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## How to Organize an Insurrection

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We are pleased to present one of the first inside reports from participants in the upheavals that shook Greece after the police murder of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos in the anarchist neighborhood of Exarchia on December 6.

This is only the first set of answers to come in from our Greek comrades. We hope shortly to receive further perspectives from other elements of the Greek uprising, so we can provide a comprehensive background on the context and dynamics of the revolt. If you or someone you know is situated to give your own answers to these questions, please email them to us at [rollingthunder@crimethinc.com](mailto:rollingthunder@crimethinc.com).

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How were the actions coordinated within cities? How about between cities?

There are hundreds of small, totally closed affinity groups—groups based in longstanding friendship and 100% trust—and some bigger groups like the people from the three big squats in Athens and three more in Thessaloniki. There are more than 50 social centers in Greece, and anarchist political spaces in all the universities of the country; also, the Antiauthoritarian Movement has sections in all major cities, and there is a network of affinity groups of the Black Bloc active in all Greek cities, based on personal relations and communicating via telephone and mail. For all of them, Indymedia is very important as a strategic point for collecting and sharing useful information—where conflicts are happening, where the police are, where secret police are making arrests, what is happening everywhere minute by minute; it is also useful on a political level, for publishing announcements and calls for demonstrations and actions.

Of course, we can't forget that in practice the primary form of coordination was from friend to friend through mobile phones; that was also the main approach used by young students for coordinating their initiatives, demonstrations, and direct actions.

What kinds of organizing structures appeared?

a.) All sorts of small companies of friends were making spontaneous decisions in the streets, planning actions and carrying them out themselves in a chaotic, uncontrollable manner: thousands of actions taking place at the same time everywhere around the country . . .

b.) Every afternoon there was a General Assembly in squatted schools, squatted public buildings, and squatted universities . . .

c.) Indymedia was used for announcements and strategic coordination of actions . . .

d.) The various communist parties also organized their own confederations of students . . .

e.) . . . And also, one especially influential federation was organized by the friends of Alexis, to organize the students' demonstrations and actions, the squatting of schools, and to publish general announcements from the students' struggle.

Were there any structures already in existence that people used to organize?

For the young students who were in the streets for the first time, and also for the immigrants who participated, the telephone was more than enough; this produced a totally chaotic and unpredictable element in the situations. On the other hand, for anarchists and anti-authoritarians, the General Assemblies are the organizing tool they have used for the last 30 years during any kind of movement. All affinity groups, squats, social centers, university occupations, and other organizations have their own assemblies, as well. Some other participants included left political organizations and left and anarchist university political spaces. During the fight, a lot of new blogs appeared, and new coordinating networks of high-school students.

What different kinds of people have participated in the actions?

The majority were anarchists, half of them older ones, some at high risk as they had previous charges for actions and would have to face custody if they were arrested. Beside them were thousands of school students 16-18 years old. Alongside these groups were immigrants, thousands of university students, many “gypsy” [Romani] kids taking revenge for social repression and racism, and old revolutionaries with previous experience from other social struggles.

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What different forms have the actions taken?

a.) Smashing, looting, and burning were the main actions that the young people used. They often attacked the expensive shopping districts, opened the fancy luxury shops, took everything from inside, and set fire to it in order to counteract the effects of the tear gas in the air. Many turned cars upside down to serve as barricades, keeping the police at a distance and thus creating liberated areas. The police used over 4600 tear gas bombs—nearly 4 tons—but people set countless fires, enough to maintain areas in which you could breathe despite this chemical warfare waged by the state against the people.

When the thousands of people on the streets realized that the black smoke of the fires could cancel out the white smoke of the tear gas, they used the tactic of burning everything at hand as a protection from the tear gas. Other techniques included the smashing of the pavement with hammers, to produce thousands of stones for people to use as projectiles; and, of course, the personal initiative of producing and throwing

molotov cocktails. This last tactic was used especially to force the riot police to fear and respect the demonstrators, and also as a way of controlling the space and time of attack and escape.

b.) Attacks with sticks, stones and molotov cocktails were carried out against countless banks, police stations, and police cars across the country. In smaller cities, the banks and the police were the primary or only targets, as the small-scale society and face-to-face relations discouraged the smashing of shops, with the exception of a few multinational corporate franchises.

c.) Hundreds of symbolic occupations were carried out in all kinds of public buildings, municipal offices, public service offices, theaters, radio stations, TV stations, and other buildings by groups of 50-70 people. Also, there were many symbolic acts of sabotage and blockading of streets, highways, offices, metro stations, public services, and so on, usually accompanied by the distribution of thousands and thousands of pamphlets to people in the area.

d.) Every day there were silent protests, art happenings, and non-violent actions in front of the parliament and in all cities. Most of them were brutally attacked by the police, who used tear gas and arrested people.

e.) Leftists organized concerts in public spaces with the participation of underground bands and also politically conscious pop stars. The biggest one in Athens involved more than 40 artists and drew over 10,000 people.

f.) Controlled student demonstrations were organized by the Communist Party. Many of these attracted much less participation than the chaotic spontaneous student demonstrations.

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How many of the participants in the actions have been involved in similar actions earlier? For how many of them do you think this is their "first time"?

Many thousands of people were experienced anarchist insurrectionists, anti-authoritarians, and libertarian autonomists; half of them were older anarchists who come into the streets only in very important struggles, as most of them have previous charges. There were also many thousands of young people who were radicalized over the last three years in the course of the social struggles for Social Insurance and

against the privatization of education, and also in the huge spontaneous demonstrations that took place during the fires that burned almost 25% of the natural areas of Greece in the summer of 2007. We estimate that for about 30% of the people, this was their first rioting.

Which of the tactics used in the actions have been used before in Greece? Did they spread in the course of this rebellion? If they did, how did it happen?

Most of the tactics used in this struggle have been used for a long time now in Greece. The most important new characteristic of this struggle was the immediate appearance of actions all over the country. The assassination of a young boy in the most important area of anarchist activity provoked an instantaneous reaction; within five minutes of his death, anarchist cells all over the country had been activated. In some cases, the police were informed much later than the anarchists about the reason they were facing attacks from the people. For Greek society, it was a surprise that the majority of young people in the country adopted the tactics of "anarchist violence, smashing and burning," but this was a result of the generalized influence that anarchists' actions and ideas have had in Greek society over the past four years.

Have any conflicts emerged between participants in the actions?

The Communist Party separated itself from anarchists and leftists, and organized separate demonstrations. Also, the announcements that the Communist Party published, their appearances in the corporate media, their speeches to the parliament, and the negative propaganda that they carried on against all leftist organizations prove that they are a real enemy of any kind of efforts for social change.

What is the opinion of the "general public" about the actions?

What is called "general public" during a period of tele-democracy is something that needs a lot of discussion.

Generally speaking, the "general public" feel fear when the TV says that we were "burning the poor people's shops," but the people know well what kind of shops exist in the expensive districts where the riots took place; they feel fear when the TV says that angry immigrants came out to the streets and looted, but also they know that the immigrants are

poor and desperate, and also that it was only a minority of them that came to the streets. There were many artists, theoreticians, sociologists, and other such personages who offered explanations about the revolt, and many of them were beneficial for our causes; some were probably trapped by their need to participate in the spirit of the times, while others were using the situation as an opportunity to honestly express their real ideas. The “general public” is angry about the murder of a 15-year-old boy by a police officer, and they hate the police much more than before; anyway, nobody liked the police in the first place. The majority of “normal” people in Greece don’t trust the right wing government or the past (and probably future) socialist government, and they don’t like the police, expensive shops, or banks. Now a new public opinion is appearing that offers all the social and ethical justifications of revolt. If it was difficult to govern Greece before, now it will be much more difficult.

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How important to the context of these events is the legacy of the dictatorship in Greece? How does it influence popular opinions and actions in this case?

In 1973, the young people were the only ones who took the risk to revolt against the seven-year-running dictatorship; even if this was not the only cause of the end of dictatorship, it remains in the collective memory that the students saved Greece from the dictators and the domination of the US. It is a common belief that young people will put themselves at great risk for the benefit of all, and this produces a feeling of hope and a tolerance of the students’ actions. Of course, this story is now an old story and though it influences the background of the fights, it is not mentioned in reference to this conflict.

Another influence comes from the student struggles of 1991 and 1995 against the privatization of education, which succeeded in changing the plans of the government and saved public education until today. Granted, the revolt of December 2008 was probably the apex of the anarchist movement in Greece until now, as it appeared all around the country and with a great deal of influence on the actions and slogans and ideas of a general part of the society; but the earlier student struggles, especially in Athens in 1991 were more visible and more generalized.

Do you think troubles in the economy are as important in these events as the corporate media is saying?

The young people from the many rich areas of Athens also attacked the police stations of their areas, so even the class war Marxists have serious troubles to explain what is happening: the separation of the rich and poor doesn't seem to matter as much as long-existing solidarity and participation in the fight for equality and social justice.

On the other hand, Greeks between the ages of 25 and 35 cannot make families and have children, because of the economy. Greece is the most underpopulated society in all Europe. But we don't talk about that here as the cause of the revolt. Young people are angry and they hate the police, capitalist cynicism, and the government in a natural, instinctual way that doesn't need explanations or a political agenda. The local media tried not to speak in depth about social conditions here the way the English, French, or US media have. The local corporate TV stations attempt to pass off lies about chaotic "masketeers" with no ideas and no social identity, because the moral influence of anarchists is so strong now in this society that if they start to talk seriously about our ideas on television, society could explode. With the exception of some TV programs and newspapers, most of the mass media are trying to separate economic issues from the chaotic revolt.

Even the leftists from the May '68 generation, when they speak to the media, say that the smashing and the riots are not political expressions of the needs and the hopes of the people—that the anarchists and young people don't have the ability to express a political agenda, and the people need other kinds of political representation. Of course, all this has little influence on the young people who will participate in the social struggles of the future, as after this struggle there exists high tension and a great distance between the younger people and any kind of political leadership or authority.

What other motivations, besides anger against the police and the economy, do you think are driving people to participate?

The personal and collective need for adventure; the need to participate in making history; the chaotic negation of any kind of politics, political parties, and "serious" political ideas; the cultural gap of hating any kind of TV star, sociologist, or expert who claims to analyze you as a social phenomenon, the need to exist and be heard as you are; the enthusiasm

of fighting against the authorities and ridiculing the riot police, the power in your heart and the fire in your hands, the amazing experience of throwing molotovs and stones against the cops in front of the parliament, in the expensive shopping districts, or in your small silent town, in your village, in the square of your neighborhood.

