

# **Land and Freedom**

**An Open Invitation**

Seaweed

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# Introduction

If ecology is being in a mutually beneficial relationship with the land that we live on, rather than forcing the land into subservience to us, it would mean challenging our entire notion of what society is.

What would our planet look like if industrialism were not in place? Could experiments in living be the solution to the social crises facing humans and to the ecological crises engulfing practically all life-forms? Isn't access to land a necessary condition for any self-organized, self-directed group of people? Will anarchist rebellion naturally lead to a society of free people living in conjunction with healthy habitats? If not, what sorts of natural and human relationships might arise from, and sustain, an ecologically-informed anarchist rebellion? These were the types of questions I was considering when I began writing the articles found in this book.

Digressions make conversations interesting, the adage goes, and so it was with my investigation and research. Along the way I learned that theories are most often just opinions and ideologies are imprisoned by ideas. I learned that assertions are generally less interesting than questions explored among friends. I learned that jargon is a sign of weakness, and that a manifesto yells while a romance whispers.

I have been inspired by the specific martial skills used by countless generations of people and communities resisting conquest and how those people kept martial approaches from dominating their social fabric. The essay **Of Martial Traditions** grew out of this interest. We need as many skills as possible to be successful and we needn't fear that studying martial abilities leads inevitably to leftism. Martial skills can be used by individuals or by groups, as part of a push toward the acquisition of land or to attack an institution or individual. I was originally inspired by their potential for emerging communities of resistance, but discovered that these are skills that are useful generally.

I also discovered the historical existence of a band of escaped indentured servants in 18th century Newfoundland, Canada who successfully evaded authority by living in the wilderness for nearly four decades. You can read about this in **The Society of Masterless Men**.

Complete transformation, of our relationships with each other and with our natural environments, is both possible and urgent. The more widespread the participation in the thrust toward transformation, the quicker and more likely it will happen. Ultimately, it means overturning and dismantling the global grid of authoritarian and capitalist institutions that dominate us. If having a reciprocal relationship with a natural environment is inherently healthy because this creates habitats, which in turn sustain their living inhabitants, then a focus on occupying a land base would seem always positive. Local or regional undertakings in acquiring these bases seem the most sensible. Actions around re-appropriating land, because they undermine the state and the market's control over our shared environment, help destroy the global institutions which prevent us from having land in the first place.

Isn't it likely that the planetary network of authority and economics can only be defeated through multitudes of local and regional uprisings, ruptures and occupations, coalescing in an

organic way? A single, overarching, world-wide movement would require complex international organizations to coordinate and manage, and this would open up the possibility and even likelihood, for new global institutions to form and dominate our lives in different ways. At the very least, the less diverse a movement, in terms of means and participants, the less diverse will be the resulting outcome, in terms of possible social relationships, should it succeed.

If we envision global revolution as the merging of countless numbers of local ruptures and rebellions, we can help prefigure this diversity by making our practice conform to our vision. ■ The essay **Land and Liberty** fleshes out some possible answers and approaches to questions of habitat and resistance, of the dynamic between local and global.

I looked into one of the main solutions environmentalists have been pursuing, i.e. the creation of parks and conservation areas. One of the many things I learned from this research is that the healthiest natural environments, often called wilderness areas, were not necessarily without human occupation. I share some of this research in the article **On Parks**. The first parks were indigenous peoples land bases. Many conservation areas are chosen because they appear pristine and untouched, but their very health, diversity and even sometimes beauty are often the result of generations of occupation by people who tended and protected and interacted with them, and this trend continues today. Hopefully this fact will help counter some of the misanthropy prevalent in certain environmentalist circles.

A while ago, many anti-authoritarians were reading and excitedly sharing a book called *Temporary Autonomous Zones* by Hakim Bey. This book spoke to investigations into what kinds of activities are not only worth initiating, but, given our lives within capitalist civilization, are possible to accomplish. My piece **Permanent Subsistence Zones** addresses those questions with a different answer, positing permanence and subsistence as the groundwork for the possibility of lives based around freedom and pleasure. While the specific actions in that article didn't endure, it is the type of experimenting we need to engage in as part of our attempt to create ecological relationships with the places where we live.

**Ponds and Oceans**, a collection of simple phrases and proverbs, offers a different way of expressing some of my ideas. They are also a nod to the game of Go, an ancient board game or mental martial art widely played in most eastern countries and which uses proverbs as a teaching tool. In that collection, I use the noun *federation* and the verb *tofederate*. I do not intend these in the leftist sense of a formal organization with members, policies, a programme, etc., that seeks to take on a political or representative role. *Tofederate*, in my usage, means to not be afraid of collective power or will. Dismantling the institutions that prevent us from re-appropriating our lives means exploring ways in which to band together. We do this in order to more successfully protect each other from, and to take offensive actions against, those institutions, but as well to practice mutual aid and to cooperate on a larger scale than say within a group of friends or a single occupation site.

I also include a series of phrases in that piece based around the concept of withdrawal. While I question civilization, as I understand it, generally, the civilization which dominates us today is capitalist civilization. This specific civilization relies on statist and economic institutions which in turn rely heavily on technological means to maintain and advance its control. I refer often to secession and withdrawal, but I do not encourage these activities as a form of dropping out, but as a strategy for healing, for regrouping, for training, etc. Furthermore, I recognize that to simply withdraw and try to defend a place might lead to a series of losing battles, but I don't think that this is the obvious or predictable outcome. I see withdrawal as a form of rebellion, as a way of

weakening the existing order by withholding participation in it and ultimately as a way to better prepare ourselves for attacking its institutions from a place of communal strength.

Of course, not everyone can do this. I speak from my particular geographical and cultural place. I'm not trying to advance a universally applicable approach to rebellion. Where ever one finds oneself, whether it is in a prison or a city or a religious cult or a factory or whatever, one does one's best to fight against the immediate experience of living under the civilized order. We need to attack and not just withdraw, but we also need to withdraw and not just attack. A dynamic between the two seems most promising.

As it stands now, some prioritize attack (black bloc, demos, strikes, sabotage, etc.) then disperse and disappear, which is ineffectual, while others withdraw (form communes, co-ops, community gardens, avoid wage labor, etc.) and never attack, which is equally so.

With the wisdom of hindsight, we can see that certain permutations of human organization are inherently destructive, both to our individual existences and to the environments that sustain us. These are the urban and authoritarian arrangements. The controlled existence of mass society is simply harmful and unnecessary.

There are infinite variations on how humans can organically self-organize in much healthier ways, so there is no need for blueprints or proposals to present that might detail such anarchic arrangements. However, I do allow myself to take a brief speculative stroll into the immediate future of a city following the destruction or collapse of urban society in my opening essay, **An Open Offer**. This might give the impression that I am arguing for transitional time periods. But this is not the case. Clearly cityscapes can be re-naturalized to some extent, but urban living itself is antithetical to anarchic ways.

Therefore, I would argue for the abandonment of cities and against the herculean efforts which would be necessary to redesign, reform and rehabilitate them. But there might be places where rehabilitation is necessary, for many reasons, and I am using this essay to point out that in these areas a transition from city to autonomous clan or village, from atomized urban dweller to free, wild being is possible.

The means of production did not have to develop from empire and conquest, through primitive accumulation to feudalism and on through to industrialism on a long painful path to utopia, a belief touted by both the lords of capitalism and the Marxist prophets of socialism. All that blood and exploitation and sacrifice have causes located in domination, not in any inevitable or desirable direction toward the positive achievements of something called "progress." Partly because of this, you will find within my meta-narrative a great admiration for many of the cultures of land-based peoples, which I find consistently superior to urban/civilized ones. I believe that many primitive people consciously refused to allow institutions of domination to take root in their societies. This is an important difference from others who believe that because the non-civilized never had authoritarian institutions which they destroyed and dismantled, we can't consider them examples of authentic anarchic cultures.

Urban societies are founded on constraints, on maintaining their regimes by suppressing the individual not only through laws but through the generalized fear of ungoverned individuals. But political authority and institutional bullying are inherently weak or non-existent in small-scale cultures. Therefore, free individuals have a far greater chance of surviving and thriving outside of urban (massified) existence. Or to put it another way, within small scale sets of social relationships constraints on the individual are much more difficult to establish.

Society, in the sense of that which is hostile and oppressive to the individual, has as a precondition: urban life.

Small bands of friends or even the human relationships which exist in small villages are not societies. Of course, I am talking about voluntary associations between people on a small scale. I'm aware that authoritarian cults, for instance, exist regardless of their size. I look at de-massifying our lives as important not only as a way of healing the environment through the eradication of industrialism, but because the more massified our settlements, the more human freedom is reduced.

Individual freedom thrives within a group of other free individuals, but the larger the group, the greater the depth and width of the constraints and the more impersonal the control mechanisms. Small groups of free individuals do not seem to legitimately constitute societies. One can be embedded in a group (which in turn is embedded in a place) and not experience any inherent antagonisms with the relationships that together constitute the collective. A group of people sharing agreements and practicing subsistence together does not establish a society. It is in this sense that the ungoverned, nature-loving individual is at the heart of my conception of an ecologically minded anarchism.

A group of friends who have been exploring many of the same proposals in this collection have recently begun using the expression "insurrectionary subsistence" as a way to summarize their ideas. Keep an eye out for pamphlets, magazines and essays with this headline in it if you are interested in broadening your understanding or participating in associated activities. I have been using "organically self-organized subsistence movements", which also grew out of our discussions and actions, as an encapsulating phrase. Both of these give an idea of the direction some of us believe rebels should be going in.

It is my hope that these articles contribute some original thought, but I would be most pleased if they helped foster a new spirit.

# An Open Offer

## 1

This is an encouragement for local, anti-authoritarian secessionist activity aimed at acquiring land bases. This push for different ways of living would be characterized by new ecological insights and awareness, an inspiration from primal ways, and a desire for autonomy, both individual and collective.

Secessionist action is not aimed at establishing new, smaller nation-states, but toward the creation of stateless zones. The actions aim for a decisive break from a world that damages and stunts us. Secessionists secede not only from nation states but ideology as well. This type of rupture is based in a desire for new relationships, between each other, within ourselves and with the world that surrounds us.

This is about notions of regeneration and renewal, a call to look to the time after the death and darkness of civilization as one when life will return and growth will begin anew. It is an appeal for a persistent, global May Day, to ideas and actions inspired by the midpoint between the spring equinox and the summer solstice, the time when the sun is set free to bring the pleasurable warmth of summer back to earth once again.

Numerous ancient cultures were suffused with anarchic qualities. Sexuality and fertility were viewed as joyous expressions of wild nature, of creation. Ecstatic community dances rejoicing in the many cherished wonders of life were common. Let our rebellions aim for planetary rejuvenation, let them signal a time to celebrate abundance and fecundity, let them be yearnings for new life and blissful days in the pleasing heat of our new season.

Humans are at a juncture. We can continue to be conned, obedient citizens who venerate the market and respect the institutions of capitalist civilization or we can try to put into practice new ways of living, ways that implicitly acknowledge the rich potential that comes with freely-chosen communalism, that honor earth wisdom and continued renewal. The techno-utopian argument remains wholly unconvincing. Who wouldn't rather have clean rivers flowing with abundance, intact mountains and healthy forests, teeming with wildlife and purifying our air, than polluted rivers supporting only a few contaminated fish, mountains cleaved in half for coal and minerals and forests reduced to monoculture or scraped into clearcuts?

These attempts would be highlighted by the widespread sharing of skills, resources, and burdens now carried by individuals and families locked into their private lives. They would also involve the creation of common lands, gardens and gathering spaces, collective child rearing and collective responsibility for shelters. Subsistence activities would be explored and practiced. Secessionists would consciously aim at permanently freeing their territory, their habitat, from political power.

In the beginning, openness for intimacy with others, with strangers will be essential, because we have all become strangers to each other. Ultimately, these local movements aim for true kinship, authentic community, genuine inter-relationships that allow each individual to be all



that she can be yet part of a whole. These expressions of collective will would involve measures of offense and defense, for there are those who cannot accept community autonomy, who fear individual freedom or who have an interest in maintaining control from the top.

## 2

Many people now assume that a pitiless chaos is on the horizon. A chaos birthed and driven by a social system based on hierarchy and exploitation. Our fragile biosphere is sick. Its health is deteriorating fast. Desertification of vast areas, global warming, diminishing sunlight, widespread cancer, and daily extinctions are but a few of the symptoms. Our planet's diversity of life forms is in peril.

This crisis has been caused by the institutions of the state and the urban ways of industrial capitalism. It is maintained by our belief in ideologies. Our way out is to collectively de-urbanize and de-industrialize. It is to relearn how to feed and shelter ourselves without governments or markets. It is to create our habitats as we are simultaneously created by them, thus re-establishing a healthy relationship with our environment.

Unfortunately, every crisis is compounded by the existence of yet other crises on our horizon: nuclear waste waiting to sit up like a corpse and spread its death, the ongoing possibility of nuclear war, the disappearance of the protective ozone layer, scarcity of potable water, and even complete ecological meltdown. The warning lights are blinking wildly, the alarms are getting louder and the elders are warning us: it's urgent.

Our future is shrinking.

Will there always be seeds of the old world in the revolt for the new? Perhaps, but a genuine rebellion won't be fertile ground for them to get established. Liberating humans from urban life is possible. We are all potential agents of change. By emphasizing local resistance, our strengths become more obvious and defeatism wanes. We need not prolong the time it takes to travel from the possible to the impossible.

This isn't to say that an international anti-authoritarian uprising can't or won't happen. It is to ask how might this come about if we recognize that institutions of domination are complex and global, and that there are too many variables for any particular minority group to grasp and control in order to strategically and intentionally instigate such a global process. Many Marxists hold that planned, coordinated revolutions are possible by putting our power into the hands of a specialized intelligentsia and often the political party they work for, but history has shown us the misery and repression waiting for us when we do allow them to hijack our insurgencies.

The breaks I am encouraging don't require the permission of parents, parties, or productive forces. There is no need to wait for history, god, or material conditions to authorize them. I'm exploring willful ruptures among friends, neighbors, fellow conscripts and comrades, ruptures and breaks that are valid adventures unto themselves, yet might coalesce into something larger, something planetary even.

Where do authentic rebellions originate? Most often they originate where people spend a lot of time together and therefore know each other enough to have shared their misery and their desires, to have built some trust: ghettos, neighborhoods, factories, universities, prisons, reservations. Frequently rebellions happen along tribal, ethnic or kinship lines.

Of course, any individual who wants to make a break, who wants to live an intense life, can. This is making one's life a cause sufficient unto itself. These folks can inspire others, can implicitly give others permission to stand up and shine and flourish. But, when such individuals are embedded somewhere, are surrounded by friends and neighbors with whom they try to have real relationships, the virus can take hold, the contagion can spread. If they are entrenched only in a milieu, a scene or subculture based exclusively around shared outlooks or interests, then the contagion will likely be contained by its typically narrow demographic limits. Occasionally, anti-authoritarian radicals from these sub-cultures can join in various oppositional struggles to try and push them further or in order to question notions of directors and representatives, but these opportunities aren't always present and nevertheless we shouldn't be basing the realization of our dreams and desires on a strategy of intervening in reformist revolts.

### 3

The endless stream of ecological and social catastrophes can be stopped. When you're in a battle you don't have many choices: continue to fight, surrender, or retreat and regroup. It would be wise to look at all of the means at our disposal, to consider all of the paths that might lead us to a place and time where self-organized people can create the lives they choose.

If we exclude surrendering, what's left?

Fighting includes riots, sabotage, insurrections, and other forms of self-organized mutiny. Some may be spontaneous, like waves that seem to swell up suddenly wherever you live that you can participate in. Others might involve instigation and intent, like blockades and occupations.

We can withdraw, drop out, encourage absenteeism, stop participating and refuse various forms of conscription. We can regroup, build trust, come to some agreements, and then perhaps lay some plans.

We can also plant seeds for the future. This sometimes involves attempting to create a different world here and now. Other times, it means acquiring skills and tools that may be useful for sustenance should a cataclysm turn the world upside down. This would help ensure that the Old World doesn't immediately return to prevent genuine New Ones from taking hold. It often prioritizes withdrawal over direct attacks. Sharing skills, growing food, hunting and fishing, prioritizing conviviality, pirate radios, gatherings, and communal child rearing are just some examples of this approach.

There is no approach that guarantees that we can realize a more unprejudiced and authentic world, a world without commodities or money, without states or wage labor, without prisons and politicians. In fact, the most we can likely hope to intentionally accomplish is to free, temporarily or permanently, our home, the place where we live, of these institutions and ways and values.

