

Down with Empire!

Up With Spring!

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Publisher's Note

Down with Empire, Up with Spring has been pulled from the British ecological and anarchist journal *Do or Die*, issue 10. Despite its British-centric perspective, we believe this work is both hugely inspiring to those of us involved in ecological struggles here in Aotearoa (Part 1) and also helpful in placing these struggles in the context of the general fight against Power and Capital (Part 2).

This work is a lucid account of the last 15 years of the ecological movement in Britain and the development of their tactics and vision, and offers many creative ideas for those of us in Aotearoa fighting similar battles. However, it is not without its faults. The treatment of indigenous people in Part 2, in particular, is strongly imbued with a colonising ethos and must be read critically, especially in the context of Maori and indigenous struggle in the Pacific.

The work remains almost entirely unaltered except for the deletion of a significant tract from Part 2 detailing the Mediterranean ecology that is of little interest to those outside of Europe.

– **Torrance, Rebel Press**

Part One: Recent Pre-History

An Insurgency of Dreams

“Defend the Collective Imagination. Beneath the cobblestones, the beach”
– Slogan daubed in Paris, May 1968

The radical ecological movement was born from the world-wide revolutionary upsurge of the 1960s and ‘70s. Love of the earth and for each other has always been with us, but in that period these feelings exploded across the world in a way they hadn’t for decades. In nearly every land people came together and resisted. In some areas there were decisive victories for people in the battle against power; in others, power won hands down.

The epic struggle of the Vietnamese people and the anti-Vietnam war actions across the world; urban guerrillas across Europe; barricades in Paris; the European squatting movement; the brutal end of the Prague Spring; the rise of the Black Power movement.

This upsurge brought with it the (re)birth of the feminist, ecological, indigenous and libertarian ideas that now form the basis of our worldview.

Authoritarian Communism had dominated the radical movements ever since the Bolshevik counter-revolution. After having been physically exterminated in country after country, anarchist/libertarian groups started once again to grow.

Industrial development accelerated in the ‘Third World’ following World War Two. The global elite extended its tentacles, attempting to assimilate or

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exterminate tribes and band societies outside its control. In turn ‘indigenous’ peoples fought back. In the 1970s the American Indian Movement (AIM) re-launched indigenous armed resistance in North America, reminding us that even the capitalist core countries were always colonies.

Seeing the horrors inflicted on our imprisoned non-human relations – in laboratories, abattoirs and factory farms – the animal liberation movement was born with sabotage at its centre.

New generations took up the standard of Women’s Liberation, challenging not only the dominant society but also its patriarchal (loyal) opposition that forever sidelined women’s lives in the cause of the (male) workers’ struggle.

After decades of almost universal techno-worship, not least by radicals, many people began to see that the earth was being destroyed, and started trying both to defend it and regain understanding.

The Rise of Environmentalism

“It’s time for a warrior society to rise up out of the Earth and throw itself in front of the juggernaut of destruction.”

— Dave Foreman, US EF! co-founder.

The Western environmental movement grew as part of the upsurge, but also in large part as a postscript. When the barricades – both actual and metaphorical – were cleared, a generation of Western radicals looked to new fronts while many others retreated to rural idylls and communes. What they both found was strength in nature and a burning urge to defend it. This early environmental movement fundamentally challenged the established conservation organisations which for so long had acted as mere (ineffective) park keepers.

At sea a raw energy propelled tiny dinghies to confront the nuclear and whaling industries. On land new organisations were forming, fighting toxic waste dumps, logging, mining and other essentials of industry. Scientists were uncovering huge cataclysms facing the earth and – to elite horror – breaking

ranks. This environmentalism had a threatening potential that had to be defused – an army of hacks, cops, advertisers and ideologues got to work.

Capital and state both attacked environmentalists while simultaneously funding counter-tendencies to steer the movement away from confrontation and towards co-operation. This carrot and stick approach co-opted many; groups which had looked promising succumbed to respectability and corporate funding. Environmentalists were given a seat at the table but the talk was not of nature but of compromise, techno-fix and corporate greenwash. Assimilation.

In fact, as early as 1972, *The Ecologist* magazine (at the time printing articles on the links between ecology and anarchy) carried an editorial entitled ‘Down with Environmentalism’ saying: “We must repudiate the term environmental. It is too far gone to be rescued.”⁽¹⁾

All through the ‘70s environmental groups were gaining increased support and membership lists were expanding dramatically. By building **mass** based organisations environmentalism was split into campaigners and supporters. Bigger offices and bigger salaries were needed to **manage** the movement. This division – a creation of scale – acted (and still acts) as a terrible internal pressure crushing the radical content and practical usefulness of groups.

Those attracted to ‘campaign’ jobs were often exactly the wrong **class** of people (inclined to paper pushing rather than physical action) while most of the support their ‘supporters’ gave was the annual return of cheques and membership forms – conscience-salving exercises. When serious people got involved in groups their action was often curtailed by other ‘campaigners’ (or the cop in their own head) reminding them that it could alienate the ‘public’ and thus cut into membership and funding.

This process was as prevalent in what was then the most radical of the environmental groups – Greenpeace (GP). In 1977 Paul Watson, one of GPs directors (who became an icon when he drove a dinghy straight into the path of a whaling harpoon), was heading an expedition to the Newfoundland ice floes. At one point he grabbed a club used to kill baby harp seals and threw it into the waters. The sealers dunked and nearly drowned him, yet worse was to come on return to the office – betrayal. Throwing the club into the sea was criminal

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damage and he was told by a faceless lawyer, “I don’t think you understand what Greenpeace is all about.” He was expelled from the corporation.

Watson went on to found the whaler-sinking Sea Shepherd (more of them later) while Greenpeace just got bigger, gaining millions of members while all the time becoming more symbolic and less of a threat. As GP’s founder Bob Hunter said with an air of depression, “Nothing could be done to stop it from growing. It’ll keep growing and growing, a juggernaut that is out of control.”⁽²⁾

Meanwhile the global attack on the wild was left largely unabated. Christopher Maines in *Green Rage* put it well:

“Like the Youth movement, the women’s movement, and rock and roll, the reform environmental movement suffered from its own success. It entered the ‘70s as a vague critic of our society and exited as an institution, wrapped in the consumerism and political ambitions it once condemned. In their drive to win credibility with the government agencies and corporations... the new professional environmentalists seemed to have wandered into the ambiguous world of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, where it was increasingly difficult to tell the farmers from the pigs.”⁽³⁾

The Birth of Earth First!

“So, from the vast sea of raging moderation, irresponsible compromise, knee-jerk rhetorical Sierra Club dogma, and unknowing (OK, sometimes knowing) duplicity in the systematic destruction of the earth, a small seed of sanity sprouts: Earth First!”

— Howie Wolke, EF! co-founder.

In 1980 five friends hiked into the desert. All long term activists sick with careerism, legality and failure, they knew a new kind of group was needed. One that would break the law, push open the envelope, hit the corporations where

it hurt (in the pocket) and most of all never EVER compromise in defence of mother earth. Around their camp fire Earth First! was born.

EF's first act was one of sarcastic symbolism – and defection. In a land full of memorials to the genocidal victor, EF! raised a plaque commemorating Victorio, an Apache who wiped out a mining camp.

“Victorio, Outstanding Preservationist and Great American. This monument celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the great Apache chief, Victorio's, raid on the Cooney mining camp near Mogollon, New Mexico, on April 28, 1880. Victorio strove to protect these mountains from mining and other destructive activities of the white race. The present Gila Wilderness is partly a fruit of his efforts. Erected by the New Mexico Patriotic Heritage Society”

The next action EF! pulled off was at the Glen Canyon Dam, where a three hundred foot polythene banner was unfurled down the side of the dam, looking for all the world like a vast crack opening up. The demonstrators chanted RAZE THE DAM. People had campaigned in the past against new dams but no one had ever had the audacity to campaign to pull down those already built. The Glen Canyon Dam in fact held special significance. In a sickening deal the big environmental groups had accepted the damming of the canyon in return for the cancellation of a dam elsewhere. This was exactly the kind of compromise EF! was founded to resist.

Thus from the very beginning EF!ers set themselves not only the task of defending the last fragments but of reversing the process: pulling down the dams and the powerlines. EF! launched its proposal for a network of vast wilderness preserves – half of Nevada for instance would be declared “off limits to industrial human civilisation, as preserves for the free flow of natural processes.” EF! didn't want people to wait for the state to set them up. Instead the people themselves should make them happen – direct action. If logging needed stopping – stop it, blockade it, trash the machines. If a road needed digging up – DIG IT UP! This militancy was a touchstone of even early EF!, but it wasn't just its militancy that made it stand out globally (though it shocked Americans). All around the world groups were turning to direct action in environ-

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mental struggles. In both Britain and Germany, for example, anti-nuclear mass action had been growing apace. What was really unique in the environmental movement was EF!'s militant *biocentrism*.

The wilderness proposals preamble stated: "the central idea of EF! is that humans have no divine right to subdue the Earth, that we are merely one of several million forms of life on this planet. We reject even the notion of benevolent stewardship as that implies dominance. Instead we believe that we should be plain citizens of the Land community."

Echoing *The Ecologist's* earlier denunciation of environmentalism Dave Foreman goes one step further:

"Wilderness is the essence of everything we're after. We aren't an environmental group. Environmental groups worry about environmental health hazards to human beings, they worry about clean air and water for the benefit of people and ask us why we're so wrapped up in something as irrelevant and tangential and elitist as wilderness. Well, I can tell you a wolf or a redwood or a grizzly bear doesn't think wilderness is elitist. Wilderness is the essence of everything. It's the real world."⁽⁴⁾

Within a year EF! moved beyond symbolism to direct struggle. Around the country a combination of civil disobedience and sabotage halted logging and oil drilling. Groups were setting up all over. What many in industry had originally written off as a joke was quickly becoming a nightmare. In 1985 EF!ers published *Ecodefence: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*. This was unashamed, heads held high 350 page manual on how to trash pretty much any machine with which civilisation attacks the wild. Written by over 100 contributors to the *Earth First! Journal*, this book was information for action.

Diggers trashed, forests occupied, billboards subverted, logging roads dug up, trees spiked, offices invaded, windows smashed, snares disabled, computers scrapped – EF! was on the move.

But so now was the state.

The FBI wasn't about to let a crew of hippies, feminists, cowboys and desert anarchists continue to hammer company profits. The late '80s onwards saw a wave of reaction that included infiltration, set ups, conspiracy trials, raids,

corporate directed anti-environmental hate groups and even assassination attempts on 'leading' EF!ers. This was a continuation of the FBI's COINTEL-PRO (Counter Insurgency Programme) previously unleashed in the '60s/'70s upsurge against the Weather Underground, the New Left, the American Indian Movement, the Black Panthers and the Puertorican liberation movement. Now some of the same agents that had destroyed those movements were overseeing the attack on EF!

Pre-existing divisions over philosophy, tactics and not least of all personality were exacerbated by the crisis that engulfed EF! A split began to emerge between supporters of EF! co-founder Dave Foreman and long term California organiser Judi Bari. All the while both were under serious corporate/state attack. Foreman was woken up one morning with an FBI gun to his head and charged with conspiracy to down power lines. Bari was carbombed.

The split and state attacks seriously weakened US EF! and it would never fully recover its accelerating drive. Nevertheless survive it did and at the beginning of the '90s it was still *the* kick ass environmental movement of the developed world. Its actions, ideas and attitude would inspire a massive wave of action across the Atlantic.

EF! Crosses the Atlantic

The climate in Britain in 1991 was similar to that which had given birth to US EF! Organisations that had started off quite radical in the '70s were well and truly assimilated. Big offices, good salaries, lobbying and little else.

Back in 1972, in its first ever newsletter, FoE UK stated:

“We want to avoid the centre-periphery situation, whereby an organisation's forces and resources tend to be drawn to the centre, to 'head office' while patently the strength of the group ... is derived from experience in the field.”⁽⁵⁾

By the '90s FoE had undeniably FAILED to avoid the 'centre-periphery situation' (to put it politely). Greenpeace was even more centrist – its local groups

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simply fundraisers.⁽⁶⁾ The late '80s had seen a massive increase in support for environmental groups yet nothing real was happening. Something more radical – and practical – was needed.

On the south coast in the seedy kiss-me-quick seaside town of Hastings some sixth form students were plotting. They were bored out of their minds by A-levels and disillusioned with FoE. In contrast the biocentric approach of US EF! and its victorious direct action tactics were inspiring. The wild was calling...

They formed Britain's first EF! group with a handful of people and no resources. Within a few months they would be making headlines – for now they spray painted Hastings. A year later they had kick-started the biggest wave of ecological defence Britain has seen since the vanquishing of the peasantry...⁽⁷⁾

So as to cover the last decade relatively briefly I'm going to have to paint with big strokes. The time covered divides (pretty) neatly into three overlapping stages:

Earth First! Birth Period (1991 – 1993)

Land Struggle Period (1993 – 1998)

Consolidation and Global Resistance Period (1998 – 2002)

Earth First! Birth Period (1991–1993)

Earth First! hit the headlines when two EF!ers flew from Britain to the rainforests of Sarawak. At the time the Penan tribes were barricading logging roads and standing up to the corporate attack on their home – the forest. The two joined the blockades and for their efforts were locked up for two months in a stinking Malay jail. This news story went through the roof – much to the annoyance of both the Malaysian government and the UK's leading environmental groups.

FoE Central Office publicly denounced EF!, arguing that by taking action in Sarawak the EF!ers AIDED the Malaysian government who wanted to paint all opposition as emanating from the West. This position ignored that the Pen-

an had requested that people join them and that the Malaysian government was unlikely to halt the destruction without increased PHYSICAL opposition. As one of the imprisoned EF!ers said:

“In our absence from Britain we had been tried and convicted by the mainstream groups. They have convicted us of a crime they themselves could never be accused of: action. With friends like these, the Earth doesn't need enemies.”

This was the first of many public attacks on the new generation of radical ecological activists by the headquarters of the environmental NGOs. The difference between the two tendencies was shown in July 1991. While the Sarawak Two were in prison the annual meeting of the G7 (worlds seven leading state powers) came to London. EF!ers with no money and few numbers carried out a number of actions – banner drops outside and disruption of meetings inside. The NGOs submitted reports. This mobilisation by EF! was small but a portent of things to come. The next time the G7 came to Britain the radical ecological movement would field not dozens but thousands...

Thanks to the Sarawak campaign the Hastings lot quickly began to make links with people around the country from a variety of pre-existing networks: Green Anarchist, the (embryonic) Rainforest Action Network, ALF, Green Student groups, peace groups, local FoE and the hunt saboteurs. Out of a generation largely consisting of students and doleys disillusioned with mainstream environmentalism, groups sprang up in London, Brighton, Glastonbury, Liverpool, Oxford, Manchester and Norwich.

Roads, Rebels and Rainforests

Inspired by abroad, the handful of new activists went about importing the North American/Australian model. What this meant was a combination of non-violent civil disobedience, media stunts, and monkey-wrenching. Actions were organised as part of international rainforest days co-ordinated in the US and Australia. Australia had seen some recent big dock blockades and the tactic was quickly brought to Britain.

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On 4th December 1991, in what was EF!'s first really successful action, 200 people invaded Tilbury docks in London. That month the *EF! Action Update* also reported under the headline 'Reclaim the Streets' a small roadblock done by South Downs EF! More was to be heard of Reclaim the Streets...

Tilbury was followed by a 400 strong protest at Liverpool docks.

"On the first day we stormed the fences, occupied cranes, piles of dead rainforest, observation towers and machinery; we hung banners off everything and blocked the busy dock road... Police relations were good; because of full liaison work, violence on both sides was prevented and we all got on like good mates. This was helped with good legal backup, and non-violence training from experienced CND activists... People stayed up the cranes all night... The second day saw a complete change in attitude by the authorities. They'd let us have our fun on the first day and they were determined that the ship would dock on the Wednesday. Under fear of violence, our press office got the media straight down there – our strongest weapon against foul play, but already the police were wading in and holding people in a big cage."⁽⁸⁾

The description of state force as 'foul play' and our greatest protection from it being the media illustrates well the startlingly naive views held by many at the time. The dock-workers refused to unload the shipment while EF!ers were still running around in danger. Eventually the police cleared the dock and the shipment was unloaded.

February saw the first anti-road direct action at Twyford Down. FoE held a symbolic chaining up of the site which they ended when injunctioned. At the request of the Twyford Down Association EF!ers from all over the country started a wave of site actions, sabotage and blockades.

Offices started to be targeted around this time with an example being the chaining up of the Malaysian airline office by 29 activists in solidarity with 31 Penan on trial.⁽⁹⁾

While the national days of actions at Twyford continued down south, up north the campaign to stop peat extraction from Thorne Moors hotted up. On Monday 13th April £100,000 of damage was done to Fisons machinery. A tel-

ephone call to the media claimed the action for Earth First! FoE central office quickly condemned the action on television.

In many ways the first few months of 1992 set a pattern of activism prevalent for much of the next decade – a cycle of national actions, anti-road campaigns, office occupations, night-time sabotage and street blockades.

The South Downs hosted Britain's first EF! gathering in April 1992. Around 60 people turned up to discuss direction, aims and plan future actions. While EF! was quite unified at the time, divisions were definitely present. The recent Moors sabotage and unwise interviews to the press concerning the future environmental use of explosives caused quite a stir. Most agreed that if EF! itself was seen to do criminal damage then it would put groups at risk. A line of 'We neither condemn nor condone' was agreed upon. For some this was simply a legal technicality – in reality EF!ers would still be doing damage. For the less militant faction it was seen as meaning civil disobedience was *the* tactic for EF! while sabotage was secondary, separate and something done by others. Though I'd still say that the wet faction was wrong, it was understandable given the widespread paranoia following the then recent Arizona conspiracy trial and the FBI bombing of EF!ers.

In this period EF! was primarily involved nationally in two campaigns: rainforests and anti-roads. While similar tactics were used for both they had fundamentally different characters. While rainforest days of action would trail off, anti-road action would get bigger and bigger.

While the rainforest actions were often very successful – on their own terms – they rarely lasted more than a day. On May 11th '92 over 100 invaded the yard of Britain's biggest mahogany importer. Though a successful action in itself, it remained in the whole a media stunt. The site remained operative, the offices weren't trashed and next day it opened up again as usual. We all felt empowered by the action, but there was a different feeling at Twyford Down. At Twyford the movement could engage in protracted physical resistance. It was a land struggle. You could feel the land you were struggling over with your hands and your soul. When people started to move onto the land itself they connected with it, became part of it. Standing in the sun, grass between your

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toes looking to the diggers on the horizon *the rage grew*. It wasn't a single issue – it was war.

On an entirely practical level it was a focus; an easily accessible battleground local groups could drive their vans to. In this struggle EF! grew and evolved. Most actions through '92 were done by between 10-50 people and commonly resulted in minor arrests for breach of the peace. Sabotage commenced almost immediately. The site was regularly flooded by redirecting the River Itchens water and machines were wrenched. Just as it was new for us so too it was for the state, who were suprisingly unprepared. In these first few months it would be case of running onto site, climbing a crane or locking onto a digger. An hour or so later the state's most regular foot-soldier would arrive – Bill Aud, a copper with a sideline in mobile disco.



Friend or FoE?

In the early 1990s Friends of the Earth (FoE) central office made a concerted effort to restrict the growth of the new movement. Negative public statements about EF! were issued (most notably about the Sarawak jailings) but it wasn't until the April 1992 Thorne Moors sabotage that FoE central office showed its true colours when Andrew Lees – then head of FoE – condemned the action on TV.

"We have to be very careful that this style of anti-environmental action does not actually get misrepresented as something the environment movement support. We decry, we deny it. It has no place in a democracy which relies, and must rely, on public demanding the politicians deliver the goods."⁽¹⁰⁾

This public condemnation of the very essence of direct action showed how far FoE central office had come from its early radical days. Contrast it with a statement by FoE's first director twenty years previously.

"Whilst it is the case that the Japanese experience of people physically fighting the construction of an airport or motorway has not been repeated in Britain that is not to say that it will not occur here. Indeed... it is almost inconceivable that clashes... will be avoided... When patience runs out we won't really be – what's the word? – militant. After all is said and done, putting sugar in a bulldozer's petrol tank is relatively

undramatic compared with blowing up a mountain.⁽⁹⁾

After slagging the action publicly Lees got to work on his own members. Worried (correctly) that many local FoE groups were showing interest in direct action an edict was issued banning them from working with EF! It even went as far as to warn FoE groups that if they demonstrated with EF! their right to use the FoE Ltd. name might be revoked. This intimidation was too much for some of the FoE grassroots. At FoE National Conference local groups led by Birmingham and Brighton challenged Lees on this and defeated him.

Lees and others at FoE Central had seen the new movement as a potential threat to power. They thought they could nip it in the bud – they couldn't. It would grow much bigger and gain vast public sympathy. The strategy of FoE changed – from one of strength to one of weakness. By the mid-'90s a new director was trying to court EF! – even turning up to an EF! Gathering with a large block of dope (whisky for the natives). He envisaged a series of meetings at which he and two or three other top staff could meet a similar number of EF! 'representatives' behind closed doors. This was of course out of the question. Just as no-one could represent EF! at a national level, EF! could not represent everyone involved in eco-direct action. Over twenty EF!ers came to the first meeting, most to make this point and make sure no one could sell the movement down the river. FoE said it had learnt from its past mistakes – most EF!ers looked sceptical.

At the same time the Newbury Bypass saw FoE central's biggest push to capitalise on direct action. It even managed to take over the campaign's media liaison, (resulting in a major increase in its media profile and resultant subs money). Promises not to publicly slag direct action were hastily forgotten when over a hundred stormed an office throwing computers out of the window. When hundreds took part in the festive burning of diggers, FoE Central once again condemned the resistance.

The experience of dealing with FoE Central would be just the first of its kind. A few years later, following the J18 global day of action, the Socialist Workers Party (another reformist hierarchical racket) would try to boost its membership by fronting itself as the backbone of the movement. Just like FoE it condemned militant and genuine resistance while trying to build bridges to mainstream groups.

NGOs, political parties. These professional priests of assimilation are simply vampires – let's do some staking.