Other motivations include the collective feeling of planning an action with your best friends, making it come true, and later hearing people tell you about this action as an incredible story that they heard from someone else; the enthusiasm of reading about some action that you did with your friends in a newspaper or TV program from the other side of the planet; the feeling of responsibility that you have to create stories, actions, and plans that will become global examples for the future struggles. It is also the great celebrative fun of smashing the shops, taking the products and then burning them, seeing the false promises and dreams of capitalism burned in the streets; the hatred for all authorities, the need to take part in the collective ceremony of revenge for the death of a person that could have been you, the personal vendetta of feeling that the police have to pay for the death of Alexis across the whole country; the need to send a powerful message to the government that if police violence increases, we have the power to fight back and society will explode—the need to send a direct message to society that everyone has to wake up, and a message to the authorities that they have to take us seriously because we are everywhere and we are coming to change everything.

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Are political parties succeeding in co-opting energy from the uprising?

In “real” numbers, the Socialists have increased their lead over the right wing government, gaining an 8% lead in the polls; the “European Social Forum communists” lost 1% even though they helped the revolt, but still they are in third place with 12%; the Communist Party has 8%, the Nationalist neo-fascists 4.5%, and the Green Party is holding steady at 3.5%.

It is also interesting that the leader of the Socialists appears now to be regarded as first in “capability to govern the country” after many years with much less popularity than the right wing prime minister. The riots had a great effect on the political scene: the political parties seemed unable to understand, explain, or react to the massive wave of violence

and participation from every level of society. Their announcements were irrelevant to what was really happening. Their popularity decreased dramatically among the younger population, who don't see themselves in the logic and the politics of the political parties and don't feel represented by them.

What has been the role of anarchists in starting and continuing the actions? How clearly is their participation seen by the rest of society?

Over the past few years, anarchists have created a network of communities, groups, organizations, squats, and social centers in almost all the major cities in Greece. Many don't like each other, as there exist many significant differences among the groups and individuals. This helps the movement, though, as the movement now can cover a great variety of subjects. Many different kinds of people find their comrades in different anarchist movements and, all together, push each other—in a positive, if antagonistic, way—to communicate with society. This communication includes creating neighborhood assemblies, participating in social struggles, and planning actions that have a meaning for the general society. After 30 years of anti-social anarchism, the anarchist movement in Greece today, with all its problems, limitations, and internal conflicts, has the capability to look outside of the anarchist microcosm and take actions that improve society at large in ways that are readily apparent. Of course, it will take a lot of effort for this to be obvious, but day by day nobody can deny it.

As for the role of anarchists in starting and continuing the actions . . . especially at the beginning—Saturday and Sunday, December 6 and 7—and also in the continuation after Wednesday, December 10, the anarchists were the vast majority of those who carried out the actions. In the middle days, especially on Monday when the destructive Armageddon took place, students and immigrants played a very important role. But the vast majority of students found it easy to feel satisfied after one, two, or three days of smashing, and then went home or attended demonstrations with a more pacifist atmosphere. Likewise, immigrants had to face a very strong backlash from locals, and they were afraid to return to the streets.

So the 20,000 anarchists in Greece started it, and continued it when everybody else returned to normality. And we have to mention that the fear of returning to normality helped us to keep up the fight for ten days

more, putting ourselves into great danger as acts of vengeance for the assassination of our comrade transformed, in our fantasies, into preparations for a general strike. Now European society knows once and for all what a social insurrection looks like, and that it is not difficult to change the world in some months.

But you need all the people to participate and play their roles. The young people of Greece sent an invitation to all the societies throughout Europe. We are awaiting their responses now.

How much visibility do anarchists have in Greece in general?  
How “seriously” is anarchism taken by the majority of Greek people?

In a way, you can say that it is just three or four years now since anarchists started to take themselves “seriously” so we are seen that way in the broader society. It is only in the past few years that we have succeeded in expanding beyond the limitations of the anti-police strategy that had characterized our efforts for 25 years. According to that strategy, we attack the police, they arrest people, and we do solidarity actions, over and over again. It took us 25 years to escape from this routine. Of course, the anti-police attacks and fights continue, and the prisoner solidarity movement is stronger than ever, but the anti-social element inside the anarchist movement is under conscious self-control and we can speak, care, and act for the benefit of the whole society now, using actions and plans that can be comprehended much more clearly by at least a part of the society.

Many actions, like the attacks on supermarkets and the free distribution of stolen products to the people, became very popular and well-accepted. The attacks on banks, especially now following the economic crisis, are well-accepted also, and the attacks on police stations have been adapted and utilized by high-school students around the country. In one way or another, we have been the first subject in the news for the last 15 days. Generally speaking, with our participation in students’ or workers’ struggles and also in ecological struggles, every week some action taken by anarchists attracts attention and offers visibility to the anarchist movement.

This doesn’t mean that “anarchism” is taken seriously by the majority of Greek people, as most people still believe the lies of television that describe us as “masketeers” and criminals, and also the majority don’t have any idea about how an anarchist society could ever function—that

includes most of the anarchists, also, who refuse to address this question! But our actions, critiques, and ideas have strong influence now on left and progressive people. It's not possible anymore to say that we don't exist, and now our existence radicalizes the majority of the younger generation.

What role have subcultural groups—like punk, squatting, and so on—played in making the uprising possible?

After '93 we had a strong tendency in the Greek anarchist movement—accompanied by many serious internal fights—that eliminated the influence of “subcultural” styles inside the movement. This means that there is no punk, rock, metal or whatever anarchist identity in the Greek anarchist movement—you can be whatever you like, you can listen to whatever music you like, you can have whatever style or fashion you like, but that is not a political identity.

In the street fights this month, many “emos” participated, together with hippy freaks and ravers, many punks, heavy metal boys and girls, and also trendy, normal kids and students that like Greek music or whatever. It has to be social and political consciousness, social critiques and collective understandings that bring you to participate in the anarchist movements, not fashion. Of course, for at least the last 19 years the Void Network and similar collectives have played the role of offering a cultural introduction to radical political spaces. Such groups organize many cultural/political events, festivals, and parties every year and have the power to attract thousands and thousands of people to underground cultures. But even Void Network doesn't create subcultural identities, doesn't separate the different subcultures, and tries to organize events that include most of the underground cultures. It's true, though, that the majority of the people in the scene attend and participate in most of the events of the d.i.y. underground culture; many events are organized every month in liberated spaces.

What things have made the anarchist movement healthy in Greece?

The separation from subcultural identity politics made people understand that to call yourself an anarchist it takes much more serious participation, planning, creativity, and action than just wearing a t-shirt with the antichrist on it and walking around in punk concerts drinking

beer and taking hypnotic pills. Now there is an understanding that to call yourself an anarchist you have to come to demonstrations, to come out into the streets with banners and black or red-and-black flags, shouting slogans together and manifesting an anarchist presence. Also, that you should participate every week in one, two, or three different assemblies with people for one, or two, or three different preparations of different actions, plans, or struggles to call yourself an anarchist. You have to be friends with people you trust 100% to plan anything dangerous, you have to be aware and informed about anything that is happening in this world to decide what the proper course of action is, you have to be crazy and enthusiastic, to feel that you can do incredible things—you have to be ready to give your life, your time, your years in a struggle that will never end. It is healthy not to have expectations, because then you don't get disappointed. You don't expect to win. You are used to appearing, fighting, and then disappearing again; you know how to become invisible as a person and visible as collective power; you know that you are not the center of the universe, but that any time you can become the center of your society.

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In what ways do you think the anarchist movement in Greece could be better or stronger?

We need to find more intelligent ways of explaining our ideas to people. We need techniques of political communication with all of society, better and stronger ways to make the "political translation" of our actions and put the whole struggle in its social context. In a tele-democracy, where the politicians are nothing more than television superstars, our refusal to communicate with or through the mass media is healthy, but we need to find new ways to overcome the mass media "consensus reality," the media propaganda against us, and find ways to explain the causes of our actions to society. As long as whatever the TV shows "exists" and whatever doesn't appear on TV "doesn't exist," we will be there with our crazy ideas, the dangerous actions and the street fights to break the normality of the TV program, we will use the negative advertisement of our actions to kidnap the fantasies and dreams of the common people. But how can we explain our positive ideas to everyone? How can we help people cease to trust the media? How can we come into contact with millions and millions of people?

It will take millions and millions of posters and free pamphlets, traveling hand by hand in the streets; it will take millions of invitations for demonstrations and participation in social struggles; it will take more free public services in sections that the government don't want or cannot cover—free anarchist doctors and teachers, free food, free accommodation, information, underground culture, and so on—that can bring people closer to our ideas. It will also take more and more squats and social centers. If you can start a squat, that is better, but even if it's not possible to squat in your town, rent a building with your friends, take care of the bureaucracy, make a collective, start an assembly, and put the black or red-and-black flag in the entrance. Start offering the people of your city a living example of a world without racism, patriarchy, or homophobia, a place of equality, freedom, and respect for differences, a world with love and sharing. We need more "Autonomia" in the insurrectionism of the Greek anarchist movement, to make it shine as a paradigm of a new wave of social life and demonstrate this novel survival methodology in the metropolis.

How effective has police repression been in shutting down the anarchist movement? How have people resisted it?

The dreams and plans of the insurrectionists came true: a huge wave of participation "overpassed" the anarchists, and for many chaotic days people traveled and fought in the city like never before, in an unfamiliar time and space of existence.

In the same days, of course, they came face to face with the limitations of insurrection. The people now spend many hours in long discussions about how to expand popular understanding and invent practices, actions, and methods that will sustain and enrich the struggle. Many people think about ways that will bring really close all the different elements of this revolt. The police repression didn't play a more important role in the conclusion of the riots than physical fatigue did. All of us share a feeling of completion and a feeling of beginning, and these are feelings that the police can not touch.

What do you think the final result of the events of December will be?

Ongoing struggle! A never-ending fight for political, social, and economic equality! Constant expansion of freedom!

In the future, neoliberal governments in Greece and throughout Europe will think very seriously before attempting to implement any kind of economic or social change. The riots in Athens and the economic crisis ended the cynicism of the authorities, banks, and corporations, radicalized a new generation in Greece, and gave our society a chance to open a dialogue about the massive social struggles of the future.

As the slogan of December 2008 in Athens and Exarchia goes:

WE ARE AN IMAGE FROM THE FUTURE.

