be a copper's wife) he'd adopted as a mother substitute for things to turn very nasty indeed. Things might have ended with our de facto eviction but O'Hara, never one to under-do vindictiveness, then encouraged Steve Booth to believe Kintz was (in his own words) "an agent for the American equivalent of Searchlight". As the Irrationalist debacle during the GANDALF period demonstrated, Booth is given to inappropriate quasi-antiautistic fixations and at this time, Larry O'Hara was one of them.

¹⁴ GA has had so many problems with mother-fuckers, pro or anti, over the last twenty years that we now make a point of asking anyone wanting to get involved what their attitudes are on the subject. Those that just think it's an odd question usually get in. Those that start raving insanely about childhood reminiscences involving having to wear the Little Lord Fauntleroy suit or how their mother was a saint or how she used to masturbate them, etc, don't. Ever. No thanks – been there, done that.

landed a post at the Earth First! Journal then based at Eugene, Oregon, this way too. He first offered to get GA printed over there for global distribution – marginally cheaper than UK printing, much better security, and distribution inroads into the US too – and then decided to fuck us off after a couple of issues on realising he could make more money publishing his own paper from Eugene instead (that this doubled our print costs in UK meant nothing to him). Much as Molland claimed to be nonanarchist (despite years publishing something called the Rabbixian Anarchist Times) and non-violent on lawyers' advice during the Gandalf trial, so they had Wood dream up some 'fundamental' green anarchism out of the pre-Hunt primordial soup, an Albonesque mishmash of allotments and homespun pacifism. Calling it Green Anarchy, Wood touted his version from venue to venue around the States, claiming it to be "the American version of Green Anarchist" and himself to be me, John Connor. Needless to say, he prevaricated endlessly about allowing any criticism to be published in it by GA (UK) – a green anarchist publication open to all except other green anarchists, evidently! Well, it would have rather blown that little scam of his and there is no dole worth talking of Stateside... Ironically, the Eugene-based crew he eventually recruited as co-editors – his dyslexia made it impossible to edit the publication beyond reprints on his own – took him at his word and when they, too, insisted on anarchoprimitivist content like the UK version, Wood worked himself up into a huff and walked out, compiling his more honestly titled News from Nowhere from the East Coast thereafter. A further delicious irony was that this all happened only months short of the N30 antiglobalisation protests in Seattle, which (absurdly) hyped the Eugene anarchists and their GA (USA) to worldwide attention.

Whilst at the Journal, Wood met radical archaeologist and fellow editor, Theresa Kintz. Although she'd been involved in EF! over a decade, she had only become aware of the anarcho-primitivist perspective on meeting John Zerzan in Eugene. When the Journal received the offer of a first interview with Ted Kaczynski, convicted

Front' rather than the wittier, less wordy accepted movement form, 'Earth Liberation Front'.

With the start of the Newbury bypass campaign in early-1995,⁶ the State turned bluster into action with raids on PO boxes and then homes under Operation Washington. Eventually over fifty homes, bookshops and printworks were to be raided, some repeatedly and some for such trivial reasons as having written goodwill cards to defendants, and some 10,000 pages of 'evidence' seized. As GA's editors, we were surprised to discover we had 'conspired to incite criminal damage by fire' with ALF press officer Robin Webb and his younger, semi-retired sidekick Simon Russell. Evidence of 'association' included such nonsense as Sax Wood selling GA at a meeting Robin Webb spoke at half a decade before. At no time was there any suggestion contact between any GA and ALF-supporting 'conspirators' went beyond normal exchange of journalistic information – in the direction of a book of matches, for example...

What was Operation Washington about? It's important in understanding it to know that it had been running a couple of years before anyone from GA was even arrested. Operation Washington Mk. I (for want of a better designation) featured an attempt to frame Webb for possession of a wrapped shotgun passed him as a 'tool' by a Sussex animal sanctuary owner Dave Hammond, who later mainstream media 'exposés' of the ALF implied had turned State asset. Webb's trial at Lewes collapsed when police refused to name their sources.⁷

Operation Washington Mk.II started out as an attempt to pin Barry Horne's arson wave on the Isle of Wight – a resounding suc-

⁶ I was actually first to pitch a tent at Tothill, later an important protest camp. Unfortunately, due to bail conditions set after the Operation Washington arrests, subsequent involvement was limited to advising 3rd Battle of Newbury on blockading contractor depots, etc.