The Camps Begin...

The need for groups to have somewhere to sleep after travelling distances for days of action was the catalyst that set up Britain's first ever ecological direct action camp. A traveller site had long graced one side of the hill, but in June an obviously separate action camp was set up on the dongas – an area of threatened downland furrowed deep with sheep droves. This became a base for action against the road-building that was going on further down the hill. On the dongas a real feeling of tribe developed as many more were attracted to the site by summer beauty and direct action.

While some travellers had early on got involved in EF!,⁽¹²⁾ it was at Twyford that a real mix started to develop between (predominately urban) EF!/Animal lib types and (predominately rural) travellers. Each threw different ingredients into the campfire cauldron (of veggie slop). The activists – action techniques. The Travellers – on the land living skills. Teepees and benders sprung up, machines were trashed. This crossover would propel ecological direct action into a potent cycle of struggle with big numbers and big successes.

However, while both sides complimented each other it would be ridiculous to iron over the very real family squabbles. As the summer progressed there was tension within the Dongas Tribe over what offensive actions should be taken and what defensive measures should be put in place. Discussion of how to resist the (obviously imminent) eviction was silenced with the classic hippy refrain: 'If you think negative things, negative things will happen'. It was even suggested, in a basically religious formulation, that mother earth would simply not 'allow' the destruction of the dongas to happen. This tendency grew as the months went on until by Autumn serious conflict reared up. Following a threat by security to repeat an earlier arson attack on the camp in retaliation for site sabotage, offensive action was actually 'banned' by a 'meeting of the tribe'. Hippie authoritarian pacifists⁽¹³⁾ practically 'banished' EF!ers who had been involved from the start. Predictably, however, the state wasn't standing idle – it was preparing.

Elsewhere the campaign against roads was building apace. New road openings were disrupted and the newspapers were already talking about the 'next

Twyford' – the battle for Oxleas Wood in London. Across the country the government boasted it was building the biggest road programme since the Romans. These roads smashed through some of the most biologically important areas – SSSIs (Special Sites of Scientific Interest) – and so it was obvious that by fighting roads one could take on Thatchers 'Great Car Economy', while directly defending important habitat. Direct action was starting to spread beyond roads. At Golden Hill in Bristol an impressive community resistance against Tesco destroying local green space resulted in arrests and mass policing. A new air was definitely abroad.

Back at Twyford the inevitable eviction came brutally on the 9th of December – Yellow Wednesday. A hundred flouro-jacketed Group 4 security guards escorted bulldozers in to trash the camp. Throwing themselves in front of the landrovers and machines those in the camp slowed the eviction – suffering arrests and injuries. Two were rendered unconscious by cops; lines of coiled razor wire crossed the down. The drama appearing live on television brought local rambles, environmentalists, kids and the simply shocked to the site, many of whom without hesitation joined the resistance. Others came from around the country, making the eviction last three days. The eviction was an important moment – deeply depressing to most involved, it nevertheless captured the imagination of thousands.

“Many, particularly the media, who like a nice neat story – will see the move of the Dongas Camp as the closing act of the Twyford drama, but the battle has not ended – it's beginning. If they think they can stop us with threats and violence, we've got to make damn sure they don't. Hunt sabs regularly get hassle but carry on regardless – let's learn from their example. Obstruction on site needs to be co-ordinated and supported. The number of days work lost is what counts. To broaden it out nationally, every Tarmac and associated subcontractors office, depots and sites in the country should be targeted. Every leaflet produced should contain the information needed for a cell to wreak £10,000 of havoc against the contractors and even put smaller sub-contractors out of business. No Compromise in Defence of Planet Earth!” – *Do or Die* No.1, Jan 1993

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From the Ashes... Twyford Rising!

In February, following an eventful invasion of Whatley Quarry, a new camp was set up at Twyford. Off route and up on the hill overlooking the cutting, this camp, and those that followed it, would have a very different attitude than the one on the dongas. Not defence, ATTACK!

Starting with half a dozen campers (Camelot EF!) the site steadily grew through spring with direct action practically everyday – and many nights too! Some actions were carried out by a handful of people locking onto machines, others were mass invasions by hundreds. Diggers were trashed, offices invaded. A sunrise circle-dance was followed by an eight car sabotage convoy.

The state response to these actions grew more organised: hordes of guards, private investigators and cops were stationed daily to stop the actions. They failed. Endless arrests, restrictive bail conditions, camp evictions and harassment only hardened resolve. By late April the Department of Transport was in the High Court pushing for an injunction on 76 named individuals. To back up their case they produced evidence nearly a foot thick with hilarious daily reports from Twyford. A not unusual entry read thus:

“At 0845hrs a group of protestors raided one of the small earthmoving operations at Shawford Down and did some very severe damage to the excavator before making off. There were between 35-50 of them and they seemed to know exactly what to do to cause the most damage to the machines.”⁽¹⁴⁾

Unsurprisingly the High Court backed the DoT and injunctioned the 76. The reaction from our side was swift, two days after the hearing 500 joined a Mass Trespass at the cutting. In a moving sign of multi-generational resistance the crowd was addressed by Benny Rothman, one of the leaders of the 1932 Kinder Scout Trespass. The mass injunction breaking resulted in six being sent to jail for a month – the first of many to end up in the clink for fighting road building. On the day of their release they were greeted by friends, smiles, hugs and... sabotage. In Collingham, Linconshire, under the spray painted title ‘For the Prisoners of Twyford Down’, the following was wrenched: 3 bulldozers, 3 Tarmac Trucks, 2 Diesel Pumps, 1 Work Shed and a Control Station.⁽¹⁵⁾

Tarmac PLC was feeling the pressure. Across the country many of its offices were occupied, its machines targeted. When its AGM was disrupted the directors made their fears known. Thanks to good corporate research their home addresses had been uncovered and published. Some had been freaked enough to hire security guards – their apprehension heightened by past targeting of directors by Animal Liberationists. Considering the relatively few ‘radical eco’ home visits since, this may seem surprising. However at this time the movement was influenced by quite divergent groups. The fact that directors were largely left unscathed in the years to come was not a given – it was a choice.

During that summer everything from Druid curses to burning tarmac was hurled at the contractors in a hectic campaign which was “a symbol of resistance, a training ground, a life changer and a kick up the arse to the British green movement.”⁽¹⁶⁾ Nevertheless, though it slowed it, the M3 was not stopped. “The cutting at Twyford Down gets ever deeper and the down, the water-meadows and of course most of the dongas are now destroyed, but it’s destruction has given birth to a movement and the fight goes on.”⁽¹⁷⁾

As the resistance at Twyford waned anti-road actions were spreading across the country like wildfire. Digger diving was organised on a near daily basis at Wymondham near Norwich, and in Newcastle hammocks were strewn in the trees at Jesmond Dene. Like Twyford, once again it was local EFlers and residents that catalysed the initial actions that burgeoned into widescale *tribal* resistance on the land.

Further north, action was hotting up in Scotland with tree and crane sits, some lasting days, connected to the M74 in Glasgow. Even further north was the campaign against the Skye Bridge, a monstrosity cutting across the Kyle of Lockash, immortalised in the environmental classic, *The Ring of Bright Water*. The bridge not only affected the direct habitat (famous for its otters) but connected the Hebrides into the mainland infrastructure, endangering the whole regions ecology by exposing it to further development.

Unfortunately, at the time there was only limited active local support for resistance. The first and only day of action against the building was carried out by around a dozen, who, bar a few from Skye and Glasgow EFl, were all from ‘south of the border’. As cops stationed on the island could be counted

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on one hand, reinforcements were brought in. Inflatables were launched as the main work was being carried out off barges. The reaction of the construction firm was brutal – industrial hoses were used as water-cannons in an attempt to knock those up floating cranes into the sea. The Scottish press were present in numbers and also enjoyed some corporate PR. The front page of *The Scotsman* put it like this:

“Journalistic objectivity is a wonderful thing. However, it is easily damaged, especially by people trying to ram your boat, sink you, throw rocks at you, then threatening you first with a crowbar and then a grappling hook, not to mention attacking you with a tracked excavator.”⁽¹⁸⁾

The boats were impounded and most were arrested. Bussed a hundred miles away, the group was given strict bail by an all-powerful ‘Roving Sheriff’ (another great colonial legacy) not to return to the Highlands and Islands for over a year. Police escorted the van most of the way to the border. Elsewhere actions were taken against the project’s funder, The Bank of America, but the campaign was effectively stillborn by low local involvement and immediate corporate/state ‘direct action’.

A very different situation had produced a very different result at Oxleas Wood in London. These woods in SE London were widely believed to be the next big battle and 3,000 people had signed a pledge to ‘Beat the Bulldozers’. After over a year of direct action at Twyford and with resistance spreading the government knew it couldn’t risk hitting such a beautiful place within ‘recruitment distance’ of millions. The summer of 1993 saw this £300 million scheme dropped, a major victory after just a year of sustained action against infrastructural growth.

Not Single Issues, Just One War

This success was all the more impressive considering that this campaign, though then becoming the dominant terrain of struggle for the movement, was still only one of the battles it was involved in. The daily fight on the land was interspersed with national and local days of action across the country on a range of issues.

Timber depots in Oxford, Rochdale and London were all targeted by days of action. One national week of action against mahogany saw 'ethical shop-lifting' (the seizure of illegally logged timber from shops) in towns across the country; and abroad the simultaneous total destruction of logging equipment by the Amazonian Parkana Indians!⁽¹⁹⁾ Other actions included bank occupations (against Third World debt), an ICI factory invasion (to highlight continued ozone depletion), road blockades (against car culture) and regular quarry blockades at Whatley in Somerset. These different battles were all viewed as part of the same war by EF!ers. Many of the hundreds that invaded Oxford Timbnet for the second time had come direct from a weekend of action at Twyford. The next day a cavalcade moved onto Bristol to help disrupt the opening of the disputed Golden Hill Tesco. Then, as now (maybe more so), many EF!ers were also also involved in the animal liberation movement.

The campaigns were carried out in a global context of escalating radical ecological resistance. Anti-road campaigns in the (French) Pyrenees, anti-whaling action by Sea Shepherd (around Norway), the campaign against the Narmada Dam (in India), the Ogoni struggle against Shell (Nigeria), EF! defence of the Danube (in Slovakia), biotech companies bombed (in Switzerland), GM crop experiments dug up (in the Netherlands), and of course anti-logging battles (in N. America, the Pacific, the Amazon and Australia).

It's a long way from North America to Newcastle but in 1993 the tactic of protracted tree-sits crossed the Atlantic. Following demos earlier in the year the bulldozers had gone into Jesmond Dene unannounced on June 16th. The state, however, hadn't factored in skiving Geordie kids, who stopped the machines working while the alarm went out. The next morning protestors barricaded the site entrance. More kids came back and shovelled earth with plastic flowerpots to build up the barricade – the Flowerpot Tribe was born. The campfire was set burning and a strong community formed. A combination of 'local talent' and reinforcements from Twyford and elsewhere, made the next five months an avalanche of site occupations, tree-sitting, piss-taking and nightly sabotage. The legendary winds of Newcastle seemed to blow down the construction site fencing again and again! The kids sang: "The Chainsaws, the Chainsaws – they

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cut down all our trees. The Pixies, the Pixies, trashed their JCBs.” Of course ,despite the laughs, it was hard.

“Everyone is getting very knackered and pissed off – tree sitting is saving the trees that are hammocked, but it’s tiring, cold, stressful and often boring. Ground support people face prison for breaking injunctions as they take food to trees. It’s GRIM for sitters when the trees are felled near them. Local people sab a Cement mixer under the copper beech by throwing rock salt into it – a workman goes berserk and tries attacking the beech with a JCB, trying to knock the tree-sitters out. He survived but the copper beech loses another couple of branches.”[20]

In 1991 EF!’s handful of activists were the radical ecological movement. By the end of the summer of 1993, EF! not only had 45 local groups but had catalysed thousands to take direct action – mostly not under the EF! banner. Now one could really begin to talk about a movement. After the Jesmond Dene camps were evicted one of the Flowerpot Tribe wrote:

“Those who’ve been involved are also gearing up to fight other schemes... What we’ve learnt will spread out to other road and environmental protests... it just gets bigger and bigger. If we can’t stop the bastards totally we can COST them, show them there’s no easy profit in earth rape. They’ve already been cost millions – let’s cost them some more.”⁽²¹⁾

Land Struggle Period (1993 – 1998)

Land struggles were infectious, the next period seeing an explosion of activity. The winning combination was relatively solid networks of long term anti-road campaigners (ALARM UK), a nationwide network of EF! groups and most importantly a swelling ‘tribe’ willing to travel across the land.

Welcome to the Autonomous Zones

While the state had backed down at Oxleas it intended to go full steam ahead with the M11 link through East London. DoT bureaucrats and politicians probably thought the movement wouldn't pull together over the destruction of a small amount of trees and hundreds of working class homes. They were wrong.

Hundreds of the houses were already squatted, long since having been compulsorily purchased. This vibrant scene was joined by others from Jesmond and Twyford. With much of the road smashing through a long-term squatting community and a solidly working class area, this more than any previous anti-road campaign was a defence of human lives as well as wildlife. Nevertheless, there were beautiful patches of overgrown gardens and copses, and the struggle was also understood in the national ecological context.

“By halting the road in London we can save woodlands, rivers and heathlands all the way to Scotland, without endangering their ecology by having mud fights with hundreds of security guards and police in their midst.”⁽²²⁾

The first real flashpoint came at a chestnut tree on George Green, common land in the heart of Wanstead. The 10ft hoardings which had been erected to enclose the common were trashed by a jolly mob of kids, activists and local people. On the Green a hunched woman in her eighties was crying. She had always felt powerless, but when she pushed the fences down with hundreds of others, she said she felt powerful for the first time in her life. Empowerment is direct action's magic, and the spell was spreading.

“A treehouse was built in the branches of the chestnut tree... For the following month the campfire became a focal point... People from different backgrounds began to get to know one another, spending long evenings together, talking, forming new friendships. Something new and beautiful had been created in the community. Many local people talk of their lives having been completely changed by the experience.”⁽²³⁾

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The eviction came in December and was carried out by 400 police. With 150 people resisting it took nine hours to bring down one tree! Sabotage also played a part – both of the contractor’s hydraulic platforms had been wrenched the night before.

“The eviction had forced the DoT to humiliate itself in a very public way. The loss of the tree was a tragic day, and yet also a truly wonderful day. It had hammered another huge nail in the coffin of the roads programme.”⁽²⁴⁾

The state hoped this was the end of No M11, but it was just the beginning. Other areas had already been occupied, and regular action against the contractors continued. It was a fitting end to the second year of concerted action against roads.

On January 1st 1994 the Indigenous Zapatistas of Mexico launched themselves on to the stage of world history. Liberating town after town, freeing prisoners, re-distributing food, declaring themselves autonomous of the new economic order. They didn’t just redistribute food; they redistributed hope worldwide, and were to have a significant impact on the movement here.

Meanwhile in Britain the year nearly started off with a big bang. In January a very small amount of broadsheet coverage reported the police detonation of an explosive device under the main bridge at Twyford Down. Coverage also reported a bomb found at Tarmac’s HQ.⁽²⁵⁾

The Spring saw camps sprout up against the Wymondham Bypass near Norwich, the Leadenham Bypass in Lincolnshire, the Batheastern-Swainswick Bypasses outside Bath and the Blackburn Bypass in Lancashire. In inner-city Manchester, a threatened local park got a dose of eco-action at Abbey Pond.

Back in the East End, Spring saw vast defensive and offensive road-resisting. A row of large Edwardian houses were next en route – they were barricaded, and Wanstonia was born: “it was declared an autonomous free zone. People made joke passports and the like. We were digging this huge trench all the way around the site. Doing that probably had zero tactical effectiveness but it really made us feel that this was where the UK ended and our space started.”[26]

The State does not take well to losing territory.

“In a scene reminiscent of a medieval siege, around 800 police and bailiffs supported by cherry-pickers and diggers besieged the independent state of Wanstonia. After cordoning off the area the invaders preceded to storm the five houses. The police had to break through the barricades to enter only to find the staircases removed thus forcing them to get in through roofs or upper floors. Some protestors were on the roofs having chained themselves to the chimneys, the contractors preceded to destroy the houses while many people were still occupying them... It took ten hours to remove 300 people.”⁽²⁷⁾

This impressive and costly eviction was followed up by Operation Roadblock – a month of rota-based daily direct action, where groups booked in which days they would take action. It worked remarkably well, with sizeable disruption every day through March. Elsewhere many of the resistance techniques developed at the M11, both for the defence of houses and trees, were now being used against other schemes.



Utter Contempt for the Court

During Jesmond Dene, people were still being picked up for having broken the Twyford injunction. ‘Quolobolox’ knew the cops would nick him sooner or later at the Dene and send him down to the High Court, but he was prepared. When the inevitable arrest came he gave the High Court quite a surprise. Stripping off to orange suspenders, worn all summer under his trousers especially for this occasion, he goosestepped up and down in front of the judge sieg-heiling. The judge closed the court in horror. This was a not-so-subtle reference to the recent death of Steven Milligan, the Tory MP for Eastleigh (near Twyford). Milligan (who had once memorably described the Dongas Tribe as “weirdoes”), was found dead hanging from the ceiling after an erotic auto-asphyxiation disaster, wearing nothing but suspenders with an amyl nitrate-soaked orange in his mouth. Unsurprisingly the judge added weeks to Quolobolox’s sentence for ‘contempt of court’.



Progress, Yuck – Time to Go Back to the Trees

Tactics were evolving fast. At Jesmond, temporary hammocks had graced the branches; at George Green a single treehouse had been built; at Bath the first real network of treehouses hit the skyline; in Blackburn there was a full-on Ewok-style Tree Village. Unable to defeat the bailiffs on the ground, resistance had moved skyward.

“You’d be standing at the fire at night, and it would be the first time you’d been down on the ground all day. You’d look up and there would be all these little twinkles from candles up above you... How were they going to get us out?... I don’t think I can describe here how special it is to sleep and wake in the branches of a tree. To see the stars and the moon. To feel the sunshine and feel the rain.”⁽²⁸⁾

Hundreds were now living on-site across the country, with many, many more ‘weekending’ or visiting for days of action. Most campaigns were now setting up multiple camps, each taking a slightly different form according to the lay of the land. Previously, barricades had been built around houses and woodlands – now they themselves were transformed into barricades – complex networks of walkways, treehouses, lock-ons, concrete and determination.

Solsbury Hill’s fourth site eviction at Whitecroft was the first full-on, all-treetop eviction. Using cherry-pickers and standard chainsaw men, the Sheriff failed to take down a single tree; the camp had defeated him... for now. The cost was high; one protestor hospitalised with spinal injuries and a collapsed lung. Ten days later the Sheriff returned, this time with madder baliffs – Equity card-holding stunt men. These were more crazy, muscular and willing to take risks with their own lives as well as of those in the trees. By the end of the day Whitecroft was no more. This – the most spectacular at the time – was only one of the many conflicts countrywide. These evictions were becoming hugely costly – to the contractors, to the state, and to social stability. Most sites at this time continued offensive action as well, using the by then standard formula; digger diving, office occupations and crane-sits, alongside overt and covert sabotage. The state was being challenged – it would soon escalate its response.

With every campaign the movement seemed to be going from strength to strength, with one exception, Leadenham. A camp had set up, and the DoT said it was putting the scheme into review, but victory was not to be. The contractors launched a surprise attack – during the ‘reprieve’ – while those still on site were ‘dealt with’ a few weeks later by local thugs. Vigilante attacks on sites had always been an occasional occurrence, but they were usually minor in scale. At Leadenham though there was a sizeable group of pro-road locals willing to take direct action.

“The attack happened following a demo by local people in favour of the bypass. Leadenham villagers decided in their infinite wisdom that a road was preferable to a ‘few trees’. Masked vigilantes arrived at the camp at 5am armed with chainsaws. They proceeded to hack down trees protesters had been sitting in. Anyone getting in their way was punched and violently assaulted.”⁽²⁹⁾

This basically put an end to site occupation at the scheme, though days of action still followed. What Leadenham showed was the absolute necessity of having significant community support IF a camp was set up. Without it, there was a danger of being sitting/sleeping targets. Thankfully, through this period no other sites were mass attacked by local vigilantes in this way.⁽³⁰⁾

While in this article I’ll give an overview of this period, from so high up one can’t hope to focus on the detail – and it’s the detail that counts. The incredible moments, the passion, the exhilaration, the waiting, the amazing people, the occasional twat – the tribe. Not to mention the holy trinity: dogs, mud and cider. On site and in the trees, this feeling of togetherness and otherness grew. Leaving site to get food or giros, the harshness and speed of the industrial world hit you; but by living a daily existence of resistance we were hitting back.

Hunting the Machines

Every month brought news of an increase in sabotage despite minimal coverage in either mainstream or radical press, not least because communiqués were rarely sent. Sabotage largely centred around projects where ongoing daytime campaigns were underway, but some were done in solidarity with campaigns

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further afield. With so many groups fighting multiple schemes by the same company, actions often ended fulfilling both roles. ARC, for instance, had supplied roadstone to Twyford Down and was trying to expand quarries in North Wales and Somerset.

“After forcing their way into the control room [of ARC Penmaemawr quarry] the intruders smashed a glass partition and then caused £10,000 worth of damage to computer equipment.”⁽³¹⁾

The scale of sabotage carried out during the ‘90s land struggles is often forgotten. Altogether the direct costs of replacement and repair at construction sites must have easily run into the tens of millions. Fantasists may dream that this was the work of highly organised anonymous cells, striking and then disappearing⁽³²⁾, but in truth most trashings were carried out by those camping onsite; either subtly during digger diving, raucously as a mob, or covertly after heavy drinking sessions around the campfire. Basically, whenever it was possible, people fucked shit up. The sensible and commendable desire not to boast has left these actions hidden behind newspaper images of smiling ‘tree-people’. The grins though were often those of mischievous machine wreckers; near campfires no yellow monster was safe from the hunt.