*Questions answered by Void Network (Theory, Utopia, Empathy, Ephemeral Arts); posed by the CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective*

### **Appendix I: Links to the Blogs of the Occupied Universities**

- This is the blog of Polytechnic University that was in the center of the riots, 200 meters from the area where Alexis was assassinated. Here you can find links for most of the squats and initiatives that were organized in schools, universities, and many public buildings during the revolt in all country.

- Though most of it is in Greek, this is the blog from the squatted Athens School of Economics, which accommodated hundreds of different anarchist, autonomist, libertarian, utopian and antiauthoritarian movements, actions, and groups. It is located 500 meters away from Polytechnic School in the center of Athens.

- Again, most of it is in Greek, but this is the blog from the first ever occupation of the building of the General Federation of Greek Workers, a syndicalist institution that has functioned as an obstacle to workers' struggles for the past 90 years. The building is located between the Economics University and the Polytechnic School.

- Though it seems that it wasn't used as much for political work and the sharing of ideas as the other blogs, this is the blog of the squatted University of Law in Athens, the main center of the Anti-Authoritarian Movement and many other leftist groups.

### **Appendix II: Important Squats in Greece**

There are countless other buildings, social centers and projects in Greece—these are just a few.

*In Athens:*

Villa Amalias - <http://villa-amalias.blogspot.com/> (since 1990)

Lela Karagianni - <http://www.geocities.com/lelask/index.htm> (since 1988)

Farm Prapopoulos - <http://protovouliaxalandriou.blogspot.com/> (since 2006)

. . . and also we have to mention Nosotros - <http://www.nosotros.gr/> (Free Social Space) in Exarchia, even though that social center is not a squat but a rented building.

*In Thessaloniki:*

Fabrika Yfanet - <http://fiveprime.org/hivemind/Tags/yfanet> (since 2004)

Terra Incognita - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/20222375@N07/2280591376> (since 2005)

Delta squat - <http://delta.blogs.squat.gr/> (since 2007)

## **Greece and the Insurrections to Come**

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From December 6, when police murdered 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos in downtown Athens, to the time of this writing, Greece has seen unprecedented rioting. Anarchists and students, supported and often joined by significant swaths of the population, have clashed with police, destroyed corporate and government property, and occupied government buildings, trade union offices, and media outlets, not to mention the usual universities. By December 12, police had used over 4600 capsules of tear gas, and were seeking more from Israel and Germany—an ominous pair of nations, when it comes to repression.

What's going on in Greece? Is it simply a matter of disenfranchised youth protesting a discouraging job market, or is there something more afoot?

### **What's It All About?**

The corporate media has ignored the banners decrying police brutality and unaccountable authority, seizing instead on the idea that the unrest is the result of widespread unemployment and poor economic prospects for young Greeks. Thus prompted, many people—including some radicals—have focused on these issues as well.

At such a distance, we are not equipped to speak on the causes of the riots or the motivations of the participants, but we know better than to trust the media. Some corporate outlets have gone so far as to announce—in language that might be less surprising in a magazine like

*Rolling Thunder*—that the events in Greece may presage the second coming of the anti-globalization movement thought to be vanquished after September 11, 2001. Though this might be true, we should hesitate to let the corporate media provide us with our narrative, lest it prove to be a Trojan horse.

If the riots are not about Alexandros after all, are we to believe that—were the economy more stable—it would be acceptable to shoot down 15-year-olds? After all, police kill people all the time in the United States without anyone smashing a single store window over it. Is this simply because we have a lower unemployment rate?

Should we accept that the rage being vented in Greece is economic in origin, the implication is that it could be dispelled by economic solutions—and there are capitalist solutions for the crisis in no shorter supply than socialist ones. Perhaps the exploitation, misery, and unemployment currently rampant in Greece could be exported to some meeker nation, or else enough credit could be extended to the disaffected stone-throwers that they could come to identify as middle class themselves. These approaches have worked before; one might even argue that they have driven the process of capitalist globalization.

If Greece could somehow be transformed into Sweden—if every nation could be Sweden, without any having to be Nigeria—would it be OK to shoot teenagers then? They shoot anarchists in Sweden too, you know.

To the extent to which the resistance in Greece is simply an expression of frustration at dim financial prospects, then, it is possible that it can ultimately be defused or co-opted. But there are other forces at work here, which the corporate account de-emphasizes.

These riots are not coming out of nowhere. Masked anarchists setting fires and fighting the police have been common in Greece since before the turn of the century. In 1999, shortly before the Seattle WTO protests, there were major riots when Bill Clinton visited. At the time, the economy was livelier—and the socialists were in power, which seems to contradict the theory that the current unrest is simply a result of dissatisfaction with the conservative government.

Corporate media generally ignore anarchists, trivializing them with qualifiers such as “self-styled” when they refer to them at all. That corporate outlets have been forced to detail the anarchist involvement in these and other struggles in Greece attests to the depth and seriousness of anarchist activity. Leftists may attempt to portray the events in Greece

as a general uprising of “the people,” and certainly countless “normal” people have participated, but it is clear even from this vantage point that anarchists started the rioting and have remained the most influential element within it.

We hypothesize that the rioting in Greece is not simply an inevitable result of economic recession, but a proactive radical initiative that speaks to the general public.

Though the rioting was provoked by the murder of Alexandros, it is only possible because of preexisting infrastructures and social currents—otherwise, such murders would catalyze uprisings in the US as well. Such an immediate and resolute response would not have occurred if anarchists in Greece had not developed a culture conducive to it. Thanks to a network of social centers, a deep-seated sense that neighborhoods such as the one in which Alexandros was killed are liberated zones off-limits to police, and a tradition of resistance extending back through generations, Greek anarchists feel entitled to their rage and capable of acting upon it. In recent years, a series of struggles against the prison system, the mistreatment of immigrants, and the privatization of schools have given innumerable young people experience in militant action. As soon as the text messages circulated announcing the police killing, Greek anarchists knew exactly how to respond, because they had done so time and again before.

The general public in Greece is already sympathetic to resistance movements, owing to the heritage of struggle against the US-supported dictatorship. In this regard, Greece is similar to Chile, another nation noted for the intensity of its street conflicts and class warfare. With the murder of Alexandros, anarchists finally had a narrative that was compelling to a great number of people. In another political context, liberals or other opportunists might have been able to exploit this tragedy to their own ends, but the Greek anarchists forestalled this possibility by immediately seizing the initiative and framing the terms of the conflict.

### **It's Not the Economy, Stupid**

That is to say, it's always the economy. But it's not just the economic hardships accompanying times of recession—the resistance in Greece is also a revolt against the exploitation, alienation, and hierarchy inherent in the capitalist system, that set the stage for police to murder teenagers whether or not a significant percentage of the population is unemployed.

To repeat, if alienation and hierarchy were themselves sufficient to inspire effective resistance, we'd see a lot more of it in the United States. The decisive factor in Greece is not the economy, but the cumulative efforts that have built a vibrant anarchist movement. There is no shortcut around developing an analogous movement in the US if we want to be capable of similar responses to oppression and injustice. Militant actions, such as some of the solidarity actions that have occurred in the US thus far, can provide some experience and momentum, but the creation of enduring cultural spaces is probably more essential.

Anarchists in the United States face a much different context than their Greek colleagues. Greece is a peripheral participant in the European Union, while the US remains the epicenter of global capitalism, with a correspondingly more powerful repressive apparatus. The legal consequences of participating in confrontations with the police are potentially more severe in the US, at least in proportion to the support for arrestees. Much of the population is more conservative, and both radical and oppressed communities are more fragmented, owing to the tremendous numbers of people in prison and the transience enforced by the job market. There is little continuity in traditions of resistance—in most communities, the collective anarchist memory does not stretch back beyond a decade at the most. The events in Greece are inspiring, but US anarchists can probably learn more from the infrastructures behind them than from the superficial aspects of the clashes.

Likewise, radicals in the US can draw inspiration from Greek anarchists without forgetting what is worthwhile in local anarchist communities. Though Greek anarchists clearly excel at confrontation, this does not guarantee that they are equally equipped to contest internal hierarchies and forms of oppression. The capacity to work out conflicts and maintain horizontal distributions of power is as essential to the anarchist project as any kind of offense or defense. It would be unfortunate if a fascination with the Greeks led US anarchists to deprioritize discussions about consent, consensus-based decision-making, and privilege.

### **The Insurrections to Come?**

The events of the past two weeks may help reframe the global context for struggle, as the Zapatista revolt did in 1994. The rioting in Greece is not the only major unrest in the world right now, but it is perhaps the

most promising, because it is explicitly directed against hierarchical power.

Most current hostilities, even those not organized by governments, are not as promising. Not everyone who takes up arms outside the state's monopoly on violence is fighting for the abolition of hierarchy. Nationalist campaigns, fundamentalist crusades, religious conflicts, ethnic strife, and the gang warfare of illegal capitalism pit people against each other without any hope of liberation. We have to set visible precedents for liberation struggles if we hope future conflicts will pit the oppressed against their oppressors rather than against each other. Greece may be one such precedent. We can create similar precedents on smaller scales in the US, by taking the initiative to determine the character of confrontations with authority. The anarchist mobilization at last summer's Republican National Convention was arguably an example of this, though certainly not the only format for it.

Today, party communism is largely discredited, and most influential resistance movements do not see seizing state power as feasible or desirable. This leaves two roads for critics of the current world order. One is to support reformist heads of state such as Obama, Lula, and Chavez, who cash in on dissent to re-legitimize the state form and, as if incidentally, their own power. On the other hand, there is the possibility of a struggle against power itself—whether waged consciously, as it currently is in Greece, or as a result of complete social and economic marginalization, as in France in 2005. The latter path offers a long struggle with no victory in sight, but it may be the first step towards a new world.

### **Resources**

Our friends at the Center for Strategic Anarchy are following events in Greece closely as they unfold, and [their website](#) is an excellent resource for news and updates. We also recommend [this collection of stirring photos](#) from the conflict.

*If something scares us, it is the return to normality. For in the destroyed and pillaged streets of our cities of light we see not only the obvious results of our rage, but the possibility of starting to live. We no longer have anything to do, other than to install ourselves in this possibility and transform it into a living experience: by grounding on the field of everyday life, our creativity, our power to materialize our desires, our power not to contemplate but to construct the real. This is our vital space. All the rest is death.*

-from a statement from the occupation of the Athens School of Economics and Business

## **Appendix: Questions for the Greeks**

In order to provide more informed coverage of the events in Greece on this website and in the forthcoming issue of Rolling Thunder, we are soliciting participants in the uprising to answer the following questions. If you or anyone you know can help us with this, please email us at [rollingthunder@crimethinc.com](mailto:rollingthunder@crimethinc.com).

How have the actions been coordinated within cities? How about between cities?