⁷ Hepple never offered to wrap our guns for us, but its difficult not to see the same sort of offer and the same consequences as both these parallel State 'games' targeting the direct action movement were played out.

cess inasmuch as it forced Boots to close their Thurgatton vivisection lab and made their ‘cruelty-free’ labels authentically cruelty-free — by reasoning that anyone knowing about it must have directly or indirectly been informed by the fire-starter, supposedly a ‘conspiratorial association’. Unfortunately, Horne was arrested placing devices in Bristol before we were first dragged into court, so evidence about him was removed from the bundles and the brief expanded to suggest that any reporting of direct action implied prosecutable ‘conspiratorial association’ with its unknown perpetrators. As Robin Webb and GA (though its Direct Action Diary) were then just about the only publications carrying such reports in UK without added ‘police spin’, how much this all suited the State as a weapon in the propaganda war was pretty obvious.

This is not the place to give a blowbyblow account of a prosecution process (including Operation Washington I) that ran from 1993- 1999, included three major trials and ended up costing the State nearly £10m.⁸ However, this new weapon of political repression’s first outing was ill-served by its advocates, ailing CPS prosecutor Alan Ventnor insisting at our first hearing at Portsmouth in early 1997 that his definition of conspiracy had been ignored and that Hampshire Constabulary’s ‘broad definition’ threatened free speech — until he was literally dragged out of the court between two cops and ‘spoken to’. Then the acting prosecutor, the portly, florid Dick Onslow whose family may have been associated with the 1977 Persons Unknown conspiracy trial, got so badly muddled by his legal definitions that the State’s prime target, Robin Webb, had to be acquitted — and the chronically scared Simon Russell should have been then too, as any supposed ‘association’ with GA defendants was through Webb. Of course, not to let the law inter-

⁸ We later worked out that it’d have been cheaper for the cops to have bought up every copy of the zine we produced at £5,000 each than bring their prosecution, and ran a “£5,000 to cops” line on GA’s mast head to taunt them about it!

there have been no more ‘Heretics Fairs’ attempted since — means he has lost his rationale to continue smearing GA. And he knows we have the full gen on Wakeford and he now too, of course... Throughout this Homestyled “feud”, there has been an undercurrent of collaboration between him and the State as well as the fascists. Of course, both before and after World War 2, fascists were well-served by their connections to intelligence as a deniable reservoir of anti-Communist brute force. It also suits both their agendas propagandawise to infiltrate militant Green circles and so have them portrayed as violent and fascistic.

Splits and Schisms

The end of the GandALF prosecutions also marked a slow, acrimonious end to GA’s fourth editorial collective.

As you’ve already read above, the obsessive Noel Molland — who had neither understanding of or sympathy with GA’s broader politics and used our pages simply to get his listings printed in the name of animal lib movement cred — moved out of our orbit even before the first trial was done and now plays on his short spell inside as an angle in publishing his Earth Liberation Prisoners newsletter. A rigid, mother-identified individual, Molland’s publication is more appreciated by the animal lib movement than he is. His compromising behaviour — including sneaking off to a hotel room to talk to a journalist that then ran one bogus anti-ALF programme after another — during the GAndALF trial is a matter of record, after all.

Sax Wood also legged it out of UK rather than get called to testify at the 3rd GAndALF trial. This was the start of a strange odyssey indeed. EF!UK refuses all representative principles — including that there is an “EF!UK” as opposed to a scattering of distinct local groups — and yet Wood addressed his way across Canada to the Amerikan West Coast as its self-styled “representative”. He

using the ‘F’ word. Long-since exposed — not least by GA — Lawson then moved in on Alternative Green as founded by someone authentically Green and guaranteed to cry long and hard if his appropriation of it was ever challenged. The fascist tactic of convergence is to lay claim to juicy terms (“freedom”, “ecology”, “anarchism”) and hope that those already using them will drop them like poison rather than be poisoned by association with those misappropriating them. This cultural ‘war of position’ has been meat and drink to the ‘political soldiers’ for at least a quarter century now.

We’d been actively discouraging sales of Alternative Green since it started to go rotten at its 2nd issue. But Hunt’s new chums were ambitious, having him front a series of ‘Anarchist Heretic Fairs’ in contrast to the annual Anarchist Bookfair in London, as showcases for one species of convergence after another. Trouble — for them — was this didn’t get very far, with venues consistently crying off when told what sort was really planning to show up and eventually even the mainstream anti-fascist movement — which typically can only spot the sort of fascist that wears jackboots and says “sieg heil” — woke up to what was going on and shooed a frustrated Hunt and his stall off the front of the 2000 Bookfair, sans stock. They showed less enthusiasm for moving on those promoting a convergence agenda within the Bookfair, organisers Martin Peacock and Carol Saunders being longstanding chums of the ‘avant garde’ Home and Fuckwit. In fact, Peacock showed more enthusiasm for beating up a GA leafleteer alerting Fair-goers to convergence than barring those promoting it from his event. Equally tellingly, other attendees have shown typical movement principle in preferring a stall at the Bookfair to challenging its organisers over this blatant incident.