Of course, we want our rebellions to be global because our adversary is global, yet we must avoid being paralyzed by an attitude that views all local attempts and activity as marginal and ineffective. We have to counter all of the doctrines that promote a view of humans as helpless, powerless objects of history. History can be a story that we all have a voice in authoring. It is our activities, taken collectively, that create history.

But right now our powers are under the control of malevolent, impersonal institutions which we ironically reinforce by continuing to not only obey, but believe in, as though they were gods.

There are gods, but they are you and me. We are just afraid of our powers, of the possibilities they might unleash.

One thing is certain: waiting, either for ecological or economic collapse, for global rebellion or local insurrection, can not be the main choice. We can change the world because we can change our world, the place where each of us lives.

#### 4

A NEW WORLD can't BE CREATED BY THE ACTIVITIES OF A small group of radicals. However, there is no megalomania in considering critically the possibility of initiating and participating in a local, organically self-organized thrust aimed at freeing the place where we live from the selfish, myopic bullies that enforce injustice, ecological plunder and exploitation. And this process could be healing, because it would likely create the space and the possibility for better relations between us and these new relations would in turn create the possibility for a complete rupture with the current reality of sickness and domination.

Yet, it isn't just an economic class and their henchmen and police that need to be confronted, but the values that permeate authoritarian societies generally. In other words, each of us must also wage an internal struggle and in the process free ourselves and help create an atmosphere that supports others doing the same.

The organic world consists of paradoxes, chaos, spectrums, and gradations, not engineered grids, predictable patterns, and axioms. No person or world view or ideology has all the answers. By trusting our instincts and our desires, new possibilities will open. We can make public what Power wants to keep private: our dreams, our visions, our unhappiness and our anger.

The thousand-mile journey begins with the first step; an old truth.

Authoritarian civilization is founded on our systematic self-enslavement and self-exploitation. Humans are at the helm, our fathers, brothers, sisters, and mothers are at the helm. Almost every one of us contributes to reproducing this authoritarian, destructive, unjust, oppressive and unimaginative planetary realm. It is hegemonic and, therefore, difficult to live outside of.

Yet one persistent mutiny on this global slave ship called civilization could unlock all the doors, could let loose the animals, could let us all find our wings and our immortality once again. Any generation can change the world. But one generation must soon, because there may not be a future one healthy enough to do it.

This transformation would create the possibility of authentic, intense lives lived in genuine, autonomous communities embedded in healthy habitats.

And having a healthy habitat in which to live offers the possibility of having a sense of place. A sense of place in turn offers the opportunity for rediscovering feelings and experiences of awe, reverence and wonder, not for science and technology, but for nature and its marvels.

The simple proposal is this: a widespread insurgency, based on a multitude of local rebellions, each one demanding enough land to sustain its inhabitants. More specifically, occupying or re-occupying territory with the explicit view that it becomes our habitat. And these withdrawals, while ends in themselves, as far as flourishing under adversarial conditions goes, are also only a means to a much greater vision. We withdraw to build strength, to succeed for ourselves but also in order to offer assistance to other revolutionary projects and attempts, to intertwine

our liberated spaces with the struggles of others who want to make a final break with global institutions of domination.

Yes, we have much anger and rage toward the class of rulers; yes, we are inspired by expressions of hatred and destruction aimed at the bullies who organize society. But here I suggest that we emphasize, among ourselves, fraternity and cooperation. This proposal is about intent, about not waiting for the right conditions, about consciously taking advantage of the cracks and fissures in the dominant reality wherever you live, prying them open, creating space for ourselves. It is from many of these free camps that capitalism might potentially be attacked, as rebels and dreamers join with others for whom life under the civilized order is unbearable.

In the long term, acquiring a home, a habitat, is essential. This means freeing up colonized land, rehabilitating plundered land, or seizing land. In the short term, it might mean rent strikes or squatting. It could involve wilderness camps, fishing shacks, shared berry patches, collective harvesting of wild foods and group gardening and permaculture, etc. Learning from and being in solidarity with people of the land, elders and traditionalists among indigenous people for instance, who may live nearby, might be a priority. It seems obvious that acquiring food in groups, and sharing food among many, are possible foundation stones. From every angle, a land base becomes essential.

In a small but significant way, this is a proposal to take the initiative, because we can't win if we are always on the defensive.

These organically self-organized subsistence movements are autonomous but linked, small but many, local but together spread out, and occupy great amounts of territory. They don't want new popes or statesmen, better governments or better representation, new countries or new republics. They aim for a world of clans, tribes and villages, of freedom and community.

This strategy doesn't aim for a mass movement, but for a dynamism of local rebellions that offers to sweep up everyone who isn't afraid of being energized and carried by it.

There are no books necessary to read, no leaders to follow, no traditions or jargon or vocabulary to adopt. You don't have to live in the countryside or in the city. It is homegrown, like a euphoric weed that grows everywhere and spreads easily. It is against the laws of the unjust, the arrogant and the elite, the powerful, the intolerant, and the unimaginative. It is strengthened by critical observation. It has no room for bullies. It is intuition and rationality, hand in hand. This effort would be courageous and celebratory. It would succeed through persistent self-directed activity by people without labels.

It promises to be an incredible voyage, and you are invited!

## 5

Any authentic anti-authoritarian resistance should be an offer: an open offer to all who cherish freedom, sharing, giving, healthy habitats, mutual aid, cooperation and voluntary association.

It isn't just for the ultra-exploited or the severely marginalized. It isn't open only to the excluded or the imprisoned or the hungry and poor. But it listens carefully to all these voices because they know firsthand of the most brutal hardships authoritarian systems impose on their inhabitants. It doesn't scapegoat anyone because of their genital morphology. It doesn't point self-righteous fingers at skin tones or linguistic groups. It doesn't exclude some because of their place of birth on the social ladder. It has a low tolerance for judgment, guilt and shame as

weapons and tools. We are all in this mess together, and we need to make room for all of us to contribute meaningfully to a way out. Our solidarity is an invitation to all.

But History has created identities marked by privilege for some, victimization and powerlessness for others, and the rebellions are determined to free everyone from these chains. In the meantime, there can be no place for those who want power, who want to control others.

An anarchic rebellion aimed at healthy habitats and free, unique individuals embedded in authentic communities, makes room for the old and the frail, for the young and the strong, for the impatient and the patient, for those who are repulsed by violence and those who view its use as another weapon in our arsenal. Morality and dichotomous world views cannot choose it, because it is an organic, site-specific impetus. Each region, each town, neighborhood, affinity-culture, or tribe can base its secession from the nation-state on their own desires, tenets, and dreams.

Starting from a circle of friends—or a neighborhood, an eco-village, an island, a commune, an ethnic group, part of a city, a city, a region, a clan, a reserve, a cult—its ultimate aim is always access to territory from which the group can sustain itself. This means that it always seeks access to land. Naturally, there is room for wandering lone wolves, nomadic families, and hobo tribes, as long as free villages and liberated zones aren't viewed as mini welfare states for them to depend on.

Do you know how to grow or gather food? Do any of your neighbors? I don't mean a weekend garden, but enough to sustain you and your extended family over a winter. Should the capitalist market collapse, and the stores all get looted, what would you eat? Do you have seeds, a fishing rod or a hunting weapon? Do you know how to use any of these? Is there a place unpolluted enough that you could go to for food? Are you part of a tribe, a community or a clan? Are you woven tightly enough into any social group that would be willing to help each other out in a time of crisis, or are you an atomized individual whose social group consists mostly of your immediate family, with a few friends you see occasionally at work or at play?

The vast majority of Europeans and North Americans, and of urban dwellers everywhere, are just like you. They have no seeds, no survival skills and no fishing rod or hunting weapon, belong to no genuine community, haven't a garden or access to an unpolluted place from which they can gather food or medicine. You aren't alone, at least in your predicament.

One doesn't always have the option of joining in social disturbances, most often you have to take responsibility and help create them. This isn't as difficult as you might think at first. It involves taking time away from work. It means saying hello to a stranger. It asks you to turn off your TV and other weapons of social control. Where possible, it involves exploring the wilderness and countryside closest to you.

Revolt requires being optimistic in the face of the nearly insurmountable. It means viewing privacy not as something to preserve and protect, but to unburden oneself from. It demands that you spend more time with children, not only yours, but children in general. It requires you to envision humans as a collection of individual life-forms each an integral part of a natural home.

## 6

Cities are not habitats. City folk can, indeed must, participate in a push against urban living, because city ways are one of the roots of our predicament and it is city inhabitants who will suffer the most in the coming years.

Obviously, hundreds of millions of people can't move out of cities overnight. So perhaps bringing some wilderness to the city might be part of the route back home. Cities must be de-citified. It will take insurgent imagination and imaginative insurgencies. Cities can become partly abandoned, partly re-created into a collection of autonomous villages and zones separated by vast tracts of orchards, gardens, re-emerging forests and re-establishing wild nature, the whole region healed by becoming a sort of vast permaculture zone.

And cities don't end where the suburbs dissipate into farmland. Rural living presently is but the flip side of the same coin of capitalist civilization. Rural people also work and shop and pay rent or mortgages and live out atomized lives. The air is cleaner and at least one might spot a deer and watch the stars at night, but private property, work and cops also control the countryside. There too, habitats are invaded, plundered, polluted. Country folk are also incarcerated, carcinogized, monitored, and punished.

Our destruction of urban life entails the destruction of rural life. The goal is a geography where villages and clans and groups of friends dominate the social landscape, not vast tracts of farmland that feed cities or country estates that the privileged and lucky retreat to. The goal is healthy natural homes, the creation of healthy environments and the healing of sick ones that can sustain all the life forms that live within them.

## 7

Imagine your city neighborhood without cars. The sounds are returning: birds, leaves rustling, children laughing and squealing. The smells are returning too. In springtime and summer, the perfumes of buds and blossoms and new growth fill the air; the haze from automobile pollution is beginning to dissipate and the sky is visible again. It's so much safer to be outside without two-ton machines whizzing by at 60 kilometres an hour. Most of the roads are breaking up from the new shoots pushing through the pavement and concrete. There are footpaths everywhere. Even bicycles seem strangely out of place.

Parks have become community gardens and orchards. Creeks and small rivers are beginning to form and re-form here and there. Someone claims that a salmon was spotted moving up a regenerating creek during spawning season. Life is returning!

Sharing and giving have become the preferred way of circulating everything. You don't get up and head to work in a factory or a mine or in a store or for someone else's profit. You pack a lunch and head to the garden. It's a long day, but an enjoyable one.

There are over a hundred people in your vast community garden. Today you are all weeding and watering and mulching and repairing fences and water catchment systems. There is a playground inside it where the children play. But in every place some food is also wild crafted, gathered and fished and hunted, depending on where the city was located and on the level of knowledge of its inhabitants. Gardens need fences and constant attention. As subsistence skills

spread and grow, gardens and orchards contract, making room for the expansion of dream and play time, for the nurturing and blossoming of carnal and ludic adventures.

Tomorrow is music day in the field just outside the garden. There will be a bonfire with wild meat and fish and herbs shared. What used to be a dead zone, a polluted, homogenized, top down city, a habitation without wildness, an insane density of atomized people is turning into a fascinating collection of autonomous neighborhoods and villages.

If you walk an hour south, you enter what used to be just another aspect of the same standardized urban life of producers and consumers that existed everywhere before the rupture succeeded. Now it is like going to another realm. A different etiquette, different ways of food gathering and preservation, different approaches to sexuality, perhaps even a different dialect have all been slowly emerging. Everything there is different because individuality was allowed to blossom and communal identities only take hold organically and voluntarily. One doesn't have to travel to a faraway place for adventure, in search of diversity or difference anymore. Walk to any other village, only a couple of hours or so away and you enter a unique zone.

In the countryside, subsistence might immediately be the primary way of living. In the healing zones of formerly urban centers, permaculture might take center spot. Permaculture is a set of practices that emphasize efficiency in our food production activity. Composting human waste into manure, for instance would be such a practice. Within permaculture philosophy and practice, various food preservation techniques need to become a widespread set of cultural skills. In this sense, permaculture might be a stepping stone while crossing the turbulent waters of post-urban living.

And there are places inside the city walls where no one enters anymore. These are the dead zones. They are so polluted and ugly and unsafe to be in that long ago we piled up a mountain of rubble around them to make sure that everyone knows to stay away: a chemical factory, a prison, places of psychological ugliness and ecological sickness. This is why specific physical areas of cities will need to be abandoned, not just the urban ways that sustained them.

Whether cities were just a bad experiment and shouldn't be repeated, or whether they were an imposition of forces opposed to genuine living, re-forming them can't be part of the solution. Transformation will be the healing medicine this time. Our land bases will be places where experiments in living are a constant opportunity.

## 8

What is subsistence? Subsistence means committing to a place and the people who live there. It means generally getting food from your region because that is the geographical area that you understand and are familiar with and therefore you know when and how much of each item or animal is acceptable to gather or hunt.

Subsistence means fishing with friends. It means preserving food with others in your group or village or clan or whatever. Subsistence is getting together, voluntarily, with folks that you have an affinity with, to provide yourself with food and shelter and musical instruments and friendship.

Subsistence means abundance and balance, it means wildness and harmony at once. Subsistence is not an impoverished, depleted existence.

Time spent repairing the fishing nets or pickling vegetables or building a communal smoke-house isn't alienated time. It is meaningful and joyous. In some places likely characterized by songs and mead, in others by quiet satisfaction. It means providing for yourself where you live.

Subsistence is participatory. It involves understanding your habitat and finding a healthy place within it.

Subsistence could be the bedrock upon which an anarchic culture's ways rest on. It is the foundation of a healthy, independent, autonomous set of living practices, based on the cycles of the place where you live. Sense of place. Sensual wisdom.

This doesn't mean that primal people don't make mistakes. But overall, they rely on directly lived experience complimented by generations old wisdom to make their decisions.

Life in nature isn't nasty brutish and short. This is a lie of the fearful and the fear mongers, of ruling classes set on the conquest of land-based people.

Subsistence means no or very little material waste: no dumpsites, no burning piles of garbage, no necessity of a recycling industry, and no mountains of appliances, gadgets and plastic. It is based in the natural cycles of your group's land base. It means respecting nature where you live and all of the life forms that you share your habitat with, even the ones that are threatening to you, because we are all interconnected.

Subsistence isn't about dumpster diving, scams, food banks, stealing and welfare cheques. Subsistence is directly participating in a collectivity's future and thus ensuring your own.

For now, a group of five or ten folks acquiring food and shelter together is a form of surviving or pioneering. Fifteen or twenty people providing food and shelter for themselves, communally rearing their children, and generally taking care of each other is perhaps the ember of a clan, but true kinship probably takes a few generations.

When fifty or more people spend their lives, within the context of a successful break from the current world of hierarchy and private property and ideology, making sure that everyone within their group is fed and sheltered and nurtured and have built an infrastructure of ways and tools to assist them, anarchy begins to take hold.

This speculative glimpse is just my notion of how an urban area might de-urbanize should the present social order get cast overboard. Today, inhabitants of rural communes and eco-villages can practice some subsistence skills, but these are generally projects of the fortunate, out of reach of the majority, and can't be viewed as the primary tactic of a thrust toward autonomous, genuine communities embedded in nature. A rural intentional community based around principles of mutual aid, cooperation and ecology might be a qualitatively superior place to live than most others, but truly self-directed people embedded in a habitat requires secession from private property and a refusal to obey the laws of both the market and the nation-state.

Power abhors subsistence. Capitalism depends on obedient producers and consumers spending our lives shopping and at work, not friends and neighbors practicing communal self reliance within a shared habitat. But together we can say no, we can disobey, and in this negativity there will birth a positive and creative force.



# The Art of Rebellion

## 1

Even those of us in what appear to be peaceful countries are deeply involved in a war. It is a social and a political war. It is a war of ideology versus freedom of thought. It is a war of industrialism against healthy environments. It is a war between the included and the excluded, between the individual and the constraints imposed by impersonal institutions.

The vast majority of the world's population consists of defeated peoples in this war. In fact, we are more than just defeated. We are kept: kept in fear, kept in awe, kept out of touch with each other and the earth that gives us life. It has been said that our chains are long and our cages big, yet we are still prisoners. Coercion is everywhere, including the necessity to sell our labor for a wage, forced obedience to laws, conscription in imperial armies, and compulsory moralities and schooling.