What kinds of organizing structures appeared?

Were there any structures already in existence that people used to organize?

What different kinds of people have participated in the actions?

What different forms have the actions taken?

How many of the participants had been involved in similar actions before December 6? For how many participants do you think this is their "first time"?

Which of the tactics used in the actions have been used before in Greece? Did they spread in the course of this rebellion? If they did, how did it happen?

Have any conflicts emerged between participants in the actions?

What is the opinion of the "general public" about the actions?

How important to the context of these events is the legacy of the dictatorship in Greece? How does it influence popular opinions and actions in this case?

Do you think troubles in the economy are as important in these events as the corporate media is saying?

What other motivations, besides anger against the police and the economy, do you think are driving people to participate?

Are political parties succeeding in co-opting energy from the uprising?

What has been the role of anarchists in starting and continuing the actions? How clearly is their participation seen by the rest of society?

How much visibility do anarchists have in Greece in general? How seriously is anarchism taken by the majority of Greek people?

What role have subcultural groups—like punk, squatting, etc.—played in making the uprising possible?

What things have made the anarchist movement healthy in Greece?

In what ways do you think the anarchist movement in Greece could be better or stronger?

How effective has police repression been in shutting down the anarchist movement? How have people resisted it?

What do you think the final result of the events of December will be?

## **Rolling Thunder #4 Complete PDF Available**

We mailed out the last *Rolling Thunder* #4 yesterday, and as such, the complete PDF is now available for free download.

**[Download Rolling Thunder #4 PDF \[10MB\]](#)**

The centerpiece of the fourth *Rolling Thunder* is a full-color photoessay chronicling the popular uprising during which the people of Oaxaca, Mexico wrested control of their city from the government for a period of months. Continuing that theme, other feature articles cover the defense and eviction of South Central Farm in Los Angeles, the Really Really Free Market as a model for reclaiming public space from capitalism and bureaucracy, the resurgence of squatting in Buffalo of all places, the university occupation movement in France, and the ins and outs of urban exploration. The remainder of the issue includes a comprehensive guide to supporting prisoners and defendants, the lyrics to “The Big Rock Candy Mountain” as interpreted by acclaimed comic artist Nate Powell, a gallery of ready-to-use stencils, and plenty of the edgy artwork and poignant prose you’ve come to expect.

## **New Poster: Crisis is Business as Usual**

[Here’s a new poster on the economic crisis](#), perfect for wheatpasting in neighborhoods with a lot of foreclosures.

Everybody knows that you’ve got to have money to make money, and never is that more true than in a speculation-driven economy. As the stock market reached unprecedented heights, its connection to the nuts and bolts of the economy became more and more illusory, making a “correction” inevitable—and profitable, for some. Gambling on the correction became a money-making scheme in its own right, and continues now after the collapse, without regard for the fact that such

late-game betting assures that the recession will be all the more severe. Institutional investors can afford to play this game because, for them, a collapse of the stock market just means an opportunity to gamble on bonds or currency or whatever other financial product which might benefit from the disappearance of trillions of dollars in artificial value.

But if the value lost in the stock market is artificial, the consequences for human beings are very real. The ranks of the unemployed are rising by the hundreds of thousands every month. Inflated prices for consumers goods will largely stay inflated, even as earnings decline and homes are repossessed. And while the ultra-wealthy will ride out the recession in a riot of luxury and consumption, everyone else will be faced with a new, harsh reality—one in which the means of subsistence are increasing hard to achieve.

So for all the media's obsession with stunned stockbrokers and disgraced corporate tycoons, their suffering is distinctly abstract: paper losses to be pondered during a long and comfortable early retirement. The rest of us will be forced to wonder why the most basic needs of our lives—food, shelter, medicine—are tied to the whims of a marketplace designed for collapse.

### **Further Reading**

[A brief introduction to the sources and implications of the economic crisis](#)

[A glossary of terms for the crisis](#)

[Prescient discussion of the crisis before the media even acknowledged it](#)

### **Stay The Course**

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An analysis of the political climate following the election of 2008; a plea for anarchists to maintain vibrant networks and confrontational organizing even as Obama takes office; a discussion of what it takes for such networks and organizing to succeed; and a brief review of actions around the election, with a glimpse of what is to come.

*Featuring a revision of our earlier Obama poster, and a PDF [6.2 MB] of a paper used to satirize corporate media the day after the election . . .*

**STAY THE COURSE**

As much as radicals have focused on bringing people together in public spaces over the past ten years, not all public togetherness is necessarily radical. On election night, when sports-riot-size crowds took to the streets of many cities to celebrate Obama's victory, the subtext was that representative democracy, long discredited under the Bush regime, had been rehabilitated as the populist spectacle it was always meant to be. The chants of "Yes We Can!"—appropriated, like most of Obama's shtick, from actual grassroots movements outside electoral politics—translated to "Yes *He* Can": in endorsing the transfer of power from one politician to another, people may feel powerful, but it is not *their* power they celebrate. It was exactly the kind of display that prompts young defeatists to declare that "the masses" don't want anarchy; to be fair, with hundreds of millions of dollars for publicity, anyone could probably have achieved the same results—even anarchists.

Obama has ridden to power on the same social currents that radicals have relied on to propel their organizing and outreach over the past eight years: disgust with the excesses of empire, longing for more fairness and sociability in daily life, optimism about vague alternatives. It is no coincidence that the liberal anti-war movement died out just as the presidential campaigns got underway; the race effectively subsumed the energy of all not explicitly critical of representative democracy. This cooptation of popular momentum is as essential to the disempowerment of the populace as the brutal repression associated with the right wing. The powers that be are equally willing to tear gas us or hire us to go door to door registering voters—whatever it takes to keep us from building our own power outside and against their structures. In that regard, Obama's election marks a new phase of their efforts to keep their system viable—calculated to defuse discontent, further marginalize radicals, and maintain the essential power imbalances of our society while giving the institutions that perpetuate them a makeover.

Top-down structures obscure the motivations and individuality of the participants, but they don't necessarily neutralize them. Some of those who packed the streets on the night of November 4 must harbor desires too radical to be realized under capitalism, desires which might still bubble to the surface despite the veneer of social consensus. In Minneapolis, not far from September's bitter street conflicts outside the Republican National Convention, a mixed crowd of East African immigrants and predominantly white anarchists occupied a major intersection for several hours, blocking traffic and defying police until the authorities resorted to pepper spray and finally called in massive

backup. Chants of “Yes We Can!” and “U-S-A!” mingled with “Smash the State!” and the traditional “Whose Streets?” as drummers pounded out rhythms, dancers filled the lanes, and multiracial lines of masked youth taunted and blocked police cruisers.

In one reading of this event, the anarchists were cynically endangering the less privileged immigrants by luring them into a dangerous situation; presumably, had the anarchists gone home, the immigrants would have had the sense to stop provoking the police and get back to pulling themselves up by their bootstraps—a challenge that can only be easier now that there is to be a black President, never mind the recession. In another reading of the situation, the anarchists and immigrants found tentative common cause in seizing public space, coming together on the basis of a shared desire to celebrate—even if they respectfully disagreed on the details of what was worth celebrating. Together, they were able to obtain a few hours of the visibility and jubilation normally forbidden to their class; and the inevitable confrontation with the police demonstrated to all that, Obama or no, we only get what we are prepared to defend.

The Obama years will doubtless offer us countless complicated opportunities such as this one. But bad advice abounds in radical circles as this new era looms. Some, afraid of being misunderstood, caution against confrontational organizing of any kind, forfeiting the initiative precisely when it is most important to maintain radical momentum. Others, in attempting to keep a principled distance from all things reformist, risk isolating anarchist projects, denying them the interplay with other efforts and milieus that makes them effective and infectious. How do we chart a middle course, staying connected to popular currents without subordinating our own priorities to those of the forces that exploit them?

### **What Now?**

Unfortunately, there is a recent precedent for anarchists freezing up and dropping the ball, which too many have already forgotten. After September 11, 2001, radical projects and momentum collapsed around the country as anarchists, fearful of appearing insensitive and of running afoul of the anti-terror reaction, cancelled plans and stepped back from organizing. The resulting loss of impetus contributed to the decline of the anti-globalization movement in the US and enabled authoritarians to determine the character of the incipient anti-war movement; it took years for anarchist organizing to recover from these setbacks. The lesson is that, however inconvenient a particular historical juncture may be for

anarchists, it's always easier to maintain organizing than to start over from scratch.

Yes, Obama is the first person of color to be elected President. His victory doesn't mean representative democracy is suddenly inclusive and egalitarian any more than the successful careers of Bill Cosby and Michael Jordan indicate that capitalism isn't structurally racist; it also doesn't mean that the inequalities of the system are suddenly invisible to our neighbors. We can affirm others' enthusiasm at the shattering of this particular glass ceiling without endorsing the authoritarian structure that remains or giving up on our opposition to it being intelligible to those around us. Real relationships with people in adjacent communities are the best protection against the corporate media accounts portraying them as lockstep converts to liberal democracy; those who insist most stridently that confrontational organizing is now self-defeating may do so because they lack connection with their neighbors.

Make no mistake about it—more people of color are in prison in the United States than ever before in history. Obama will not grant them clemency or reassemble the communities torn apart by their kidnappings. Global capitalism continues to plunder peoples and devastate ecosystems, disproportionately affecting people of color worldwide. If anything is racist, it is failing to attack the roots of the system that perpetrates these injustices.

Some have expressed fears that any overt resistance to Obama's ascendancy will be misrepresented as racist, but these have already proved unfounded. Although there was considerable discussion on this topic before the protests at last summer's Democratic National Convention, not only did corporate media coverage fail to cast any such aspersions, locals on the street also seemed clear on the motivations of the predominantly white black bloc. Participants in the protests could certainly have done more to convey their opposition to white supremacy, but the precedent indicates that it is possible for anarchists to act against Obama without being misconstrued.

Coming out of the protracted mobilizations leading up to last summer's Democratic and Republican National Conventions, anarchists have actually built up some networks and momentum. It would be all the more tragic, then, for hesitation to erode those modest gains. Depending on what happens next, the clashes outside the Republican National Convention in St. Paul indicated either that anarchists have regained the initiative in the streets, or simply that they were the last rats

to leave the sinking ship of the anti-war movement. Either momentum will fizzle as ad hoc networks drift apart, or additional efforts will shift anarchists to the forefront of radical struggles now that the former liberal opposition occupies the highest seats of power.