And what of Home now? Virtually silent, whether because Brit lit’s star has fallen and without himself even tagged to its tail (so no publishers, no moronic pseud fan base, etc — hard life, eh?) or because the final expose of the convergers at the 2000 Bookfair —

fere with a good show trial, Robin was thrown back into the legal process for the unsuccessful 2nd and 3rd trials of 1998 anyway.

Rogers felt most strongly that a political prosecution needed to be fought politically (even pragmatically speaking, ‘conspiracy’ was such a catch-all it could hardly be fought legally!), and was backed in this most strongly by Booth. The GAndALF (GA-and-ALF) Defendants Campaign was formed over Simon Russell’s typically unsussed objection that his poor, sick mother might find out about the case in consequence, and was backed administratively by the Stevenage-based National Anti-Hunt Campaign. Much of the GDC’s limited (giro-level!) resources went into trying to publicise the case including two (chaotic and ill-attended) national speaking tours, but the mainstream media consistently pleaded sub judice rather than admit their own tacit complicity with police censorship by acknowledging others uncowed by it. It took the start of the 1st GAndALF trial in Portsmouth, August 1997, for the liberal NCCL to send even a token observer and for Stephen Hancock, a principled NVDAer once jailed for UK’s first Ploughshares action and who knew Rogers personally, to kickstart movement media coverage at an alternative media gathering in Oxford — not least as they realised they were next. Only after the end of the first trial did we see a second support group formed by London Greenpeace and solidarity actions ‘to make prosecuting more trouble than not prosecuting’ such as the bricking of butchers’ shops in Portsmouth and Dr. Margaret Jones’ disruption of Bristol’s intercollegiate boat race.

Another important element in fighting a political prosecution is to have lawyers prepared to argue a case politically in court, for all the restrictions imposed by the Law Society. The firm most commonly used by activists then, Bindmans, were rejected out of hand as Jeffrey Bindman is lawyer to Gerry Gable, Searchlight’s editor, but the alternative Birnbergs proved almost as bad. They agreed to argue direct action — and incidentally reporting on it — was necessary selfdefence against State threats to established liberties, which

would give us scope to drag spooks, their assets and compromised journalists into court, ask Hepple about his home-made sabotage manual, the Ecodefenders Handbook, dig up highly embarrassing dirt about 1970s coup plots like Wilsongate, etc, at a time when a new Labour administration was thinking of butchering MI5's budget. When the case came to court, all Birnbergs barristers did was get a few off-the-record admissions PII's (public interest immunity certificates) were being used to cover up MI5's role in the case and then did their best to play one defendant off against the others and get them to denounce their own politics in best US 'client management' manner, in the hope the jury would find them too disunited, pathetic and stupid to ever conspire together. Naive defendants — and none of GA's editors other than Rogers had ever even been arrested before Operation Washington — such as Noel Molland identified so strongly with the lawyers that he allowed himself to be destroyed by prosecutor Onslow on the stand for days on his lawyer's advice, ran to them at first hint of counter-demos against the trial (in the hope organisers would be arrested — as documented in Grassy Noel, a post-GAndALF pamphlet endorsed by Robin Webb) and continued to defend their conduct even from jail! In the long term, the lawyers did more damage to GA than the police, their only apology coming through word of mouth and a third party at the 2000 Mayday events in London.

Because Rogers only insisted the lawyers do what they were hired to do, he was presented as a paranoid endangering other defendants liberty, with his lawyer Ken McDonald QC⁹ quitting mid-trial rather than represent him, insisting "I'd be struck off" for running the agreed defence. When military judge David Selwood refused to allow him new representation, Rogers made it quite clear he would call every spook he could lay a writ on, de-

⁹ Having begun his career defending such early-1970s 'Robin Hoods' as anti-apartheid campaigners caught sabotaging the All Blacks rugby tour and pornographers, McDonald is ending it as the first Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to be cautioned for cannabis possession.

think this fools anyone — Home is used to passing outrageous remarks that go over their heads and, I suspect, enjoys trying to worm his way round criticism if confronted over any of them. He's happy to use the Evolian slogan "Long live Death!" in one of his AK-published booklets, claiming it to be an anarchist Civil War slogan when challenged. It may well have been. Incidentally. Which I doubt is the reason Home used it. Similarly, we knew what integralism was, an irrational ultra-nationalist belief promulgated by the darling of the 'political soldier' far-Right as 'more extreme than the Nazis', Corneliu Codreanu, fuhrer of the Romanian Iron Guard during World War 2. We knew what "Bakuninism" was too, an alternate term for so-called nationalanarchism, a far-Right attempt well-established in Germany and Russia to appropriate anarchism, much as national Bolshevism was a fascist attempt to appropriate Stalinism in the run-up to World War 2.