The occupying physical forces are essentially the police and the army. Over the centuries, we've internalized much of the values and ideas of the conquerors and have thus been assimilated into the ways of the obedient and the domesticated. But I'd like to explore our physical occupation, not the various skins that we must shed and the fears we must lose.

If people want to claim space, then they have to be prepared to fight and defend it. This space could be permanent (a liberated region or village) or temporary (squats, wilderness camps, legally and illegally built shelters or autonomous neighborhoods). It could be based in village or regional secessionist movements, access to land by popular movements or indigenous assertion over traditional territories.

Those of you familiar with the events in Kahnésatake, a Mohawk reserve outside of Montreal from which the cops were physically chased out of town a while ago, are aware of how successful an organized martial action can be. Canadian anarchists and other insubordinates have an incredible amount of insight and inspiration to glean from that event. People can claim space if they get organized and aren't afraid to lose a few teeth.

With this in mind, perhaps a look at history generally will help us discover how others in our predicament have successfully organized themselves martially. There are countless examples of rebels organizing themselves and winning a few battles.

Official history is written by the conquerors. Their self-congratulatory folklore is that we (rebels) have always lost because the conquerors were superior (and thus had superior weapons). Most of us assume that this is true, so we might as well not even try a martial approach because we're sure to lose. But this isn't the case. In North American history for instance, the dishonest image of the technologically advanced Europeans overrunning primitive savages needs to be re-examined. All over this continent, the indigenous peoples rose up and used martial skills to repel the invasions. In most instances, at least initially, they had some success.

Let's look at an example from one of the very first invasions. In 1521, in what is now called Florida, the Calusa and Timucua defeated experienced conquistadors under Ponce de Leon and

Hernandez de Cordoba. In fact, both of these conquerors died of wounds inflicted by the Calusa! For half a century the indigenous tribes repelled the Spanish in that region. The invasion by de Leon and de Cordoba was the fourth invasion by Spaniards repelled successfully by local tribes-people.

Throughout the invasions, there were numerous examples of success. In many instances, the indigenous successfully defended their territory for decades, some even succeeded for generations. Europeans would not have ultimately won without adopting some native technology and skills, even as the indigenous peoples also adapted European technology and tactics. In his excellent book, *Warpaths*, author Ian Steele explains that: "Spanish crossbows had failed to compete with Amerindian longbows that were six to seven feet long, thick as a man's arm, and very accurate at two hundred yards. Although Spanish armor had been effective against most arrows encountered on three continents, these . . . arrows penetrated six inches of wood and even Spanish breast- and back plates."

Attack needs to be organically self-organized in a broad, horizontal, diverse way, and if it is based within entire communities, I think that it has a better chance of succeeding. Regional and village-like secessionist movements might be expressions of this, but so too would occupy sites. Centralized authority cannot control a multitude of rebellious fronts: regions, villages, reserves, and neighborhoods, each with its own focus, its specific expression of anti-authoritarian self-organization. For all the criticism anarchists have heaped on the Zapatistas in Chiapas, I think we have more to learn from them than the other way around. Also, by collaborating with or at least acknowledging indigenous actions for autonomy and territory, we can be part of something much larger, something quite close to what many insurgent communitarians, radical ecologists, anarchists, and other rebels are aiming for.

Part of breaking out involves shedding all those ideological skins grafted onto us through schooling, the mass media, living in nuclear families, etc. But my involvement with rebels over the past 25 years tells me that most of us already know that this is important. What we don't seem to inventory is the means available to us to counter our physical occupation. After all, it is only by ridding ourselves of organized coercive authority that we will truly begin to have real opportunities to profoundly transform ourselves and to take back our lives. Can a local area succeed against this coercion and against the imperialism of the market? If so, what are some of the first steps?

Part of being an insurgent today could involve acquiring martial skills. Martial traditions include everything from fighting techniques, fighting theory, group cohesion and earth knowledge, to skill with a weapon. This isn't a call to "armed struggle" but for inclusion of a neglected aspect of a more all-inclusive approach to rebellion. Most simple weapons are also useful tools and we should make use of them in that context, for instance by learning hunting skills, then bringing home some wild meat to share with friends so we can stop relying on dumpsters and food banks and jobs, as well as using them for self-defence or to chase away adversaries. The bonus is that our possession and familiarity with them could be extremely useful in a crisis situation or during a popular revolt.

The prisons are full. The factories and mines are full. A small class of people calls all the shots. A wave of extinction is denuding the planet, a tsunami caused by a system that is imposed from above. Entire populations are on anti-depressant and anti-anxiety pills.

We need to regroup and heal and make plans for re-appropriating our lives. Encouraging individuals and groups of rebellious people to get some training in survival and martial skills

seems like common sense. These various individuals and groups would help create a new anti-authoritarian culture that includes a widespread acceptance of a martial component. Rhetoric and politeness have ruled us for too long. A more martial approach should be given an opportunity to contribute to attempts at creating new relationships grounded in imaginative, healthy cultures.

The support for martial skills could translate into anti-authoritarian militias and other semi-formal groupings that exist over time, or more fluid entities like the black bloc that manifest themselves spontaneously and informally when the need arises. Either way, the intention is that there are groups of individuals able and perhaps willing to help their neighbors, comrades, and friends claim space to express anger, resist the plundering of their habitat, and help various grassroots initiatives to fight back through the practice of martial approaches. When a squat is about to be evicted or a wilderness camp burned by authorities, for instance, they might show up to give moral and physical support with their training and ability to act strongly as a group. Whether groups form or not, by being inclusive and encouraging as many friends, neighbors, and comrades as possible to explore martial ways, a stronger, more resilient and threatening anti-authoritarian culture will be given the opportunity to emerge.

Canadian rebels can take advantage of the relative freedom and openness of our society and get these skills and tools before the chains shorten and the cages shrink. The reaction to the September 11th events in the US proved just how quickly an open society will bring in draconian laws to protect the elite, the system they depend on and the values that allow such a system to exist in the first place.

We are all occupied peoples. The occupation is partly maintained militarily and our response should therefore be, in part at least, a fighting one. But I don't want a warrior-like ethic to be the central aspect of my community. I want the wisdom of the elders, the spontaneity, playfulness and brutal honesty of the children, and the careful chiding and questioning of the pacifists to also be essential aspects of my resistance, otherwise we'll end up with martial societies rather than societies with martial skills. I'm not suggesting the acceptance of a fighting elite, but an anti-authoritarian culture that values martial skills and tactics generally. Training in self-defence, widespread use and knowledge of weaponry, popular study of conflict and confrontation, general encouragement of fighting back and standing up, etc. might all be central.

The trained fighters I want to encourage are motivated by a concern and caring for others in their community. They aren't based in small sanctimonious cliques. However, they care about others because they care about themselves, about their immediate experience as individual, unwilling conscripts of authoritarian civilization. I want to encourage the rising up of a combative spirit, in the best sense of the fighting spirit of North America's indigenous warriors. Our fighter exists to claim space for herself and others. In this newly freed up space we can have the opportunity for genuine experiments in living.

Part of preparing ourselves for revolt should include the study of military history, the principles and ways of warfare, mostly because our adversaries are well schooled in it, but also because these offer insights and principles valuable to anti-authoritarian rebels as well. Many of us are familiar with some of the classics: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, Musashi's *Book of Five Rings*, Che Gueverra's writings, Mao's musings, and analysis and the works of Clausewitz for instance. But these are only some of the works, many from an authoritarian or vanguardist perspective, and clearly inadequate for an emerging martial culture wanting to resist or to claim and defend space.

We could also look at the history of anarchists, like the Makhnovchina or the Durruti Column, for instance: how they got started, how they were organized, as well as at some of their specific battles and how these were won or lost. We can learn from the mistakes of countless past attempts.

Anti-authoritarian rebels don't have an elitist leadership and aren't centrally organized. Federations of independent camps could be encouraged, but these alliances should be fragile agreements. Ultimately, it is in not becoming too formally linked that we will succeed in permanently breaking the existence of political monopolies and large-scale infrastructures that tend toward congealing into authoritarian organizations. The notion here is to be a small part in helping create a world of free individuals, of healthy ecological environments where self-organized groups of free humans can live.

This new focus of rebellious people on the history of the military response to social conflict would obviously be well complimented by also including the struggles of indigenous and other insurgent groups. In this respect, we could also look at the Metis rebellion around the Red River Valley and the Society of the Masterless Men in Newfoundland, for instance. We'd benefit as well from a study of the battles of war leaders like Crazy Horse, Tecumseh, Chief Joseph, Pontiac, and Geronimo, as well as events like John Brown's attempted seizure of the armory at Harper's Ferry, and countless other examples.

A study of the military attempts of anti-authoritarian and indigenous rebels that focuses on specific battles and the strategies that either won or lost the fight, can lead to many useful insights into the art of revolt. A look at the Potawatomi, for instance, who lived according to open and free principles, and who struggled to survive while caught up in the conflicts between the French and English colonial powers, reveals secrets of successful warfare. Here is just one example: in the spring of 1755, British Major General Braddock led a large army of colonial militia and regular troops from Virginia to destroy French forts on the Ohio River. His guide and adviser was a young colonel, George Washington.

Here's a description of what transpired from James Clifton's book *The Potawatomi*:

On June 8 the British were approaching Fort Duquesne in western Pennsylvania, site of present day Pittsburgh. Seeing that the British were camped and on the alert, the Potawatomi war leaders persuaded the French not to attack. Instead, they planned to attack the British troops the next day while they were on the move, stretched out in mile-long files along a narrow, forest-shrouded trail. Their surprise attack was a complete success. Colonel Washington tried to ... counterattack in Indian style ... but was defeated. They suffered nearly 1000 dead and wounded out of 1500 on the trail that morning. They abandoned most of their equipment and supplies ... Braddock was mortally wounded. Washington barely escaped with his life. He learned a life-saving military lesson from this disaster, one that he would regularly give as advice to his own generals when sending them against British and Indian forces: 'Beware of surprise!'

In military theory, surprise is one of the most potent weapons available. We should keep in mind that a study of historical combat shows that surprise increases the combat power of fighting forces. Surprise, combat effectiveness, defensive postures, these are all multipliers that can help. Shouldn't this knowledge be generally available and understood among anti-authoritarians?

Like all strategies involving territory and occupation, the defeated have myriad choices in terms of how they live out their lives. But the choices are more limited if we can agree on what our aims are, on what success is and on what constitutes an acceptable quality of life. Were the Warsaw Ghetto inhabitants who rose up against their Nazi tormentors ethically reprehensible for killing? Should they have continued to accept daily humiliation, suffering, violence and death? Yet at the time, there were those among them who argued against the uprising on various grounds, including moral ones.

Oftentimes, it isn't a question of who was more successful, but agreeing on what success is. In the case of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, those who participated felt that victory was standing up to their oppressors and risking death rather than continuing to live in Nazi hell. For others, success was measured simply by staying alive at all costs, even if that meant being a traitor or accepting defeat. For others still, victory was measured by being morally superior, by never adopting the means and ways of the enemy, even if that meant suffering or death.

All rebels who want to overthrow the present social order in favor of a more just and imaginative one need to ask themselves not only what is acceptable radical behavior, but what are acceptable conditions of living. Standing up to the bullies who run things and asserting some territoriality within which we can learn to live in harmony with each other and the world around us seem reasonable to me, while waiting for objective conditions to be right or other such Marxian concepts seem unacceptable. To confront the institutions that maintain our servitude and misery we need to listen to the hot-headed, impatient, and courageous fighters as much as we do to the cautious, negotiating, and compromising peacemakers. It's about context, not morality, the forces of history, or universally applicable strategies.

We are all damaged people who need to heal and not just fight. We partly do this with others with whom we share affinities and openness for intimacy. We also need to analyze civilization (or domination generally) and share our insights through debates, pamphlets, publications and discussion. And we need to help create communities and/or cultures of resistance by contributing to the various projects that fellow rebels are involved in. Yet personal healing, propaganda, and putting our energy into community projects, no matter how worthy, still don't confront the military occupation we are presently living under. Even attempts at re-wilding are vain if we don't push for a generalized, effective, long-term push against militarily-protected centralized authority. History is not only the story of imperial civilizations targeting and conquering others, it is also a chronicle of the resistance to that conquest. I have allies and kin that extend back millennia. They have won countless battles. There has been successful resistance in every area and every era. In order to honor these ancestors we need to give them thanks and keep up the fight.

In military theory, it is said that for the conqueror to really succeed, the losing population must accept defeat. Otherwise, the conquerors only win after every single person has been killed, which isn't normally in the conquerors interest because they need slaves and soldiers, etc. A very large part of our population unfortunately has accepted defeat. So, I want to repeat that sharing our unique world-views and critiques and creating community are as essential as acquiring martial skills. A martial component is simply one part. But we also must remember that a small band of rebels can accomplish a lot, even succeeding in leading relatively free lives away from capitalist civilization.

In Ireland, in the early nineteen hundreds, small local militias, with not even enough rifles to go around, succeeded in thwarting the designs of one of the most powerful empires on the planet

for decades. They were successful partly because they used many martial skills, from spying to engagement in actual battles but also because they had widespread support. The fighters could melt back into the population. Disadvantaged fighters need widespread support to win. With this in mind, it's helpful when rebels stay put in one region and make strong bonds with the land and the inhabitants there. Perhaps, over time, the embers of authentic communities with martial skills will begin to glow and maybe these seemingly isolated embers will one day gather themselves into small local fires. And hopefully, you'll be a rebel around one of those fires.

## 2

I HOPE THAT I CAN STIMULATE SOME INTEREST NOT IN THE outrage and tragedy that is conventional war, but in the art of revolt. The principles of the art of rebellion might apply in regional secession, guerilla warfare or insurgency. They might apply among a group of friends doing their best to confront the imperialism of the market within their potential territory or their neighborhood. They might allow a stunted, humiliated individual to find dignity and achieve small successes along her life path, rather than resignation.

While conflict, even armed conflict, is as natural as a rainy day in the Pacific Northwest, war or large-scale invasions in the interest of an elite or ideology, violent brutality as a continuation of politics, seems to only begin with urban civilization. I have read about the exploits of Hannibal, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon and so on. There is much to learn from them, but little to be inspired by. Theirs is the story of wretched masses impoverished by the scale and insanity of the conflicts in their lands, of obedient soldiers dutifully following the orders of their superiors. It is the story of plunder and rape and pillage, of senseless slaughter and bloodshed.

### **Against war**

War generally has little to do with real courage and more to do with a superficial heroism based primarily in self-preservation, although one does find examples of extraordinary bravery and solidarity, a humanity that asserts itself in the midst of the inhumane. Calls to class war, from one point of view, represent an ignorance of the realities of war or an example of a general lack of vocabulary among radicals who want to overthrow the present order. These calls are often a shallow romanticism, frequently the privilege of those who live in peace.

I am interested in the re-awakening and celebration of the fighting spirit. The call is not for war, but an end to war through revolution. Tecumseh, Pontiac, Zapata, Makhno, Gabriel Dumont, Crazy Horse, Durruti, the uncontrollables everywhere, these are my "heroes." I'm sure you have friends, neighbors or acquaintances who have the fighting spirit, who stand up to the bullies around them, who aren't afraid to speak their mind, who give support to rebellious practices, be it through attitudes or actions. This is the spirit that should be acknowledged and encouraged, especially when it coincides with anarchic desires.

Martial skills are useful for everyone, including those who simply want to irritate, to vandalize, to commit small low level attacks designed to make public their hatred of the institutions and managers of this culture. And a clandestine group of friends that creates beauty by destructive means or that spreads subversion using playful methods, can also benefit from and help inform the martial approaches I am advocating.

Many rebels are anxious to explore the possibilities that successful resistance might offer. And outside of these milieus, there are others whose communities or friends are threatened and haven't the skills to act on their desires. Can we challenge the institutions that rule our lives without losing? Ongoing ecological catastrophes cascading into a potential collapse make the situation urgent. Institutions of domination are global, but this doesn't mean that to overcome this planetary regime local confrontations and occupations are futile. Perhaps the mega-monster can be torn apart limb by local limb. Low intensity insurgency based primarily on unconventional warfare techniques is one possible avenue to pursue.

I am not promoting a resistance dominated by a sea of humorless "revolutionaries". Rather these insurgencies would be primarily based among groups of friends, in geographical or genuine communities. This usually implies some degree of a mutually beneficial and trusting relationship between the actual fighters and the folks around them. Presently there seems to be widespread interest among anarchists in exploring a variety of martial arts. There is also interest in destructive actions, occupations of shelters and of food producing land bases, in survival and wilderness skills, etc. The urgency brought on by the shredding of the green world has helped create a rebel milieu anxious to fight for a future.