A word is necessary on what it takes to maintain healthy networks, since anarchists in the United States have had so little success with this. Networks only persist when they offer something concrete and desirable to the participants. Were there an anarchist federation that could provide its members with free health care, this country would not lack for anarchists. The networks that developed in the buildup to the convention protests flourished because they offered the opportunity to participate in something exciting and historic; they are unlikely to endure unless people find other ways to use them to circulate useful resources. Otherwise, as has happened countless times already, most people will drop out in search of more productive uses of their time, leaving only the most tiresome individuals to play at bureaucracy as an end in itself. Some tentative attempts are unfolding to make use of the networks that linger in the wake of the conventions; if they don't take off, anarchists will have to start all over again next time a nationwide mobilization is called for.

So what are anarchists to do, at the opening of the era heralded by Obama's victory? First, we should maintain explicitly anarchist organizing. This doesn't mean refusing to work with non-anarchists, but establishing our own projects and organizing bodies, so we won't be stuck reacting to others' initiatives or lose ourselves in authoritarian structures that absorb our efforts without bringing real liberation any closer. The efforts of the RNC Welcoming Committee provide an excellent example of this, in stark contrast to the absence of any serious anarchist initiatives at the Republican National Convention of 2004. Now that the Democrats hold power in Washington, D.C., it should be much easier to distinguish ourselves and our positions than it was when we were lumped in with the liberals under Bush.

And how can we organize popular resistance, when seems that everyone loves Obama? With the economy in shambles and global warming finally acknowledged as reality, the answers to this question should be obvious enough. Capitalism hasn't gone anywhere—on the contrary, its negative effects are only more and more apparent to all. Rather than entrenching ourselves on the losing side of the pro-or-anti-Obama debate, we should sidestep that trap to pose new questions. Here is one example of how this could play out concretely. The past two

Presidential inaugurations have featured spirited liberal and anarchist protests questioning the legitimacy of the new ruler; this time, rather than simply repeating that equation with significantly diminished prospects of success, it would be strategic for an anarchist mobilization to focus on economic issues and economic targets, plenty of which can be found in Washington, D.C. As of this writing, a vague call to action for the inauguration has circulated, but it remains to be seen whether anything more concrete will materialize.

Above all, to repeat this once more, we cannot afford to withdraw into the shadows as we did after September 11, 2001; a world sliding swiftly into catastrophe cannot afford this either. But to urge anarchists to maintain confrontational organizing is not to endorse any and all action for its own sake; on the contrary, it is essential that we pick our battles carefully. The disaster of capitalism presents us with an endless number of fires to put out, and running around attempting to do so with no strategy can only exhaust us pointlessly. As our numbers and resources are currently extremely limited, we should start with the objectives that will best enable us to extend our networks and capabilities. Once we've done so, we'll be better equipped to put an end to mountaintop removal, thwart the racist deportations carried out by ICE, and so on.

We leave it up to you, dear readers, to sort out what this looks like in practice—though here's a hint.

### **Appendix A: A Point of Departure**

This year, with one exception, anarchist actions around the election were fairly isolated and predictable. There were the usual scattered acts of vandalism, presumably limited to small in-groups, and principled refusals to participate in the electoral spectacle, which attract an even narrower demographic; only one effort stood out as subversively combining public and clandestine elements.

The morning following election day, consumers around the country woke up to find that the newspapers in the dispensers on their streets, and in some cases even in their very driveways, had been provided with a spurious front page courtesy of local pranksters. This occurred in at least twenty cities, including Washington, D.C., New York City, Lawrence, Milwaukee, Duluth, New Orleans, and Chicago, not to mention several cities in Iowa, California, and North Carolina. One paper estimated that 1000 copies of their publication alone had been affected.

Presumably, one or two groups came up with this idea, then solicited the participation of others around the country. Because it involved comparatively low risk on the street level, it offered a perfect opportunity for newer groups to build up experience in an activity they wouldn't necessarily have had the resources to pull off alone and to invite new people to participate. This is exactly the sort of format that can enable a network to increase its numbers and capabilities. On top of all this, the action gave visibility to dissent precisely when Obama's triumph was obscuring it.

This action demonstrated the proper way to make use of the networks that remain after the convention protests. Had one group simply called for actions targeting corporate media, surely very little would have happened. The point of a network is to save organizers the trouble of duplicating groundwork, and to increase the scope of what can be achieved with the same tactics so it is possible to escalate conflict without increasing individual risk. Further efforts to utilize these networks need not take the same form, but they must follow the same basic principle; otherwise, the groups that compose the networks will inevitably return to the isolation of focusing exclusively on local projects without outside support.

Download the paper used in the aforementioned newspaper prank: **[PDF \[6.2 MB\]](#)**

Instructions for how to pull off a newspaper wrap can be found in *[Recipes for Disaster](#)*.

## **Appendix B: Revised Poster**

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Now that Obama has won the election, we've revised [our earlier poster](#) to keep it relevant. Please print these out and disseminate them: **[PDF \[684 KB\]](#)**

## **Rave Review for Rolling Thunder**

The British magazine [Last Hours](#) recently presented [a glowing review](#) of the fifth issue of [Rolling Thunder](#), which we present here:

*Rolling Thunder* #5

September 24th, 2008 · review by Tom Fiction

I first encountered CrimethInc. some years ago as I sat in a cramped living room chatting with friends. On the coffee table

lay a truly battered and well thumbed copy of *Days of War, Nights of Love* (CrimethInc.'s flagship publication). I was a young punk kid lightly politicised by the threat of war in Iraq but with no real knowledge of radical culture. Anarchy was just a word printed on the sleeves of my parents old punk records. The text and images I found in those faded pages offered something new and engaging that I had never experienced.

A couple of years passed and *Days of War* was joined on my bookcase by more astute radical literature whilst its felt like CrimethInc. had almost gone into hibernation. Or so it seemed. The last few months have seen a flurry of activity from CrimethInc. with a new publication (the excellent *Expect Resistance*) and a new issue of *Rolling Thunder*, their sporadically released anarchist journal of dangerous living. This, the fifth in the series represents how much CrimethInc. has developed over the years. The contents present some of the best critical analysis of the anarchist movement both in the United States and in Europe I have read in recent years, largely focusing on the effectiveness of (direct) actions as well as how they can fail and how to respond when they do. Highlights come in the form of a report on the green scare (the FBI's crackdown on members of ALF and ELF) and what it means to be a government informant, as well as a well written and descriptive report of the events surrounding the 2007 G8 protests.

*Rolling Thunder* is not likely to act as a recruiting tool for anarchism but provides necessary analysis and debate on some of the most crucial topics activists face today. A worthy read for activists left feeling helpless and demotivated by most conventional forms of resistance.

*Note:* In the original text, "CrimethInc." appeared with incorrect punctuation (as "Crimethinc"). We've corrected that throughout, along with the other spelling and typographical errors in the original, same as we must for the RAND corporation and others.

## **Fashion Tips for the Brave**

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Nowadays, entirely apart from the question of whether you're engaging

in illegal activity, it can be important to protect your privacy while participating in public protests. Local and federal law enforcement agencies are compiling extensive files on everyone they deem suspect; if you don't want them invading your privacy, it may be appropriate for you to remain anonymous while exercising your supposed right to free speech. The same goes double if you lack the privileges of citizenship or you fear your employer may discriminate against you for your political beliefs. In the light of the felony charges resulting from the recent RNC protests, it is especially important for activists to be aware of this.

We've already published extensively on this topic, most notably in the guide Blocs, Black and Otherwise. The following is largely a refresher for anyone who needs it before hitting the streets again.

### **Fashion Tips for the Brave and Fabulous**

Do you desire to be an autonomous individual rather than a faceless, mass-produced cog in the machine? Great! That is, unless you are marching in a bloc—where conformity is a weapon that you can use to smash the machine itself.

The goal of the bloc as a tactic is to have everyone look as similar as possible, so that, ideally, no single individual can be identified within the anonymous mass. This helps to keep everybody safer. If only some people within a bloc take these precautions, the cops can more easily spot and target individuals and groups, which is dangerous both for those who are acting within the bloc and for those who are not. Those who make the effort to stay anonymous can draw extra police attention; those who don't can be more easily identified, which can make them easier targets. Neither of these situations is desirable.

Take this stuff seriously! If you're setting out to accomplish something risky, taking these precautions is crucial. If you're not, you can help to protect your comrades and avoid making yourself a target.

- If you're going to wear a mask, keep it on at all appropriate times! If you are captured on camera or witnessed at any point with your mask off, you can then be easily identified with it on.

- Be extremely conscientious about where and when you change into and out of your mask and anonymous clothing; there should be no cameras or hostile witnesses. If possible, explore the area in advance to find appropriate spaces for changing. Remember that police are especially likely to target masked individuals who are not in a crowd that is similarly dressed.

- Wear different outfits layered one upon the other, so you'll be prepared for any eventuality. Ideally, you should have one outfit for getting to the site of the action without attracting attention, your anonymous gear for the action itself, and then another outfit underneath so you can look like a harmless civilian as you exit the area. Don't forget to stay hydrated, particularly if all those clothes get hot.

- If you have tattoos that are or could be visible, cover them up! You can do this with makeup or concealer, especially if you use heavy-duty products designed for that purpose. Many actors and dancers use Dermablend to cover up tattoos, burns, and scars. It comes in numerous colors that can be mixed to match your skin tone, and it's water resistant and rated for 12 hours of wear. It's expensive, but cheaper than bail! If you can't find Dermablend or a similar product, cover your tattoos with clothing that won't ride up. Tuck your clothing in if you have to.

- Likewise, if you have visible piercings, take them out—or at least cover them up so they are sure not to be exposed.

- Do not march in a bloc wearing your regular clothing, especially if it's distinctive. Cops may be stupid, but they can probably match the pictures of the masked-up person with the purple polka-dotted pants to pictures of the same person in the same outfit minus the mask—even if the pictures were taken on different days.

- If you are going to carry a backpack or bag, don't take the one you carry around in everyday life. No matter how perfect your outfit is, it's all for naught if your bag is recognizable—especially if, like many people, you change bags much less frequently than you change clothes.

- The same goes for your shoes, for similar reasons—wear different ones during the action than you wear every day. This is also important because cops can attempt to use footprints or other traces from shoes as evidence.

- Do not wear patches or other identifiable insignia on your clothing while in a bloc, unless everyone else has exactly the same ones in exactly the same places.

- Don't just cover your face! Bandanas are popular and convenient, but they don't conceal enough. Cover your head completely so your hair cannot be seen—especially if it's distinctive. In a black bloc, you can do this by wearing a ski mask or making a mask out of a T-shirt—stretch the neck hole across your eyes and tie the sleeves behind your head, with the rest of the shirt covering your head and shoulders. In other

circumstances, you could try a wig, if that fits the aesthetic of your action.