How did we know all this stuff, other than Home's suspicious interest in the obscure byways of the farRight and as a consequence of our ongoing association with the train/ fascistspotterish Larry O'Hara since the Hepple affair? Because we had to. Flattered by political attention from anyone at all, Richard Hunt (remember him?) had let his Alternative Green (and his mind) grow rank with fascist weeds, opening its columns to 'political soldiers' like Patrick Harrington (a big chum of Wakeford's), Richard Lawson and Troy Southgate. Pretty soon, Hunt himself was arguing the same sort of meaningless distinctions as them between 'racial nationalists' and Nazis and claiming the Strasser brothers "weren't Nazis" despite years of being card-carrying NSDAP members, albeit a tad more proletarian than usually accepted into its upper ranks. Southgate is happy to call himself a 'national-anarchist' and 'Bakuninist' and is welcome to provided he doesn't attempt — as Home and his clones have not coincidentally consistently tried to do — to confuse this with any authentic, nonbogus, anti-statist form of anarchism. Lawson edited a publication called Perspectives, using the old Mosley study group trick of suckering in the middle class by never overtly

After that, we responded with a ‘pot calls kettle black’ editorial paragraph noting Home’s association with National Front member Tony Wakeford and to date have so far had three different claims from Home as to when he disassociated himself from him as well as insubstantial, self-serving claims that Wakeford has left off fascism, each disproved by a subsequently discovered document. This sounded like someone with something to hide to us... When we collared Home’s space cadet sidekick Fabian ‘Fuckwit’ Tompsett at one of their artsy do’s at the Oval two years into this crap, he couldn’t even define ‘fascism’, insisting it was “a matter for sociologists”. This didn’t stop them throwing similarly incoherent mud for another half-decade.

By 1997, the ‘who said what’ of this manufactured scandal was so bewilderingly convoluted that people thought it all poor entertainment at best — with a few opportunistic lice like AK Press also seeing it as a bulwark against anarcho-primitivist supersession of their antique ideologies. Then Home and his clones — I won’t call them Neoists as he did, following Neoist founder tentatively a convenience’s denunciation of their attempt to discredit Neoism by appropriation — started to broaden their aim. Fuckwit issued a pamphlet denouncing ‘anarchist saint’ Stuart Christie, a veteran Black Flag editor who tried to assassinate Spain’s generalissimo Franco, as a “fascist” for advocating anarchist militias. As typical with this crowd, Christie’s distinction between classic anarchist militias in Spain and racist, Christian fundamentalist ones in the US was deliberately blurred. At the 1997 Anarchist Bookfair, when they prematurely hoped GA’s editors would already be safely jailed and not there to answer back, Home and his clones issued *Anarchist Integralism*, a pamphlet claiming all anarchists as tainted by anti-Semitic “Bakuninism”, although neither this nor ‘integralism’ were ever defined. Of course, the anarcho-Establishment sat there and meekly took it, not knowing the ‘joke’ (such as it was) was on them.

Surrounded by a fan base of exceptional sycophancy and stupidity — typically college kids dressed up as skinheads, as if they

liberately picked out all proof of complicity (e.g. Hepple and police references to “PO Box 100”, MI5’s drop) in reviewing the evidence under their noses¹⁰ and tried to contact David Shayler, the dissident MI5 officer then hiding out in Paris, via the Daily Mail’s Mark Hollingsworth. Returning to court the following Tuesday, Rogers was immediately severed from the case by Selwood, as originally requested.

Other than Simon Russell — who really had nothing to do with it and damn all to actually worry about — the other, more naive defendants were all convicted after a three month-long trial. Selwood deliberately span out his blatantly hostile summing-up three days to ensure Barry Horne was sentenced the day before the jury began their deliberations. Sax Wood’s parents saw them reading about it in the paper on the train to court. They each got 3 1/2 years, lucky as Barry Horne got 18 and the laws of conspiracy make them as culpable as he supposedly was. In fact, arson can carry a life term, even if all you did was write up a report on it gleaned from the Net. Consistent with MI5’s “ecoterrorist” smear strategy, what national press deigned to report the story at all (no longer sub judice now it suited them) ran ‘Anarchists Jailed for Bomb Plot’ headlines conveniently omitting any reference to their true ‘crime’, writing, and pretending it was them there with the candles and pop bottles full of petrol the whole time.