Some celebrity liberals⁽³³⁾ argued ‘criminal damage’ should not have a place in campaigns as it would put off ‘normal everyday people’. This ridiculous idea was even stupider considering one of the main groups consistently carrying out sabotage were those locals with jobs and families who didn’t have available (day)time to live on site, and for whom arrests for minor digger-diving could lead to unemployment and family problems. For many ‘normal everyday people’ covert sabotage was less risky than overt ‘civil disobedience’. Another group of locals that always took to ‘environmental vandalism’ like ducks to water were kids, nearly always the most rebellious section of any community, often with the most intimate relationship to the local environment.

Of course despite what I say above, some ecotage was carried out entirely covertly with *modus operandi* borrowed from the Animal Liberation Front.

“Police believe a £2 million blaze at an Essex construction site could be the work of Green Activists. The fire swept through Cory Environment’s

aggregates and waste disposal site at Barling, near Southend, ruining four bulldozers, two diggers, and a fleet of six trucks owned by the main contractor. The police say that forensic evidence confirms arson.”⁽³⁴⁾

There is no Justice, Just Us!

It was becoming obvious that the ecological land struggles were really getting in the way of ‘progress’.

The government (correctly) saw the movement as part of a social fabric (travelling culture, festivals, squatting, hunt sabbing) born of the ‘60s/’70s upsurge. With the Criminal Justice Bill it sought to tear this fabric apart. No more toleration, the government announced; it was giving itself new powers to close free parties, ban demonstrations, create huge exclusion zones, evict squats and jail persistent road-protest ‘trespassers’. Unsurprisingly this challenge was met with a sudden flurry of activity. High street squat info centres around the country; local and national demos. Thousands turned up for marches in London. Rather than deterring people the new laws brought people together – ‘Unity in Diversity’ the call of the day.

On October the 9th a demo of 75,000 ended in Hyde Park for the normal ritual of platform speakers. When a sound-system tried to get in at Speakers Corner to turn it into an illegal ‘party in the park’, it was attacked by police. In turn people fought back. The call went out across the Park – Defend the System; thousands ran from the speeches to the action – the Hyde Park Riot had begun.

“Although some people faced up to the police in Park Lane itself, most of the crowd ended up inside the park separated by the metal railings from the riot cops. This made it difficult for the police to launch baton charges or send in the horses, and when they tried to force their way through the small gates in the railings they were repelled with sticks, bottles and whatever was to hand.”

“There were some very surreal touches while all this was going on: people dancing not far from the police lines, a unicyclist weaving his way

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through the riot cops, a man fire-breathing. Some people have argued that the police deliberately provoked a riot to make sure the Criminal Justice Bill was passed, but this ignores the fact that there was never any danger of the CJB not being passed, as there had never been any serious opposition within parliament.”⁽³⁵⁾

Hyde Park – like the eviction of the Dongas – was a landmark confrontation. At Twyford the movement was forced to face up to the reality of state violence. At Hyde Park it was forced to face the reality of movement violence, the reality being simple – when faced with riot cops many saw nothing wrong with fighting back to defend temporarily liberated space. At the beginning of the march ‘Keep it Fluffy’ stickers had been handed out liberally. Later as the helicopter floodlights shone down on a riot, the sight of a crusty with a rainbow jumper emblazoned with one of the stickers – throwing a bit of paving slab at the cops – showed how moments of collective power can change people. The following months would see an intensification of ‘violence/nonviolence’ discussions around the country.

When the Bill became an Act in November everyone understood that the only way to defeat a possible ‘crackdown’ was by defying it. As the *EF! Action Update* put it: “As far as it affects Earth First!ers... its purpose is not so much to imprison us as to intimidate us – and we mustn’t let that work.”⁽³⁶⁾ The day the Act went through on November 4th, activists from No M11 climbed onto the roof of Parliament and unfurled a banner – Defy The Act. Hunt sabs went out in bigger numbers, more road protest camps were established, free parties flourished. By the end of the month a big confrontation came that would test whether the government had succeeded in intimidating the resistance.

A Street Reclaimed

Throughout the Summer, evictions and resistance on the M11 had continued and most of the route was rubble. One major obstacle lay in the path of the bulldozers – Claremont Road, an entire squatted street had been transformed into a surreal otherworld. Turned inside-out, the road itself became the collective living room, the remaining cars flowerbeds. Above the sofa, huge chess

board and open fire a vast scaffolding tower reached daily further up to the sky. This 'state of the art' reclaimed street was not going to take eviction easy. When it did come, it became the longest and most expensive in English history – 5 days, 700 police, 200 bailiffs and 400 security guards, costing £2 million.

“When the bailiffs arrived they were met by 500 people using every delay tactic possible. A concrete filled car with protruding scaffold poles stopping the cherry pickers moving in. People locked on to the road. Others hung in nets strung across the street. People in bunkers, others huddled on rooftops and in treehouses. Lastly, 12 people scrambled up the 100ft scaffold tower painted with grease and tied with pink ribbons.”⁽¹⁷⁾

One by one, minute by costly minute, the state forces removed the 500 – taking the best part of a week. The sheer ingenuity of the tactics, the resolve of the people involved and the incredible barricading techniques made this an amazing moment. Like the Chestnut Tree, Solsbury Hill and a dozen other evictions, the state won the battle – but they were losing the war. With every hugely expensive eviction, every trashed machine, every delayed contract, every citizen turned subversive, every tree occupied – the social and economic cost of pushing through the roads programme was becoming unbearable.

Yet Claremont – like all anti-roads sites – wasn't simply a reaction to destruction, it was also a reaffirmation of life, of autonomy. It was an experience that changed hundreds of people; its memory would remain precious and propel a whole new wave of streets to be reclaimed. Reclaim the Streets had been formed by EFlers in '92 to combat the car culture on the city streets. With the expansion of anti-road resistance the idea had gone into hibernation, but many who had seen the topsy-turvy, inside-out world of Claremont Road wanted to feel the like again. After the end of the M11 campaign, RTS was reformed. The state had foolishly thought Claremont Road lay in rubble; in fact it haunted those who'd been there and its festive rebel spectre would reappear on streets across the country.

It started with a reclamation of that bastion of consumption, Camden High Street.

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“Two cars entered the high street and to the astonishment of passing shoppers ceremoniously piled into each other – crash! Thirty radical pedestrians jumped on top and started trashing them – soon joined by kids. An instant café was set up distributing free food to all and sundry, rainbow carpets unrolled, smothering the tarmac, and a host of alternative street décor... A plethora of entertainment followed including live music, fire-breathing... and the Rinky-Dink bike powered sound system.”⁽³⁸⁾

A month later and the action was much bigger; word had got around – 1,500 met at the meet-up point, jumped the Tube and arrived at Islington High Street.

“They swarmed across the dual carriageway as five 25ft tripods were erected blocking all the access roads. Half a ton of sand was dumped on the tarmac for kids of all ages to build sand castles with. An armoured personnel carrier blasting out rave set up, fire hydrants were opened up – spraying the ravers dancing in the sunshine. All the cops could do was stand to the side and sweat.”⁽³⁹⁾

While the Claremont eviction was the first major sign of the failure of the CJA, street parties spreading across the country were basically dancing on its grave. With the Act’s implementation resistance became a bit more difficult, but its deterrent effect was dead in the water. The rebellion against the CJA had brought together different alternative culture currents and coalesced them into a serious counter-culture; now RTS was making more connections. Above the wonderful spectacle of the Islington Street Party flew a banner declaring solidarity with the Tubeworkers.

Back on the Farm

While London events got the lion’s share of media coverage, people were defying the CJA all over, most by simply carrying on with actions – ‘business as usual’. The eviction of urban camps at Pollock in Glasgow against the M77 involved hundreds – 250 kids even broke out of school to help stop one eviction. The act had been meant to neuter direct action. Instead in the climate

of opposition, whole new struggles opened up, such as those against the live export of sheep and calves, involving thousands more in direct action.

In the Southwest the one year anniversary gathering at Solsbury Hill went off with a bang. An Anti-CJA event on the hill ended with lots of fencing pulled down, trashed machinery and security thugs in hospital. As one woman from the local Avon Gorge EF! group put it: “I guess people had had enough of being used as punch bags.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ This was followed by a day of action with 200 people – stopping most of the work along the route.

Up North the campaign against the M65 saw a major shift in tactics by both those in the trees and those who’d taken the job of getting them out. Three camps had already been evicted, but the crescendo came at Stanworth Valley, an amazing network of walkways, platforms, nets and over 40 treehouses. Through the valley surged the River Ribblesworth. It was truly a village in the sky, which was lucky as the ground was pure quagmire half the time. You’ve never seen such mud!

As well as new people and local activists there was now a dedicated nomadic tribe, seasoned at many previous evictions. After over a year of life in the branches, some were agile and confident at height – at home in the trees. The state realised that it needed a new force that was as confident on the ropes – Stanworth became the first place where members of the climbing community took sides against nature.

“Upon entering the treetops they were quite shocked to find the people were not just passive spectators to their own removal. A gentle but firm push with the foot often kept them out of a treehouse. Two climbers tried to manhandle an activist out of the trees, mistakenly thinking they were alone. The calls for help were quickly answered and to the climbers’ astonishment out of the thick shroud of leaves above, activists abseiled down, others pained up from below and yet more appeared from both sides running along the walkways and branches. The climbers could be forgiven for thinking they were caught in a spiders web.”⁽⁴¹⁾

Eventually after five days, all 120 people had been ripped from the trees – bringing the total contract cost increased by the No M65 campaign to £12.2

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million. The climbers had found new lucrative employment but they would do their best to avoid ever repeating an eviction under leaf cover. From now on most evictions would be when the leaves were off the trees; the combined factor of nature's abundance and activist up-for-it attitude a severe deterrent.

The spread of anti-road camps was by now incredible with '95 probably the highpoint in terms of national spread. On top of the established camps, new areas were occupied in Berkshire, Kent, Devon and Somerset. Over the next year the struggle moved well beyond just fighting roads. Camps were set up to protect land from open-cast mining in South Wales, leisure development in Kent and quarrying in the South West. No surprise then that one of the major voices spurring on this 'culture of resistance' got some special attention from some special people.

Green Anarchist magazine in the mid '90s was a meeting point of movements. Its readership included significant numbers of travellers, hunt sabs, class struggle anarchos, Green Party members, 'eco-warriors', and animal liberationists. It was an obvious target for the secret state. A set of 17 raids aimed at *Green Anarchist* and the ALF resulted in the jailing of a number of its editors. This repression, like the CJA, backfired. Instead of marginalising GA it actually made them far more well known; an alliance of largely liberal publications swung behind them, motions of support were even brought up at the Green Party and FoE annual conferences. This increased exposure, combined with M15 fears about court documents released in appeal hearings compromising their agents, secured their release. A major aim of the repression against GA had been to deter sabotage, while large parts of the CJA were aimed at stopping 'Aggravated Trespass'. Their absolute failure to deter the radical ecological direct action movement was shown clearly one morning in Somerset.

Whatley Quarry – Yee Ha!

“The 'national' EF! action to shut down Whatley Quarry was an even greater success than expected. A week later the owners hadn't managed to restart work. At 5.30am, 400 activists descended on the quarry. Small teams ensured gates were blockaded and all plant and machinery oc-

cupied... Detailed maps and a predetermined plan ensured police and security were out manoeuvred. Tripods were carried 9 miles over-night and set up on the quarry's rail line whilst lorries were turned away. Press reports state that £250,000 worth of damage was caused – not counting the cost of a week's lost production, for a quarry normally selling 11,000 tonnes per day! Twenty metres of railway track leading out of the quarry 'disappeared'; the control panel for video monitoring of the plant fell apart; a two storey crane pulled itself to bits; three control rooms dismantled themselves; and several diggers and conveyor belts broke down."⁽⁴²⁾

The police managed to arrest 64 people, mostly under the CJA for aggravated trespass. In time, most of the cases were dropped. All through the land struggle period EF! had been organising national actions – this was by far the most effective. It had come on the back of four years of concerted actions at Whatley and showed what can be achieved by good organisation and the element of surprise. While the cops had prepared in their hundreds, they simply hadn't factored in that 'hippies' could get up at 4am. This action really set the mood for the next year.

"An Adrenaline Junkie's Idea of Heaven"

"Police on the Newbury Bypass site today condemned the tactics of those who last night took a heavy tractor from road-works and drove to a construction area, where they damaged compound fencing, lighting equipment and a portacabin building. Police were called but the offenders ran away before they arrived at the scene."⁽⁴³⁾

The Newbury bypass was the big battle. The scale was immense. Nine miles long, over 30 camps, ten thousand trees, over a thousand arrests. A daily struggle with up to 1,600 security guards⁽⁴⁴⁾, hundreds of police, private detectives, and state climbers lined up against tribes of hundreds of committed, mud-living activists. Day after relentless day, evictions and resistance. "Every morning, cider and flies."

I don't have space to cover all the campaigns across the country, so I am focusing on those which saw important changes. Equally, I can't hope to give

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a true impression of what it was like to be living on site, at Newbury least of all. Crazy and medieval – in both good ways and bad – is all I'll say. (The book *Copse* captures the spirit of those times best, with a mix of photos, interviews and cartoons. VERY highly recommended!)

The state had by this time learnt from some of its previous mistakes; no longer would it try to clear the road in stages at the same time as building works progressed. In the past this allowed a healthy mix of offensive action against construction as well as defensive action against clearance. At Newbury the chainsaws were given five months to clear the site. Initially when protests had started the massive increased cost of clearance had pushed up costs – billed straight to the corporations, destroying any profits. Now when the contracts were tendered these millions were factored in – billed straight to the state. This made the campaigns of this period increasingly defensive in nature. Though there were attempts to move beyond this, to a certain extent it was an inevitable result of a change in 'terrain'. Yet the costs of keeping a force capable of clearing a route dotted with camps, with highly evolved defence techniques, needing highly paid specialist climbers to evict, was now immense.

Newbury, more than any other, was a national campaign in one locale. Practically everyone who had been heavily involved in radical eco stuff over the preceding five years bumped into each other in the wasteland. This was no accident – everyone knew that at Newbury the state wanted to break the movement. In reply people were determined to break the state's resolve to build roads beyond Newbury. Glorious defeats for us meant economic defeat for the Department of Transport. This war of attrition had been rolling now for years but at Newbury both sides wanted to put in the death blow. After over a year of building defences, five months of fighting evictions, night after night of sabotage and a lifetime of manic moments, the clearance was finished; but in the aftermath so was the roads programme. Of course it took a while to die. Some projects were still in the pipeline and others were continuing, but after Newbury the conclusion was not in doubt.

A year after the clearance work had started, hundreds arrived at Newbury for the anniversary, now known as the Reunion Rampage. After minor scuffles

and tedious speeches from the likes of FoE leadership, fencing surrounding a major construction compound was cut, and the crowd surged in.

“So we put sand in the fuel tanks of generators, took spanners to the motor of the crane. As we were leaving the site, a tipper truck on fire to my left and the crane on fire down to my right, there was one man standing straight in front of me, silhouetted against the bright billowing flames rolling up out of the portacabin. He stood in an X shape, his hands in victory V signs, shouting ‘YES! YES! YES!’ It wasn’t chaotic, there was a sense of purpose, of collective will, of carnival, celebration, strong magic, triumph of people power, of a small but very real piece of justice being done.”⁽⁴⁵⁾

After Defeats, Victories!

If this kind of disorder freaked the nation state, local government was terrified. At Guildford, Surrey Council cancelled a scheme where five camps had been set up – it simply couldn’t afford the economic and social costs of taking on the movement. Opencast mines were shelved in South Wales thanks to the sterling resistance at the evictions of the Selar and Brynhennlys camps. Camps saved nature reserves from destruction by agribusiness in Sussex. Camps stopped supermarket developments. Camps stopped leisure developments in Kent, and quarries were put on hold in the Southwest after costly evictions at Dead Woman’s Bottom.

If Newbury put the final nail in the coffin of the ‘Roads to Prosperity’ building programme, the A30 camps were shovelling in the soil. Put into full use for the first time, tunnels became another tactic of delay. Tree defence and complex subterranean networks made the eviction at Fairmile last longer than every previous eviction – with the tunnels staying occupied six days in. While the resistance to the A30 was amazing it was also a waymarker. Following the evictions there was NO daytime offensive action against the construction contract, though a one day camp and some impressive ‘night-work’ did get done. The amazing community had evolved over two and half years of occupation – its effect would last far longer.

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By mid 1997 Road Alert! could happily report the demise of the national roads programme.

“It has been sliced from about £23 billion to a few £billion since 1992; nearly 500 out of the 600 road schemes have been scrapped; that’s 500 places untrashed, saved - for now. These are massive cuts; *Construction News* wrote ‘...the major road-building programme has virtually been destroyed’... It seems fair to link the rise of direct action with the diminishing budget, down every year since 1993, the year of the big Twyford actions.”⁽⁴⁶⁾

On TV even the ex-Transport Minister Stephen Norris, of all people, presented a documentary on how ‘the protesters were right’ and he was wrong. Contractor newspapers sounded more and more like obituary columns every week.

The unlikely had happened, the movement’s main immediate objective had been largely attained, and the ‘threat capacity’ generated by the struggle now deterred developments in other fields. More sites were still being set up – now against disparate targets; logging in Caledonia, housing in Essex, an airport extension at Manchester.

Fly, Fly into the Streets!

While most camps were in the countryside, contestation was also spreading in the streets. After the success of the London ‘95 street parties, RTS followed up with an 8,000 strong take over of the M41; across the country RTSs were held in dozens of towns often more than once. Some were amazing revelatory moments – windows into future worlds – others were just crap. In ‘96/’97 RTS London had mobilised the alternative culture ghetto – now it was organising a break out, first making connections with the striking tube-workers, then with the locked-out Liverpool Dockers. In an inspiring act of solidarity radical ecotypes climbed cranes, blockaded entrances and occupied roofs at the Docks. Around 800 protestors and dockers mingled on the action and a strong feeling of connection was born.

Following on the back of this action came a massive mobilisation just before the May election, around 20,000 marched and partied with the Dockers at the 'March for Social Justice.' The plan had been to occupy the then empty Department of Environment building in Whitehall. Though the police succeeded in stopping this happening, the march ended in a huge party/riot at Trafalgar Square, above the crowd a massive banner – 'Never Mind the Ballots, Reclaim the Streets'. More and more street parties were continuing around the country.

National Actions

After Whatley had been such a success, people wanted more. Unfortunately, the police were once bitten, twice shy. Any whiff of an EF! national mobilisation resulted in massive policing that made most actions just impossible. While the cops were still often outfoxed, mostly by moving location (an action in North Wales moved to Manchester, an action at an oil refinery moved to an open-cast site), it was largely making the best of a bad situation.

Yet it wasn't just the state that caused problems here. The big Whatley action had come out of discussion at an EF! national gathering, with groups all over committing themselves to both turning up and organising it. Other 'national actions' that followed were often organised by local groups who wanted an injection of collective power into their campaign. This meant that effectively they were local campaigns calling on the national movement for support – very different from the national movement organising to support a local campaign.

One of the biggest failures came when a local group – Cardigan Bay EF! – declared a national day of action on the anniversary of the Milford Haven oil spill. This was to be followed by actions against opencast in the Welsh valleys.

Vans arrived from around the country to find little local work had been done by CBEF! (not even accommodation had been sorted) and no decent plans were in place, the 'organising group' not even turning up to sort out the mess. Meanwhile hundreds of cops waited at the port. Thankfully, the wonderful Reclaim the Valleys stepped in days before they were due to and sorted a

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squat and a few decent actions. Nevertheless, it was a disempowering experience to say the least.

It was followed by an action at Shoreham Docks that drew 60 people... and 800 cops. Like at Milford Haven where the refinery had been closed despite no action, all work at Shoreham stopped for the day. On one level these actions were successful, in that they stopped work comprehensively, but disempowerment meant they stifled any chance of long term organising around the issue.

Public defeats also resulted in a loss to the movement 'threat capacity' – something which had the power to stall developments before they started. Though even successful national actions (such as that at Doe Hill opencast in Yorkshire, which turned into a smorgasbord of criminal damage) did not result in local campaign numbers swelling, the threat capacity factor meant that local groups looked a whole lot scarier to the target involved. This fear was a factor in many developments not going ahead.

Attempts to go beyond individual land struggles to get 'at the root of the problem' usually meant taking a step backwards to occasional, media-centric events with no easily winnable immediate objectives. National direct action campaigns against the oil industry and ruling class land ownership both died early on.

A Shift from the Local to the Global

In 1997 a major shift of emphasis happened in the movement. At the time it wasn't so obvious, but after a while it would become seismic. The last massive eviction-based land struggle with multiple camps was the resistance at Manchester airport. This was near Newbury in scale and saw weeks of sieges and evictions, scraps in the trees, night-time fence pulling and underground tunnel occupations: "What Newbury did for the South, Manchester Airport did for the North in terms of attracting thousands of new people and cementing the network"⁽⁴⁷⁾

Both sides of the conflict were now highly evolved, with complex delay tactics and well-trained state tunnel and tree specialists; on one level it became a clash of professionals. Manchester probably continues to have an impact on

the speed at which the government is prepared to build new airports, but the campaign – unlike that against roads or quarries – was not easily reproducible. After all, there wasn't any major expansions elsewhere happening at the time.

Once the evictions had finished, some moved onto smaller camps around the country – but many of those who remained active moved off site and onto new terrains of struggle. Britain's higgeldy-piggeldy mix of land occupations, office invasions and national actions were happening in a global context, and that context was changing. In 1997 two landmark events happened, one in Cambridgeshire and one in Southern Spain; both would shape the next period.

The Mexican Zapatista rebels had inspired strugglers around the world and in 1996 held an *encuentro* of movements for 'land, liberty and democracy' in their Lacandon rainforest home. A diverse mix of 6,000 turned up. The following year in 1997 a second global *encuentro* was held in Spain. Attended by many from Britain, this proposed the formation of the Peoples' Global Action (PGA). It seemed a new global movement was being born and EFLers wanted in. At the same time it turned out that the 'globe' was soon coming to Britain.