- If possible, cover your eyes. Goggles can do this while serving the dual purpose of protecting your eyes from chemical weapons; nondescript sunglasses could also work in a pinch. Both of these can be obtained in prescription form and are better to use than your regular glasses, particularly if your regular glasses are distinctive. Contact lenses are not recommended in situations where you may come into contact with chemical weapons.

- Be careful not to leave fingerprints and DNA evidence! Wear cloth gloves—leather and latex can retain fingerprints and even pass them on to objects you touch. Wipe down tools and other items with alcohol in advance, to clean fingerprints off them—you never know what might get lost in the chaos. Don't forget about the batteries inside flashlights!

- Practice at home! Don't go out in a bulky outfit you've never worn before expecting to pull off cop-shocking feats of dexterity. You need to be familiar with your outfit and comfortable moving in it; it's important that your vision isn't compromised, too.

- Do not let any of this give you a false sense of security. Be careful! Assess your relationship to risk honestly; don't do anything if you're not sure you could live with the worst possible consequences. Stay aware of your surroundings and listen to your instincts. Make sure you know and trust the people you're working with, especially when it comes to high-risk activities. Practice proper security culture at all times. Know and assert your legal rights [PDF - .9 MB], especially in stressful situations. Doing so may not make things better, but failing to do so will certainly make them worse!

Don't get caught! Stay safe(r), and smash the state!

## **New Pamphlet: Beyond Democracy**

One month before the elections, we present The Party's Over, a comprehensive guide to the indignities of representative democracy and an introduction to some of the radical alternatives. CrimethInc. operatives have labored over various versions of this text for more than eight years, and we're excited to present what we consider to be the definitive version. Those familiar with earlier versions will be glad to see new sections of text and plenty of new artwork.

The next few weeks should offer ample opportunities to distribute these everywhere people are unsatisfied with their current options and groping for something better.

## **Hundreds of Billions of Dollars**

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*Report courtesy of the Center for Strategic Anarchy, in cooperation with the CrimethInc. Free Marketeers. The CSA will begin posting regularly again on their blog shortly.*

What the hell is going on with the economy? As part of our commitment to serve all the investors, bankers, and realty agents who rely on this site, we've solicited a brief introductory analysis.

Capitalism without failure is like religion without sin—it just doesn't work. Far from abnormal, the boom/bust cycle is as predictable as the furious scapegoating and wild-eyed cheerleading that accompany it. But every situation, even the most predictable, presents unique opportunities. We present this analysis in the interest of deriving strategic advantages from our enemies' temporary imbalance.

So what exactly is going on with the economy right now? The only honest answer is that no one is exactly sure. The American financial system operates on a variety of levels of transparency, making it impossible to know with certainty who has what and how much it is worth. The system also relies upon a high level of interconnectedness between different institutions and industries, making it difficult to predict the implications of failure.

But we can identify a few things that may give us the beginnings of a coherent answer.

The basic outline of the situation is this: starting in the mid-1990's, the American government began deregulating the banking industry, repealing laws that had governed the terms of credit and investment since the Great Depression, due in large part to the money-soaked lobbying of commercial banks. Simultaneously, it created institutional and consumer incentives for home buying, motivated in part by statistical evidence that home ownership was the single greatest determinate of a family's financial success. At the same time, the dot-com boom was putting (fake) money into consumers' and bankers' pockets, and although that bubble burst in 2001, it was quickly replaced by a new bubble in real estate.

Thus began a massive surge in home buying. Part of this up-tick in buying was made possible by “sub-prime mortgages”: loans with adjustable interest rates given to people who probably can’t afford to buy a house in the first place. They function much like credit cards: if homebuyers miss a payment, which they are likely to do, the interest rate doubles or even triples, dramatically increasing the cost of their monthly payments. These were attractive loans for banks to make since they assumed that all but a few homeowners would continue making payments after the upward adjustment of their interest rates.

The scheme seems idiotic in hindsight. A huge rise in demand for homes led to rapidly rising real estate values. To keep the market booming, less qualified buyers were found and given sub-prime mortgages to buy houses at inflated prices. Because prices were rising and wages were stagnant, lots of people with sub-prime mortgages were unable to keep up with payments. Their interest rates rose, but instead of paying banks a premium, many of them had to stop paying entirely. Now, at least two million of the seven million sub-prime mortgages used to buy homes since 1998 are expected to default.

What exactly led to the failures of Lehman Brothers, AIG, Morgan Stanley, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac, the news of which has cable news anchors on the verge of tears? The precise answer is more complicated than space allows. To put it in very general terms, the trading of sub-prime loans became a market unto itself, a market that was almost completely unregulated and pushed to wildly unrealistic heights by mountains of debt. When the loans themselves started going bad, the obscure little financial products based on them—which had been virtually printing money for investment banks—turned to shit. All of a sudden banks had a lot less money, making it impossible for some of them to pay for everything else they do.

Now, the U.S government is planning to buy most of those bad loans for \$700 billion. This will take them off the balance sheets of banks and put them on the balance sheet of the Federal government. Naturally, Wall Street is ecstatic, for the moment.

Where things go from here is difficult to predict, but we can safely assume that there will be a lot less money floating around for loans, at least for a while. This means businesses will have a harder time expanding and fewer people will be able to afford homes, cars, and higher educations. This will have broad negative implications for the economy and growth will almost definitely slow; whether that will be an

apocalyptic recession or a brief lull is up for debate. And if the federal government ends up spending upward of \$1 trillion bailing out failing businesses, we can expect less government spending for a good long while.

What does all of this mean for anarchists and our projects? It means that our context is about to change. As if the change in presidential administration weren't enough of a game-changer, this will shift the terrain even more. Here's some highly subjective advice for taking advantage of the new circumstances:

1) This is going to sound insane, but if you have been thinking about buying a house or land, try to do it in the next 18 months, especially if you won't need a mortgage. Reasonable mortgages will be hard to come by, even if you have good credit, but real estate prices are going to continue to drop. Looking at a house priced in the low five figures or less in some dying Rust Belt city? Negotiate downward as much as possible—which you'll likely have the leverage to do—and pull the trigger.

In places like Greece, anarchist neighborhoods—yes, neighborhoods—are the foundation from which much anarchist resistance, from community meals to bank robberies, is launched. This could be our generation's chance to establish something similar.

2) Be the wrecking ball to gentrification's fragile edifice. The housing bubble facilitated the rapid gentrification that has transformed many neglected inner-city neighborhoods into atrocious playgrounds for young affluent types. During that process, anarchists weren't exactly the sand in gentrification's proverbial diesel engine. Now we have the chance to make up some ground.

The credit crunch will make it temporarily more difficult to expand or even maintain the current reach of gentrification, leaving gentrifying areas more vulnerable to resistance. The recent RNC solidarity actions in Pittsburgh have been an inspiration to many, but keep in mind that going on the offensive also means establishing alternatives that allow more and more of us to survive and resist outside of the labor market. If mutual aid can effectively substitute for spending money, that can be just as damaging to business as a broken window.

3) Propagandize. The contraction of the economy and the change in presidential administration both provide powerful propaganda opportunities. We can offer a unique economic analysis by providing a total critique of capitalism—prominently explaining the natural role

played by the boom/bust cycle—and offer the immediate, tangible alternative of mutual aid, unlike authoritarian Leftists who can offer only ineffectual protest and a dystopian vision of the future. Anti-capitalist and anti-political propaganda that is intelligible and relevant to non-anarchists will play better over the next year or two.

That said, you can't fire a cannon from a canoe. Propaganda alone is just more useless paper. It should function as a component of direct action, whether that means Really Really Free Markets or riots. When it appears as part of an amazing experience or a useful gift, what otherwise would have appeared to be extremist claptrap is suddenly worth reading.

## CWC Interview in Swedish Anarchist Paper

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This is the English version of an interview appearing in the new issue of *Brand*, a quarterly Swedish anarchist paper founded in 1898. It explores the complexities of challenging capitalism from outside the economy, clearing up much of the confusion around the infamous anti-work stance associated with CrimethInc. To order a copy of *Brand*, contact [distro@anarkistisktiding.org](mailto:distro@anarkistisktiding.org).

The theme of this issue of *Brand* is work. CrimethInc. calls itself an “Ex-Workers’ Collective.” What does “work” mean for you and why have you left it behind?

It's not so much that everyone involved with CrimethInc. has permanently left work behind, but that we focus on what we can do outside our role as workers in the capitalist economy. Identifying as ex-workers is a way to emphasize that we want our lives to revolve around what we do freely outside wage labor and capitalist competition.

We feel that capitalist competition rewards the most ruthless and selfish people with the most power, and that participating in such an economy drains us of all our potential as human beings, turning our creativity and labor power into monsters (such as global warming and patriarchal propaganda) that destroy and subjugate us. The less any person can contribute to this, the better—and the more we can realize our potential outside of the economy, the better we can fight it.

In the realm of capitalist ideology, there are some who identify with their role as workers—they measure their value according to what they

produce and earn, the same way the economy does. Today there are probably more workers who don't identify with their role as workers at all—for them, it is obvious that they're only working because they're forced to earn money to pay bills. Their "real lives" are elsewhere—in leisure consumption, for example. So identifying with the non-work aspects of life doesn't necessarily make a worker into a revolutionary. All the same, we feel the tensions in this aspect of modern society can easily give rise to revolutionary desires, if we make demands that the capitalist economy cannot fulfill. One example of this is demanding that we should be free to live life to the fullest at all times; obviously, as long as capitalism exists, this will be impossible for most of us, so this desire can inspire people to revolt and resistance.

In the realm of anti-capitalist ideology, there are also some who identify with their role as workers. For them, the primary way they see to contest capitalism is by organizing with other workers to strike for higher wages and so on. In the best case scenario, aspiring revolutionary workers can hope to seize their workplaces and use them to produce goods to be shared by all, as Marx and various anarcho-syndicalists have described. But a lot has changed since 1848. In the era of climate change and alienating technology, it is becoming very difficult to believe that anything worthwhile can be produced in some of those workplaces. Because of this, we feel it is especially important for aspiring revolutionaries to be experimenting outside the workplace as well, where our activities and our sense of self are not dictated by the necessities of production and competition. In organizing a squatted social center or a Really Really Free Market, we discover more hints of the world we want to live in than we ever could under the bosses' whip. Marx and Lenin might call this bourgeois; we would counter that we want revolution as much as they did, but unlike them we can imagine a society without authoritarian structures or destructive mass production.