And this era has also helped rebels back into our bodies. There will always be philosophers; incisive people who can easily juggle ideas, but hopefully we will now begin to honor those with sensual wisdom among us as well: more women, the indigenous traditionalists, those with survival skills and earth knowledge, even so called rednecks, rural outlaws with whom we could be building bridges. A more rounded approach seems necessary if we are going to succeed in our desires for healthy communities and individuals. So perhaps once our philosophizing is complimented by an equal degree of pursuit of sensual knowledge, including martial skills, a more significant threat will begin to emerge. And the more that we integrate these abilities into our ideas the more confident and healthy we will be and the more likely will we begin to see opportunities that we were previously blind to.

## **Against militarization**

Integrating the arts of rebellion into our self organizing doesn't imply an iota of hierarchical structure of arrogant superiors and obedient ranks. Obviously we don't want to militarize rebellion. The hope is that potential insurgents will develop a richer vocabulary and experience around conflict. There is for instance an enormous difference between attacking, invading and fighting or between claiming and occupying. We can explore these and many other differences and concepts. Training camps, places where radical theory, survival skills and martial arts are learned and shared, could be useful. Having these types of abilities could be helpful, even life-saving. Luckily, it isn't necessary to reinvent combative skills, because there are timeless truths and principles that apply to all combat.

## **Sun Tzu**

Sun Tzu IS ACTUALLY AN HONORIFIC TITLE GIVEN TO Su-N Wu (c. 544 BC-496 BC), the author of *The Art of War*. There is some debate about the original title of this famous text, which some of you may be interested in because it seems that the author intended to suggest martial

arts, rather than war. In any case, Sun Tzu looked at both the philosophy of conflict as well as the conduct of military operations, especially maneuvers and combat, making his writings as they stand useful to anarchist rebels. *The Art of War* is an important text and should be widely read by potential insurgents. This isn't to say that Sun Tzu was an anarchist, rather that his writings are poetic and open ended enough to be used by just about anybody interested in being victorious in "combat" or "conflict". This means that many, many people have read them, including your adversaries. Therefore, to succeed, study this text among others, and aim to be on equal footing with your opponents, at least in theoretical knowledge.

*The Art of War* is widely available, but I thought I'd share some of my favorite quotes from one of the translations:

Those skilled in warfare establish positions that make them invincible and do not miss opportunities to attack the enemy.

Generally, in battle, use the common to engage the enemy and the uncommon to gain victory. Those skilled at uncommon maneuvers are as endless as the heavens and earth, and as inexhaustible as the rivers and seas.

To be certain to take what you attack, attack where the enemy cannot defend. To be certain of safety when defending, defend where the enemy cannot attack.

Subtle! Subtle! They become formless. Mysterious! Mysterious! They become soundless.

In armed struggle, the difficulty is turning the circuitous into the direct, and turning adversity into advantage. Therefore, if you make the enemy's route circuitous and bait him with advantages, though you start out behind him, you will arrive before him.

## Ourown parables

One of the ways that I understand Sun Tzu is through the use of the genre in which he expressed himself. While there is no reason to reinvent useful philosophies of combat and conflict, we can pass on new parables, ones that grow out of our own experience and insights. For instance, based on some of the discussions that friends and I have been having, new ideas have begun to emerge which might be helpful to others. The notion here is that we can all contribute to philosophical meditations on revolt, based on our own study and experience. This sharing might help our projects and attempts and make each of us more worthy opponents of the megamachine.

I think that it is safe to say that anarchist insurgents are a small minority within almost every given population; it is certainly true where I live. For many reasons, mobility, lack of kinship ties, etc., we are a dispersed group of people. Yet, it is important, from the perspective of the art of rebellion, to at times concentrate one's forces, especially on a vital point of an opponent. Naturally those in control of the repressive apparatus are aware of such things and have planned and trained accordingly. Riot control techniques, for instance, are an example of this. So rather than remaining inactive out of fear of losing a direct confrontation as a group and thus remaining defeated, we can find ways to act as a group without appearing to be a group. Remember Sun Tzu: "subtle, subtle, they become formless." We can concentrate our forces, we just can't let our



enemy know that we are doing so until it is too late. Black blocs often come close to achieving this.

Every potential rebel exists in different circumstances, regardless of the fact that we all live within various prisons of capitalist civilization. Therefore it is up to you to decide if it is best for an in-the- street, prolonged, collective confrontation at a counter summit all dressed in black, for instance, or whether it is wiser to avoid uniforms, appear to be unconnected individuals, and coordinate an action that occurs quickly, following which the participants melt away. The latter would be an example of acting as a group without appearing to be a group.

## Napoleon's campaigns

Since Sun Tzu there have been innumerable treatises and theoretical works on war. For instance, in the 1st century AD Sextus Julius Frontanus wrote a book called *On Military Affairs*. Byzantium produced both *Strategikon* by Mauricius and the *Tactica* by Leo the Wise. There are many such books, but I believe that overall they have little benefit for our purposes although a historian or a scholar could find much value there.

Much later, in Europe during Napoleon's reign, and in fact inspired by his successful campaigns, Carl Von Clausewitz (1780-1831) wrote *On War*. This is the only text that compares in importance and originality to Sun Tzu's. As pointed out, many treatises on various aspects of war and military approaches had been written after Sun Tzu, but Clausewitz was the first to introduce a philosophical perspective on it and he did so thoroughly. His contributions are enormous. I won't attempt to summarize his ideas, but will mention some of the areas that he explored and some of the terms that he used.

Clausewitz wrote about the essential unpredictability of war, explored the asymmetrical relationship between attack and defense, came up with the useful concepts of "fog" and "friction" in war and emphasized that there must be a culminating point of an offensive. Commentators also remind us that he used a dialectical method to present his ideas, making them sometimes difficult to understand. If you are truly interested in military theory, then Clausewitz is a must-read. It would be difficult for any writer on these topics to claim to not have been influenced by him.

Clausewitz had a contemporary, Antoine Henri Jomini, who was also largely stimulated by Napoleon's campaigns to search for a theory or a collection of laws on war. He is worth investigation for a fuller understanding of the development of the theory of combat.

Finally there is JFC Fuller, one of the greatest military thinkers of the 20th century. He is nearly as important as Clausewitz, if only because his influence is also widespread, but his ambition was not as great. The Principles of War, as they have been known for nearly a century, were first codified by him. The US Army's list of the *Principles of War*, found in one of their basic field manuals, is almost identical to the list first compiled by Fuller. Let's have a brief look at these:

The Principles of War:

Mass Objective-Offensive Surprise Security Economy of force Movement Unity of command Simplicity

Mass-Bring decisive force to bear at critical times and places.

Objective- Define a decisive and attainable objective for every military operation.

Offensive–Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.

Surprise–Strike the enemy at a time and/or place and in a manner for which he is unprepared.

Security–Never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage.

Economy of Force–Allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts.

Movement/maneuver–Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power.

Unity of Command–For every objective, there must be a unified effort.

Simplicity–Prepare clear, uncomplicated plans. Complex plans are more likely to be misunderstood or to fall-apart as soon as something goes wrong.

All apply to organized anti-authoritarian rebellion. We should also keep in mind that these are the guiding principles of literally every military organization in the world.

## **Timeless truths**

The timeless truths of combat, while having been derived from a careful study of centuries, even millennia, of human history, can (with a little imagination) be applied to social struggles as well. These truths seem to apply in all combative situations, regardless of changes in the technology of conflicts. Keep in mind that these principles and truths are not necessarily intended to be used in direct military battles against state forces, although they could be used in this way. They can also be used in fighting against gentrification, protecting your autonomous space from being destroyed or its valuables taken, to stop developments, to occupy or reoccupy land, etc. And you will notice that the truths of combat often coincide with the basic principles of war elaborated on earlier.

The first and most important truth is that “defense is the stronger form of combat”. This is a quote from Clausewitz, but he was not the first to make this realization. All things being equal, it would seem that the side with the defensive posture will likely succeed. And a defender with well placed and well protected forces, even with less weaponry or less experience or fewer people, can still have an enormous advantage. The practice here would be to dig in, make fortifications, don’t yield for as long as possible, and your opponent will surely take heavy losses, and may even retreat.

An example: a group of friends has spent the last several years building a wilderness camp as a place to hunt and fish from, to go and gather medicines and food, to escape from capitalist civilization, in short, to practice green ways. Somehow a group of “opponents” (forestry officials or whatever) has not only discovered the camp, but has decided to “remove the squatters.” These officials are intent on evicting the camp dwellers.

Luckily, one of the camp occupants was doing a regular peripheral sweep and spotted the officials on their way up. She returns to camp and warns everyone. Because the camp dwellers have studied and practiced martial skills, they don’t just panic and abandon their camp and its valuables. Rather they are confident from the knowledge that because they have the defensive posture they enjoy many advantages and will put these advantages to maximum use by combining them with other skills they have acquired through collective study and practice. In all

likelihood, the officials will soon give up and return home or retreat to seek reinforcements, giving the rebels a chance to hold onto their position long enough to gather their stuff, avoid arrest or injury and hopefully escape to another camp.

The defensive posture is the strongest, so it makes absolute sense to focus on where one can have an impact, namely where you live, here and now, with the confidence that comes with knowing that should you manage to wrest even a small area from authority and the market, you have a good chance of holding onto it for a long time, perhaps long enough for other areas to accomplish the same, join you or open new fronts.

In fairness, however, the second truth must also be remembered: “an attacker willing to pay the price can always penetrate the strongest defenses.”

Some military theorists have noticed that superior combat power always wins. This is the third truth of war. All other things being equal, fate smiles on the side with the greatest combat power. For this reason, it makes absolutely no sense for a minority of revolutionaries in North America to contemplate attempting an outright military contest against the police and army. The state’s combat power is simply overwhelming, so it might be better to focus on making friends within the military and hoping for mutinies or at least treasonous acts (like providing gear or information . to outsiders). In any event, destroying the imperialism of the market is not a military exercise. Martial skills are primarily helpful when occupying (or reoccupying, for Indigenous people) and/or defending territory, for building the confidence to initiate small battles and to act as a grounding influence for dreamers. There will be times, however, when the insurgents will have the superior combat power and this would be the time not to be afraid, but to push and succeed.

The fourth truth of combat is what Clausewitz referred to as “friction in war”. During any combat operation, most activities are hindered by mistakes, the dispersal effects of firepower, disruptions caused by confusion and fear in a potentially lethal environment, etc. Practicing in the safety of your local wilderness or in a camp or dojo, is just not the same as the real thing. The pace especially suffers and therefore allowances must be made during the planning stages for this friction. Keep this truth in mind when planning to disrupt a gathering of economists or politicians, for instance, and you will less likely be thrown off by the “friction” and its effects.

Achieving surprise in a combative situation is extremely important. This is the fifth truth. Analysis of historical military confrontations has shown that surprise actually significantly increases the combat power of the side that achieves it. In fact, as mentioned in part one, surprise is the greatest of combat multipliers. As noted above, it is included in the US Army’s list of the *Principles of War*.

T.S. Dupuy writes that offensive action is essential to positive combat results as his first truth. Defense and strength and surprise are important, but ultimate combat success involves offensive action. Even should a strategy of overall defensive posture be the plan, (for example successful local upheavals which are surrounded by hostile adversaries), offensive tactics and operations must be selectively employed for final victory.

While the purpose of this chapter is to encourage the study and practice of martial skills, the focus is on strategy and tactics generally and, when specifically “military”, on ground combat. I have completely ignored air and naval theorists. Such thinkers do exist and any insurgency would have to deal with aspects of each.

Many, if not most, of state forces today use a combination of land and air combat. For instance high tech, high performance helicopters will often do reconnaissance that directs far away tanks,

with extremely specific GPS coordinates, to their targets. Land Combat today is rarely unsupported by fixed wing aircraft, drones or helicopters. Thus we should more accurately speak of Air Land Battle in many instances.

As for Naval combat, these ideas can be applied effectively to deter and harass navies or to initiate very small scale naval combat, although we mustn't forget about the power and potential of a sailors mutiny.

I think that what you can learn from these introductions and ideas, especially if followed up by your own study and practice, can be applied to all areas of conflict.

## **Tactics and strategy**

One important and useful exploration is the distinction between tactics and strategy.

Clausewitz believed that strategy belonged primarily to the realm of art, while tactics belonged primarily to the realm of science. From a military point of view strategy is the planning and managing of the resources available in warfare. The military and political elite, i.e. those with national power to influence these matters, do this.

Just below strategy, the military uses the term operations when the direction of armies or large forces in military (usually combat) activities within a clearly defined theater is involved. Conceptually, operations lie between strategy and tactics when engaged in combat.

Tactics are the specific techniques used to achieve your strategic ends. They are influenced by local conditions, or you can say that context determines your choice. Tactics are the detailed maneuvers and offensives used to achieve the objectives of your strategy. They are often plans and moves that gain advantages in the short term, while strategy is the larger-scale framework of direction and control. You can practice your tactics, but you must use intuition for your strategy.

## **Sieges**

One might think that studying the techniques of sieges would only be of interest to hobbyists or scholars of medieval warfare, but this is not the case. Only quite recently, from 1992 to 1996, the city of Sarajevo was under siege during the Bosnian war. In fact, I've noticed that many of the most significant conflicts that occur tend to have siege qualities to them. If we look at Oka, Gustafsen Lake, MOVE, Caledonia, squat evictions, etc., we find sieges and siege techniques used by both sides.

A siege is a military blockade of a city or fortress with the intent of conquering by force or attrition, often accompanied by an assault. A siege occurs when an attacker encounters a city or fortress that refuses to surrender and cannot be easily taken by a frontal assault. Sieges involve surrounding the target and blocking the reinforcement or escape of troops or provision of supplies (a tactic known as "investment"), typically coupled with attempts to reduce the fortifications by means of siege engines, artillery bombardment, mining (also known as sapping), or the use of deception or treachery to bypass defenses. Failing a military outcome, sieges can often be decided by starvation, thirst or disease, which can afflict both the attacker or defender.

Generally speaking, siege warfare is a form of low-intensity warfare (until an assault takes place) characterized in that at least one party holds a strong defense position, it is a highly static situation, the element of attrition is typically strong and there are plenty of opportunities for negotiations.<sup>1</sup>

### \*\*\* Variables

Whenever considering an action, it is important to reflect on what Clausewitz called “the variables representing the circumstances of combat.” Let’s look at an example:

A group of friends decides to destroy a couple of bridges in a nearby wilderness to prevent logging and other industrial activity. The first step is to look at the many basic security considerations to follow: don’t tell anyone outside the group anything ever, have alibis, don’t use or carry any techno-devices to communicate, document or brainstorm, etc.

The group uses their knowledge of strategy, operations and tactics in making plans. They are conscious of some of the principles and truths of conflict: surprise, movement, economy of force, etc. But what we haven’t looked at yet are the variables that typically come into play, (the concept of friction does take into account these influences to some extent).

Trevor Dupuy breaks down the variables into a few simple categories, although I’ve tweaked these somewhat. There are many that are sure to influence the outcome and smoothness of your action, so please make sure that variables are considered before pursuing your objective.

The variables are Environmental, Behavioral, and Operational. Under Environmental, we find primarily the weather and terrain, although I would include season, time of day and even lunar cycle as important. Secondly, we find Behavioral variables. These relate to the psychology and nature of the human participants. Morale, training, emotional well being, stability, drug and alcohol use, experience, etc. Finally, Operational includes vulnerability, mobility, fatigue and posture. It should be noted that we have influence over these and should take advantage of this fact.

The Environmental: It’s cold and rainy. Will this affect the terrain enough to make any changes? Does the group need to make a fire, perhaps to burn the bridge? If so, can they make a fire in the rain? They were counting on the full moon to help, but the clouds will inhibit this, do they have a flashlight? Heavier clothing can slow down one’s escape. The area is primarily a deciduous forest, so in spring there will be plenty of coverage from the leaves, but it’s autumn, can they hide behind bare branches?

The Behavioral: If it is going to be a rainy and cold night and one of the group is inexperienced or weak, one might want to make sure that his backpack is checked for proper clothing, that he is rested enough to do the action, perhaps consider pairing him up with a stronger or more experienced participant, etc. If you expect to be confronted, who has the most training to stand firm, who is likely to flee?