"In the Autumn of 1997 a handful of activists started to talk about the May 1998 G8 summit. It seemed an opportunity not to be missed – world leaders meeting in the UK and the chance to kick-start the debate on globalisation."⁽⁴⁸⁾

On the continent there was increasing resistance to genetic engineering; but in Britain, none. In the summer of '97 in a potato field somewhere in Cambridgeshire activists carried out the first sabotage of a GM test site in Britain. It was the first of hundreds to come.

Land Struggles – though still useful and active – would soon no longer be the main 'hook' the movement hung on. Camps would continue to be set up and many victories (and some defeats) were yet to come but the radical ecological movement was definitely now going in a new direction. The Land Struggle Period had inspired, involved and trained thousands. Let's make no mistake – it played the major role in the cancellation of 500 new roads, numerous

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quarry/open cast expansions, and many house building projects. An amazing coming together of rebel subcultures (travellers, animal liberationists, EF!ers, city squatters, Welsh ex-miners, ravers, local FoE activists and the mad) forged the biggest wave of struggle for the land Industrial Britain had ever seen.

Consolidation and Global Resistance Period (1998 – 2002)

The spectacular growth of our action through much of the '90s was in part thanks to the clear ecological priority of the moment – stop roads. While many camps continued after Newbury against other developments, without the obvious and nationally unifying factor of major road-building the movement was a bit lost. We had never had to really think about what to defend before; the Department of Transport did that job for us. By moving into a period of Consolidation and Global Resistance we could pretty much sidestep this question – for a time anyway.

Tribal Gatherings

Throughout the '90s EF! gatherings were the main place that activists from all over got together to discuss and organise. While most that attended felt some allegiance to the EF! banner, many were not active in listed EF! groups and would not consider themselves 'EF!ers'. More, the gatherings were/are a place:

“...where people involved in radical ecological direct action – or those who want to be – get together for four days of time and space to talk, walk, share skills, learn, play, rant, find out what's on, find out what's next, live outside, strategise, hang out, incite, laugh and conspire.”⁽⁴⁹⁾

At the 1997 gathering near Glasgow, attended by around 400 people in total, it was obvious that with the roads programme massively scaled down, some major things were going to change. While there were many discussions throughout the week, these were some of the key points:

- The national roads programme would continue to create individual aberrations (such as Birmingham Northern Relief Road) but it would not provide so many sites for resistance nation-wide.
- The road campaigns had been very successful as struggles, but had largely failed to leave solid groups or communities of activists behind after the 'direct action camp roadshow' moved on.
- Most of those present saw the radical ecological movement (and EF! in particular) as a network of revolutionaries, part of a global libertarian, ecological movement of movements.

Of course these things converged. Given that revolution wasn't looking immediate that week, as revolutionaries we had to be in it for 'the long haul'. The '90s had seen rapid growth, thousands had taken action but the movement, being relatively new, didn't have the infrastructure to support long term participation. With less major land struggles, less people would get involved in direct action. There was a high risk that established groups might entropy when activists got disillusioned. 'Non-aligned' individuals who had been active against roads, yet who hadn't become part of any network, might simply drift into reformist politics/work/drugs/mental asylums.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Unsurprisingly the gathering didn't cook up any magical formulae, but it did throw together something passable. To tackle a drop in 'recruitment' concerted outreach would be done and to keep what activists the movement did have, local groups would consolidate. The fight against GM test sites was enthusiastically accepted as a new terrain of action.⁽⁵¹⁾ The keynote evening talk on the weekend was done by a woman recently returned from the Zapatista autonomous territories. With the first congress of Peoples Global Action (PGA) coming up the following Spring it looked like despite the drop in sizeable confrontations on the land, we were in for an exciting few years...

Local Consolidation and Outreach

Squat cafés were nothing new, but 1998 saw a sudden proliferation around the country, as groups took over buildings in highly prominent locations, creating autonomous spaces where people interested in direct action could mix and conspire. In January, Manchester EF! opened up the first of many OKasional

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Cafés: “The squats were intended mainly to get political ideas across through socialising, as political groups in Manchester were quite inaccessible.”⁽⁵²⁾ Similar projects were carried out in Brighton, London, North Wales, Leeds, Worthing and Nottingham. In Norwich a squat café was opened because the local group “thought it would be a good idea to do a squat centre as a form of outreach and as a group building exercise.”⁽⁵³⁾ In this period ‘direct action forums’ sprung up all over – regular town meetings for mischief making miscreants. Both the forums and the centres were essentially attempts to bring together the diverse scenes of animal liberationists, class struggle anarchists, forest gardeners, EFlers and the like.

In parallel with this outreach, many radical eco circles were working to give themselves permanent bases and support mechanisms – needed for the long haul.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The number of towns with activist housing co-ops would increase substantially over the next four years. In the countryside quite a few communities of ex-road protesters would consolidate in bought or occupied land/housing from the Scottish Highlands, to Yorkshire and through to Devon. Others went onto the water in narrow boats. Following the last evictions at Manchester airport dozens moved into the Hulme redbricks in inner-city Manchester. Other needed ‘supports’ such as vans, printing machines, a mobile action kitchen, prisoner support groups and propaganda distribution were slowly built up. This process of consolidating local direct action communities has paid a large part in making sure that the radical ecological movement hasn’t been a one hit wonder: dying off after the victory against the roads programme. At its centre was the obvious truth: what’s the point in trying to get more people involved if you can’t keep those who already are?

On the Streets, In the Fields

This period saw an escalation of crowd action on the streets and covert sabotage in the fields: both types of action increasingly *seen* as part of a global struggle.

In February ‘98 the first ever meeting of the PGA was held in Geneva, home of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The congress, despite in-built prob-

lems, was an amazing coming together of over 300 people from movements across the globe:

“There’s a woman from the Peruvian guerrilla group Tupac Amaru chatting to an Russian environmentalist. Nearby, activists from the Brazilian land squatters movement are doing some funky moves on the dancefloor with a guy from the Filipino seafarers union. Then some Brits brashly challenge a bunch of Maori indigenous activists to a drinking contest.”⁽⁵⁵⁾

Needless to say, the Brits lost. Ideas were swapped, arguments had and plans were laid to take action around two events coming up in May – the annual G8 meeting and the second ministerial of the WTO a day later. Back in Britain Reclaim the Streets parties were continuing around the country – Leeds’ fourth RTS was typical:

“West Yorkshire coppers threatened to ruin the party before it had started, petulantly waving around side handled batons and vigorously wrestling the not-yet-inflated bouncy castle from the vigorously bouncy crowd. But after half an hour of unrest the police suddenly withdrew. Then a full on 600-strong party: bouncy castle, billowing banners, free food and techno... At the end of the afternoon everyone escorted the system safely away, whilst the police sent a few cheeky snatch squads into the crowd’s dwindling remainder; one person was run down and then beaten with truncheons. 22 arrests.”⁽⁵⁶⁾

Meanwhile sabotage of GM sites was on the up. The first action against a test site may have been in ‘97, but by the end of ‘98, thirty-six had been done over. Most were destroyed by small groups acting at night – covert, anonymous, prepared and loving every minute. Others were carried out by hundreds in festive daytime trashings. GM sabotage by this time was becoming an international pursuit with actions throughout the ‘Global South’ and trashings in four other European countries. One of the best aspects of test-site sabotage is that it has been a lot less intimidating for people to do if they have had no experience of sabotage. After all, you don’t need to know your way around a JCB engine (or an incendiary device) to work out how to dig up sugar beet.

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Alongside sabotage, other actions against GM proliferated, ranging from office occupations to the squatting of a (recently trashed) test site.

Activists were getting more sorted, as *Police Review* attested: “The protesters are ingenious, organised, articulate... They use inventive tactics to achieve their aims. Forces are having to deploy increasingly sophisticated techniques in the policing of environmental protests.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ These ‘sophisticated techniques’ were often quite comical: “Undercover cops who’d set up a secret camera in a Tayside farmer’s barn and parked up in their unmarked car, hoping to catch some of the Scottish folk who are decontaminating their country by removing genetic test crops, had to run for their lives when the car exhaust set the barn on fire. Both the barn and the car were destroyed.”⁽⁵⁸⁾

On May 16th the annual G8 meeting came to Britain. The last time it had been here in 1991, half a dozen EF!ers had caused trouble. In 1998 things were a bit different – 5,000 people paralysed central Birmingham in Britain’s contribution to the Global Street Party. Tripods, sound-systems and banners were all smuggled into the area.

“There were some great comic scenes of police incompetence, including them surrounding the small soundsystem (disguised as a family car) and escorting it into the middle of the party. They never once asked why the ‘frightened family’ inside wanted to escape by deliberately driving the wrong way around the roundabout towards the crowd. By the time they realised their mistake it was all too late... *the decks were under the travel blankets, boys*. What threw you off the scent? The baby seat, or the toys?”⁽⁵⁹⁾

The party, populated by ranks of scary clowns and gurning ravers, lasted for hours, the normal strange combination of ruck and rave. Unamused, the leaders of the most powerful nations on earth fled the city for the day to a country manor. This being their showpiece, the day was a major victory.

Simultaneously other PGA affiliates were on the streets in the first International Day of Action. In India 200,000 peasant farmers called for the death of the WTO, in Brasilia, landless peasants and unemployed workers joined forces and 50,000 took to the streets. Across the world over 30 Reclaim the Streets

parties took place, from Finland to Sydney, San Francisco to Toronto, Lyon to Berlin.

The world leaders flew off our island, no doubt with TV images of dancing rioters on their minds, thinking 'Ah now to genteel Geneva and wine by the lake at the WTO'. On arrival a huge (molotov) cocktail party welcomed them, the car of the WTO Director General was turned over and three days of heavy rioting followed. While the movement against power was always global, now it was networking and co-ordinating at a speed and depth rarely seen before.

Street parties and GM sabotage continued throughout the Summer. No longer content with holding one massive street party, RTS London organised two on the same day – in both North and South London. By now state counter-action was a real problem; following the M41 action, the RTS office had been raided and activists arrested for conspiracy. Despite the surveillance, the parties were both pulled off beautifully, with 4,000 in Tottenham and a similar number in Brixton.

"I remember two of us standing at Tottenham in the hot sun, getting drenched by a hose directed at us by a laughing local in a flat above. North London RTS had entirely outfoxed the cops and we knew so had South London. Three sound-systems, thousands of people – all blocking some of London's main arteries. It felt wonderful.

"A couple of nights before, seven oil seed rape test sites had been destroyed across the country on one night. I mean, both of us were usually pretty positive about the movement, yet if a couple of years before someone had predicted that one night multiple affinity groups would covertly hit seven different targets and that that would be almost immediately followed by the simultaneous take-over of two main streets in the capital; well both of us would have thought they were a nutter. Thinking about those actions and looking around us at the smiling crowd we both cracked up, our dreams were becoming reality, we were getting stronger, the music was thumping and the party even had tented pissoirs over the drains!"⁽⁶⁰⁾

The Struggle is Global, The Struggle is Local

The PGA International Day of Action and the Global Street Party catalysed a wave of actions across the globe, unprecedented in recent times in terms of both scale and interconnection.

Hundreds of Indian farmers from PGA affiliated organisations travelled across Europe holding meetings and demos and carrying out anti-GM actions. Strange occasions proliferated. A squatted ex-test site in Essex hosted a visit from the farmers, one of which (to much applause) sang an old Indian song about killing the English. The farmers' organisations had destroyed test sites and a laboratory in India, so despite the huge cultural differences, this was a meeting of comrades. As one Indian put it: "Together we, the peasants, and you, the poor of Europe, will fight the multinationals with our sweat and together we will succeed in defeating them." That month nine test sites were destroyed in one night and a major research organisation pulled out of GM due to being constantly attacked by direct action.⁽⁶¹⁾ The year would see over 50 experiments trashed.

Next came J18, bringing actions in 27 countries by over a hundred groups. Thousands closing down the centre of the capital in Nigeria, besieging Shell, and 12,000 storming the City of London – one of the hearts of the global financial system – were just two of the highlights. J18 in London was more successful than anyone could have imagined. Many offices were closed for the day in fear of the action. Many of those that weren't probably wished they had been. As the soundsystems played, a festive masked crowd (9,000 had been handed out) took advantage of their control of a slice of the city to dance and destroy.

"I ran into the LIFFE building [the Futures Exchange], smashing a few mirrors in the foyer and then looked round to see this masked up figure light a distress flare and hurl it up the escalators towards the offices. Fuck I thought, this is really full on."

“I was nicked... so I was in the police station... one cop came in drenched from head to toe in white paint. I really had to control myself to stop laughing – it looked like he’d been shat on by a huge bird.”⁽⁶²⁾

The HQ of the GM food giant Cargill had its foyer trashed as were the fronts of countless other banks, posh car showrooms and the like. The police were solidly defeated on the day. Above the crowd glittered beautiful banners, one proclaiming ‘Resist, Refuse, Reclaim, Revolt’; and to back up the statement, hidden inside the banner were half a dozen broom handles – seen the next day on front covers being used against the cops to great effect. Another banner high above the street declared – ‘Our Resistance is as Global as Capital’, with a huge list of places where actions were happening across the planet. June 18th, more than any event before it, saw the coming together of generations of radical opposition in a celebration of our power to create another world – unified around the planet by action.

The success of the first two days of action had now created a global cycle of inspiration. In November 1999, N30 saw more action. Timed once again to coincide with the meeting of the WTO, actions happened in Britain but undoubtedly the main event was in the US – Seattle. Tens of thousands brought the city to a standstill and in three incredible days forced the meeting to close. This was understandably seen as an amazing victory, especially considering the paucity and assimilated nature of much of American opposition. The victory in America was mirrored in Britain by what many saw as a defeat. RTS London were now in a pickle. People expected them to organise big mass events, but apart from being very busy many were worried about the (violent) genie they had let out of the bottle on J18. N30 in London was a static rally, masks were not handed out. Despite the burning cop van (always a pretty sight) N30 London remained contained by the police, and to a certain extent by the organisers. For good or bad you can’t turn the clock back – from now on any RTS style event in the capital would see massive policing and people coming expecting a major ruck.

Of course, resistance was not only centred around GM and the International Days of Action, or for that matter around internationalism; the local was still at

the forefront for many. While the big days got the column inches, everywhere activists were fighting small local land struggles and increasingly getting stuck into community organising. In fact, in the twelve months following the Global Street Party, there were 34 direct action camps across the country.⁽⁶³⁾ Most of these were now a combination of tree-houses, benders and tunnels and set up against a diverse set of developments. While most were populated by what *The Sun* described as the ‘tribe of treepeople’, some were almost entirely done by locals – the type of people who before the ‘road wars’ might have simply written to their MP. Direct action was so big in the ‘90s that it was/is seen as a normal tactic for fighting projects.

This generalisation of direct action is one of the many hidden but hugely important victories the movement has had.

While there were no major technical innovations in camps over this period (Nine Ladies in 2002 looked pretty like Manchester Airport in 1997 – but smaller) there were many victories. Simply the threat of a site stopped many developments and many camps had to ‘tat down’ after victories, usually against local authorities or developers. Even evicted camps sometimes resulted in victory. In London a camp ran for a year against a major leisure complex in Crystal Palace Park. The eviction came at the cost of over £1 million.

“Bailiffs, accompanied by around 350 police, moved on to the site and began removing the fifty people present from the various tree and bunker defences. The eviction was completed a record breaking 19 days later when the last two occupants came out of the bunker they had been in since the beginning of the eviction.”⁽⁶⁴⁾

This campaign won. The eviction cost, and the prospect of more trouble, freaked out the council no end. Though this period saw far less victories than the fight against the national roads programme, it saw many more victories where camps themselves actually won there and then. Despite this, without the unifying nature of the previous period (and with many activists both ‘looking to the global’ and not willing to go to sites), camps decreased in number.

Other factors also included increased police harassment (especially following J18) and of course ‘defeat through victory’. In the South Downs during

this time, two major developments, the Hastings Bypass and a house building project in Peacehaven⁽⁶⁵⁾ were both halted (for now) after direct action pledges were launched. Many other groups have been in this situation, which, while a cause for jubilation, has meant that 'the culture of camps' has suffered setbacks while its spectre wins victories. The year and a half between July '99 and January '01 saw only 10 camps operate, a quarter of the number that had been active in the previous year and a half. Since January '02 there have never been more than four ecological direct action camps at any given time.

Other local struggles such as those against casualised workplaces or for access to the land have continued, never though really become period-setting events.⁽⁶⁶⁾ One major area that many have moved into – often at the same time as night-time sabotage and irregular 'big days out' – has been community organising. From helping run women's refuges and self defence, to doing ecological education with kids and sorting out local food projects, this work has been an important extension of direct action.⁽⁶⁷⁾ While these actions don't directly defend ecologies they (hopefully) work to grow libertarian and ecological tendencies in society, an integral part of the revolutionary process.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Guerrilla Gardening

The next PGA International Day of Action was Mayday 2000. Once again there were actions all over the globe. Across Britain events happened in quite a few established 'activist towns', many very successfully; unfortunately overshadowing them was the mess that was the London 'Guerrilla Gardening' event.

The idea of doing another big national action was mooted at an EF! gathering in Oxford the previous winter – nearly everyone thought it a terrible concept. The state would massively prepare, the number of imprisoned activists would no doubt increase. As has been argued elsewhere,⁽⁶⁹⁾ Mayday 2000 – and most of its follow ups – were essentially attempts to copy J18 minus the street violence and sound-systems.

J18 had come from a momentum built up by street parties and anti-road protests, and it worked in part because it involved groups all over the country and had the element of surprise. As with national EF! actions after Whatley, the

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police were once bitten, twice shy. Containment of the crowd by both the cops, and in part by the organisers, created what most saw as both a rubbish party and a rubbish riot. Up until this event there had always been quite a strong 'working relationship' between radical eco groups nationwide and activists in London. Following Mayday this would, sadly, decrease.

Ironically, the symbolic 'guerrilla gardening' at Parliament Square only succeeded in reminding activists across the country why they liked actual guerrilla action, like covert GM sabotage; and actual gardening, on their allotments. The next year's London Mayday was hardly better. The double whammy of N30 followed by Mayday resulted in RTS London losing its 'great party' reputation, at the same time as street parties were happening less and less regularly across the country.

Meanwhile actions against GM continued to increase in scale, some involving up to 800 people. The vast majority, however, continued to be carried out covertly at night. Globally, GM sabotage was now spreading even more. Across the world shadows in the moonlight were razing GM crops trials to the ground. Spades, sticks, scythes, sickles and fire brought in the harvest. Doors splintered as labs were broken into. Pies were aimed at the arrogance of the powerful. Harassment and disruption greeted the biotech industry wherever it gathered. The deputy head of the American Treasury said in a statement to the Senate that the campaign against genetic engineering in Europe "is the greatest block to global economic liberalisation presently in existence."

The actions were hugely successful in frightening institutions into not extending GM research and forcing many supermarkets to withdraw from pushing GM food. Sadly though, 'pure research' was rarely attacked in Britain. Apart from the major successes the campaign achieved/is achieving, GM sabotage schooled hundreds in covert cell-structured sabotage – a capacity which will no doubt become ever more useful.

Channel Hopping

Given the decrease in day-to-day struggle and the failure of the London street actions, there was a sharp turn towards international riot tourism. The biggest

‘workshops’ at the 2000 EF! Summer gathering were for those preparing to go to the next meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in Prague. Hundreds went from Britain, experiencing an exciting range of success and failure.

Divisions over violence and symbolism that were always present in the British scene were thrown into relief by the extremes of the situation. Some joined the street-fighting international black block, others (both pro- and anti- violent attacks on the summit) formed together in the Pink and Silver Block. This ‘Barmy Army’ was a contradictory group of people with quite divergent views, pulled together by a desire for ‘national unity’. Diversity in this case, was definitely NOT strength. Putting the problems aside (dealt with well elsewhere⁽⁷⁰⁾), Prague was immensely inspiring. Thousands from all over Europe converged and forced the conferences to close early, creating a surreal, almost civil war atmosphere. Though the crowds failed to break into the conference, they shattered the desire of future cities to host these events. Previously, a visit from one of these august ruling class bodies was the dream of any town bureaucrat or politician – now it was their nightmare.

The following year, many more from the movement would go to Genoa in Italy where an unparalleled number of people on the street would clash with the state (and sometimes each other). Many also went to the anti-summit actions in Scandinavia, Switzerland and France. Only three years after the Global Street Party and the riot in Geneva started the wave of summit actions, the global elite was having to organise massive defence operations to stay safe behind their barricades. This wave of action not only inspired thousands, and spread the wildfire of resistance worldwide, it also forced many of these meetings to cut down the length of their events, move to ever less accessible fortresses and in some cases cancel their roving showcases all together.⁽⁷¹⁾

Beyond the big street spectacles many British activists were increasingly spending time abroad, inspired by the often more up-for-it squatting scenes. This acted as a further drain on the movement, but it also brought new experiences into ‘the collective mind’, aided future action, made real human links across borders and just as importantly gave some amazing moments to those involved. The move to the territory of other nations, temporary for most, comes as no surprise in a period defined by its internationalism.

International Solidarity

Back in Britain, the radical ecological scene was increasingly involved in solidarity with (largely ‘Third World’) groups abroad. As the Malaysia campaign showed, this had always been a major part of the movement. Following the ‘95 EF! gathering, activists invaded a factory that built Hawk aircraft and hoisted the East Timorese flag. Throughout the land struggle period, office actions, AGM actions, embassy blockades, petrol station pickets and home visits to corporate directors had all been used to support the Ogoni/Ijaw struggle in Nigeria and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army in Papua New Guinea. Yet in this period solidarity with struggling communities beyond the capitalist core became a much bigger part of the movement. This was part and parcel of the shift in emphasis towards people seeing the radical ecological movement as part of a global revolutionary movement.

On the first business day of 1999, three groups barricaded themselves into two senior management offices and the corporate library in Shell-Mex House in London.

“January 4th was Ogoni Day, celebrated since Shell was forced out of Ogoni through massive resistance. The concerned individuals seized three key locations in the building, some of which had a pleasing view of Waterloo bridge and the banner being hung across – by others – reading ‘Shell: Filthy Thieving Murderers.’”⁽⁷²⁾

In 1999 the keynote speech at the EF! Summer gathering was made by a visiting Papuan tribesman from the OPM. His inspirational talk resulted in actions across the country that Autumn against various corporations involved. Sporadic actions would continue in solidarity with this South Pacific struggle, as well as financial support for refugees and medical aid for prisoners, both actions which literally kept people alive.