So calling ourselves ex-workers is also a challenge to ourselves and to others to make the most of our potential outside the exchange economy right now, in order to fight that economy. Of course, different individuals, classes, genders, and nationalities have different relationships to that potential, according to how dispossessed they are by hierarchical social structures and repression. Some workers outside Europe and the US—say, in Korea—have almost no free time and resources outside the workplace; their primary weapon against capitalism is their ability to refuse to work. Elsewhere in the world—say, in India and Africa—there are millions of people who are already

unemployed. Some dogmatic Marxists say they cannot be part of the “revolutionary subject” because they are not positioned to seize the means of production; we would counter that they too can participate in revolutionary struggle by interrupting the channels of distribution and control (think of Argentina’s piqueteros, or the street urchins who raided the World Social Forum in Africa).

But let’s be honest, young Swedish workers: in Sweden and the US, many of us have a great deal of unused potential to act outside the exchange economy to fight capitalism. In our countries, there is some degree of social mobility and social security, and many luxuries are available on credit; these can seduce workers so they conflate their interests with those of the middle class, rather than desiring freedom via the abolition of capitalism. So one of the primary challenges in our context is to spread a value system that counters middle class values in workers. Middle class values mean that, since the worker might one day be able to afford to own his own house, he identifies with the laws of the wealthy that protect those with big houses—even if these laws are used against other poor people like him. An example of counter-values would be valuing togetherness over property, so workers (or ex-workers!) could find fulfillment in living cheaply in collective spaces without a lot of status-oriented consumerism. The less we need to buy to feel good about ourselves, the less we are at the mercy of our enemies. This holds true for workplace organizing as well—the less workers feel they need the luxuries produced by capitalism and the more their necessities come from outside the capitalist economy, the longer and harder they can strike.

Incidentally, really beautiful things sometimes happen when workers go on strike: they write plays about their workplace conditions, they get to know each other outside the constraints of the shop floor, they help each other, they get to stand in the sunlight and raise their voices—sometimes they even utilize corporate equipment to make things according to their own desires. Perhaps you could say “ex-workers” are attempting to stage a permanent strike, to seize the means of production in the form of our own time and energy, as a step towards provoking a general strike.

CrimethInc. organizes an impressive number of projects and publishes an impressive number of books and journals. Is this not work?

Let's not waste too much time on semantics—let's just say we consider there to be a fundamental difference between voluntary labor and wage work. Obviously, we are not against labor—we put a tremendous amount of effort into our projects. Some of it is not “fun” at all—for example, supporting our friends through trials and lengthy prison sentences, or washing all the dishes after three hundred people eat at a Really Really Free Market. But the important matter is that it's all activity we have chosen for ourselves, rather than activity the economy coerced us into.

Okay, what about praxis then: How can we imagine the effort of a CrimethInc. collective to, say, bring out a book or organize a convergence? There are CrimethInc. texts rejecting mandatory meetings, consensus decision-making, even individual commitment to collective processes. So what happens when you get together in order to plan a project?

You know, there is no “CrimethInc. party line” about anything, so you can find CrimethInc. texts rejecting things that other CrimethInc. texts (and agents!) embrace. Different structures are appropriate for different situations. In some cases, you need a structure that works for a lot of people who don't know each other, that guarantees that all of them will have an equal voice. But really strict formal structures tend to be more exhausting, so they sometimes break down over time. We make use of such forms when needed, but we are also trying to stage a long-term struggle that will go on for the rest of our lives if need be, so we try not to use them unnecessarily. Because we are not trying to make decisions for whole neighborhoods, but only to collaborate on specific creative projects, we can afford to be more fluid. Most of our projects function on a basis of informal or semi-formal consensus among groups of comrades who share affinity and have been working together a long time. It seems that this structure has proved to be the most efficient and long-lasting for us. It means that the people cooperating on a project share long-term investment in it and know what to expect from each other, so we don't have to start over from scratch again and again.

If we follow what you've said so far, it sounds like your understanding of work is strongly tied to the wage labor system. Obviously, many folks are dependent on this system, otherwise they can't pay their bills, feed themselves and their families, etc. How do you think these folks should deal with their situation?

I hope it's clear from the answer above that we see the refusal of work as a strategic approach for those who can make use of it, not as a litmus test to determine who is really radical. The point is simply that to the extent to which people can realize their potential outside the exchange economy, this can be a point of departure for anti-capitalist resistance. It's not the only point of departure, and it's not available to everyone, or to the same degree.

You are familiar with the critique that the CrimethInc. ex/non-working stance might function for young, healthy individuals with few responsibilities, maybe in particular for white middle class kids who have their color and class privileges to fall back onto in a bind. What do you make of this?

The refusal of work is a strategy that takes different tactical forms in different situations; obviously, specific tactics are better suited for people in some situations than for others. We're not saying that working single mothers who slave all day cleaning floors to feed their children should quit their jobs and live on the street; but we are saying that anarchists who make comfortable incomes from wage labor should consider cutting down on their hours to start free childcare programs. We're not saying African American men in the US who are always watched by racist security guards should steal (though many of them already have to do so); we're saying that white radicals who have an easier time stealing should steal resources for collective projects that help everyone who needs food. We're not saying that "freedom" means middle class punk kids dropping out of school to hitchhike around the world for a couple years before getting high-paying jobs at NGOs; we're saying nobody is really free until all of us can make decisions based on desire rather than economic need, and the first step towards real freedom is for us to commit our lives to lifelong resistance... whether or not it comes with a salary.

Working class and middle class anarchists in the US and Sweden should be honest about acknowledging our privileges: we have access to resources and opportunities others around the globe do not, and we owe it to them and to ourselves to use those for everyone's benefit. That means spending less time at work earning money for our own personal advancement in capitalist society, and more time fighting capitalism tooth and nail. Most full-time participants in CrimethInc. projects and related anti-capitalist activities have no bank accounts, no insurance, no

retirement funds, no fancy wardrobe, and often have to steal and scam from one meal to the next; some of our harshest critics are probably much better off, financially speaking.

What about ex-working ethics in the context of communities where unemployment is rampant: many communities of color in the US, whole regions of Eastern Europe, vast areas of the so-called “Third World”? Usually, the lack of available (wage labor) work is seen as a serious problem within these communities. Some political activists have accused CrimethInc. of “cynicism” with regard to this situation, also in the context of the infamous blurb on the *Evasion* back cover.

Free-market intellectuals always defend corporate exploitation of “third world” nations (including US ghettos) by saying the exploiters are “creating jobs” that are desperately needed. Of course, once upon a time, long before European colonialism, the ancestors of these potential employees had access to the resources around them without having to trade their lives for them as wage slaves. People in rural Mexico and Brazil don’t need corporate exploitation so much as they need land reform. Lack of wage labor is only a problem when it is coupled with capitalist domination; to campaign for jobs for all, rather than for the abolition of capitalism, is cynical if anything is.

But this whole question is somewhat beside the point. Just because someone needs a job to get an income in Belgrade doesn’t mean a radical in Malmö is doing them a favor by working a lot instead of developing local anarchist projects and international solidarity efforts. Likewise, there are people who deliberately refuse and avoid wage work all around the world, even in the poorest regions. In some cases, these are people whose non-capitalist traditions are still alive, who are resisting assimilation into the culture of production, competition, and violence.

*Evasion* has to be seen specifically in the context of our efforts to promote a “counter-values” in the US, where middle class values have infected so much of the working class. In presenting an adventure story in which the protagonist makes the most of a life without financial means or stability, we were countering the pervasive message in the capitalist media that there is no pleasure or freedom without money. Many young people who start from an uncritical fascination with *Evasion* subsequently move on to more serious anti-capitalist ideas and efforts. The book is certainly not representative of most of what we do, but it has

been surprisingly effective at accomplishing its specific purpose. It would be more sensible for political activists who feel it is not relevant to their lives to simply ignore it, rather than obsessing over it.

Incidentally, all the criticism of *Evasion* I've ever heard has come from middle class or working poor people. When the book was first published, the middle-aged African American and white homeless men with whom I shared tasks at Food Not Bombs said they thought it was right on, including the quote on the back cover. That quote was removed after the first printing, all the same, out of respect for the frustration some had expressed with it.

Can there be any place for trade unions? What about syndicalism? Class analysis? Is this all outdated leftist baggage, or can it still be a worthwhile pursuit, at least under certain circumstances?

Oh, syndicalism is still relevant, absolutely! I think most people involved in CrimethInc. projects see it as a complimentary strategy, not a competing ideology. Some people simultaneously participate in syndicalist organizing and anti-work organizing; others try to find connections between the two, such as providing dumpstered or stolen food to day laborers and those on picket lines. As for class analysis, we're simply saying that it's not radical enough to frame our interests as workers in this society—we have to start developing new conceptions of what our interests might be outside capitalist structures, or else our solutions will always be based in capitalist assumptions.

In light of this, what are your prospects for the ex-workers' movement?

As the economy becomes more and more based on "precarious" work, it will be more important than ever to experiment with forms of resistance that are based outside the workplace. Likewise, in the US, where most trade unions have been totally absorbed into the machinery that perpetuates capitalist domination, we desperately need other starting points for class war. Effective anti-work struggles can only complement workplace organizing—that is, so long as we don't misunderstand them as conflicting approaches.

Could you end with some examples of what “ex-workers” do besides publishing books and organizing protests and convergences?

In the community where I live, a town of less than 15,000 people, we maintain a number of community-oriented programs that we could never do if we had full-time jobs. We operate a free grocery distribution in the two low-income neighborhoods, and we sometimes do a free breakfast program for migrant laborers as well. We get the food for these from dumpstering, and also from sneaky employees—another reason to cultivate connections between workers and ex-workers, and to popularize anti-corporate theft. Every month, we help with a Really Really Free Market, at which hundreds of local people from all walks of life come together to give and receive resources without any capitalist exchange. We maintain a program sending free books to prisoners, since US prison conditions are terrible and prisoners otherwise have no access to reading material. We run a free zine distribution of perhaps 6000 zines, which we produce by means of theft and scams, for tabling at public events. There are underground networks to provide health care to people who cannot afford it, especially women. And of course we have gardens, bands, reading groups, postering and graffiti, and great parties.

These are just a few examples of what we focus on in the spare time we get from living outside the economy. In the US, unlike in Sweden, there is no government funding for any social programs or cultural projects, so we have to do these things on our own. Perhaps this is healthy, because it means we are never seduced to do things because they pay more. Sometimes one of us gets arrested for shoplifting, but we support each other and so far it has not been a serious problem—at least not compared to the long prison sentences some comrades are serving for ecological direct action.