The Operational: will the rain make it muddy and slow down the vehicles? Does everyone have the proper clothing? If the group will have to sit still and hide for a long period of time in uncomfortable circumstances, has everyone trained for this long enough? Variables and the reality of friction are essential last considerations to ponder before setting out to “battle”.

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<sup>1</sup> The paragraphs on sieges came primarily from Wikipedia, as did parts of the description of the Principles of War.

## The Society of Masterless Men

*When I began thinking about outlaws and outlaw history I realized that if outlaw just means one who breaks the law, then I could write about the lives of nearly every citizen. So I define outlaw as one who not only breaks the law, but who survives by breaking the law or essentially lives outside of it. And the more I delve into Canadas past, the more outlaws I discover, and many of them are worthy of our attention. As an introduction to Canadian outlaw history, here is the story of a group of Newfoundland rebels who survived without masters for half a century.*

The story of the Society of Masterless Men, which included women and children, begins in the 18th-century settlement of Ferryland, in Newfoundland. In order to colonize Newfoundland, The British Empire created plantations. These were settlements of primarily Irish indentured servants, many of them very young, (thus their name: the Irish Youngsters), abducted from Ireland either by force or guile and brought to the South Shore of Newfoundland where they were literally sold to fishing masters. Their price: \$50 a head.

These village plantations were primarily set up by consortiums and cabals of wealthy merchants in England. The fishing masters were essentially the Lords and Ladies of the villages, living in luxury and security while surrounded by dozens, even hundreds, of indentured servants who fished and labored in the camps processing the fishing catch. British frigates were stationed in the harbors and marines patrolled the town. Because there wasn't a local police force, the Navy helped reinforce the authority of the local fishing masters.

The workers in these fishing villages were barely a step up from slaves. Corporal punishment was routinely used and everyday life was harsh and brutal. In the small settlement of Ferryland, for instance, there were a gallows and three whipping posts, in separate regions of the town. When a man was sentenced to be flogged for stealing a jug of rum or refusing to work for one of the fishing masters, he was taken to all three posts and whipped so the whole town would have an opportunity to witness the punishment as a warning.

The settlement of Ferryland was founded by Sir George Calvert around 1620, and was partly intended as a "refuge for ...Catholics." It's not clear if there were any "free" Catholics, or only Catholic servants. This was a time of penal law and repression of Catholicism in Britain and at least some Irish Catholics voluntarily came to the New World to escape persecution. Unfortunately, the laws in Newfoundland were the same as in the Old World. The orders given to the governor from 1729 to 1776 were: "You are to permit a liberty of conscience to all, except Papists, so they be contented with a quiet and peaceable enjoyment of the same, not giving offense or scandal to the government."

This order wasn't always strictly followed and around the mid 1700's there was a crackdown on Catholicism. In 1743, the governor of the time, Smith, wrote to the magistrate in Ferryland, John Benger, instructing him to be mindful of the "Irish papists" in the area. William Keen, the chief magistrate of the city of St. John's was killed by a group of Irishmen in 1752. Following this assassination, penal laws were strictly enforced for the next thirty or forty years.

Life wasn't much better for those in the British Navy patrolling the area. The Navy wielded its authority over its seamen with zero compassion and nothing but discipline enforced by abuse and violence.

Food rations were slim and flogging was common. For instance keelhauling - dragging a seaman on ropes under the keel of a ship, thereby shredding his flesh on the sharp edged barnacles - was still a legal punishment even though it frequently resulted in death.

Some refer to the Society of Masterless Men as lore or a traditionally told story, one for which there is little documentary evidence. But there is a fair amount of facts that are known about the Masterless Men. And, as a matter of context, we know a lot about the injustice of the British Empire and of the cruelty of many of its managers and henchmen. We know that indentured servants were brought to Newfoundland and treated with brutality, as were the seamen in the Royal Navy. We also know that one Irish-born Peter Kerrivan was among those young indentured servants and abused seamen. It is largely believed that he was a reluctant seaman, having been pressed into service.

Some time in 1750, while Kerrivan's ship was docked in Ferryland, he escaped (historians usually choose to say "deserted"). Together with two or three escaped indentured fishermen, he helped establish a lookout and base in the Butter Pot Barrens, a wild area of the Avalon Peninsula, for outlaws. This was the beginning of the Masterless Men.

Hunted by the authorities, the Masterless Men soon learned a way of life based on subsistence and sharing. They came into contact with Newfoundland's aboriginal peoples, the Mi'qmaq and the Beothuk, who taught the rebels survival skills. They learned how to hunt for food based on the caribou herd on the Peninsula.

At the time, one could be hanged for running away. Nevertheless many young men escaped from the plantations and took up lives as outlaws. In 1774, for instance, a petition written by Bonavista merchants, justices of the peace, and others, was sent to Governor Shuldham to complain of a number of "masterless" Irishmen who had gone to live in a secluded cove and "were there building fishing rooms." But Kerrivan's band of young companions were among the luckiest and best organized.

Word of the well organized free men spread and fresh runaways from coastal settlements came to join them. Eventually their numbers swelled to between 20 and 50 men. There were also women, but their numbers are unknown. The literature I found mention the women simply as "wives," although I imagine them as strong, rebellious women sickened by the misery and cruelty that surrounded them who also yearned for a freer and better way of life and who joined their outlaw husbands voluntarily.

After a while, the group of comrades began trading caribou meat and hides with allies in the remote villages, receiving supplies such as flour, tea, and bullets. They also organized stealth raids against the fishery plantations.

By this time the British authorities, without a police or militia of their own, were beginning to fear that this group of anarchic rebels would inspire too many others to desertion and ordered the Navy to track the freedom-loving band down and make examples of them. Some years passed before the first expedition against the Masterless Men was organized and, by then, the rebels had become skilled wilderness inhabitants. Anticipating the attack or somehow being forewarned, Kerrivan and his comrades cut a series of blind trails which confounded their pursuers. The party of marines sent to capture them often found themselves lost and dumbly led into bogs and impenetrable thick bush.

Eventually the Navy did manage to close in on the rebels' camp near their lookout, but they found the log cabins deserted, "with every rag and chattel removed". Taking advantage of their pursuers' confusion, Kerrivan and his friends had moved off towards the north and west. The navy set fire to their little village but had to return to their base without any prisoners. The Masterless group rebuilt their cabins and the Navy burned them down again. Over time the Navy burned down their cabins three times and each time they were rebuilt.

Two of the rebels were captured and hanged, but the state never did succeed in destroying the Society. In fact, the captured young runaways had joined the band only a few weeks earlier and had been taken by surprise away from the main body of the rebels. They were hanged with great dispatch from the yard-arm of the English frigate in Ferryland. No other Masterless Men were ever captured after this incident, presumably because this only made the outlaws more cautious. Some of the tracks that had been carved partly to support their wilderness ways and partly as subterfuge became Newfoundland's first inland roads. In fact, their road system eventually connected most of the small settlements of the Avalon Peninsula.

For more than a generation the Masterless Men roamed free over the barrens! Over time, perhaps as military rule began to relax or for reasons unknown to this author, their ranks began to dwindle. In 1789, 39 years after escaping, four men gave themselves up on condition that their only punishment would be deportation to Ireland, which was agreed upon. Many of the other rebels settled in remote parts of Newfoundland's coast and survived as independent fishermen. Kerrivan, who was never captured, is said to have had a partner, four sons and several daughters and is believed to have remained on the barrens well into old age, never returning to civilization.

The children of the Masterless Men gradually drifted out to the coast and settled down in small coves never visited by the navy. They married the children of other outlaws who had settled there generations earlier and together they raised families.

The story of The Society of the Masterless Men is inspiring because they succeeded. A group of people voluntarily joined together in common cause and broke free from their masters, most never to be captured or to return to their work prisons.

## **Sources:**

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# Ponds and Oceans

*For freedom and nature lovers.*

*Simple proverbs and phrases intended as  
broadhints and insights for the rebellious.*

## *Habitats*

The dispossessed will occupy land for habitats.

Cities are not habitats.

Adapt to nature.

The people of the land are our elders.

Nature has no political boundaries.

Industrialism kills habitats.

Industrial production must be permanently dismantled.

The village can learn from the traveler.

Our minds are not separate from our bodies. Mind is matter. Habitats create us as we create them.

Defend your habitat.

## *Withdrawal*

Withdraw to organize.

Withdraw to attack.

Withdraw to experience communal subsistence. Insurgency and withdrawal coexist.

Withdraw to train.

Withdraw to heal.

Withdraw to occupy.

Withdraw now to attack later.

Refusing to participate is an act of sabotage.

The state will use violence to enforce reintegration and assimilation of group withdrawal. Pursue collective experiments in living.

### *Anarchy*

Free individuals cluster together organically.

Secessionist regions and enclaves can experiment with anarchy. Kinship ties facilitate anarchy.

Anarchy will bury anarchism.

The ungoverned individual is the basis of anarchy. Decentralisation prevents new states from emerging.

Desire for the inherent benefits of harmony and successful subsistence activity encourages efforts to create pleasurable coexistence. Federations can break away from the nation state.

Anarchy is a fight for experimentation in living.

Freedom is a set of social relationships.

Peace is achieved through the revolutionary abolition of nation states.

The group is stronger within an alliance.

The anarchist alliance is an organic body.

The organic decays and disappears to make room for renewal. The artist experiments. The anarchist destroys.

The animal embodies sensual knowledge.

The alliance can be a weapon of insurgency.

### *Revolution*

Global revolution cannot be planned but local secession can.

Organic self-organization can precede secession from the nation-state.

Seceding from the nation-state makes room for organic self-organization.

Authentic revolution creates authentic human bonds.

All politicians are obstacles to revolution.

Revolution is organically self-organized.

Revolution is complete renewal.

Complete renewal requires an organic dimension. Federations of communes can break away from the nation state. Occupation sites federate.

Allies federate. Ponds become an ocean.

Revolutionary foresight creates revolutionary futures.

*Urban ways*

Abandon cities in groups.

Atomization is the chain that binds us.

Uprisings must destroy the relationships called city. Without destroying the city, complete renewal will fail. The city is an authoritarian institution.

Numeracy and literacy are urban technologies.

Temporary gatherings of thousands of people are not cities. Technology can't solve social problems.

Using technology is not a consensual activity.

A collection of villages is not a city.

Urban civilization is a necessary condition for capitalist civilization.

Coercive hierarchy is a necessary condition for urban civilization.

Agriculture makes urban civilization possible.

The destruction of capitalism will include the destruction of urban ways.

The rural will be buried alongside the urban.

Resist atomization.

*Martial traditions*

Communes defend themselves.

Animals don't have hospitals.

Even fragile, peaceful snowflakes acting together can sometimes quietly suffocate the dominant reality.

Some will die.

No one can see the whole mountain.

Beneath the surface, the roots live in darkness.

The state prevents the emergence of federations with violence. Martial skills can defeat military ones.

During unrest the state will use police or rebels as

human sacrifices, the first to justify law and order, the second to reassure the bourgeoisie.

Act as a group without appearing to be a group. Insurrectional events should threaten the bosses of the dominant reality.

Without risk we fail.

A community of resistance has an arsenal.

Makhno, Durruti, Pontiac, Geronimo,

Gabriel Dumont, Zapata, Crazy Horse.

Collective fury is the invisible weapon of the disarmed. You're only disarmed if you think you are.

A mutual shaping of ideas and action begins before genuine revolt and continues during it.

*Capitalism*

Capitalism is a violent crisis.

No roles or identities created for capitalist civilization are worth preserving. Capitalism is a river of blood.

Capitalist civilization stunts its populace. The market is the world's imperial master.

# Permanent Subsistence Zones

## Villages or free wanderers

If you read through this collection, you'll get the distinct impression that I am trying to guide rebels in a specific direction. But what is the destination of these paths I am urging us on?

There is general consensus that the first people to colonize the North American continent did so about 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. There are dissenting archaeologists who believe that humans have been here for closer to 20,000 years or even more. Radio carbon dating indicates that humans were on the eastern half of the continent, in what is currently called the United States, at least 10,400 years ago. Their remains are found over the entire area. Meat seems to have been the primary food source and the peoples of the area used fluted projectile points as their basic hunting tool. These free wanderers, as some archaeologists have described them, were essentially single families or small bands of related kin.

What interests me is that there is no physical evidence, to my knowledge, of human-made shelters in this area for the first several thousand years of people living there. No seasonal campsites have been found, let alone permanent village sites, until around **8,000** years ago. That means that humans on this continent wandered freely without permanent sites, and perhaps without even human-made shelters, for at least 4,000 years.

From 8,000 until 3,500 years ago, there is a gradual shift from this open wandering-based life-way to a more sedentary one. First, there emerges a number of temporary campsites, with some evidence of longer occupation. Toward the middle of this period, we find increasing numbers of seasonal campsites, places where the wanderers would regularly return to for certain foods. By the end of this period we find the midden deposits, designated village or family places where the waste products of meals and other debris from human activity were placed, many of them **10** meters deep.

Human groups became slightly larger, they wandered less, and had camps that occupied an acre or two. This is when we find circular pole-framed structures, ornaments, woven mats, storage pits, nets and traps. Humans slowly moved from their free wandering days to a more subsistence based life. They became embedded in specific areas, developed a set of skills and tools based on their environmental context. Essentially, they became part of a place, both formed by and forming it.

The subsistence I imagine and believe we should strive toward is one that once found its expression somewhere between and within these two time periods. I don't view one time period as superior to the other against a measure of extent of domination or domestication. I don't agree with the model of history that draws a map of rectilinear roads going through time with village life located in a purgatory downhill from the heaven of free wandering and somewhere before the hell of urban life.

Were the free-wanderers the most free? Were their people the happiest, the least alienated (or without alienation)? Were they even the wildest?

In some green anarchist and primitivist writing, re-wilding is the destination. And because any degree of sedentary living, even seasonal, is viewed as a degree of domestication, then only the free wandering lifeways seem to offer the ultimate fruit of wildness. For them, unless we are aiming toward small, self-organized bands of related kin roaming forests and seashores, then we won't ever be truly capable of rediscovering our wild existences, and thus our potential to realize ourselves as truly undomesticated beings in an unconstrained, direct relationship with every raw moment.

But I have come to the conclusion that a mutually shared set of life skills, combined with the extensive sensual knowledge that comes with being embedded in a place, also allows for the same unfettered existence that the free wanderers had.

To view human history on this continent as a simple linear devolution from the completely free, unmediated lives of the original inhabitants to the first degrees of separation in the campsites, then deeper still with the seasonal camps, then into the abyss of domestication in the semi-permanent and permanent villages to, the complete colonization and integration into urban life under the empire of the market and hierarchy, is just too one-dimensional. I am not aiming for relationships that always exclude any degree of sedentariness any more than I am aiming for an obligatory sedentariness.

I think that the villages that gave us the midden deposits, and the traps, and the nets, and the masks, and the songs, etc, are as ideal an ultimate destination as the roaming days of the free wanderers.

Subsistence for me includes the lifeways of free-wandering people as well as village/seasonal camp-based people. Both can offer the richness of meaningful, ungoverned lives. Both can encourage our possible variations as free beings.

The village isn't a stage on a downhill momentum toward urban life. The net and song and mask aren't first steps on a path toward rank and privilege, environmental degradation or ever increasing degrees of mediated lives. They are merely the outcome of sensual wisdom, of embeddedness, of organic life ways. In this sense, my destination is primarily toward small villages and seasonal camps.

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Here, where I live, in the Comox Valley in the Pacific Northwest, herring season has come and gone once again. Many of us take special notice of this natural cycle, it seems truly wondrous: the water whitening from fish spawn, the seagulls excitedly squealing with anticipation and satisfaction, the deep bark of sea lions filling the air, keen-eyed bald eagles swooping down from their tree top perches to gorge themselves. But there is a sinister player in this seasonal cycle. It is the commercial fishing industry.

In the middle part of the eighteenth century, the western expansion of the European invaders involved the use of market hunting as opposed to a subsistence tactic. Combined with the development of breech loading firearms, this approach led to the extermination and near extinction of several species, including the pronghorn, elk, deer and some waterfowl. On the Great Plains, frozen pronghorn carcasses were stacked like cordwood along railway lines to be shipped east to urban centers. The elimination of the bison was part of a covert policy of the United States government to deprive the indigenous people of their subsistence base, and thereby their base of operation, against the army and settlers.