Less theory, it was more lived experience abroad that inspired solidarity work back at home. By 2001, most towns listed with EF! groups had at least one returnee from the jungles of the Mexican South West. In 2001 a steady stream of activists going to Palestine started, many doing valuable on-the-ground solidarity work in the heat of the second Intifada – and the Israeli crackdown.

Those returning from abroad wanted to 'bring the war home' with a range of actions, speaking tours and fundraising pushes. Of course GM actions are also in part solidarity actions with Third World peasants. From benefit gigs to demos at the Argentinian embassy – solidarity work was increasingly filling the gap a lack of land struggles left behind.

Then and Now

This decade-long retrospective ends at the end of 2001. I did think of extending it when this issue of *Do or Die* became ever later and later but I thought better of it for a number of reasons. Firstly it seemed a neat end point; secondly much of this issue of *Do or Die* covers the next year and a half to Summer 2003; and thirdly Part Two of this article was released in January 2002 and some of what the movement has engaged in since then has been, at least partially, as a result of its suggestions. For good or bad I'll leave it to others to use hindsight to judge whether some proposals were blind alleys or blinding campaigns. To analyse them here would be definitely to put the cart before the horse.

Nevertheless, I'll say a little about where we find ourselves. Looking at the first EF! AU of 2002, it seems strange, slightly worrying, but also inspiring that 10 years on there is an obvious continuity of action through the decade: a new protest site, night-time sabotage actions, actions against summits, anti-war demos. The centre spread is a briefing for the campaign to defend Northern peat bogs, a struggle from right back in 1991 (and further) that re-started in 2001 and is covered elsewhere in this issue.

In a way the last year or so has reminded me of the film *Back to the Future* (now I'm showing my age); not only was the peat campaign back up and running, but also there was an anti-road gathering in Nottingham, and actions were announced to aid tribal groups in the Pacific.

There are now far fewer EF! groups listed than in the mid '90s, and the travelling culture many site activists came from has been largely destroyed by state force and drugs. Nevertheless, the radical ecological movement is in a surprisingly healthy state and has succeeded in not being assimilated into the mainstream. Ten years on and we're still more likely to be interviewed by the

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police than a marketing consult or academic (remember to say “No Comment” to all three!). The movement is still active and still raw. Many places continue to be saved by ecological direct action, our threat potential still puts the willies up developers, and people are still getting involved and inspired.

Our gathering this year will probably be attended by around 350-400 in total – the same kind of number it has been since 1996. While we don’t want to build up the movement like a Leninist party – ‘more members, please more members’ – the fact that we have stayed at this number despite catalysing situations of struggle involving thousands should give us some pause for thought.

Two prime contradictions have haunted the radical ecological resistance on this island. British EF! was born as a wilderness defence movement with no wilderness, and evolved into a network of revolutionaries in non-revolutionary times. The process of consolidation that was started in 1997 enabled radical ecological circles to survive the slowdown of domestic land struggles after the victory against national roadbuilding. This process combined with the upsurge in ‘global resistance’ enabled us in part to side-step the questions posed by the above contradictions.

If we want to see the wildlands defended and any chance of libertarian, ecological (r)evolution increase then practical action is needed. Much is already underway, but more is needed and without a clear strategy we are bound to fail. ‘Part Two: The Four Tasks’ aims to provide some pointers towards a unified strategy and attempt to resolve, or at least overcome, some of the contradictions of our movement.

On a personal note the ‘Ten years of radical ecological action’ documented here have been immensely inspiring to me. It’s been an honour to stand on the frontlines (as well as lounge about in lounges) with some lovely, brave, insightful and amazing people.

Notes

- 1) *The Ecologist*, Vol. 2, No. 12, December 1972
- 2) *Eco-Warriors* by Rik Scarce, (ISBN 0 9622683 3 X), p. 103
- 3) *Green Rage*, Christopher Manes, p. 65
- 4) Speech by Dave Foreman, Grand Canyon, 7/7/87
- 5) *FoE Newsletter* No. 1, Jan 1972
- 6) While FoE and GP remain centrist, both groups increasingly try to engage their membership AS activists not just as supporters. This, as many of their staff admit, is due to the influence of the '90s land struggles.
- 7) A ridiculous statement I admit – but true!
- 8) *EF! Action Update*, No. 3
- 9) *Ibid.*
- 10) *Direct Action Video*, Oxford EF!
- 11) 'Militancy', *FoE Newsletter*, No. 10, Oct 1972
- 12) Noticibly South Somerset EF! who organised the early Whatley Quarry actions.
- 13) This description is no joke – one described herself on more than one occasion as 'the queen of the tribe'!
- 14) Dept of Transport Affidavit concerning May 1st 1993
- 15) Welcome Back Twyford Six, *Do or Die* No. 3, p. 45
- 16) 'Car Chases, Sabotage and Arthur Dent: Twyford Diary', Pt. 2, *Do or Die*, No. 3, p. 21
- 17) *Ibid.*, p. 22
- 18) 'Skye Campaign Soaked in Sea of Anger', *Do or Die*, No. 3, p. 11
- 19) *EF! Action Update*, No. 5
- 20) 'For Flapjack and Mother Earth: Earth Warriors At Jesmond Dene', www.eco-action.org/dt/jesmond.html
- 21) *Ibid.*
- 22) 'News From The Autonomous Zones', *Do or Die* No. 4, p. 21
- 23) *Ibid.*, p. 22

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24) *Ibid.*, p. 23

25) These were not police smear stories. There was only a few sentences ever mentioning them and no tabloid 'eco-terrorist' horror stories. If anything the state probably enforced a 'quieting strategy' on the situation as they did to the ALF at its height of support.

26) *Copse: The Cartoon Book of Tree Protesting* by Kate Evans, (ISBN 0 9532674 07), p. 32

27) *EF! Action Update*, No. 9

28) *Copse*, p. 20

29) 'Leadenham', *Do or Die* No. 4, p. 6

30) Fash threatened a number of sites through the '90s. At Jesmond they were chased off, running for their lives (which is what they do best) – mostly they didn't even turn up (with the one major exception of the M11). Far more dangerous were random individual loonies. Arson attacks on camps happened right from the beginning – both at Twyford and the M11. Of course the police paid little notice. On one occasion when some posh student arsonists were nicked at Newbury (after they had put a petrol bomb through a truck window and into a sleeping child's bedroom) they got off – the magistrates viewed them as drunken pranksters.

31) *Daily Post* (North Wales), 9/1/94

32) *Green Anarchist* was undoubtedly a great influence on this period. One big gripe though – again and again one would read GA reports of actions which said the Earth Liberation Front had done this or that. Some may have been true but most of these claimed actions were often simply done by crowds or 'camp warparties'. In fact on a number of occasions people have been arrested for criminal damage only to read later in GA that 'the ELF' had carried out their action. This is both dishonest and dangerous.

33) Jonathan Dimbelby at Solsbury Hill for instance.

34) *Construction News*

35) 'The Battle For Hyde Park: Ruffians, Radicals and Ravers, 1855-1994', (Practical History)

36) 'CJB: Business As Usual', *EF! Action Update*, No. 12

37) *Schnews*, No. 3

38) 'London Regional Report', *Do or Die*, No. 5, p. 23

39) *Ibid.*, p. 25

40) 'Meanwhile Down in the West-Country', *Do or Die*, No. 5, p. 18

41) 'It's (Not Really That) Grim Up North!', *Do or Die*, No. 5, p. 12

42) *EF! Action Update*, No. 23

43) Thames Valley Police Press Release 11/11/96

44) *Copse*, p. 105

45) *There's A Riot Going On* by Merrick (Godhaven Press)

46) 'Direct Action, Six Years Down the Line', *Do or Die*, No. 7, p. 1

47) *EF! Action Update*, No. 40

48) *Global Street Party – Birmingham and the G8*, p. 3

49) EF! Summer Gathering 2003 leaflet.

50) This reference to Mental Asylums is no joke – over a dozen people were sectioned from Newbury alone, prompting the setting up of the 'Head State Support Group'. Land Struggles had been immensely therapeutic for many, but for some they became the catalyst for mental breakdown. On sites the intense connection to other people and the land was amazing. Feeling the land being ripped all around you and having your community broken up was unbearable for many. Some would have been broken by Industry either way, but it was the movement's duty to provide support for those who were asked to risk all. It mostly failed in that duty.

51) It's worth pointing out that EF! is a network of autonomous groups and individuals. Gatherings can be the place where people decide what they are going to do, but they cannot decide what others should or shouldn't do. After a number of bad experiences with people representing the movement in outside publications and stating that 'EF! has said the...' it was decided that gatherings would mostly not distribute written reports – too often the writer's own political dogma misrepresented the consensus – or lack of one. Here, I am trying to sum up some of the points the '97 gathering came up with in consensus. I have asked around to check that my memory is correct, but I may too have clouded the reality of the discussion with the fog of my own particular dogma. I apologise if this is so.

52) 'Autonomous Spaces', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 130

53) *Ibid.*

54) Fears that the giro checks would soon stop arriving, bringing an end to the dole autonomy that, along with student grants and crime, had been the main economic backbone of movements here for generations was also a major factor. Resistance to the introduction of the Jobseekers Allowance and the New Deal did occur – but with most claimants not joining in with collective efforts to repel the squeeze, the campaign was doomed. By individualising their problem people were collectively defeated.

55) *Schnews*, No. 156

56) *Schnews*, No. 167

57) Police Review, quoted in 'Surveillance Watch', *Schnews Survival Handbook*

58) *EF! Action Update*, No. 50

59) *Global Street Party: Birmingham and the G8* pamphlet.

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60) The reference – me and a mate on a glorious day!

61) *EF! Action Update*, No. 59

62) 'Friday June 18th 1999: Confronting Capital and Smashing the State', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 20

63) 'Carry on Camping', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 148

64) *EF! Action Update*, No. 57

65) *EF! Action Update*, No. 48

66) For a short while it looked like The Land Is Ours might successfully set off a wave of action around the country. However, the entrenched nature of the problem and the spectacular, media-centric style of some of the main 'occupations' cut that possibility short.

67) There is always a danger here of merely becoming unpaid social workers. For too many in the past, community organising has been a way back into the mainstream. That this is a danger should not stop people doing these bread and butter activities – but should remind us to be ever vigilant against assimilation.

68) One argument put forward for community organising over ecological defence, is that only the working class can defeat capitalism so 'real work' needs to be done 'in' the working class to strengthen 'it' and radicalise it. Apart from the obvious patronising missionary attitude this view ignores the fact that the Land Struggle Period saw large actions with and by working class communities across the country; a level of joint action most traditional class struggle anarchists could only dream of. While many of the places '90s land struggles happened in were 'Tory shires', others were in the old 'barracks of the labour movement' – the East End, South Wales, Glasgow, inner-city Manchester and the Yorkshire mining areas!

69) For a good analysis of this debacle see – 'May Day: Guerrilla? Gardening?', *Do or Die* No. 9, p. 69

70) 'Here Comes the Barmy Army!', *Do or Die* No. 9, p. 12

71) This year's EU summit in Greece is likely to be the last outside of the EU Fortress in Brussels.

72) *EF! Action Update*, No. 55

Part Two: The Four Tasks

We Shall Control the Night

In Part One we looked at some of radical ecology's recent history; now it's time to stop looking back and start looking forward. I called Part One 'Recent Pre-History' because the past is prologue. An understanding of our own movement's evolution so far is essential when discussing in which direction(s) we want to evolve.

For if we are going to help catalyse a movement that can "confront, stop and eventually reverse the forces responsible for the destruction of the earth and its inhabitants," we are going to need good strategy.

We live in important times. This moment does not allow us much margin of error.

This is an attempt to solidify my ideas on our strategy and put them across in a digestible form. Though I am doing the typing and the mental filing, the ideas are by no means mine alone. Some are very common in our circles, in the last few years having reached the point of cross-group consensus. I will state them nonetheless as it's useful for those who've recently entered our arcane world, who may not know the subtext. They are also worth clarifying for those of us whose minds, filled with the subtext, become murkier every day. Many of the ideas are not in any way cross-group consensus. They are offered up and can be treated as delicacies or dogfood depending on your taste.

This is a strategy document written to promote discussion in Britain's radical ecological direct action movement. Much of it may be useful for people from

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other circles and countries. BUT it is NOT an attempt to build some overriding strategy for 'the emerging global resistance' or any similar abstraction. While it may be useful for readers in the global North, I reckon it's largely out of context in the Majority World. Even within Western Europe, culture, terrains of struggle and movements vary a lot. It's worth reiterating the obvious. Strategy should be informed by the global context but primarily shaped by the local conditions.

A Small Editorial Note

'Part Two: The Four Tasks' was pre-published for the EF! Winter Moot in 2002 where 150 copies were given out free. I did this for two reasons. Firstly I wanted to get feedback with an aim to improvement, and secondly I feared that *Do or Die* No. 10 would not come out for months... or years. *Do or Die* No. 10 came out 17 months later and I got quite a lot of wise responses. Many of those thoughts from good warriors and friends have been incorporated in the re-written text printed here. In large part this project, despite its meglomaniacal undertones, was always a collective effort – a bringing together of many of the strands that bind us together as movements. The many helpful suggestions, criticisms and funny chats that resulted have made it all the more so.

As a strategy document it is 'of its time' more than most writings, maybe. As you are reading this well over a year after it was written, action has moved on. One glaring example is the peat campaign, mentioned as an embryonic campaign, when in fact it has now succeeded in most of its original objectives. Some recommendations in this 'Part Two' have been taken up, others ignored. While some increased activity in some areas may seem – in hindsight – a result of this text, it would mostly be more true to see the four tasks as mirroring existing trends, not necessarily inspiring them. In some places I have updated the text to take consideration of this time lag, mostly though I have just left the text unchanged with the occasional [editorial intermission].

I: Growing Counter-Cultures

We need to catalyse living, loving, fighting counter-cultures that can sustain rebellion across generations. In both collective struggle and our everyday lives we must try to live our ecological and libertarian principles. Our counter-cultures must be glimmers of ecological anarchy – fertiliser for the growth of collective imagination. Fulfilling this task is what will enable the others to be fulfilled over the long haul. The counter-cultures must be bases from which to carry out ‘thumb in the dam’ actions and give support to rebellions beyond the core. In times of crisis they should act decisively against authoritarian groups. The counter-culture’s eventual aim should be total social transcendence – (r)evolution.

“[An anarchist society] can hardly come about when isolated groups follow a policy of resistance for the sake of resistance. Unless we can first prove that anarchism works through creating libertarian communities, the critical level of support that we need will never materialise, for the mass of workers will otherwise continue to be influenced by authoritarian propaganda...”

“[One] reason for developing a libertarian social and work structure is that it is a bulwark against authoritarian groups when the upheaval comes. If we have not yet learnt the lessons of the Russian and Spanish revolutions when the communists savagely attacked the freedom of anarchism, then we do not deserve to survive as a movement. We start at a severe disadvantage vis-à-vis our authoritarian ‘comrades’, and they will easily destroy us again unless the shoots of libertarianism are already pushing through the crumbling remains of the old society.”

– Stuart Christie, *Towards A Citizens Militia*.

Map Reading in the Social Desert

Things are going to shit. They have been for a long while (10,000 years) but now it’s getting really serious. Social solidarity is imploding and ecological systems are being ravaged as never before. What is needed is an entire change of

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direction for global human society. We need to find each other and together find our way back to nature.

We must totally dismantle the technological web of slavery and dependence that we have been born into. For the earth's remaining forests to stay up, the world's factories have to come down. To do this we will have to take on the most murderous ruling classes ever to disgrace the earth.

Of course, within the realm of contemporary politics, these solutions are not only unrealistic, but also unintelligible. That hardly matters. The biological meltdown is fast making the logic of industrial society irrelevant.

Reformist manoeuvres in this context resemble rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Global ecological and libertarian revolution, though incredibly unlikely, is a far more realistic strategy for defeating apocalypse and global slavery than recycling or voting for the Socialist Alliance.

A consensus in plenary at the 1997 EF! Gathering was that 'the movement' saw itself as an ecological revolutionary network.⁽¹⁾ This is a considerable change from the past radical ecological view that sees no hope for positive social change this side of industrial collapse.

So, if we set ourselves the task of advancing (r)evolution here in the core, how are we going to go about it? We are talking vast change here. Lefties just want to change the rules of the game leaving hierarchy, ideology and industry intact. We want to stop the game and start living. While they want to build workers power (power for lefty ex-students mostly) we want to destroy power and abolish work. This is a massive (though not a mass⁽²⁾) undertaking.

The mythical Revolution is not something that will just happen suddenly one day after we've polished some ideology long enough. (R)evolution is a process of individuals and collectives reclaiming what has been taken from us, rediscovering our power and creativity together. Sometimes gradually, sometimes in huge leaps during times of greater struggle.

Expand the Cultural Oases

“If we are to actually change things then there are some things we have to do: We have to build our own economic, justice and social systems. We have to do this all the while maintaining an equal emphasis towards destroying the existing culture and its fucked up systems”

– Making Punk A Threat Again ⁽³⁾

(R)evolution is about practical change in everyday life, class consciousness, solidarity, love and imagination.

(R)evolution is the evolutionary process of the creation of new worlds.

Ecological direct action could be just an exciting holiday of autonomy between leaving school and entering the world of work and parenting. If that's all it ends up being, then it has still given me and thousands of others some of the most beautiful, exhilarating and just plain weird moments in our lives.

However if we really want to kick this system in and grow a new world we have got to build a multigenerational culture that can sustain us for the long haul.

In growing ecological libertarian counter-cultures it is worth looking at past experiences of anarchist (r)evolution. Probably the best example in the West remains that of the historical Spanish anarchist movement.

The Spanish Anarchist Counter-Society

Us anarchists have a tendency to fetishise Spain 1936. In the non-insurrectionary times that we live, looking back to a 'golden age of anarchism' can seriously get in the way of analysing and struggling in the here and now. We are a long way off from the cataclysm and clashes of the Spanish civil war. However, there is a lot to learn from the Spanish experience – less in the trenches of Aragon and more in the movement that gave them birth.

A simplistic view sees the Spanish revolution as starting in 1936 and ending with Franco's victory. In fact, the (r)evolution had started decades before. Franco's attempted *coup d'état* and the ensuing civil war was the rich's (eventually

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successful) attempt to stall the growth of a culture that was reaching transcendent levels in many parts of Spain. Increasingly class conscious and combative workers organising in (largely) anarchist unions were immersed in a multigenerational culture which not only opposed, but replaced, much of Spain's state/church backed infrastructure; they were maturing into a movement that given a few more years, would have been almost impossible to destroy. In learning about the movement that Franco had to unleash a sea of blood to wash away we can see in part what needs to be done in our own times.

In his brilliant book about the pre-civil war anarchist movement, Murray Bookchin has this to say:

“The Spanish anarchists left behind them a tangible reality that has considerable relevance for social radicalism today. Their movement's ‘heroic years’ 1868-1936 were marked by a fascinating process of experimentation... [They] had evolved an astonishingly well organised subculture within Spanish society that fostered enormous freedom of action...”⁽⁴⁾

“What these Spanish anarchists aimed for, in effect, was a ‘counter-society’ to the old one. It is easy to mistake this for an ‘alternate society’, one that would co-exist with capitalism as an enclave of purity and freedom, however, nothing could be further from the truth. The Spanish anarchists expressly rejected the concept of an ‘alternate society’ with its hope of peaceful reconstruction and its privileged position in a world of general misery... Since social or personal freedom could not be acquired within the established order, they viewed a ‘countersociety’ as terrain in which to remake themselves into revolutionaries and remove their interests from any stake in bourgeois society... The bureaucracy, state, and church were the anarchists mortal enemies; any voluntary dealings with these institutions were to be avoided. Children were sent to libertarian or union schools.”

“Wherever the [anarchist movement] had a substantial following it established *Centro Obreros*, which functioned not merely as union headquarters but as cultural centres. Depending upon its resources, the *Centro Obrero* might provide literature, books, classes, and meeting halls for discussion

on a wide variety of subjects. This institution exercised a profound influence on the personal life of the worker who belonged to anarchist influenced unions... Ricardo Mella recalls Seville “with its enormous Centro Obrero, capable of holding thousands of people.”⁽⁵⁾

“Far more important than the episodic revolutionary uprisings, individual atentados [assassination of bosses or bosses men], or the daring escapes of small circles of comrades was the ability of the Spanish anarchists to patiently knit together highly independent groups (united by ‘social conviviality’ as well as by social views) into sizeable, coherent organisations, to coordinate them into effective social forces when crises emerged, and to develop an informed mode of spontaneity that fuelled the most valuable traits of group discipline with personal initiative.”

“Out of this process emerged an organic community and a sense of mutual aid unequalled by any workers movement of that era.”⁽⁶⁾

We are in a very different situation today and we are quite different people. The Spanish counter-culture was an expression of a transitional class captivated by an ideal that reflected its rural communal past and its harrowing social present.⁽⁷⁾ Yet we should take inspiration and practical guidance from their example.

In Britain a similar – but significantly different – working-class culture of mutual aid grew in nineteenth-century industrial communities. This culture sought to resist the intrusions of an industrial system into every aspect of people’s lives and was the domestic flipside of defensive workplace struggles.

People endeavoured to mitigate for each other visitations of sickness, the death of children, the perishing of women in childbirth and a continuing inadequacy of basic resources. Much of this was the work of women, and was possible through networks of kinship and neighbourhood, as well as the associations in the workplace, through trade unions, co-operative societies, burial clubs and friendly societies.

Many radicals saw in this lived working class solidarity culture an embryo of a non-capitalist society, but thanks to industry and ideology it never embraced

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libertarian insurrectionary fervour like its Spanish relative; in fact, the opposite. Despite – or perhaps because of – the monumental mistakes made, we can learn a lot from the still warm corpse of the British labour movement.

Its continuation into the relatively recent past underlines what many libertarians have pointed out. Under the veneer of illusory command it is voluntary co-operation, mutual aid, nurturing, human solidarity and love that keeps society from imploding. Here though, we are concerned with something grander than mere survival – living free.