Thanks very much for the opportunity to talk about this subject. If anyone has more questions, email us at [hello@crimethinc.com](mailto:hello@crimethinc.com). Good luck in everything you are doing there!

## **RT#6 to Press, Anecdote from Denver**

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Just today we've sent *Rolling Thunder #6* to the printer, due to arrive back in about five weeks. To celebrate, we have posted the foreword below,

including the detailing of an event from last week's DNC protests in Denver:

### **EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL**

True to form, we completed this issue in the midst of the demonstrations at this year's Democratic National Convention in Denver, at which anarchists are attempting to reinvent mass mobilizations. Every day endless meetings, false alarms, tense standoffs, narrow escapes; every night, while the others sleep or carouse, endless editing and deliberation. Next issue we'll be able to report on all this in depth; for now, the following tale must suffice.

A couple hundred people have gathered in a park downtown: some for dinner with Food Not Bombs, some just hanging out, and some in tentative response to a call for a black bloc issued a month earlier but never adequately organized. Armored police are positioned in groups of a dozen all around the park and the surrounding streets, outnumbering the young people sitting around with black sweatshirts in their laps. A vehicle was supposed to deliver banners, but word comes in that the driver has been detained and the car impounded; there don't seem to be any scouts or communications networks ready. Rumors circulate about some other convergence point. A full hour passes without anyone taking any initiative; even the police seem to lose interest.

Finally, when most people have drifted away and it seems certain that nothing is going to happen, a few people—perhaps ten or fifteen—pull up their hoods and masks and hesitantly begin chanting: "A! Anti! Anticapitalista!" A little air horn gives a feeble toot. They begin walking in a tight little knot.

Who are these lunatics? What are they thinking, masking up and linking arms with hundreds of riot police surrounding them and undercovers at their elbows? This is not the Seattle WTO protests, when the few cops on duty had their hands full dealing with a hundred thousand protesters; these kids are the only ones doing anything this evening, and the whole city is militarized. What can they possibly hope to accomplish?

But others join them. Soon there are a few dozen, in varying degrees of black attire, and then several dozen more. The chant

picks up momentum, but this just makes the whole enterprise seem more suicidal. They make it as far as the road, and the nearest squadron of police forms a line blocking their path. There's nothing for it, the die is cast: they march, awkward and ill-prepared, straight into a shower of pepper spray.

Coughing and choking, the crowd stumbles back to the grass. This should be the end of it, but the numbers keep growing as curious onlookers push forward for a better view. Suddenly someone is shouting out a count, and others join in: "One! Two!" This is yet another mistake—you're supposed to count down, so everyone knows when the count will end—but on "THREE!" perhaps thirty people are running over the grass away from the police, and everyone falls in behind them. In a few seconds hundreds of people are sprinting across the park to the intersection at the far side, at which police have not yet massed.

The crowd pours into the street. The obligatory road closed sign appears and is dragged into the intersection. The energy in the air is electric now, in contrast to the malaise and uncertainty of a mere ten minutes ago. As soon as the stragglers catch up, the crowd lurches forward, turning the wrong way at the corner, and heads off away from the nearby shopping district. They make it exactly a block and a half before another wall of police forms in front of them; a few seconds later another police line traps them from the back. The nimble ones slip out the edges, but the rest—perhaps a hundred—are penned in. The police shut down several blocks, lining the streets with riot cops, bike cops, mounted cops, paddy wagons, and armored cars, and commence beating and shooting pepper balls at the detainees before arresting them.

The story should end there, but it goes on. An hour later several hundred more people, most of whom were not involved in the march or even at the park, have gathered at the intersection where the road closed sign appeared. A crowd of African-American youth are chanting "FUCK THE POLICE!" at one side while a mass of street kids and middle class citizens stare down the police lines and shout denunciations. Spray paint adorns the walls: POLICE STATE. FUCK A PIG. A helicopter circles overhead, scanning the crowd with its spotlight, but this just riles everyone up more; the atmosphere is getting increasingly volatile. People of all walks of life are showing up to ask what's

happening; strangers who never would have spoken otherwise are debating anarchism, police brutality, and what to do next. Nearby bars have closed their doors and business is disrupted throughout the district. Democratic Party delegates are unable to pass through the area; some are trapped in the parking garage of their hotel. This goes on for hours and appears all over the news.

Later, when the participants assess the march, some rate it a successful disaster: from a tactical standpoint it was a catastrophe, but it somehow created an environment in which the dissent submerged in downtown Denver boiled to the surface. If everyone had been sensible and simply dispersed in the park, nothing out of the ordinary would have happened. Instead, a very small number of people succeeded in shifting the options that confronted everyone else around them—and faced with new choices, many people acted differently than they would have otherwise. Had the initial group been more numerous or better prepared, the transformation might have been correspondingly more dramatic.

In taking on the powers that be, we don't need to be prepared to win a war with them—we don't even necessarily need to make all the right decisions or formulate the most airtight plans. We just have to change the context in which others make decisions, to precipitate situations with unforeseen conclusions—so that what a few initiate, many may continue.

Anarchists are specially equipped for this kind of experimentation because we have nothing at stake in the preservation of the current order. In the words of economists and gentrifiers, we are risk tolerant: having little to lose, we can afford to throw ourselves into the unknown and see what happens. Those who must succeed in everything they undertake have to be careful and conservative; nothing new or exciting ever comes from them. Perhaps ninety-nine percent of our projects are dismal failures, but whenever we achieve a breakthrough, it's historic.

Our successes can be dangerous—when you try something and it works, it's easy to get trapped in attempts to repeat it. How many new models have we invented over the past decade, really? At our best, we treat ourselves as experimental material, thrusting ourselves into uncharted territory and returning with new innovations. This issue explores some recent attempts to develop

alternatives to the standard anarchist approaches we inherited from our forebears. Some of these alternatives have become standard themselves, like the SHAC model; others, such as the approach pioneered by the Swedes who built a social center from the ground up in despair of ever being able to defend a squat, have yet to be tested outside a single community.

Through everything, we should constantly be honing our skills to support each other. Living dangerously can take a lot of different forms, and taking risks all the time can be exhausting even apart from the batons, pepper balls, and prison terms. We need to do a lot more to care for one another than just linking arms when it's time to charge the police. It's not easy being experimental material.

## **(Raid on) Logistics in the Twin Cities**

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*Tonight, the convergence space in the Twin Cities was raided by police officers brandishing a warrant to search for materials that they didn't find. Afterward, they used the entry as an excuse to harass, invade, and repress the activists gathered there. This post was originally drafted to be a simple introduction to the logistics work done in Minnesota in preparation for the RNC — but as we were preparing it, news of the raid reached us (via Twin Cities Indymedia's [rss feed](#)) and we had to quickly append this note. Read the RNCWC's [Press Statement](#) for more info.*

As tension builds in the Twin Cities, we thought it would be fun to share one of our contributions to the logistical organizing of the RNC Welcoming Committee. There should be no doubt that members of the RNCWC in Minneapolis/St. Paul have done an incredible job meeting the larger anarchist community's enthusiasm for convention resistance. We were happy to pitch in by helping design some of their logistics literature.

**RNC Welcoming Guide (.8MB) .: Need To Know Basis MN Legal Primer (.9MB)**

We're not trying to boast, though—we're making these screen-readable .pdfs available to help those who can't be there understand as much as they can about what's going on there while events unfold.

**Follow Along**  
[twincities.indymedia.org](http://twincities.indymedia.org) — up-to-the-minute updates from people on

the ground.

[infoshop.org](http://infoshop.org) — for communiqués and news coverage

### **Logistics Support**

[nornc.org](http://nornc.org) — RNC Welcoming Committee Central Branch

[tincancollective.org](http://tincancollective.org) — RNC Communications Collective

[coldsnaplegal.wordpress.com](http://coldsnaplegal.wordpress.com) — Jail Support and Legal Collective

[northstarhealth.wordpress.com](http://northstarhealth.wordpress.com) — Medic and Healthcare Collective

## **The Mortgage Crisis for Beginners**

Our favorite radio show, *This American Life*, recently did a hour show examining the current mortgage crisis—the straw that broke the camel’s back and triggered a global financial crisis, the end of which is nowhere in sight. As the U.S. stumbles forward deeper and deeper into a recession, it would behoove those of us who don’t understand what has happened to take a minute to learn about the economic process—which was truly not a major aberration from business as usual—behind the credit collapse that has many economists warning of a new economic depression.

As usual, TAL makes the dry subject matter absolutely fascinating and entertaining, interviewing victims and perpetrators at every level of the travesty, and as they say:

We explain it all to you. What does the housing crisis have to do with the turmoil on Wall Street? Why did banks make half-million dollar loans to people without jobs or income? And why is everyone talking so much about the 1930s? It all comes back to the Giant Pool of Money.

Listen to the show here, for free, by clicking on the ‘Full Episode’ link. For those looking for more details, another radio favorite of ours, *Fresh Air*, has some more perspectives here, and here. And of course, Wikipedia comes through with 12,000 words on the subject.

## **New Unconventional Action Paper**

An Unconventional Action chapter has just published a new free paper, *False Hope vs. Real Change*, detailing the pitfalls of electoral politics and exploring alternatives grounded in direct action and community self-determination. We’ve made the PDF available:

*False Hope vs. Real Change PDF [3.2 MB]*

CrimethInc. Far East will be including copies of this paper in orders. To obtain copies in bulk for distribution, email [falsehopeorrealchange08@riseup.net](mailto:falsehopeorrealchange08@riseup.net).

From the release announcement:

False Hope vs. Real Change: An Anti-Partisan (Beyond) Voting Guide to the 2008 Elections argues passionately for direct action in the face of war, environmental destruction, militarized borders, and the alienation of American life—while exposing how politicians profit from these crises even as they claim to offer solutions to them. Beyond merely telling people not to vote, this colorful, engaging eight-page newspaper offers concrete examples of how to participate directly in resisting oppression and creating alternatives to voting. By responding directly to many of the reasons why people who are disillusioned or cynical about politics continue to vote, the articles explore how our most empowering options for participation exist outside of the ballot boxes. The writers examine the possibilities of direct action, collectives, mutual aid, and anarchy, analyzing their potential as tools to move beyond the constraints of voting, party politics, capitalism, and government. Highly recommended as a tool for explaining anarchist critiques of elections and voting, and for building momentum towards the 2008 Republican and Democratic National Convention protests.



**[www.feedbooks.com](http://www.feedbooks.com)**  
Food for the mind