The same forces today are used to prevent any possibility of the dispossessed from regrouping and claiming territory within which to live according to principles of mutual aid and organically

self-organized subsistence ways. Of course, as the earth's natural abundance is plundered for the market, indigenous traditionalists also have less chance of living according to the old embedded ways. Take note that it was military policy to deprive the resisters of their food sources so that they would lose their base of operations. Doesn't that indicate that in order for rebels to begin having some success in terms of the social war that they too need to secure bases as they regroup and strategize on how to win a few battles?

Unless humans begin to live in accordance with ecological principles, that is, in harmony with our biosphere and with each other, ecological and social collapses appear inevitable. The signs are everywhere: climate change on a global scale, empires aggressively pursuing imperial conquests, the populations of entire nations muted by fear of punishment and numbed by mood-altering drugs, planetary domestication and plunder of wild nature, overflowing prisons, astronomical suicide rates, cancer, extinction, hunger, and private atomized existences. Name a civilization that wasn't fundamentally characterized by centralization, coercive authority, ecological plunder, imperialism and a general arrogance toward others.

It's not just the state and capitalism that are to blame, because every civilization included classes and a state. We have to look at what it is about the cultural values and philosophical outlooks of the civilized (urban peoples) that lead them to disrespect life forms outside of their view and to tolerate oppressive, impersonal institutions as an inevitable part of everyday living.

But there are many examples of individuals, groups of friends and communities resisting the current and pursuing different paths. Those that inspire me the most are committed to firmly establishing themselves in a specific region. They want to (or continue to) hunt, fish, collect herbs and grow gardens together, share tools and child-minding responsibilities, and help clothe and shelter one another using everything from permaculture techniques to re-appropriation.

The focus must be on access to land that can potentially support these clans and groups which are based on voluntary association and mutual aid and self-sustenance. And as these these subsistence zones are nurtured, a general and natural willingness to defend them naturally emerge. From South America to South Africa, from Chiapas to India, we read and hear about communities that are not only trying to survive, but to create new societies based on anarchic insights. Using diverse tactics, these communities are determined to secede from the nation states that confine and dispossess them. This is where herring season comes back into our focus.

## **Empty Handed**

All along the west coast, indigenous peoples TRAditionally collected herring roe as a food source. Today, many different people come annually to the Gulf Islands of what is called British Columbia, in the Coast Salish and Kwakiutl territories, to participate in the herring run. Incidentally, while the group of islands are collectively known as the "Gulf Islands", they are located in a strait not a gulf. This is because a European explorer named them without traveling the full length of the waters in which they are located.

In any case, some who attend the annual herring run are newcomers while others have been doing so for generations. They harvest the roe and net the fish along the shoreline or from boats. Traditionally, the roe, or eggs from the females, is collected on hemlock or other evergreen boughs or kelp that is floated in the water until they are saturated. On many islands, families and



friends also collect the roe, which washes onto the shore mixed in with the seaweed, for their families, and for their gardens, providing a rich source of minerals for their compost.

All this is collected on a small scale, harvested without machines or wage slaves. Oftentimes, the fish itself is harvested, not just the roe. Using different preservation techniques, like pickling, this bounty is stored for future use. Some use the herring as bait for other fish. All of this activity is and has been pursued on a scale commensurate with sustainability for generations.

But, according to Dave Wiwchar in a report published in the *Nuu-chah-nulth Southern Region Reporter*, "...over the last few years, First Nations (indigenous) fishers who drop hemlock trees or kelp bundles in order to harvest the traditional dietary staple of siihmuu (herring roe) have come up empty handed. Boughs that would normally be laden with numerous layers of roe, two inches thick, are being hauled up with barely a single egg. Traditionally, herring spawning areas were heavily protected by Chiefs, and Nu- chah-nulth spawn-on-kelp/bough fishers used special "silent paddles" whenever they ventured into herring spawning areas. The report continues:

"Siihmuu/Kwaqmis is traditionally very important to us as it is the first resource to return to our territories after the winter," said elder Nelson Keitlah. "In the days of my grandpa, no one was allowed to go into the spawning areas where the herring were looking for a place to spawn. Not even a noise from a canoe was allowed. People had a very high respect for the herring as they are a very important part of the food chain, and our diet," he said. Keitlah fears the noise from the vessels, machinery and sonar are driving the herring down to depths where their eggs will not survive. "We've been saying for years that the sonar and machines are a total disrespect to the herring, and as a result the herring are now spawning in deep water, and not coming near shore where we can feed on them," he said. "We haven't had siihmuu/kwaqmis in recent years as it has been very scarce. We need to be able to harvest them in a natural, normal way, which is a much better way to do it than to harvest the roe by seiners."

And in an article in the *Globe and Mail*, Reg Moody of the Heltsiuk people in Bella Bella said in a statement:

"Who knows, maybe this province and country will soon see scenes on national TV of what took place with our brothers from Burnt Church on the east Coast. These stocks mean that much to us. Our way of life is at stake here . . . To protect the future of the central coast region, the Heltsiuk and Kitsoo Xaixas have been instructed by their people not to allow a sein or gillnet sac-roe fishery in their traditional territories for the next season ..."

The traditional method of stringing fronds of seaweed in spawning areas allowed the herring to lay their sticky eggs on the seaweed and then swim away. But the commercial method is harmful and unsustainable. The seiners are noisy, scaring the spawning herring away into deep waters, and the fish are killed to extract the egg sacs rather than allowing them to swim away. Combine this with industrial activity on or near their spawning grounds and the herring are increasingly threatened.

## The fishery

This year a group of us living on Sla Dai Ich, an island in the strait that separates Vancouver Island from the mainland, decided that we should learn more about the natural cycle of the herring. The island that we live on is a regular stop for the annual pacific herring run. At roughly 250,000 tons, the herring that pass through our waters is one of the largest biomasses that moves on our planet, comparable say to the bison herds of two hundred years ago.

Because the fishery is essentially based strictly on the collection of roe, what actually occurs in the water is this: a convoy of fishing boats gather in the strait as the herring arrive in our waters to spawn. The schools of fish are surrounded by the boats and the smaller punts. Once the fishery is opened by government officials, the herring are brought onto the boats by nets, which are then slapped by large rotating paddles beating the herring out of the nets. From the shoreline one sees fish seemingly flying through the air onto boats. The females are gutted and the roe extracted to feed the hungry sushi and delicacy markets, while the males and the female carcasses are collected for animal food and fertilizer. About thirty to fifty boats gather on the waters off our shores. And, while in reality they are a veritable platoon of parasites eagerly plundering this incredible abundance of life, the boats appear rather innocuous, even picturesque, especially at night when they are lit up and together resemble a small floating village.

There exists no local cottage food industry that harvests the fish for human consumption. Pickled herring and roll mops (delicious *tasting* strips of herring rolled around capers, pickles or olives and bathed in vinegar and spices) are sold locally but are imported from Europe.

There are 252 seine and 1,254 gillnet licenses in the roe herring fishery alone. Fisheries and Oceans Canada set the quota and catch limit based on an “exploitation rate of 20% or less.” This means they ostensibly leave 80% of the stock in the ecosystem. But this is misleading, because the Canadian commercial fishery takes only 20% of what moves through our waters. What about the American fishery, the sea lions, the salmon and cod, etc., who are also all feeding on this run?

This year, 2005, the coast wide commercial roe herring allowable catch is 25,574 tons! The spawn on kelp fronds fishery is 3,000 tons for 37 non-Heltsiuk licenses and 525 tons for the nine Heltsiuk licenses. It’s worth noting that the once abundant Haida Gwai herring run is at a record low. In terms of statist laws and regulations, there is a whole herring daily limit of 20 kilograms and a possession limit of 40 kilograms for the so-called recreational fisher.

If the stocks continue to be affected by the contamination of spawning grounds and attacks on other aspects of the intertwined marine ecosystem, then it doesn’t matter what percent is taken. The herring will eventually disappear unless the commercial fishery is terminated and the spawning grounds are protected from industrial activity.

## Camps

A FEW FRIENDS AND COMRADES WENT DOWN TO THE shoreline and set up a small camp. A fire pit was set up, some fresh water brought down, a few posts and beams erected to define the area and as something for us to secure windbreaks to. Meanwhile, several of us gathered rock salt, pickling vinegar, capers, pickles, and food grade buckets. I phoned my mother on the East Coast of Canada to ask for a recipe and any tips she might have.

Believe it or not, even though I'm only 46 years old, my mom grew up making her own soap from animal fat, churning her own butter, collecting nuts, weaving wool, harvesting firewood with horses and sleighs, etc. Her family lived with hardly any money. They did just enough from selling hazelnuts along the highway, firewood from their land, and other small initiatives to pay their property taxes, buy oil and flour and a few other basics. In one generation all these skills have been lost in our family. While my mother mourns her childhood, she does so with much reservation. It was all too much work, she complains. I think this is because the effort was done in the context of her family, without the deep roots of true village ways. Pioneer ways are different than a context of communal activity among others with whom we have strong kinship ties.

It so happened that a comrade from Mauvaise Herbe, a green anarchist group in Montreal, was visiting. He came to the little camp and we had a talk about their activity and ours, shared some perspectives and gathered some fresh oysters to roast and eat. One of the things we talked about was the "individual self" and its development. He related how some tribes people from the Vietnam area traditionally didn't use the word I, but rather usually spoke about themselves from the perspective of the relationship that they were engaged in at the moment of talking. For instance a person speaking to an uncle would say: "niece wants to walk with uncle." An individual without a community to rely on, to share the demands and desires for shelter and food and intimacy, for example, becomes groundless and atomized. Clearly, we need to be embedded within a group of people. And a group of people has the best chance of enduring and thriving if embedded in a place.

A couple of friends got hold of a zodiac and ventured into the water armed with a video camera to document the commercial fishery. It was risky. Bobbing around in extremely choppy waters in a rubber dinghy trying to videotape a bunch of fishers who likely weren't too sure whether or not they wanted to allow it. After all, if anyone gets a lot of finger pointing from self-righteous urban environmentalists and activists, it's the rural wage slaves who do all the primary extraction and plundering of resources for urban civilization: loggers, fishers, miners, etc. Thanks to our three brave friends, we have a few hours of documentation to use in our arsenal for future use. But at that point we still hadn't gathered any herring.

Each day for about a week, a dedicated bunch of us went down to the camp and waited to determine whether the herring had begun to fill the waters enough so that we could stand along the shoreline and net them, which is how it normally happens. The fish become so plentiful, that simply by dipping a net into the water, one can gather as many as a half dozen herring at a time! While they waited, they collected oysters and roasted them over the fire, and explained to others from our island community what they were up to. During that time many local friends, neighbors and comrades from urban centers came and went. Some were just curious, but most were hoping to learn something and to participate in this subsistence approach to living.

One reason why this attempt to learn and feed ourselves and understand one of the natural cycles of our region that was so appealing to our neighbors was that it wasn't about politics. Some called it our protest camp, others the herring camp, just the . . . camp or even Vali's camp, after one of the core people who initiated the energy around it. But the days weren't intended on being spent arguing with politicians, trying to recruit members or handing our petitions. Here was a chance to feed ourselves, to build a culture not based on wage work, to learn new skills, and sadly, to witness and document another plunder. The small camp also reminded me of how little autonomous space we actually have. Apart from our local pirate radio station ( yeah, we're

on air!), situated in a small trailer, and a small autonomous zone on a separate beach created by other locals, all we have are each other's homes to visit or commercial ventures to hang out in. But this was/is different. I think some of us would like to see a campsite or two permanently on our shoreline, regardless of the outcome of the herring fishery.

Eventually some fish were gathered and brought back to one of our homes. They were killed, their heads removed, then gutted and scales shed. Then after splitting them in two, the fillets were spread with mustard, wrapped around capers and pickles and placed in a bucket of pickling vinegar and onions, to be eaten at a later time. We didn't succeed in filling our hampers for the next several months, in fact we barely harvested any, but we took a first step. That's how all great dreams are realized. Hopefully next year we'll be a little luckier and a little more experienced. Maybe eventually local kids will stay out of school, comrades will come visit from urban centers and we'll all spend a few weeks just gutting and pickling herring as an extended group of friends, neighbors and rebels. Over time we will feel compelled to defend the ecological integrity of these waters and to protect the herring that dwell in them and which help sustain us.

## Webs

The pacific herring play a huge role in the marine ecosystem of our territory. Herring are an important part of the northern pacific marine food web. They are a food source for gulls, ducks, pilchards and jelly fish. Pacific cod, halibut, Chinook salmon and harbor seals all have diets largely comprised of herring. Three quarters of the lingcod's diet consists of herring. The near shore and intertidal environment is critical to the continued abundance of the herring. This is where they deposit their eggs, and only at very specific locations. It is important for us to protect the spawning grounds closest to us. In some areas, for instance Cherry Point in Puget Sound, herring stocks have declined rapidly over the past decades. The decline is attributed to a high level of commercial fishing and to contamination of the spawning grounds by industrial activity.

Commercialized, market driven, mass levels of fishing are not sustainable. We need to re-learn how to integrate our lives into this fishery as we do with all of the natural cycles in each of our regions. We need to take care of the places where we live. It isn't hysteria to suggest that the herring might eventually disappear from over-fishing and bureaucratic mismanagement. The herring should be here for our great-great-great grandchildren. As the herring dwindle, so too will the other fish that feed on them, while the life forms that the herring feed on will become overpopulated. All this will create imbalance and ill health and contribute to the eventual collapse of the complex marine ecosystem of our potential territories.

Our struggle for ungoverned lives can sometimes appear as an exclusively destructive project. Clearly we need to be on the offensive against the forces and institutions that uphold the social order, but we can also take time to sketch out potential territories and habitats that might sustain us both here and now and in the future. Identifying such environments and exploring possible ways of adapting to them is a unique offensive tactic in that it naturally encourages a wider demographic in our resistance. Fighting for a place or defending a habitat help counter the oftentimes pointlessness of urban activism, are inherently meaningful and help foster notions of entire communities in opposition.

## Postscript

In response to this piece, Wolfi Landstreicher raised some important questions about this stance. Wolfi states that while he “thinks that it is a wonderful thing for a small group of people to get to know an area and learn to live on and with it,” he “thinks it is a mistake to conceive of this in terms of any sort of bounded region. Rather it is important to understand that relationships within the natural world perpetually flow and intertwine into each other making any real placement of boundaries impossible, except through the use of institutional force.”

Wolfi also offered an articulate criticism of bio-regionalism. He wrote:

. . . bioregionalism takes a conception, a human mental construction, developed to try to understand certain types of environmental relationships, and treats it as a thing—an actual bounded area of land. This is an unfortunate tendency that human beings seem to have with all the conceptions we have developed for understanding complex relationships (society, culture, gender, race, ethnicity, nation, etc.). When this tendency toward reification institutionalizes, the boundaries we imagined are made real by force and agreement—cops, armies, walls, treaties, pacts, etc. If I understand bio-regionalism, it is a name given to the reality that the relationship between all living and natural factors in a given area tend to create a specific environment amenable to specific living beings. Thus far there is no problem. But there are no real boundaries between these areas, but rather, gradations from one into the other. This is true even of rivers, mountains and oceans.

Thus in healthy natural environments there are constant interchanges between these areas which keeps them in a state of constant, but usually gradual, change. Therefore, bio-regions as such, do not actually exist, they are simply constructs we use for developing certain understandings. Talking of basing how one lives on assuming that a specific mental construct is a concrete reality is dangerous. Particularly when it assumes that the earth is something that is naturally divided into clearly definable sections, it can be the source of a great deal of ugliness including territorialism, quasi-patriotism and property (even if it is conceived as property of the “community”).

In response, I would argue that a home is a bounded area, be it a physical shelter or a valley. Furthermore, a group of people can claim a natural area as their home without it implying political boundaries or property. Just as you wouldn’t walk into someone’s pantry and help yourself without asking, the same would apply to an occupied habitat. To remain free and autonomous, people must defend and protect their home, not let themselves be bullied into leaving it (or giving up their food storehouse).

The boundaries of any habitat are partially determined by the life forms that create it, including human ones. Habitats are the result of activity on the part of their inhabitants, not ready-made areas that a group of people simply move onto and occupy. People become attached to their territories and want to protect them because they help create them; they are the result of their collective imaginations, desires and labor, of spending generations in one place and becoming embedded there. Sure the boundaries in some places might be ambiguous, but traditions like having first access to the salmon or berries can solve these questions and strains between close neighbors in a shared region.

Wolfi's assessment of bio-regionalism is essentially correct, I believe. For the reasons he shared, bio-regionalism does not reflect my destination, rather the expressions "habitat" is closer to what i am proposing. These are places created by us and which create us, not specific boundaries one would recognize on an environmental map.