Love's Labours Lost

In Britain – birth place of industry – the transitional class came much earlier than elsewhere. Defeated in a bitter class struggle, Britain's poor had internalised industrial logic and embraced social democratic ideas even in the midst of continuing struggle. The working class (under significant influence from marxist socialists) created the hopelessly reformist Labour movement which in turn institutionalised the culture of working class mutual aid in the welfare state.

Thus, whereas Spanish working class solidarity grew anarchist (r)evolution and the CNT, British working class solidarity produced the welfare state and the Labour Party. The post war 'triumph' of the labour movement and the founding of the welfare state was the near total subsumption of the working class by the state, not the other way round as lefties choose to believe.

The welfare state produced a security for capitalism which enabled it to set out on a period of expansion such as had not been seen since the exuberance of the early nineteenth century. An expansion which is bringing life to the brink.

The inter-generational culture of the British labour movement has now been destroyed over the last 20 years or so by Thatcherism/ Neoliberalism. With the decimation of heavy industry and the restructuring of the economy most of the old strongholds of the British workers movement no longer exist – e.g. mining, shipbuilding, the docks and the nationalised industries.



30 Years of Temporary Counter-Cultures

Beyond the 'First World' significant counter-cultures are arising. Yet here in the capitalist core since the 'proletarian glory days' there have been no (r)evolutionary counter cultures on the kind of seismic scale that evolved in Spain. This is no surprise given that the 'class in transition' that defended the barricades of Paris, Barcelona and Kronstadt is largely no longer found in the core.

Since the '60s upheaval Britain has seen quite a number of anarchist/ecological counter-cultures form then dissipate through inertia, state repression, or simply assimilation. These autonomous cultures – squatting, feminism, travelling, punk, back to the land, ecological direct action camps, animal liberation, anarchism etc. – have all predominantly been youth movements operating in the heady (and vanishing) space of dole autonomy.

They have remained temporary because they have largely been generational; failing to either accommodate the changing needs of their ageing members or having any ability to involve younger generations. The one major exception has been travelling which has evolved into a multigenerational culture – there are now three generations of 'new travellers' on the road together. Unfortunately travellers have suffered more state repression than anyone – resulting in a mass exodus from Britain of tens of thousands.

The temporary nature of these counter-cultures – though not invalidating them – does significantly limit their scope from a (r)evolutionary perspective. The struggle then is to first join the dots, link up these generations of libertarians by creating multigenerational counter-cultures.

To a certain extent we have been going down this road for a few years. The inspiring actions of the '90s have brought many different age ranges together. Yet our radical ecological circles still remain very much 'Club18-30'. [I first wrote the previous sentence around four years ago and it may be truer now to say 'Club 21-33'! Rather worrying considering the next paragraph... ho hum.]

The next few years will show whether our movement will share the fate of the Trots (who, bar students, are mostly in their late 40s having been in their

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20s in the '60/'70s upsurge) – an isolated political generation moving through time shrinking with every year.

The creation of multi-generational counter-cultures is essential simply from the perspective of our network survival.

Opening Up Space

More than anything else we need to open up space for (r)evolution to grow. Keeping ourselves undigested within the bowels of the system is going to be difficult. Later in Task II I will talk about biological meltdown and some of the steps we must take to combat it. Yet just as civilisation is destroying nature all over the globe, so too it is haemorrhaging our internal nature. (“The best kept state secret is the misery of everyday life.” – Raoul Vaneigem) This ever speeding emotional meltdown is resulting in an epidemic of depression, self-harm and violence. Without hope the oppressed will always turn their violence on themselves and each other. Ever more people in the core are turning to damaging pseudo-escapism; alcoholism, drug addiction and even religion are all on the rise. These panaceas only further poison society. Those without hope but also without the ability to fool themselves turn in larger numbers to an escapism that is in no way pseudo – suicide.

“Suicide is now the single biggest killer of men under 35... The rate – three times that of women of the same age – has nearly doubled since 1971. Working class men are at particular risk, with suicide rates four times those of men in professional occupations... The Samaritans believe the figures could be much worse as examination of road-traffic accidents involving just one driver suggests that some of them may well have been deliberate.”⁽⁸⁾ Although women – especially the young – lag behind men as ‘successful’ suicides, they are way ahead when it comes to attempts.

Speaking personally, I have already lost too many friends and comrades to death, depression and drugs. Many of these were great warriors and brave, good people who shone during the '90s land struggles. But after these struggles and the culture it spawned ended, their shield from the world was gone. Soon after, so were many of them – if not in body then in spirit. I believe that

for quite a few the temporary counter-culture of land struggle put off for years their NOT inevitable descent. It is from this that I take the belief that the growth of counter-cultures can go some way to re-instilling – and sustaining – hope and authentic human behaviour. Yet if we are to make these cultures (at least Semi-) Permanent Autonomous Zones then we need radical spaces and communities that will hold. To a large extent we have already started building (well, buying or breaking into mostly) the structures we need:

- **Communes:** Housing co-ops, traveller sites, big shared houses, farms, squats, direct action camps and land projects.
- **Social Centres:** Squats, members clubs, resource centres.

Our strength is in our ability to take action ourselves and by doing so inspire others to take action. To a large extent both the Land Struggle Period and the Global Resistance Period were catalysed initially by a very small number of people. Our network's strategy has been one of empowering others to replicate our activity rather than expand ourselves as such. It is both a duty and a pleasure to live our ecological and libertarian principles and if we do so as coherently and consistently as possible I believe it is quite infectious. Most of us, after all, got hooked on the laughs and commitment of others.

While counter-cultures should act as partial sanctuaries we should never forget the importance of defence through attack. In the words of the SPK (the '70s armed German psychological 'self-help group'): "Civilisation: This sick society has made us sick. Let us strike a death blow at this sick society."

Changing Change

Too often radicals decry others' inability to face up to the desperate need for change. A few years back Jeremy Seabrook interviewed many radicals in an attempt to find the root of their failure to change society:

"We were becoming uneasy about the recurring theme that 'people must change'. We began to wonder if the reason why the parties advocating radical change were so unsuccessful was because they were striking against the resistance of people who had changed, who had been compelled to change, too much. The experience of industrialisation had been driven

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by relentless change, and continues to be so. Even countries which pride themselves on having reached an advanced stage of development, of being post-industrial, of being ‘developed’, constantly require accelerating change from their privileged populations. So why should we expect that exhortations to change will be welcomed by those who have known little else for at least two centuries? In this context, the desire to conserve, to protect, to safeguard, to rescue, to resist, becomes the heart of a radical project.”⁽⁹⁾

In the capitalist core, development is simply renamed progress and the ground is always moving from under our feet. Our ‘thumb in the dam’ defence of ecologies over the last decade has garnered vast levels of support. A similar but far more subtle process must be carried out to defend threatened positive social relationships.

We must first root ourselves in surviving communal and ecological practises, preserve them, extend them and link them with the emerging counter-culture.

In this way the base for (r)evolution is not merely ‘new’ relationships fostered by ‘radicals’ but age old radical (in the original meaning) relationships. One example is allotments and the connection to the land and sense of autonomy they breed – under constant threat from development.

The oppressed multitude needs to wrest control of change from the elite, becoming no longer change’s subjects, but its agents.

Counter (R)evolution

The elite pre-empt counter-cultural transcendence with civil war.

To attempt to seriously change the world is to put realism in the attic, a worthy piece of Spring cleaning. Yet to embark on a project of change without taking heed of the likely reaction is not merely idiotic but terribly irresponsible.

“A truly revolutionary culture that is effective (demonstrating realistic, sincere designs aimed at the overthrow of established power) will be attacked by the built in automatic survival instincts of the established power complex creating a need to counter-poise the violence of power. Without the ability to organise a counterforce to neutralise the violence of established power, antithesis dies. We are not contending with fools.”
– George Jackson⁽¹⁰⁾

The rich will try to pre-empt and destroy by military means any movements of the multitude which have the potential to transcend and destroy power. In Spain, Hungary, Latin America, Indochina – social threats and state massacres.

Relatively peaceful social struggle and construction is only possible up to a point – the point at which it begins to seriously undermine elite power.

It is of course most likely that we will never get anywhere and therefore fail to bring the roof down on ourselves. However if we believe radical social change is at all possible than we must think and prepare for the reaction.

The leaflets for June 18th 1999 proclaimed that: “To work for delight and authentic festivity is barely distinguishable from preparing for general insurrection.” I’m a bit of a sucker for Situationist semantics but I have to say that pretty banners and samba bands do not armed militias make! Don’t get me wrong, I like a good street party as much as the next twenty something; but let’s call a spade a spade.

Situ slogans like this have been made common radical currency by the events of France 1968: rioting students in the Sorbonne, factory occupations, red and black flags in the sunshine. France ‘68 is often used as justification for the idea that spontaneous revolution can succeed without the need for significant (r)evolutionary preparation. In fact the failure of France ‘68 proves the opposite.

From the boredom and misery of everyday life a momentous social upsurge swept across France without warning. President De Gaulle was freaked out and doubting the loyalty of the French army left French soil for the relative safety of troops stationed in Germany. Great! But just as the upsurge had appeared, suddenly so too it dissipated. Why?

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There are a number of reasons – the Stalinist stranglehold on the unions chief among them. One simple factor, often ignored, was De Gaulle's appearance on national television to basically proclaim 'if you want civil war I'll give it to you'.⁽¹⁾ He insinuated he had the loyalty of a large part of the army while 'revolutionaries' could claim the loyalty of none. While this was not entirely true (action committees had been formed within camps of conscripted soldiers to organise break outs), it was mostly true. Trusted regiments were deployed around Paris and widely photographed.

A near million strong mass march of the forces of reaction took to the streets. Faced by this threat and sizing up the fight a large section of the working class, already disorganised by the Stalinists, understood its own weakness and abandoned the moment. Skirmishes at factories continued but De Gaulle's broadcast really was the turning point. Imagination is Power but the power of imagination is not enough when confronted with the armed might of the state. What is needed is class strength – an armed people.

The failure of France in '68 was that coming so suddenly, the rebellion never really went beyond negative opposition to move to positive social growth and defence. When offered civil war – the blood and the horror – many workers couldn't envision a future worth it. They also knew that they didn't have the class strength to get through a civil war. The lack of a decade by decade counter-culture left those who occupied the factories nothing tangible to defend and expand and not enough weapons to do it with.

By resigning itself to the resumption of party politics instead of engaging in a bloody slug fest it would lose, the French working class was entirely logical. The failure of many radicals to size up fights – and as a result see the centrality of an armed class in (r)evolution – says more about their class background than anything else. Stuart Christie, long term British anarchist, founder of *Black Flag* magazine and attempted assassin of Franco, puts it well:

“One of the fundamental rules of guerrilla warfare is to spread the struggle to every piece of territory and to every facet of life. Unless the seeds of anarchist freedom have already been sown there, we are doomed to perish however good our military preparation might be.”⁽¹²⁾

Surplus Baggage

Despite our professed militancy and radicalism we still carry a lot of baggage from the political terrain many of us first got involved in – single issue campaigns. As has been pointed out elsewhere, our move into ‘revolutionary politics’ has often been carried out by pressure group methods.

Our responsibility to any (r)evolutionary process is *not to make revolution*, but to evolve counter-cultures that can *make revolutionaries*.

Ideally counter-cultures can have enough time to evolve, through struggle, to a point at which social transcendence, total (r)evolution, is possible. By such a time it would be able to field considerable armed class strength and possibly defeat elite attempts to drown it in bloody counter (r)evolution.

Of course history rarely leaves anyone alone with their plans and this is just such a case. Here lies the rub, in the words of a Canadian army military historian:

“Revolutions are not, in fact, made by revolutionaries. The professional agitators, the terrible exiles of history have seldom succeeded in raising even the smallest revolutionary mob. The best they can hope for is to seize control of the course of the revolution once it has started. The thing itself is caused by the persistent stupidities and brutalities of government.”⁽¹³⁾

That ‘revolutionaries’ don’t make revolution is no bad thing considering those who executed most of the last century’s revolutionary hopes were the very people who described themselves as revolutionaries – socialists like Lenin and Hitler. As libertarians a large part of ‘our job’ is to stop these murderous parasites from seizing control of the course of tidal waves of change. How far we are away from crises of this scale is unknowable but discussed in Task III – Preparing for Crises.

By strolling on to the terrain of revolution (at least theoretically) we are confronted by a plethora of leftist ideologies. Thankfully, as libertarians, we are inoculated against infection from some of most virulent – and stupid – authoritarian dogmas. For instance we have rightly rejected out of hand much of

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the (ridiculous) party building and fetishism of organisation which characterise the ‘revolutionary (HA!) left’ in particular and capitalism in general.

There is an opposing left tendency that disagrees with almost any activity aimed at preparing for the tumultuous events that punctuate history. In times of social crisis faith is put in the ‘revolutionary impulse of the proletariat’. One can sum up the theory of this tendency as ‘It’ll be alright on the night’. There is unfortunately little evidence from history that the working class – never mind anyone else – is intrinsically predisposed to libertarian or ecological revolution. Thousands of years of authoritarian socialisation favour the jackboot and this is the very reason why libertarian counter-cultures are so important.

Some Proposals

The practical work involved in this task is far more than all the others.

- It means growing real friendships which can weather the storms of struggles and relationships.
- It means creating our lives so parenting and activism neither conflict with each other or are seen as separate things.
- It means growing food on our allotments and rebuilding the land community.
- It means consolidating locally.
- It means if forced into jobs continuing the struggle in the workplace.
- It means solidarity between groups.
- It means being vigilant against cultural assimilation, patriarchy and depression.
- It means safe houses.
- It means acting together informally in our shared interest. Your mates landlord won’t return her deposit – a short office visit by her mates should sort that out.
- It means demolishing authoritarian socialists in general and Nazis and Stalinists in particular.
- It means not allowing us to drift apart.⁽¹⁴⁾

- It means training.
- It means laughing together as we fight together.

Really the list is too long to go through. I will not even attempt to catalogue what ingredients good counter-cultures needs – social evolution and the individual situation will do that.

The two primary divisions in this society that need to be overcome are our disconnection from each other and our disconnection from the land. Practically there are some very obvious things we can do now as an evolving counter-culture.

Reconnecting with each Other

1) Build a British Social Centre Network: Social centres – which place politics where they should be, in friendship – are the key to viable counter-cultures. Probably because of the post ‘70s travelling culture Britain is unusual in not developing a social centre network. Across Europe social centres are at the very heart of anarchist counter-cultures. (This is also true incidentally of Irish Republicanism and Basque separatism). This process has begun and from this one act of organisation a thousand acts of resistance will follow. [Since this was first published, a London Social Centres Network has formed and plans are afoot for one nationwide.]

2) Prepare for Strike Support: Our circles, despite inhabiting an economically peripheral social position (casual labour, dole, single parenthood) have a far better record in the last 10 years in supporting strikes than the left. To quote a shop steward from the Liverpool Dockers: “others talk, these people do!” A small amount of thought can make our ability to use direct action to intervene in workplace struggles much easier. Solidarity among the poor – the very basis of counter-cultures and anarchy.

3) Resist Together, Train Together: While a (r)evolutionary culture can include everything from cabbage growing to hip-hop, without active resistance a culture will not hold. We need to be up against it to make sure both that the petty things don’t split us and the big things bring us together. Living in a mundane world you can know someone for years and not truly know them as you do after a day of struggle.

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Acts of purposeful resistance build our collective strength but we shouldn't just rely on events. We need to train to grow our power. Run Faster – go running with a mate. Trash Better – learn sabotage skills before you need them. Find Direction – go orienteering at night. Get Fitter – give up smoking collectively. Hit Harder – spar with friends. Strength is infectious.

Reconnecting with the Land

1) Grow the Land Community: Allotments are available to us all thanks to Nineteenth Century arson, but hundreds of sites every year are being destroyed by developers. More direct action is needed to stop this haemorrhaging of an inheritance born of struggle. More work allotments in Britain than work in farming and it is only from this land community that any hope for ecological autonomy can grow. The experience of growing your own food is (r)evolutionary.

Allotments also offer a jump point for those committed to leaving the cities and towns. On these small patches we can learn many of the skills in miniature needed if we are to grow out of our dependency on the industrial. From farm communities in Cornwall to land projects in the Scottish Highlands many of our circles have gone 'back to the land' in the last decade. Many more will follow. The call of the soil cannot be drowned by the cacophony of traffic.⁽¹⁵⁾

“In the final analysis, all revolutions are fought over the question of land.”
– Malcolm X⁽¹⁶⁾

2) Rewild Ourselves: Get out beyond the streetlights and join the stars. Hear the darkness and see the sounds of the night. Learn skills, light fires. Discover wild foods. Sit quietly in a wood and wait. Guide kids to the true joy of mud and spiders. Wear down the soles of your walking boots, harden the soles of your feet. Get naked in the sun and snow. Pack a heavy rucksack with everything you'll need for a weekend camping, then leave it on the bed and walk out the door. Nurture saplings, plant the spring. Improvise shelters, get nifty with a knife. Don't go to work – fuck in forests.

3) Continue Ecological Land Struggles: In Britain our struggles over ecology and wildness are powerful theatres for the growth of ecological sensibility. In living on, for and in defence of the land, one forges an immensely strong

connection. Fluorescent bibbed cops grappling with tree defenders brings out into the open the age old conflict. On one side the property/state axis, on the other wildness, diversity, freedom. By creating these situations of struggle, mythic discourse is shattered with a power no essay or clever turn of phrase will ever have. Unleashing these revelatory (r)evolutionary moments is at the heart of our action. With every broken illusion we take a step back from the abyss.⁽¹⁷⁾

Task Conclusion: Grow and Live

For new worlds of land, liberty and love there will be both kisses and gunfire.

Taking responsibility for our own lives and those around us is daunting. It's not just the cops, the bosses, the scabs and the poverty that keeps people working for the man. It's the terror of the blank page. We are schooled to be dependent on fictions and commands, not to believe in ourselves. Growing and defending new worlds is a daunting task, yet the alternative is far worse. An acceptance of a tide of void that consumes species and peoples while it daily drains us of dignity.

The aim of our counter-cultures should be total social transcendence – (r)evolution. That (r)evolution is extremely unlikely (there is no point pretending otherwise) does not fundamentally question the need for counter-cultural growth. Counter-cultures are not only new worlds for the future but barracks and sanctuaries for today.

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Notes

- 1) Simply wishing this doesn't make it a reality. It may be truer to say that we aspire to become ecological revolutionaries.
- 2) Civilisation needs us all to become increasingly isolated individuals that can only exist as part of a mass. Authoritarian 'revolutionaries' and reformists alike often talk of the need for a 'mass movement' to create change, yet libertarian change only happens in 'everyday life'. Check out the pamphlet: *Anti-Mass – Methods of Organising for Collectives*.
- 3) *Making Punk A Threat Again* by Profane Existence.
- 4) *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years 1868-1936* by Murray Bookchin (AK Press) ISBN 187317604 X, p. 288
- 5) *Ibid.* p. 146
- 6) *Ibid.* p. 288
- 7) 'Peasants and the Transitional Class' at the end of Task IV explains this further.
- 8) 'It's Good to Talk', *Observer Magazine*, 09/06/02.
- 9) *The Revolt Against Change* by Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook, ISBN 0 0993 090 17, p. 3
- 10) *Blood in My Eye* by George Jackson (Penguin Books, 1975) p. 50. Black Liberation fighter Jackson was killed by the screws inside San Quentin prison only a few days after finishing this book.
- 11) *Enrages and the Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May '68* by Rene Vienet, ISBN 094606105X, p. 94
- 12) *Towards a Citizens' Militia* (Cienfuegos Press, 1980).
- 13) 'The Coup D'Etat' by Lt-Colonel DJ Goodspeed in the interesting, but slightly weird, *Civilian Resistance as a National Defence* edited by Adam Roberts (Pelican).

14) A good point from another *Do or Die* editor: "In some ways, I really don't like the extrapolation of the 'personal is political' that some of these proposals represent. Instead of all social relations being subsumed/made subordinate to capital, they are subsumed to the task of building the counter culture/revolution. Have you not considered that people drift apart because they realise that they simply don't like each other any more – and that it might be unhealthy to stay together for the sake of the revolution?"

A danger correctly spotted. This is why it important to grow substantive cultures made up of inter-linked small human sized groups. A good example was the Newbury Bypass Campaign. One of the factors that made it so good was that there were over thirty camps – each with a different atmosphere. Living in many different bands enabled us to be a strong temporary tribe. If we had all been

part of one organisation we could never have held together at all. 'Affinity groups structures' (read: groups of friends!) grow counter-cultural unity by separating people as much as bringing them together. Here lies another major difference with authoritarians. In large organisations personal clashes are channelled into competitive scrambles for dominance over the mass membership.

15) In the cities isolation from the land can drive you mad, in the countryside isolation from other people can have the same affect. For this reason it is important that those moving onto the land do so collectively and/or stay in regular contact with those elsewhere. The take-over of land – legal or illegal – should be seen as an extension of the counter-culture not a flight from it. For more on allotment history, forest gardening and land struggle see 'Farmageddon: Confronting Industrial Agriculture', *Do or Die* No. 7, p. 40

16) Quoted by Stokely Carmichael (ex-prez of SNCC) in *Black Poets and Prophets: A Bold, Uncompromising Clear Blueprint for Black Liberation* edited by Woodie King and Earl Anthony, (New American Library, 1972).

17) "Or maybe a step closer to despair and the loony bin" – says another *Do or Die* editor.

II: Putting Our Thumb in the Dam

Just as counter-cultures must open up space for (r)evolution to grow we must also open up time. The life support systems of the earth are under unprecedented attack. Biological meltdown is accelerating. (R)evolution takes decades to mature. Unless force is used on the margins of the global society to protect the most important biological areas we may simply not have enough time. The last tribal examples of anarchy, from whom we can learn a lot, could be wiped out within decades if not militantly defended. 'Thumb in the Dam' struggles aim to protect ecological diversity understanding that this civilisation WILL be terminated, by either the unlikely possibility of global (r)evolution or the certainty of industrial collapse.