Determined GA should continue, Steve Booth continued to contribute articles and Community Resistance Diary listings from Lancaster Castle, hidden in the body of his prison letters. Rogers

¹⁰ Hepple wasn’t the only one in Lancaster at the time that the police unreasonably failed to question on visiting there. This erstwhile Ecodefence editor of GA — though endorsed by perpetual naif ‘Grassy’ Noel Molland in characteristic stereotypical terms as a “good activist” — used to churn out sabotage manuals like billy-oh and was delighted every time one got national publicity — at the start of the Newbury campaign, for example, when he was good enough to attend a GA editorial meeting at the local university and give each of us something compromising on his usual theme the day before the cops simultaneously raided every known GA editor — except him, that is...

was arrested four times and had phones, papers and computer seized twice in the next three months, all supposedly ‘unrelated’ hunt sab stuff. A back-up editorial collective was briefed, but as it was, the paper continued. Plans were made with new lawyers to ambush then-MI5 director Stella Rimington at a meeting in Brighton to serve a writ on her and Rogers and O’Hara tracked Tim Hepple — then living under the pseudonym Tim Matthews — to a UFO meeting in Southport where he was preparing grounds to launch his book on the subject. They exposed his past to ufologists, who were shocked by the ex-fascist’s immediate resort to strong arm tactics.¹¹ Attempts to force through a 2nd trial of Webb and Rogers, who escaped the first, before the jailed editors could appeal foundered when Rogers’ lawyer, Tim Murphy, turned out not to be a lawyer after all. An active hunt sab and no friend of the police, Murphy had been disbarred by the Law Society but had taken the case regardless by way of revenging himself on the Establishment.

In the three months granted to instruct a new lawyer, the furore was getting unmanageable for the authorities with even two Nobel Prize winners signing up to the Alternative Media Gathering’s anticensorship declaration,¹² and the jailed editors were released on a technicality to do with ambiguity of the wording of the indictment after less than four months inside. Thanks to a stream of supportive letters, the defendants had done better than might be expected in jail — except Molland whose shrill, ‘holier-than-thou’ attitude an-

¹¹ Hepple / Matthews claims he only got into all this because of his wife’s interest in ufology rather than serving some State agenda, though full documentation questioning his version can be found in O’Hara’s extended and rather odd pamphlet, *At War With the Universe*. Nowadays, Hepple / Matthews has nothing to do with UFOs either, promoting wrestling in the Midlands under yet another pseudonym ‘Matt Violent’. (See, Tim, you did have to get yourself another name, just like we said you would that night in Southport..!)

¹² The linguist Noam Chomsky and playwright Harold Pinter — the ‘usual suspects’, in fact.

tagonised otherwise sympathetic prisoners and who had his cell trashed by fascists on arrival at HMP Totnes.

Just how thin the technicality was as an excuse to release the editors was shown up by the 3rd trial, where it proved impossible for the prosecution to find any indictment wording that wasn’t deemed “ambiguous”, meaning both Webb and Rogers also finally got to walk free. There followed a standoff into early-1999 where police threatened an appeal and we threatened to sue. They blinked first — and the paper, of course, kept on coming out.

The Home Clones

Steward Home flooded London with his ‘Green and Brown Anarchist’ leaflet in mid-1994, arguing GA’s supposed support for “Green death camps” because of Hunt’s former involvement.¹³ He continued churning this crap out at least until 1998, deliberately trying to blur the distinction between ‘ecofascists’ (a Lyndon Larouche-coined term for those favouring authoritarian environmental measures, particularly re. population control) and ‘common or garden’ fascists (those committed to a fuhrerprinzip and so related supremacisms), as if we at GA — as anarchists, consistently antistatist and anti-fascist — were either. We were naively inclined to dismiss the first one or two leaflets as the sort of scandalous publicity-seeking initiated by the Surrealists and decidedly tired by the Situationists, who Home affected to ape in the hope his association with their techniques would discredit them, not him. After all, Home — a deliberately execrable writer, as if he could be any other kind — was seeking an ‘in’ to the early-1990s notoriety of Brit lit that followed Irving Welsh’s *Trainspotting*.

¹³ To give him his due, whatever else Hunt has said, even he has never said anything this offensive or stupid.