# On Parks

Anyone who enjoys mountaineering, hiking, camping or exploring valleys, caves and canyons, is grateful that parks exist. They are a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of urban living, an opportunity to delight in the slower rhythms, fresher air and greater diversity of plant and animal life. Parks are refuges, oases of green in the otherwise dreary grey of concrete and pavement. The local and federal land areas put aside to a large degree for conservation and public enjoyment exist not only to provide a cherished escape from civilization, but a sanctuary for wildlife, whose habitats are fast disappearing under the guns of housing developments and industrialism. Parks, it would seem, leave little to complain about.

Recently, however, it came to my attention that some folk, particularly indigenous peoples, did have some complaints. And, as I did a little research, it didn't take long for me to discover that these complaints weren't frivolous. In fact, there are many real concerns around these seemingly benign oases. There is even a largely unknown history behind them, one whose basis continues to this day.

## Indigenous peoples and parks

Most federal parks, not only in the US, but in Canada and indeed throughout the world, were once part of traditional indigenous territory. Following their introduction, millions of indigenous peoples around the world were forced out of their habitats.

Why has the public accepted this? First and foremost because parks have been viewed as necessary, benevolent tools for the conservation of nature. Secondly, many people have a personal stake in their existence, providing their only possible escape from urban living. And finally, most people simply aren't aware of the displacement of those millions that was necessary for their establishment. And so activists, radicals, reformers, and green minded people have accepted them without much critical thought.

Parks seem to be bulwarks against continuing encroachment into wilderness, and thus storehouses of flora and fauna for a future regenerating nature. However, perhaps its time to reconsider whether parks and conservation areas, as we know them, are a significant, long-term solution to the destructive madness of industrialism and to look more closely at what wilderness is and the impact parks have had and continue to have, on indigenous peoples everywhere.

## America's, and the world's, First Park

In 1864 Abraham Lincoln signed a Land Grant bill giving nearly 40,000 acres of federal land "encompassing Yosemite Valley to the state of California for public enjoyment and preservation." The grant deeded both Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. This was the

basis for the creation of state parks as we know them today: setting aside “scenic” lands simply to protect them and to allow for their enjoyment by the public.

On October 1, 1890, the U.S. Congress set aside more than 1,500 square miles of ‘reserved forest lands’ soon to be known as Yosemite National Park. But where did this land come from? Twelve years earlier, it was taken from a people known as the Miwok. The Mariposa Indian War, a territorial grab and an effort to subdue Indian autonomy, was the necessary precedent that led to the possibility of that first park being created.

Indigenous people have lived in the Yosemite region for about 8,000 years. By the mid-nineteenth century they were primarily of Southern Miwok ancestry. However, trade with the Mono Paiutes from the East side of the Sierra for pinyon pine nuts, obsidian, and other materials resulted in many alliances between the two tribes. There were plenty of acorns there and deer were abundant, making this a desirable place to settle. In fact, it had one of the highest densities of aboriginal peoples on the West Coast.

After the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills in 1848, thousands of miners came to the Yosemite area to seek their fortune. Naturally, the local First Nations fought to protect their homelands. In December 1850, a trading post was destroyed at Fresno Crossing, and three settler men were killed. Later, a force under Sheriff Burney clashed with the Indians on January 11, 1851. As a result of this opposition to the invaders, the Mariposa Battalion was organized as a punitive expedition under the authority of the state to bring an end to the resistance.

The Battalion entered Yosemite Valley on March 27, 1851. Dr. Lafayette Bunnell, the company physician, who later wrote about his awestruck impressions of the valley in *The Discovery of the Yosemite*, wanted to “sweep the territory of any scattered bands that might infest it.” He is also known to have had a take-no-prisoners approach to the conflict.

Three companies were formed and launched several campaigns. Indian food stores and even some villages were destroyed and tribal peoples pursued into the mountains through snow and slush. “Expulsion from the Park deprived the Miwok of their traditional hunting grounds, grazing areas, fish runs and nut collecting groves. When they tried to take anything back from the whites, they were resisted with guns and then hounded out of the area again by the Mariposa Battalion.

Ironically the very word ‘Yosemite’ is, according to Simon Schama, a term of abuse used by the Miwok to describe the Americans who were assaulting them and actually means “some among them are killers<sup>1</sup>.” Eventually all of the associated tribes were defeated and were forced to accept reservation life. Military units administered the park while the state continued to govern the area covered by the original 1864 grant. Civilian park rangers didn’t take over from the military until 1914.

The extraordinary landscapes that made Yosemite desirable from a scenic point of view were actually the result of the Miwok’s land use practices, primarily a direct outcome of the intentional burning of underbrush. After their expulsion, the activities of early entrepreneurs, tourists and settlers, (the construction of hotels and residences, livestock grazed in meadows, orchards were planted, etc.) wreaked great damage on the eco-systems, painstakingly and properly tended for so long by the Miwok and their ancestors.

We find this pattern of outlook and events recurring over and over again in the creation of parks in many places: a) the notion of wilderness as a place that doesn’t include people living there b) the recognition that an area has exceptional scenic, wilderness or industrial resource

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<sup>1</sup> *World Rainforest Movement Bulletin* No. 73 August 200



value c) the area is protected by being turned into a park d) the expulsion and dispossession of its inhabitants who were often largely responsible for creating and/or protecting its beauty/resources in the first place.

The Miwok petitioned the U.S. government in 1890. They called for compensation for their losses and denounced the managers of the park. “The valley is cut up completely with dusty, sandy roads leading from the hotels of the white in every direction... All seem to come only to hunt money... The valley has been taken away from us ...or ... a pleasure ground...” Their pleas were ignored and further evictions of remnant Miwok settlements were made in 1906, 1929 and as late as 1969.<sup>2</sup>

## Canada’s first national park

In 1871, AS A CONDITION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA JOINING Canada, the Canadian Government had to agree to build a transcontinental railroad linking BC to the rest of the country. Of course, the construction of a transcontinental railroad also established a claim to the remaining parts of British North America not yet integrated into either the Canadian or America nation-states. It comes as no surprise that Banff National Park was created in 1885, the year of the defeat of the Metis Rebellion, which cleared and opened the west for settlement, tourists and capital investment.

The official story goes that in 1882, Tom Wilson, a surveyor for the Canadian Pacific Railway, “discovered” Lake Louise, the most accessible centerpiece of the park, on the way through the Rockies. A year later the Cave and Basin Hot springs were discovered by three railway construction workers. People began to flock to the site, hotels went up and the town of Banff was born.

The truth, however, is that it was people from the Nakodah First Nation that guided Wilson to the Lake. In fact, they already had a name for it, they called it “The Lake of the Little Fish.” The Nakodah (also known as Stoney) are descendants of the Dakota and Lakota nations of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, part of the large Sioux Nation.

The name “Stoney” was given them by white explorers because of their technique of using fire-heated rocks to boil broth in rawhide bowls. The Nakodah were familiar with the area, having lived throughout it for at least several hundred years. They knew the trails and passes as part of their hunting grounds. There is archaeological evidence pointing to human occupation going back at least ten thousand years, but apparently the Nakodah came from somewhere around the Mississippi after an outbreak of smallpox in the 1600’s.

In any case, by the time the Railroad was being built, the mountains were part of their home. I’m not aware of any uprisings to protect their homelands, however the “Stoney” were signatories to Treaty 7. (In order for the transcontinental railroad to make its way across Canada, it had to go through what were recognized as the traditional lands of different aboriginal peoples. So it was important for the Canadian State to negotiate Treaties with the distinct tribes living along the route to allow the railroad to be built.) Regardless, the whole territory was evidence of long term harmonious human occupation, much like Yellowstone.

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<sup>2</sup> “This Park is No Longer Your Land: National Parks on Former Native Lands” *UNESCO Courier*, July, 2001, by Marcus Colchester. Special acknowledgment to Marcus Colchester this exceptional essay. It formed the basis for mine.

Sadly, during the first decades, park managers would do regular predator hunts, believing that mountain lions, coyotes and wolves, for instance, should be killed to save deer and elk. And now, only a hundred and thirty years later, many of the Park's eco-systems are threatened, as are several of the animals who live within it, and the Nakodah live on a reservation.

In its 2007 annual report the Parks Canada web site states: "Parks Canada continued to work with the Siksika Nation and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to resolve the outstanding specific claim in the park." The claim is by the Siksika First Nation. Furthermore, in May 2000 the Siksika threatened "to occupy Castle Mountain in Banff National Park to pressure the federal government into handing it over. The Siksika, who live east of Calgary near Gleichen, say they've been trying since 1960 to gain control of a 68-square-kilometre parcel that was used by their ancestors for rituals."<sup>3</sup>

The Siksika are part of the Blackfoot Confederacy, which consists of four different tribes, the Pikuni/Peigan, North Peigan Pikuni, Blood/Kainai, and Blackfoot/Siksika. Banff is the most heavily developed national park in North America, entertaining more than five million visitors a year and has been the site of fights between environmentalists and developers. Environmentalists claim that added development "will put added stress on a fragile lake region where grizzly bears, lynx and wolverines are already threatened by the presence of as many as 20,000 tourists a day."<sup>4</sup>

## Closer to home

In 1989, I WENT TO THE SAVE THE STEIN VALLEY GATHERING. I joined with many others and climbed to alpine elevations in the Valley, near Lytton in southwestern British Columbia. I spent a couple of days listening to First Nations elders and activists and scientists from near and far. The non-native activists spoke primarily of helping to preserve an intact and unlogged watershed, a "pristine wilderness." The First Nation elders spoke of protecting their traditional territory and of a hope of regenerating traditional ways.

The U.S. Wilderness Act states that parks are places "where man himself is a visitor who doesn't remain." But isn't it industrial modes of living that threaten the organic world? Isn't it how we live, and not simply our presence, which really makes the difference? From an essay by Marcus Colchester:

Many indigenous peoples remain perplexed by western views of what conservation means. "My Dad used to say: 'that's our pantry.' We knew about all the plants and animals, when to pick, when to hunt," remarked Ruby Dunstan of the Ni'aka' -pamux people, who have been trying to prevent the logging of their ancestral lands around Stein Valley in Western Canada. "But some of the white environmentalists seemed to think if something was declared a wilderness, no-one was allowed inside because it was so fragile. So they have put a fence around it, or maybe around themselves."<sup>5</sup>

The fact is that humans, like every living species, need a habitat. Call it a territory if you will, but we need a place that we know intimately, that creates us as we create it. And because indigenous peoples in North America had this intimacy, it was incumbent on them to protect their land bases from incursion and invasions, especially destructive ones. After all, as Ruby

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<sup>3</sup> *Calgary Herald*, August 20, 2000

<sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, August 14 200

<sup>5</sup> Colchester, 2001

Dunstan pointed out, these were their “pantry”, land bases that were part of their sustenance and their lives in myriad ways.

The lands weren’t untouched by humans. In fact, humans lived within most of the “wilderness areas” that became parks. To an outsider they appeared “pristine”, “untouched”, “wild”, but, in fact, they were closer to a type of permaculture on a grand scale. Humans had inhabited many of these “wilderness areas” for literally thousands of years. That they were so rich in their abundance as well as appealing in their natural beauty is really a testimony to the organic ways of their human inhabitants who were determined not to spoil their pantries but to respect and understand them.

The Stein Valley, like Yosemite and Banff, was a living example of harmonious human occupation. The valley had been significant to the Nlaka’pamux people for thousands of years. It provided for them. There are a large number of pictographs still visible today throughout the valley, from small single symbols to one of the largest pictograph sites in Canada. At Asking Rock near Stryen Creek, the Nlaka’pamux can stop to pray and ask permission to travel the valley safely.

According to the organization BC Spaces for Nature

Evidence of the Nlaka’pamux’s inhabitancy is found throughout the valley. Where the Indians once wintered in gigantic pithouses at the confluence of the Fraser shallow depressions of their winter storehouses can still be found. Numerous culturally modified trees, cedar trees with large, rectangular strips of bark missing, can be found near Teaspoon Creek. This small grove of cedars provided an important source of fibre for cord, clothing, roofing, basketry, and insulating materials.<sup>6</sup>

In 1993-1994, protests in Clayoquot Sound, also in British Columbia, reached a climax with nearly 800 environmental protestors arrested. This was the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history. Needing to heal the fracture between itself and many environmentalists, the government at the time doubled the provincial park land-base in BC. As a result the Stein Valley Provincial Park was created as an area to be co-managed by the Lytton First Nation and BC government. There is allowance for the Stein Valley Nlaka’pamux Heritage Park to be used for “spiritual” activities, but I don’t know at this time whether the Stein is also being used for subsistence activities or not.

## **Asia, Africa, India and Latin America**

While we have been focusing on North America, the park model was actually exported throughout the world, forcing millions of tribal peoples out of their habitats/territories. The practice continues to this day in Asia, Africa and India, for example, where non-profit foundations and United Nations sponsored organizations are eagerly trying to protect what little land is left that hasn’t been destroyed by industrial modes of living.

Unfortunately, be it the Twa peoples expulsion from Congo’s Kahuzi-Biega National Park, the Maasai from the Amboseli National Park in Kenya or tribal people in southern India forced out

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<sup>6</sup> Great Wild Spaces: Stein Valley Nlaka’pamux Provincial Park, <http://www.spacesfornature.org/greatspaces/stein.html>

of the Indira Gandhi National Park as part of an “eco-development” scheme funded by the Global Environment Facility, parks and conservation lands remain one more force which dispossesses tribal peoples. In Africa alone, one million square kilometers of land has been expropriated for conservation over the past one hundred years. Estimates in India range around three-quarters of a million people pushed off their traditional lands for conservation, in Africa the number is likely in the millions. Unfortunately, and ironically, land that has long been occupied and protected by indigenous peoples continues to be deemed “wild” and therefore suitable for “conservation” primarily by having them declared parks, thus making them out of bounds for the indigenous peoples who maintained them in the first place.

What happens to the people who once lived rich, meaningful lives within these habitats? They become like you and I. Dispossession leads to rootlessness, discouragement, depression, inability to be self-reliant, bad nutrition, broken communities, severed kinship ties, and anger, too often turned inward or directed to the nearest person.

I think we need to realize that dedication to creating parkland and conservation areas does not necessarily coincide with helping regenerate ways of living harmoniously with a habitat. More often than not it promotes a misanthropic outlook that posits intact, healthy land areas being by definition “human-free”, rather than capitalism-free. We tend to ignore the fact that indigenous peoples seeking to maintain or renew their traditional life ways need to have access to these areas, especially if the parkland in question was actually part of their traditional territory.

Even liberal organizations like UNESCO have begun to realize that there has been a negative social impact associated with many protected areas. In some places in Asia, Africa and Latin America, provisions have been made for local control so that traditional lifestyles might continue. But these tend to be limited “buffer zones”, where the original inhabitants can control “development projects”. These attempts have not succeeded.

Apparently coalitions of indigenous peoples have had some success in forcing international bodies to recognize their inherent right to manage their traditional territories. “In the 1990s, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), the World Conservation Congress and the World Commission on Protected Areas all adopted new policies and resolutions which strongly endorse indigenous peoples’ rights and promote the co-management of protected areas, based on negotiated agreements.”<sup>7</sup> However, these organizations aren’t arguing for free access to one’s habitat, but to “negotiated agreements” with outsiders and centralized authority, and land bases integrated into the scheme of state regulations and subject to the pressures of politics and the market.

Regardless of some recognition, many parks and conservation areas, especially in impoverished countries, remain part of the greater theft of traditional homelands by arrogant, powerful outsiders who impose their views of what constitutes healthy habitats. It isn’t parks and conservation areas that will help stem the tide of destruction and plunder, but recognition that new ways of living are required. And these new ways can be informed by the old ways of land based people.

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<sup>7</sup> Colchester, 2001

## **Traditional Habitats and territories**

In several parts of the world and in some parts of Canada many of the old ways have been lost, or nearly so. In the Pacific Northwest, however, this isn't the case. It seems sensible to promote a return to the traditional ways of the people of the land, because, as we have seen, the empirical proof is there for long-term harmonious occupation. Naturally, in some countries, there could be real challenges for some peoples regaining control of these parks in order to live according to ecologically harmonious principles because it would mean reawakening and re-learning buried systems of subsistence and self-organization. There are also new environmental limits that might conflict with traditional life ways. But the simple fact remains; if it is their land, it must be returned.