*“What would the world be, once bereft,
Of wet and of wilderness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet”*

– Gerard Manley Hopkins, Inversnaid.

“Our job is to save the evolutionary building blocks and to make sure there are grizzly bears and great blue whales and rainforests and redwoods somewhere, so that in the final thrashing of the industrial monster everything else that’s good on this planet isn’t destroyed.”

– Dave Foreman, Earth First! co-founder.

Here Come the End Days

The aim of this piece is to help prioritise and direct our action and organising. However, our absolute action priorities are not left to us to determine. They have been decided for us by the point in history in which we live. For this reason I have made this task section considerably longer than the others.

Industrial Capitalism has continued civilisation’s age-old attack on the wild and free - resulting in unparalleled biological and cultural meltdown. The decimation of wild peoples (cultural meltdown) and the devastation of ecological

diversity (biological meltdown) are now reaching truly apocalyptic proportions.

Biological Meltdown

“Indeed, all the indications are that we are standing at the opening phase of a mass extinction event that will be comparable in scale to the five great extinction episodes that have taken place in the history of life on earth, the most recent being the loss of the dinosaurs some 65 million years ago. Impending extinction rates are at least four orders of magnitude than is found in the fossil record. That means in the order of 10,000 times greater, a frightening prospect to say the least. If allowed to continue the current extinction episode, could well eliminate between a third and two thirds of all species... [within this] century.”⁽¹⁾

One third to two thirds of all species on earth – GONE! Stop a while, attempt to conceptualise the magnitude of the moment.

Nothing in the history of humankind has prepared us for this appalling event, but OUR generation will probably witness the disappearance of a third to one half of the earth’s rich and subtle forms of life, which have been evolving for billions of years. In the early 1990s Michael Soule, founder of the Society for Conservation Biology, made this chilling assessment of the status of the earth’s biosphere:

“For the first time in hundreds of million of years significant evolutionary change in most higher organisms is coming to a screeching halt... Vertebrate evolution may be at an end.”⁽²⁾

Soule is saying that humanity’s disruption of the environment has been so systematic and profound that it has halted the same natural processes that have brought everything we know into existence, including our very bodies and minds.

Cultural Meltdown

It is tempting when facing this scale of doom to think of humanity as an intrinsically ecocidal organism. A pox on the earth. This however lets us and our society – city culture – off the hook.

Numerous cultures have developed a sustainable and harmonious relationship with their surroundings: the Mbuti, the Penan, the !Kung, to name but a few. These societies chose not to dominate nature. In the larger history of humankind, they are the norm and we are the exception.

On civilisation's periphery, some of these wild peoples live on. Their very existence is a serious threat to city culture; simply in the fact that they show that there is a reality outside our world. Defending their autonomy and the land of which they are a part, they are the best protectors of some of the earth's wildest places.

Just as wild nature is being denuded and domesticated, so too is wild humanity. This century will probably be the last for many cultures ages old. Civilisation aims to wipe out their other worlds. Men of money and men of god conspire. If these tribes are wiped out by our culture, it will be the first time in millions of years that no human communities have lived in harmony with nature.

Guns, gold, god and diseases could make Homo Sapiens extinct in our lifetime. For when the last gatherer-hunters are hunted down, all that will be left of humanity will be in the entrails of Leviathan – having the potential for life but unliving.

'Land, the mother earth from which we are born and to which we die, on whom our lives depend, through which our spiritual ways remain intact. To impose changes on this ancient order would serve to destroy our dignity and identity as Indigenous people. Without the land, the peoples are lost. Without the Indigenous peoples the land is lost.' – Declaration of Indigenous Peoples, 1987

A Critical Moment

It is in this context that we must see ourselves. Not simply as rebels against empire, like so many before us, but rebels at the most critical moment in human history.

Our generation will likely see the decimation of remaining ecological/anarchic cultures and the haemorrhaging of the earth's life support systems. As I outlined in Task I reformist strategies are irrelevant but (r)evolution is not only unlikely but also takes time. This has often been acknowledged by radicals in the past. Emma Goldman in her last years wrote that she believed anarchy was too huge an idea for her age to move to in one step. She looked to future generations, seeing in them hope for the spring. Her feelings echo that of many over the aeons. Looking back, an example arises from the ashes and war cries of arson and insurrection in early 19th century England. One rebel anthem sung with gusto at the time resonates.

“A hundred years, a thousand years,
We're marching on the road.
The going isn't easy yet,
We've got a heavy load.
The way is blind with blood and sweat,
And death sings in our ears.
But time is marching on our side.
We will defeat the years.”⁽³⁾

They fought, but like many before and after, failed to get to the promised land. Yet they took solace in believing their path was right and others would follow, reaching where they had not. Their belief in an almost endless future of possibility, in the unswerving progressive march of humanity through and with time gave hope to the weary.

We no longer have that luxury.

Today, time is not marching on our side, but against us. We must fight all the faster. We cannot pass the gauntlet of defending the wild to unborn generations. It is that wildness and those unborn generations that are in peril today.

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What we do in our lives, in this moment, is of utmost importance. For no other generation has the weight of the future rested so heavily on the present.

Given the urgency, the pain, the horror and the magnitude of the unfolding catastrophe, the questions what to do and where to start are daunting ones. Thankfully the way has been charted in part by the last 25 years of radical ecological action. ‘Thumb in the Dam’ struggles have been at the very centre of our activity.

How can one best defend wild areas and cultures? In the absence of significant (r)evolution the answer lies in a combination of conservation, direct action and the strengthening of ecological cultures. Groups such as the Wildlife Trusts (in Britain) and Conservation International (globally) have adopted land purchase as their main tactic. This has its place but the times call for a more militant attitude. Most of us have little money to protect habitats by buying them up, while ‘protected’ areas are often far from safe. Direct action on the other hand puts the costs onto those who attack nature not those who wish to defend it. Trashing a digger poised to level a copse feels like a far more authentic reaction to ecological destruction than any amount of paper shuffling. For most of us, well targeted direct action is the most effective and efficient use of our limited time and resources. In the early ‘80s the failure of reform environmentalism made this clear and the radical ecological resistance was born. Militant direct action by warrior societies putting the earth first!

What objectives and strategy can we base our actions around, given the vast scale of the attack and the minute scale of the resistance? This Task section will hopefully give at least a partial answer.

Defending the Living Land

Though it was from an understanding of the *global* ecological crisis that our movement was born it was in *local* ecological land struggles that our movement grew. As stated earlier, we can take pride in the beauty and vitality of habitats throughout Britain that are alive today because of our resistance to infrastruc-

ture growth (roads), resource extraction (quarrying, opencast coal mining, peat digging, timber cutting) and city expansion (house building).

These struggles have changed forever all of us who have taken part in them. They have connected us to the earth in a deeply emotional and meaningful way. Exhilaration, fear, empowerment, true human communication, anger, love, homes and a feeling of belonging in both communities and the land; these are just some of what we have been given by these struggles. I emphasise this so that what I say next is *not* taken as a disavowal of British *local* ecological land struggles.

To those of us brought up in Britain's woodlands, copses, downland and dales these habitats have an immense importance – reaching deep into our soul. However, from a *global* perspective how important are these ecologies given the accelerating biological meltdown?

We must direct our action where it will have most effect. Trauma medics use triage to sort casualties according to priority – which lives are most threatened, which lives are most saveable. In this way they can put their resources where they will have most effect. What we need then is a form of global habitat triage for the biological casualties of civilisations war on the wild. Thankfully in the last 15 years such a system has taken shape, in the form of the Hotspot Theory.

Hotspot Theory was first conceived by British ecologist Norman Myers. First, it makes the task of defending biodiversity more 'approachable' by demonstrating that we can conserve a major share of terrestrial biodiversity in a relatively small portion of the planet. Secondly, it demonstrates specifically where these areas are located, and why they are so important, entering into considerable detail on what each of them contains. Third, it elucidates the different threats faced by each of the hotspots.

Myers' Hotspot priority system uses vascular plants as the main determinant, given that plants are the primary fixers of energy from the sun and are necessary for the survival of most other organisms.

Hotspots are defined with two criteria. First, biological diversity. Secondly, degree of threat. A minimum of 0.5% of total global vascular plant diversity *endemic* to the area in question is the primary cut-off point for inclusion on

the hotspot list. The theory uses the most current estimate of vascular plants as 300,000, i.e. the cut off is an area that must have 1,500 endemic vascular plants within its borders. Also bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian diversity is taken into account, in that order of importance. The second criteria, degree of threat, has a cut off measure whereby a hotspot should have 25% or less of its original primary natural vegetation cover remaining intact.

Hotspot analysis carried out between 1996-1998 resulted in a list of 25 hotspots and two exceptional mini-hotspots (the Galapagos and Juan Fernandez islands). The hotspots are:

Tropical Andes, Meso-america, Caribbean, Choco Darien, Atlantic Forest Region, Brazilian Cerrado, Central Chile, California Floristic Province, Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands, Easter Arc Mountains, Cape Floristic Province, Succulent Karoo, Guinean forests of West Africa, Mediterranean Basin, Caucasus, Sundaland, Wallacea, Philippines, Indo-Burma, Mountains of Central China, Western Ghats and Sri Lanka, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Polynesia, South West Australia.

Cumulatively, these 25 areas plus the mini-hotspots have almost 88% of their original area destroyed or denuded with only 12.28% remaining intact. This intact percentage amounts to just 1.44% of the land surface of the planet – a little smaller than the EU!

A staggering 131,399 vascular plants are endemic to the hotspots representing 43.8% of all plants on earth. Adding in estimations of non-endemic plant species found within the hotspots brings us to an even larger figure.

“At least 65.7% and more likely 70% or more of all vascular plants occur within the 1.44% of earth’s land surface occupied by the hotspots.”⁽⁴⁾

This indicates a vast percentage of all life in other species groups – mammals, avi-fauna etc. In fact 35.5% of the global total of non-fish vertebrates are endemic to the hotspots. Once again, adding in estimations of non-endemic non-fish vertebrates, we come to a figure of at least 62%. Maybe perhaps 70% or more of all non-fish vertebrates occurring in the hotspots. As the authors of Hotspots say themselves:

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“If 60% or more of all terrestrial biodiversity occurs in the most threatened 1.44% of the land surface of the planet, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these areas deserve a lion’s share of our attention over the next few decades. Indeed, if... we are at risk of losing one third to two thirds of all species within the foreseeable future, and if almost two thirds of at least the terrestrial species are in the hotspots, then it seems fairly obvious that we may make a major dent in the entire endangered species/mass extinction problem by placing very heavy emphasis on the hotspots.”⁽⁵⁾

This analysis is immensely useful, and has been refined further. Lots of number crunching later leads to a ‘top 9’ Hotspot list:

Tropical Andes, Sundaland, Meso-America, Indo-Burma, Caribbean, Atlantic Forest Region of Brazil, Madagascar, Mediterranean Basin & Choco-Darien (Western Ecuador).

These 9 areas account for 29.5% of all vascular plants and 24.9% of non-fish vertebrates. This in just 0.73% of the planet’s land surface - around half of the size of the EU!

Further analysis on threat highlights three hotspots; the hottest of the hot. They are the Caribbean, the Philippines⁽⁶⁾ and Madagascar.

If this theory is correct, and there is every reason to think it is, some solid conclusions can be drawn:

1. At this moment in time radical ecologists around the world must do everything in our power to defend the 25 Hotspots.
2. Serious action must be taken to halt or slow the destruction of the three hottest hotspots.
3. Northern Europe appears nowhere on the hotspot list. In fact it has a relatively low level of biological diversity thanks to a combination of climate, past glaciation and human habitat destruction. We should obviously continue to defend Northern European habitats. *However in the context of the global biological meltdown, struggles to defend Northern European habitats are entirely peripheral.*

4. The appearance in the hotspots list of the Mediterranean Basin should focus us in Europe. The fact that a hotspot covers parts of the EU is a surprising revelation and one that has serious repercussions.
5. Given serious action, the preservation of significant sections of global biodiversity is a real possibility, if only because it could involve such a small percentage of global land surface.
6. These conclusions combined with a sensible analysis of our powers (as radical ecologists primarily in Northern Europe) begin to give us answers to the urgent question posed earlier. Where to start?

A hierarchy of *global* priority setting can follow the pattern: global > regional > national > local > specific sites. Obviously, given our location and limited powers, the priorities set by such a system cannot be transferred immediately to a list of practically realisable objectives. Beyond this we can also set a hierarchy of priorities for *local* habitat defence here on our island and its environs – understanding all the time these struggles’ largely peripheral role in the global *direct* defence of diversity.

Some (Don’t) Like it Hot(spot)

While this section leans heavily on the hotspot theory, for good reasons, it is merely a system of global priority setting and thus should not become ideology. At base the very utility of such a project can be questioned – is global (rather than local) thinking possible or even desirable? Should our objectives be taken from cold, scientific number crunching? Unfortunately I think our time and geographic location force us to such analysis if we are to have an impact on biological meltdown. Other biological priority systems are out there but if we accept the need to go in this direction I reckon the hotspot theory offers the best route.

On a similar tack we should not see species diversity as a measure of the ‘value’ of specific ecologies. The basic tenant of biocentric thought is after all that wild nature has value in and of itself. The kind of discourse that leads to telling phrases like ‘species richness’ is poor substitute for a real connection with nature. In relation to Red Alert areas a true holistic/whole ecosystem ap-

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proach is essential. There is after all little point protecting a habitat if, outside the protected area, the river that 'services' it is dammed or re-directed.

There is one deep worry I have about the hotspot theory – maybe it's simply too hopeful. It concentrates on those highly diverse areas at imminent high risk of desolation. It's global > regional > local priorities are Hottest of the Hot > Individual hotspots > Red Alert areas within the Hotspots.

By concentrating on those precious areas most at threat we are possibly concentrating our energy in those areas in which we are most likely to lose.

This is a dilemma worth pointing to because other strategies are available – though ones with more depressing conclusions. This then swings on one's calculation of the collective power that ecological direct action, conservation biology, enlightened bureaucrats (ha!) and popular movements can muster. I choose to believe that we can have some serious impact in the hotspots, but it would not be exactly illogical to think otherwise. Many of the Red Alert areas specifically and some of the hotspots in general are probably doomed. It might make more strategic sense to concentrate instead on the less devastated/domesticated areas (the big rainforest wildernesses not included in the hotspots) making links and preparing for battles to come. This 'Long War' strategy of concentrating on the 'cold spots' (Amazon, Congo, New Guinea) is attractive but it does take as a given that a vast percentage of global biodiversity is unsavable. I choose more hope than that – for now. A reappraisal of the situation should happen in maybe 10-15 years. If our trouble-making and conservationist money hasn't resulted in victory in at least some hotspots then a switch of strategy would seem in order.

Defending the Land: Medium Term Global Objectives

Here, I am attempting to set, using the hotspot theory and an understanding of our strengths, a hierarchy of our top global biological objectives for the next ten years.

In many ways this seems ridiculous. However, in 1992 we set ourselves the task of stopping 600 roads which were ripping through a significant proportion of Britain's most important habitats. Within five years 500 had been cancelled.

I am confident that unified action can have a momentous effect. Those who believe less than I in our cumulative power should see the utility of strategising all the more clearly. Here then is what I think our top global objectives should be, in order of their importance to us.

1) **Get Militant in the Med:** A big push is needed to directly defend the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot. It is the only one of the 'top 9' found in the 'West' and the only hotspot to include part of Europe. Over the next few years we should consolidate links with Basin groups and start to engage directly in action within it. The Med's 10 'red alert areas' are of greatest importance. Of these the Maritime Alps, the Spanish section of the Rif-Betique and Southern and Central Greece should be our first concern. Involvement in resistance in these areas should build our ability to engage and support struggle elsewhere in the northern part of the hotspot. Within a relatively short period of time we could be involved in serious defence of a globally important area – making an actual impact on biological meltdown.

2) **Uncompromising Aid for the Three Most Threatened Hotspots:** The Philippines, Madagascar and the Caribbean are the priorities at the moment, yet as we are unlikely to actually get to them they are not our highest objective. However we should target solidarity and aid to radicals, resisters and conservationists in these three hotspots as a matter of urgency. Of the three it is with the Philippines that we have most extensive links – these should be consolidated. Filipino EF!ers and anarchists should be given substantial aid. [Since this was first distributed EF!ers from Leeds have formed the 'Philippine Solidarity Group', providing practical aid for EF! and indigenous groups there. This has included direct financial aid, on-the-ground solidarity, prisoner support etc.]

3) **Go Wild for the 'Western' Hotspots:** For various cultural and economic reasons our direct involvement with struggles is more likely in 'Western' countries than Majority World ones. The areas under occupation by the 'West' largely do not appear in the hotspot list. Apart from the Med and a small part of the Caribbean, those that do are South Western Australia, New Zealand and the Californian Floristic Province. Already existing links should be solidified, solidarity actions carried out and the steady flow of our visitors to these

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hotspots should continue. Just remember to wrench at least one big machine for each long-haul flight!

Beyond this we should do anything we can to assist the preservation of all hotspots, not just those mentioned above. Wild areas not included in the hotspots should of course also be defended. However if we want to have any meaningful impact on biological meltdown, as much of our activity as possible should be aimed at the hotspots in general and the above objectives in particular.

Back to Britain, Back to Reality

So far I have charted what I believe we should do on the global terrain. Yet most of what we have done over the last decade has been defending the land of these dear isles. I am not calling for abandonment of this struggle. It is important for both us and the ecology of Britain. It is also what we have shown ourselves to be pretty good at. Hundreds of habitats remain living due to ecological direct action. Kiss the earth and feel proud. We – among many – have done well.

Though many of us will take action in the global hotspots, few will spend most of our time there. One criticism of following a hotspot based global triage strategy is that it lacks soul. Species diversity surveys do not an ecological sensibility make! While that's true, the global crisis calls for *globally* important action and I believe that the hotspot theory has utility. Yet acceptance of the *globally* peripheral nature of British habitat defence does not extinguish our desire or duty to defend *our* land. An authentic land ethic must be rooted in where we are. My bioregion may be 'species poor' compared to a rainforest but I love it. It's the bracing wind on its bright hills that whisper to me to live wilder. On a totally practical level it's far easier to defend land nearby.

As I said earlier in Part One, throughout the 1993-1998 Land Struggle Period our action priorities were largely set by the Department of Transport. When we decimated the state road building program we lost a terrain of struggle that unified and strengthened us nationally. The question posed, then, is what is the greatest and most geographically spread threat to British ecology?

The tactically unfortunate answer is industrial agriculture.⁽⁷⁾ The 'great' thing about road building was that wherever you were in the country it produced a front to attack, land to defend. It bit into Britain's ecology in big bites. The terrible thing about industrial agriculture is that though it devours more, it does so incrementally, with small bites. Fronts rarely present themselves. The camps at Offham,⁽⁸⁾ The Land is Ours occupations and trespasses,⁽⁹⁾ and most of all the growth of anti-GM actions, are all in part attempts to bypass this impasse.

The post 1998 wave of global resistance allowed us to totally side step the question of what land to defend (of course, some camps continued but little on the previous scale). Now we are faced once again with this question. Essentially without a national programme to attack, the question divides further – at least from the perspective of strategy. There are three categories of British land habitat defence to take into consideration:

- a) **Bio-regional Habitat Defence.** Specific local sites under threat that may not be perceived as either ecologically or strategically national priorities should none the less be defended by local groups.
- b) **National Co-ordinated Habitat Defence.** Land deemed ecologically or strategically⁽¹⁰⁾ of prime national importance, which the movement as a whole can recognise and act on.
- c) **Defence of the Wild Periphery.** Areas beyond the bioregions of any local groups and far from large population centres that have some character of wilderness about them.

With roads, local bio-regional habitat defence fed into national co-ordinated habitat defence. Any terrains which mirror this hugely advantageous situation should be pursued. At the moment I can see no such terrain, but let's keep a look out! I'll go through each category in order with some suggestions.

Bio-regional Habitat Defence

Essentially this is a question for us as individuals, groups and hopefully eventually as local counter-cultures. We should be intimately aware of the ecologies around us. Only through a deep knowledge of, and connection with the land can we hope to defend our bio-regions from further damage. Looking at local

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biodiversity studies⁽¹¹⁾ is worthwhile, but it is our feet across the landscape that is most informative. Get out into the countryside around you. Make sure you are familiar with the wildness on your doorstep. Know your land and you'll know when it's threatened.

Put yourself about in peculiar circles. Conservationists, twitchers, ramblers, insect lovers; in most areas there are a smattering of nature nerds. If you're not one, make sure you're friends with some. They'll know about the housing development that'll destroy ancient woodland or the farmer who's draining some amphibian rich marshland for subsidies. Keep your ear to the ground.

Many of our most important habitats are listed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. SSSIs are Britain's ecological backbone, but nevertheless are often threatened. Make sure to keep an eye on the ones nearby.

I am not going to go into detail about what tactics are needed in local battles. After 10 years it's pretty obvious. Community mobilising, occupations, blockades, bulldozer pledges, sabotage. Threatening the destroyers with costly chaos and giving it to them if they try it on.

Nationally Co-ordinated Habitat Defence

Since Newbury/Manchester there hasn't been a piece of land that we have all pulled together to defend. This has been a great shame. Together we are quite a force/farce to be reckoned with. National co-ordination has some real advantages. For a start it maintains our circle's bad reputation, which is invaluable. Countless sites have been saved with just the threat of camps and direct action. However, significant and loud struggles are needed to keep this threat potential alive.

Beyond tactical considerations, some ecosystems are simply so precious they call upon us all to cram into crummy vans, meet joyously in the mud and fuck shit up. Above all else, these moments can be bonding, inspiring and educational (when they don't go horribly wrong).

When deciding whether a particular piece of land should be coalesced around nationally, a few questions should be asked. Is it highly ecologically important? Is it winnable? Is it easily accessible nationally? Is the actual physi-

cal terrain conducive to action? Will a victory or noisy defeat on this land help save habitats elsewhere?

Mid to late 2001 saw the re-emergence of direct action in defence of the Thorne & Hatfield raised peat bogs. To all the above questions this habitat answers with an enthusiastic YES! At the risk of seeming foolish from the perspective of a few years hence, I believe this campaign to be immensely important. Not only does its re-emergence allow us to co-ordinate nationally but direct victory is quite conceivable. [Since this text was first distributed the campaign escalated and secured the end of peat extraction on Thorne & Hatfield and other sites.]