Backhome, in Canada, in the Pacific Northwest, radicals can focus on protecting areas from industrialism and capitalism, while also arguing for the free access to those lands by the people whose territories they have always been, rather than for the creation of parks. And, if the lands aren't under claim by an indigenous nation, why not consider making them your own home, regardless of what the authorities and misanthropes have to say?

# Land and Freedom

A HABITAT IS A TERRITORY THAT PROVIDES SOURCES OF water and food, as well as reliable sources of materials for shelter and heat. Typically, it is where you first made love, learned to swim, caught your first fish, and perhaps even fought a battle against a belligerent neighboring group.

Practically everybody in your community knows the names of the flora and fauna of your habitat, where the berries are, when the birds leave and return. Most inhabitants feel a kinship with the totality of your habitat, not only its flora and fauna, but its weather patterns, rocks, streams and mountains, its unique smells and sounds and the various combinations of them that make the singular music of your home.

Urban civilization won't fail because of the actions of a minority of eco-activists and indigenous traditionalists. However, it is possible that a majority of those repulsed by the destructive basis of civilization will become anti-authoritarian fighters dedicated to creating a world of ecological communities, each success along the way a revitalising inspiration. If enough of the population participates, a critical point will be reached where the drive of our collective push toward kinship with our surroundings will become unstoppable.

Revolution is not everywhere or nowhere. Any region can be liberated through a succession of actions, events and strategies based on the conditions unique to it, as the grip of civilization in that area weakens through its own volition or through the efforts of its inhabitants. It would benefit these liberated regions to form alliances or meld in some way, or they might choose not to.

It is up to each of us to look for the weak points and the vital points of our opponent's armor within our geographical area and to strike them. It is not true that until all humans are free, none are free. But it is true that none are free until all are free within the same place. And it is enraging and sad that some might enjoy freedom and authentic community while others don't. It is this sense of solidarity with others, our refusal to be atomized, that compels us to spread our freedom.

Civilization didn't succeed everywhere at once, so its undoing might only occur to varying degrees in different places at different times. In any case, the process of domestication is an ongoing one. Just because it succeeds in colonizing any given area, doesn't mean civilization is inherently permanent. Its continuance relies on our belief in its superiority, our submission to its authority, and our failure to have successful insurgencies.

Civilization is a march toward death. Just to ensure that some diversity of life will endure, the brakes must soon be put on the mega machines: seemingly unstoppable, out-of-control locomotives of catastrophes.

The captivity of the civilized must be maintained on a daily basis, otherwise there would be constant organizing and revolting. Coercive authority relies on entertainment (tourism, drugs, television, etc.), ideologies (Marxism, religion, science, etc.), propaganda (schools, mass media, etc.) and repression to keep us dumb and scared. Many of us who recognize that something is

deeply wrong don't fight back primarily, I believe, because of feelings of isolation and poverty, as well as fear of retribution from the repressive apparatus of political power (police, military, courts, jails, etc.).

While the rule of capital and centralized power might seem omniscient, they actually are not. There is a totality of domination, but the totality is not yet dominated. There are many psychic and geographical blind spots, openings, frontiers, where the sentinels and soldiers are few or at least fewer. We can take advantage of these. Our struggle for individual and collective freedom isn't pointless or hopeless or so overwhelming as to make total surrender appear reasonable and inevitable.

For instance, because so much of our captivity relies on internalized cops, on the daily reproduction of social misery by our own compliance with the various roles expected of us (worker, soldier, consumer, man, woman, etc.), the weakest point in our opponents armor is probably our own ability to refuse these expectations of predictable behavior. It is through withdrawal from scripted roles and cultural constructs that we will get to know our neighbors and comrades, indeed ourselves, in a more honest light, revealing our true complexity as individuals, and thereby be better able to create the communities of resistance that could form the bases of our offensives. It also means attempting to collectively withdraw from our participation in the institutions and behaviours of capitalist civilization: entertainment, schooling, dependence on welfare states, wage work rather than subsistence skills and self-reliance, electoralism and other forms of representation, etc.

## **CITIES ARE NOT HABITATS, INDUSTRIALISM IS NOT WEALTH**

In order to become free individuals embedded in genuine communities, we need habitats. Cities are not habitats; they are concentrations of labor and commodities and an opportunity for power to synchronize the activities of masses of workers and consumers, of large populations. They are also one form of the many sacrifice zones that civilizations rely on. Their original wild state has been erased. Nearly every original expression of life and diversity and the organic has been paved over, or re-formed from above by officialdom and its planners.

An ecologically healthy, self-reliant culture would find such zones incapable of providing adequate food for a fraction of their existing populations. Free individuals would likely recognize them as hopeless wastelands of environmental desolation, rather than potential playgrounds to be newly explored and filled with expressions of the marvelous. Urban ways are inherently unsustainable, they are destructive to the environment and to the human spirit. Their territories are organized entirely to accommodate political power and the market.

Sustainable, self-reliant, autonomous groups of people need a land base, a territory. This means that we need to make the acquisition of such bases a focus of libertarian struggle. This doesn't mean a simple return to a movement of rural communes, although these could be an important part of a diverse movement toward achieving this objective. Rather having land, or at least access to land, must be acknowledged as the necessary condition it is for any group of people to live freely, to support themselves within.

For some radicals the focus might then drift away from activities aimed at reforming urban living with co-ops and community gardens and free schools, for instance, and toward the re-appropriation of their lives through the re-appropriation of sustainable land. For others, it could

mean a shift from urban activism, no matter how militant, to identifying a potential habitat and making efforts to occupy it. Both of these approaches entail abandoning cities, either literally as the places where they currently live, or as the central stage where they assume that the revolutionary struggle must occur.

Assuming that all important struggles must occur within urban settings only reinforces the belief that urban societies are here to stay. Struggles and resistance against capitalism and authority are valid everywhere. In fact, the more an anti-urban element exists within the struggle, the more threatening it is. Radicals should be able to focus energy on solutions wherever they live: small towns, villages, cities, ghettos, ethnic neighborhoods or islands.

In order to create self-directed groups based on ecological principles, we need a habitat to experiment within and with, to learn from, to grow and gather food on, and to help provide us with shelter.

If we can push the project for social freedom and harmony with the biosphere toward one dedicated to the liberation of geographical areas within which we live, we can re-create/re-discover viable habitats. Then several things become possible. For one, a movement of genuine and stable communities might begin to establish itself. Should this arise, with its tastes of deep bonds, personal freedom, collective self-reliance (not on a state), organic self-direction, etc., our ability and motivation to resist will be much stronger.

Most non-native radicals are admirably fighting against specific forms of oppression and injustice or even trying to find ways to oppose the totality of our domination, but few are fighting for a communal place and the territory it depends on. This is because so many non-indigenous people of North America are still visitors or settlers; they haven't made this place home yet. Few have either a deep connection with our surroundings or with those who live within them.

Our insurgencies could be focused on the liberation of territory as potential habitats. These emerging communities of withdrawal and resistance might then form roots and become communities implanted in specific places, thereby gaining some of the strength needed to be genuinely effective forces for authoritarians to reckon with. Non-native rebels should be aiming for a time when they too will be defending their kin and their habitats or territories.

I take great inspiration from our comrades in Chiapas, Mexico, who, in defense of their territories and relations, took the first shot and, to a large degree, have won. With the realization that we have nothing to lose but our false freedom, false wealth, and false community, we too could be preparing ourselves for secession from the nation-states and ideologies that hold us captive, wherever we live.

Large areas of North America are still claimed by the descendants of earlier peoples, and radicals need to acknowledge this when occupying land wherever we live. It's important for us to educate ourselves about the indigenous people who lived in our area before contact with empire and its civilized soldiers and citizens, and to reach out to the traditionalists, our natural allies, among them. Without a land base we can't be free, self-sustaining people. But in many places the land already belongs to an indigenous group, so our occupations must go hand in hand with relationships with them, or at least general knowledge of their history and territorial claims. Colonization and colonialism can take many forms, including revolutionary attempts at occupying land.

Some believe that an anarchist uprising always includes the liberation of geographical areas from the rule of the state and capital and therefore always include a renewed relationship with the natural world. But this isn't the case. Many radicals and rebels still seek anarchy through the



creation of large political organizations, by winning converts and taking over the levers of production and distribution. They want us to manage civilization for ourselves rather than abolishing it and creating a total transformation of our life- ways. Their vision still includes cities, factories, an ethic of production rather than a subsistence ethic, overarching infrastructures (transportation, industry, research, large political organizations) and large-scale agriculture.

That set of ideas has as a condition a situation in which the natural environment is subservient to humans rather than predicated on a more harmonious, reciprocal relationship. If the primary relationship we have with the natural world is based on its domination and colonization, then it would seem that everything built on that approach has a predictable outcome: the degradation and eventual depletion of the land that it relies on, just as under capitalist civilization.

Unfortunately we can't have our industrial cake and eat it too. Anarchist industrialism, like its sibling, capitalist industrialism, is untenable in the long term.

Anarchy implies not only voluntary association and organic self-organization, but self-reliance, which occurs most naturally and easily within groups embedded in a specific region. We aren't aliens. Our feelings of indifference to our habitats grows out of an imposed separation from them by institutions of political and economic power, which are threatened by land-based people.

The present authoritarian order seems to have originated around the end of the so-called Paleolithic era. This is where we find the beginning of our systematic self-enslavement and self-alienation. All of the developments usually associated with the Neolithic revolution (urban living, agriculture, etc.) seem to ultimately lead to today's mega technological civilization.

Over the centuries, myths have permeated civilized societies in order to make the ideologies that civilization is predicated on seem natural. These myths include the necessity of political hierarchy, a belief in progress, the notion of nature as hostile, and the belief that economics (exchange rather than gift-giving) are inherent in all human social arrangements.

Preceding urban civilization, many changes must have occurred within these cultures' collective psychological experience, for instance the emergence of symbolic mediation (language, art, time, etc.), that made domestication more likely to occur. These changes led to sedentary lives and the domestication of formerly wild plants and animals, breaking age-old, organic life-ways and creating a permanent cycle of increasing separation from our natural surroundings.

No matter the chronology, or whether there actually is an original source of domination, our contemporary predicament is most characterized by lack of access to land within which to freely live.

We've all become either prisoners, livestock, inmates, refugees, dependents, slaves, servants, settlers, or their various overseers and managers.

Restoring/reclaiming genuine habitats means the liberation of geographical areas from the rule of the state and capital, as well as renewing our kinship with nature. Free people living in free groups in harmony with the biosphere need to locate themselves within natural, not political, regions.

It isn't possible to lay out a universally-applicable practical strategy. Revolt takes myriad forms. Ultimately a combination/ confluence of defensive and offensive strategies seems obviously most promising. Occupy land and defend it, or at least look in that direction for ideas.

## **Toward a self-organized SUBSISTENCE MOVEMENT**

Creating anarchy, or the undoing of capitalism and the dismantling of authority, is primarily an unknown adventure, but living in anarchic villages is in our blood. Since the first dawn we have been free except for the long nightmare of this urban civilization. Rediscovering voluntary association, creating collectively a new era of social experimentation will involve many events and upheavals and in many cases bloodshed, not because rebels are fixated on violence, but because authority relies on it. All over the planet, political authority is making it safe for the market to devour the wild and punishing and imprisoning its opponents.

In many areas where civilization is most ingrained and the population most bribed by the 'goods' of capitalism, we will likely free ourselves in bits and pieces, slowly removing our armor, questioning authority, re-discovering self-reliant ways, learning new strategies and tactics with which to oppose capitalism, unlearning the internalized forms of our domination like homophobia and racism, isolating leftist vanguards and politicians, learning about the natural world, etc. Demanding/creating large commonly-held land bases fits very well within this overall strategy for self-emancipation. Cities need to be abandoned, but this might take a long time in some places. Succeeding in renewing and regenerating large urban or rural areas by freeing them from the market will at least give many of us a chance to get some breathing room.

This is about probing power for weaknesses while at the same time making attempts at self-emancipation. Expanding one's territory, while shrinking the enemy's, is the ideal move in a territorial contest between opponents.

As authority is repulsed and its institutions dismantled, new opportunities will open up. As it stands now, based on experiences around the Occupy movement and events in Montreal around the student protests (2012), indeed looking at many recent uprisings around the world, neighborhood councils and general assemblies, at least in cities, would likely become core institutions guiding radical aspirations. But rather than opening new doors, rather than making experiments in living possible, these assemblies risk becoming the new directors and representatives of revolt, reproducing large scale urban ways of organizing based on democratic values, rather than smaller scale, organic approaches.

As long as we are on a path, taking a specific direction, toward an end to all the prevailing truths, toward the creation of genuinely new relationships, then general assemblies can be a stepping stone, so to speak, on that trail. But if they are seen as ends in themselves, as the embodiment of what an anarchic society would look like, one where we are still entrenched in cities and politics, then they will become obstacles. The direction, after the carnival of expropriation, of the liberation of our yearnings, of the erasure of all rank and privilege, of feasts and dances and experimentation, must be toward building new relationships with, and re-situating ourselves within, the natural world.

## Postscript on Post-Script

Literacy, and its role in society, is a huge topic, one deserving of much debate and conversation. But it's important to me that the reader is aware of my discomfort with literate-centricity. It seems implied by the writing and publishing of my thinking that I view literacy as a neutral, if not important, tool in the spreading of ideas. But this isn't the case. Literacy has many aspects that make its neutrality questionable. In fact, I believe that a better world would have difficulty making a place for it.

Literacy presupposes many relationships between humans and between humans and their environment. Are we going to be sitting in schools learning how to write and spell and read or will we be at the river learning how to fish, or in the field learning medicinal herbs and edible plants? Will we be laboring at a printing press, with its machinery and ink, or honing our oratorical skills at gatherings? Will we be in a machine shop making parts for the press or reciting poetry from memory to our lover in a meadow? Books are like cars or computers or electric guitars. We make use of them today, within the context of this particular social order, but will we really be interested in or able to maintain the cultural values and relationships necessary for their survival?

I have greatly benefitted from books, from poetry and radical theory to how-to and fiction books, I've been enriched by their possession. And there is a lot of knowledge that elite classes While the rule of capital and centralized power might seem omniscient, they actually are not. There is a totality of domination, but the totality is not yet dominated. There are many psychic and geographical blind spots, openings, frontiers, where the sentinels and soldiers are few or at least fewer. We can take advantage of these. Our struggle for individual and collective freedom isn't pointless or hopeless or so overwhelming as to make total surrender appear reasonable and inevitable.

For instance, because so much of our captivity relies on internalized cops, on the daily reproduction of social misery by our own compliance with the various roles expected of us (worker, soldier, consumer, man, woman, etc.), the weakest point in our opponents armor is probably our own ability to refuse these expectations of predictable behavior. It is through withdrawal from scripted roles and cultural constructs that we will get to know our neighbors and comrades, indeed ourselves, in a more honest light, revealing our true complexity as individuals, and thereby be better able to create the communities of resistance that could form the bases of our offensives. It also means attempting to collectively withdraw from our participation in the institutions and behaviours of capitalist civilization: entertainment, schooling, dependence on welfare states, wage work rather than subsistence skills and self-reliance, electoralism and other forms of representation, etc.

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In order to become free individuals embedded in genuine communities, we need habitats. Cities are not habitats; they are concentrations of labor and commodities and an opportunity for power to synchronize the activities of masses of workers and consumers, of large populations. They are also one form of the many sacrifice zones that civilizations rely on. Their original It just seems plainly ridiculous to assume that literacy will endure everywhere. I doubt the interest, ability and energy will exist to ensure its universal continuance. A few sacred or important texts in some places will be copied and reproduced in some manner, but we shouldn't project a literate world into a decentralized, non-authoritarian, ecological existence. It seems much more likely that the average inhabitant of a given area will be expected and encouraged to nurture highly developed memory and oratorical skills rather than literate abilities.

In the meantime, I want to encourage face to face conversations and debates, reading to each other, public speaking, and other forms of direct communication specifically among radicals and rebels, but among all people generally. Memorization, public speaking talents and the ability to take the stories and ideas of others and make them our own can be powerful tools and skills in our struggle to dismantle the psychological institutions that dominate our lives.

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For over **30** years I have acted, debated and conversed with other anarchists. Throughout my life I have read the words and listened to the voices of numerous philosophers, poets, fighters, friends, and neighbors. I can't see any use in trying to sort out exactly who said what or in trying to locate the passages in books where some of my ideas, influences and even expressions might originate from. I believe I have taken each idea and phrase and made it my own.

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