Reform environmentalism has spectacularly failed to save this hugely ecologically precious habitat. If we win this battle and choose our next equally well we could end up in a cycle of success. One noisy victory leads to another and many quiet ones besides.

A recent good example of such a cycle is when animal rights groups got on a roll after closing down Consort, who bred dogs for vivisection.⁽¹²⁾ Once they had shown their mettle by closing Consort they followed up by forcing closed Hillgrove (cat breeders) and Shamrock Farm (a monkey quarantine centre). By the time the cycle reached Regal (rabbit breeders), the owners were so freaked that they packed up the day after the campaign was launched!

These successes understandably led animal liberationists to become too cocky too quickly and take on a much bigger target – Huntingdon Life Sciences. HLS is integral to corporate Britain. The state saw the danger of animal liberationists on a roll and realised that if HLS was brought down the ‘animal rights extremists’ would feel unstoppable. Smaller companies would crumble at the sound of their approach. Thanks in large part to the targeting of its financial backers things were getting economically dicey for HLS. The state reacted and stabilised the company by arranging a large injection of capital. From then on HLS has acted as a firebreak, stopping the spread of animal liberation. The cycle may have been broken. The teeth of this trap should not be allowed to cut into resistance again.

A comprehensive analysis of national land defence priorities is too big a job for this piece. Such a study must take place. For the moment we can concentrate on the peat bogs, but we should not wait till victory to map out our

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next targets. It is around our ability to act nationally that our network survival (rather than just that of our local groups) rests. Previous waves of national action have been defeated by either our victory in a particular battle (i.e. roads) or the pig's success in swamping us (i.e. Sea Empress, Target Tarmac etc). Hopefully this time we'll get the wagon rolling fast enough that it can't be stopped – at least for a while!

One priority that can definitely be set is confronting corporations in the National Parks. As long as they succeed in one development, one quarry, one pipeline, the vampires will push on with another attack. It should be our job to make them scared enough to retreat – at least out of some of the National Parks.

The National Parks are immensely important and the hold they have over popular imagination makes them easier to organise around than other areas. It is also often easier to find out about threats facing the Parks. If the companies are given an inch they'll take a mile, but if their profits are threatened they'll run a mile.

The present Nine Ladies action camp in the Peak District National Park stands a fair chance of success, has strengthened the resolve of local conservationists and is deterring other destructive projects.

Defence of the Wild Periphery

Our movement for the wild has evolved in a physical and political environment lacking big wilderness. Habitats near large human population centres are more likely to be defended by us than wilder and more precious eco-systems far from the cities. Wildness is everywhere from the grass between the paving slabs to the high mountains. It's good that we defend wild pockets in deserts of development (the M11, Abbey Pond, Crystal Palace etc.) – primarily for such struggles' (r)evolutionary potential – but we should not ignore 'the mountains' altogether. So far this has largely been the case.

With the exception of some good work in North Wales, the stillborn (but dramatic) campaign against the Skye Bridge and the victorious defence of the

Pressmenan Woods Caledon remnant, defence of the wild periphery has been pretty paltry.

An example of our failures can be found in the Cairngorms – one of Britain’s largest roadless areas. For at least 8 years I remember occasional campfire/pub chat about the possible construction of a funicular railway up Cairngorm. It’s been very contentious as the train replacing the ageing chairlift (itself an aberration) will massively increase the amount of people on the Cairngorm Plateau (1,000 a day is a figure bandied about). With them we knew would come much damage and significant building work, shops and all. Plans are even being discussed for hotels! This isn’t fucking Mayfair – it’s the summit plateau of one the wildest areas in Britain. Many said that direct action should be used if construction started. The project was put on hold at one point and I for one presumed it had been cancelled.

Yet no one kept their ear to the ground or acted if they knew. The first I heard about the railway being actually built was Autumn 2001 and on January 1st 2002 the first public train ride up Cairngorm was broadcast across the nation. A carriage filled with smiling politicians toasting the New Year – pass the sick bag (No wonder they were smiling – there was no way the parasitic slobs could have got up the mountain in January if they had had to walk it. That would have made far more amusing TV). The glint in their eyes was the reflection of our failure. If one of the last British bastions of wildness can become a site for development, what chance have we got of re-wilding London or Liverpool!

In the Cairngorms 10% of the area below the treeline is still covered by native woodlands and is the “most extensive example of Boreal forest in the UK and one of the largest tracts of comparatively unmanaged and still mainly unenclosed woodland.”⁽¹³⁾ If we have failed to defend the wildness of the Cairngorms Plateau it is essential we protect these remnants of Caledonia and other sites like them. Though a significant proportion of the massif is now under conservation ownership, a lot of damaging economic/ecocidal activity continues. If anywhere calls for some occasional monkeywrenching, it’s these wildlands.

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I use this example because it's horrific and it's in Scotland. If protecting SSSIs and the like is of primary national importance it is worth pointing to one simple fact: 20% of the total area of Scotland is designated either an SSSI, National Nature Reserve, or National Scenic Area. Scotland's total species diversity is far less than England's but its habitats are far less fragmented.

“We have species and habitats in Scotland that are important, in both the national and international context. Examples are the native pinewoods, the extensive blanket bogs, the bryophyte-rich Atlantic woodlands and the enormous colonies of breeding seabirds”⁽¹⁴⁾

These areas should be militantly defended. Yet apart from the exceptional actions of some communities, few stand up to defend these wild areas from the threats of plantations, logging, development etc. In large part this is because of the absence of people in much of the Scottish countryside – excluded by one of the highest concentrations of land ownership anywhere in the world. Given this, it is all our responsibility to protect these areas. If not you, who? In the long run it would be good to formulate ways of confronting this destruction in a co-ordinated fashion. Until then, happy hikers with wrenches in their backpacks have an important role to play.

Unfortunately, what makes Scottish bio-diversity globally unique – its climate edge position resulting in an amazing coexistence of species from different ecologies – is itself under threat from climate change. This should not dissuade us from action but remind us all the more of the need in times of flux for massive wilderness restoration; and situate our *local* British struggles in the *global* context. As one contributor at a conference on biodiversity in Scotland put it:

“Our Scottish action on biodiversity is in danger of being reduced to trivial tinkering on the margin: another example of deckchair-shifting on the Titanic.”⁽¹⁵⁾

As in Scotland, so it is across the divided queendom – many habitat's main protection lies in their remoteness and the efforts of an array of often relatively powerless conservationists. Not even on this domesticated isle has the wild been

vanquished, but it is under threat. I'm not going to specify the areas in need of special defence – across the wild periphery diversity is being whittled away. We are a people in love with the wild. We are committed to the wild – to its power and its defence. By spending more time 'out in it', we will better know which areas are threatened and gain the inspiration to take the action needed.

Many tens of thousands desire these areas, finding solace and strength in them. One of Newbury's greatest moments was when the state's use of climbers catalysed the involvement of many from the climbing fraternity. Those who took the state's silver were seen by other climbers for what they truly were – scabs, traitors to the land. A leading climbing magazine stated that what Britain's wild areas really need is a monkeywrench gang unity forged between us, two tribes of the outdoors. I couldn't agree more.

Many committed to the wild will not engage in our (r)evolutionary organising. They may scent defeat and futility or simply disagree with our 'political' aims. This is understandable. Thumb in the Dam resistance enables those without hope for any positive change *in* culture to take action, by militantly defending wildness from negative change *by* culture. In this they can create hope for nature even if they see little hope for humanity. In the masses of climbers, walkers, hill runners and mountain risk freaks is an untapped force, that if unleashed could become a formidable biocentric army for the wild. Against such a force incursions like the Cairngorm Railway would have little chance.

Through walking the wildlands we become more able to defend them and unite with others who hold them in their hearts. As John Muir said: 'One days exposure to mountains is better than a cartload of books.' Or a radical eco rag like this for that matter.

Defending the Land: Immediate British Objectives

Having gone through each of the categories in turn I'll outline some objectives for British habitat defence. These I believe are realistic objectives, some of which we have already got our teeth into. In defending the wildness of our isles we can find both great peace and great excitement. We have shown ourselves

capable of being adequate habitat defenders. Let us march on to the defence of many more.

1) **Build Bio-regional Defence:** Locally we should all continue to expand knowledge of our bioregions and take action when important habitats are threatened. Our ability to generalise the skills and confidence needed for direct action is what will protect areas.

2) **Save Thorne/Hatfield Moors and Kick-start a National Cycle of Successes:** Despite considerable success throughout the '90s, direct action is often seen as a last stand rather than a tactic that wins. As a network we should pull together for a loud and undeniable victory which can catalyse others. The defence of Hatfield Moors is an excellent terrain of struggle. The habitat is very precious, on the brink of unrecoverable damage and yet it is winnable. It's strategically and ecologically in all our interests that the campaign succeeds. [The campaign has succeeded!]

3) **Keep Camp Culture Alive:** The high cost of evicting action camps is the reason many habitats are still alive. As recently as 2001 the state cancelled the Hastings Bypass when camps were threatened. Unfortunately the last few years have seen a steady decline in camps. If allowed to continue a decline in our threat potential to stop developments may follow. It's make or break time. We should do all we can – as predominantly urban activists – to keep camp culture alive; otherwise much of the ground gained by the Land Struggle Period could be lost.

At the time of writing there are only three ecological defence camps. The responsibility for aiding them lies with all of us – not just those groups nearest. Tat, cash and bodies are always needed on site. Next time the bailiffs go in we should descend en masse to kick shit, up costs.

Ok, so I sound a bit old school; after all many of us lived on camps but now choose not to. However we should not let our present cloud the continuing and future importance of camps. For nearly ten years there has not been one month in which a camp hasn't held out against development. Let's make sure we can say the same in another ten.

4) **Increase Action on the Wild Periphery:** Our movement for the wild has too long neglected the wild areas far from the cities. As many in our circles

spend more time 'out in it' this action will increase. Let's remember to pack a wrench as well as our waterproofs!

A concerted effort should be made to push militancy among the many tens of thousands who walk the wild. We should aim to empower those who don't wish to 'join' our 'movement', but nevertheless embrace the land ethic and want to defend the areas they love. Boltcroppers for every hiker!

Links should be consolidated with the small number of organisations representing non-ruling class interests in the wilder parts of the British countryside (prime among them of course the Crofters Union⁽¹⁶⁾).

We should build towards a future where we can make significant interventions on behalf of threatened habitats even when they are far from 'activist centres'. Until then, it's monkeywrench gang time!

Given the onslaught of climate change and the highly fragmented nature of British ecology – especially in England – ecological restoration is essential from a Thumb in the Dam perspective. Isolated reserves will be little use in the long term, what is needed here is the regeneration of big ecosystems that can manage themselves. Before we are finished let's see bison and wolves in the Cotswolds!

Defending the Living Sea

Most of this earth is covered by sea. The oceans, birth place of all life. Despite civilisation's ravaging they remain wild. Two centuries ago Byron said it well:

“There is a murmur on the lonely shore. There is a society where none intrudes. By the deep sea and music in it's roar. Roll on thou deep and dark blue Ocean. Four thousand fleets sweep over thee in Vain. Man marks the earth with ruin. His control stops with the Shore.”

Since Byron's time the fleets have grown. Huge factory ships sweep the seas leaving ruin in their wake; fisheries which must have seemed endless now brought to the edge by machines which must have been unthinkable;⁽¹⁷⁾ giants

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of the sea hunted to extinction. Yet Byron is still right. The oceans are the largest wilderness left on earth, injured but untamed.

It is unlikely that the ecologies of the seas will suffer the fate of many of their land cousins; debilitated, denuded and finally enclosed within the prison of agriculture.⁽¹⁸⁾ Yet many are under serious threat of being wiped out. In the seas are some of the planets oldest species and systems, survivors of hundreds of millions of years. Now, they drown in man.

Climate change, pollution, factory fishing, whaling, oil exploration and increasing volumes of shipping are some of the main threats to the oceans. How, if at all, can we combat these attacks?

As always, when looking into the chasm we have to accept that much of what is alive today will be dead tomorrow, whatever we do. Coral reefs are one example. Already climate change induced warming of high sea temperatures has killed most of the coral reefs in the Indian Ocean, Western Pacific and Eastern Pacific. Corals in the Caribbean and Brazil have also been badly damaged.⁽¹⁹⁾ Given the time lag inherent in climate change, if we had global insurrection tomorrow (unlikely), we could still expect the death of most of our reefs and the life that depends on them. Depressing, but as the hackneyed old slogan goes: Don't Mourn, Organise! We CAN take some practical action to slow some assaults on the sea.

Despite the spectacular image of Greenpeace dashing around in natty zodiacs, relatively little direct action has been carried out to protect the seas. This is largely for entirely understandable reasons. We are, after all, land mammals and few of us spend much time at sea. When compared to the odd roll of poly-prop the cost of running anything sea-worthy is astronomical. Yet we in the British Isles are ideally placed to get to grips with the problem.

So far the only serious group to take Gaia's side on the oceans is the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Its founder, Paul Watson, declared: 'Earth First! is mother earth's army and we are her navy'. Their first action was the 1979 ramming and disabling of a whaling ship off the Portuguese coast. The whaler managed to limp into port only to be mysteriously bombed a few months later and sunk with a magnetic limpet mine.

Since then Sea Shepherd has been confronting enemies of the oceans with an arse kicking attitude. Slicing the nets of driftnetters, ramming and scuttling whalers, and sabotaging seal and turtle kills. As I write they are patrolling the waters off the Galapagos Islands. The last year has seen them make headway in eliminating the ecocidal ships attacking this immensely important area.⁽²⁰⁾ If they succeed it will be one of ecological direct action's biggest victories. It should be no surprise that they might be responsible. In fact, if it wasn't for Sea Shepherd, mass commercial whaling probably would have restarted, pushing numerous species to extinction.

Though predominately based in North America, Sea Shepherd has operated all over the world carrying out many operations in European waters. Most recently Norwegian and Faeroes whalers have been targets. Its mere presence has a serious deterrent effect. The Italian fishing industry halted its most damaging practices on hearing Sea Shepherd had entered the Mediterranean.

Though a smattering of Brits have crewed, the number is surprisingly small when you think how many of our mad lot it might appeal to. There are a number of reasons. Real lasting links have never been made between us and Sea Shepherd. Personality politics is also a factor. The figure of Captain Paul Watson is both immensely inspiring and deeply off-putting to circles with a dislike for hierarchy and the media. Our height was also their low. The mid to late '90s coincided with a relatively less active period for Sea Shepherd. That period has thankfully now ended with two large boats in the fleet and a growing international organisation.

Though few links exist now, if ever there is a meaningful attempt by our circles to contribute to the defence of the seas, we will have lots to learn from Sea Shepherd. A major driving force behind their success has been good strategy and well applied tactics. So let's have a look.

Most of Sea Shepherds most spectacular actions can be divided into two categories – Sea Confrontations and Harbour Sabotage. The terrain of struggle they operate in is one of both waves and laws. A lot of what they confront is illegal and often beyond state territorial waters. Political considerations make the extradition and jailing of anti-whaling activists difficult.

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Sea Confrontations: Slicing driftnets and ramming enemies of the sea is what has made Sea Shepherd famous. The keys to the success of many SSCS sea confrontations is that they're militant – though 'non-violent', media friendly – though not merely stunts, carried out on an international level but rarely against Sea Shepherd host nations, largely against illegal activity, and regularly in international waters. The main key of course is having big fuck-off boats and crews committed enough to plough them into target ships. Keeping these ships running is expensive.

Harbour Sabotage: Sea Shepherd's most infamous action was a daring raid in 1986 that left half of Iceland's whaling fleet at the bottom of a harbour and its major processing plant trashed. This action needed only good intelligence, cunning, limited funds and two brave souls to open up the boats' sea water intake valves. By the time the action was discovered, the two, a Native American and a Cornishman, were on their way to the airport to leave Iceland forever. Since '86 Sea Shepherd has carried out other impressive scuttling, most notably against Norwegian whalers.

So far no-one in Sea Shepherd has served any major time for any of their actions! Despite SSCS glaring victories no other groups have successfully copied them by taking to the seas. It would be excellent if an autonomous Sea Shepherd-like organisation evolved in Europe. But with no such groups coming into existence, those who wish to take action at sea must join the long volunteer lists of SSCS.

Readers who have served aboard Sea Shepherd or have general maritime experience should seriously consider the need for a European addition to 'Neptune's Navy'.

Much money and commitment would be needed to set it up, but it would be an immense asset to ecological resistance in Europe. Such a project, if handled right, could bring together energy and resources from a range of circles – radical eco-types, ex-members of Greenpeace's direct action units, animal liberationists & rights groups, ex-Sea Shepherd crew etc. Indeed, the years have proven that there is significant mass support for radical action at sea – especially when it comes to dosh. Two decades ago, a third of the cost of the first Sea Shepherd boat was put up by the RSPCA. The Faeroes campaign in '86

was funded mainly by English school children who raised £12,000 in a save-the-whale walkathon.⁽²¹⁾

While Sea Shepherd is alone in carrying out militant sea confrontations, the tactic of harbour sabotage has been taken up by others. Even here in Britain serious sabotage was carried out against seal cullers in the mid '70s, resulting in the destruction of one vessel and damage to another.⁽²²⁾ Across Europe a number of ecocidal ships have been scuttled. Recently, Norway has been the prime target.

On 11th December 2001, one of Norway's main meat processing plants at Loften Dock was destroyed by fire, causing damage totalling at least £1.5 million. Five days earlier, the whaler *Nehella* had burned and sunk at the same dock costing £150,000. Another whaler, the *Nybraena*, was damaged when the factory fire spread to the dock. The *Nybraena* had been scuttled by Sea Shepherd agents in Christmas 1992, for which Norway sought in vain to extradite Captain Watson.

These recent actions also follow another action on 27th February 2000. Then, another Norwegian whaling vessel, the *Villduen*, was destroyed when an explosion sunk the ship at its moorings. The blast collapsed the deck and the ship sank to the bottom of the harbour half an hour later. Sea Shepherd stated publicly that they were not responsible. It has always denied the use of explosives and this is what it said about the attacks. 'We neither take, nor condone actions that might result in any injuries. Nonetheless, we are pleased for the whales!'⁽²³⁾

While putting a new fleet afloat would take a lot of work, basic harbour sabotage takes few resources bar pluck. While the recent Norway bombing and arson were obviously very effective, monkeywrenching can be effectively done with just hand tools. An exact and proven guide to the subject has been written by Sea Shepherd Agent #013. S/he says in the intro:

"With the scuttling of ecologically destructive ships comes the possibility of doing tens of millions of dollars of economic damage. We are talking megatage here. The joy of bringing down a whaler can be one of the great pleasures in an eco-warrior's life. It can be the most treasured of feathers in one's spiritual war bonnet."⁽²⁴⁾

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S/he should know – the author was one of the team that scuttled the Nybraena in 1992.

We have looked at direct action tactics used in the defence of the sea and posited some possible conclusions. Now maybe it's worth looking at the situation around the British Isles directly. Beyond the unconfontable cataclysms of climate change and the like, a variety of processes threaten the marine ecologies around our shores. The oil industry (especially expansion into the Atlantic frontier), factory fishing, industrial shoreline expansion, marine aggregate dredging and pollution.

In my opinion we can have little impact on pollution given the continuation of the system. It's a hydra with too many heads/outflow pipes. The odd concrete blockage might be good for press attention and a bit of justice, but it's not really meaningful.

Of the other threats, we have only done action against industrial shoreline expansion. The best example is the campaign against the Cardiff Bay Barrage, which though unsuccessful is credited with discouraging some other similar schemes. A similar struggle could soon arise at Dibden Bay on the edge of the New Forest. These campaigns are really just an extension of the land struggles, with the possible added excitement of zipping around in dinghies, so I will not go into detail here.

The oil industry at sea has been largely ignored by us bar the ridiculous debacle that was the Sea Empress Spill Anniversary Action. As it happened it would have been far better had we ignored it. (Though all credit goes to Reclaim the Valleys, who tried to rescue the situation when the organising group 'Cardigan Bay EF!' went AWOL on the day – after 70+ activists from around the country turned up!) So far only Greenpeace has done actions around the Atlantic Frontier. It is beyond me how with our present resources we could carry out *direct* defence of this globally important marine ecosystem – but let's at least get our grey cells working on the issue. Though it's not actually getting in the way on the Atlantic Frontier itself, blockades etc of Britain's oil infrastructure may be useful.⁽²⁵⁾ When jewels like the St. Kilda region are under threat, action must be taken.

As for factory fishing, Britain is both a base and a stopping port for fleets of driftnetters and klondkyers from around the world. Look through the eyes of agent #013 to see the work ahead.

Fishing quotas are resulting in the elimination of over half of the British fishing fleet. Unfortunately this is not automatically a cause for celebration. The elite are using the collapse of fish 'stocks' to eliminate small fishing boats while leaving large factory boats to trawl the seas. There is potential for some level of joint action by radical ecologists and militant fishing communities against big ships and the economic forces steering them. The barriers and conflicts which would need to be overcome to build such a unity are maybe too big and it's maybe too late already.

Aggregate dredging – aka quarrying the sea – is set to become a significant threat to marine life around this island. Massive expansion plans are afoot which among other things threaten 'fish stock breeding areas'. Fisherfolk in France have already shown their opposition, and ironically there could be a point of tactical unity between us around this attack. As far as I know, no one is organising on this.

Defending the Living Sea: Medium Term Objectives

I have been more vague when dealing with defending the living sea than I was when discussing defending the living land. This is not a reflection of their relative importance; just on our position today and the powers we have developed. Though hotspot style analysis does exist for the seas, it is both less developed, less accurate and, for us anyway, less relevant. As mentioned before, some of the most diverse marine ecosystems – such as many coral reefs – are probably doomed thanks to climate change. Nothing we can do will save them. However, I do believe there are some steps we can take to move towards the challenge of defending the living seas

1) **Engage with Sea Shepherd:** The SSCS has a UK contact but no office. We should build connections and aid them if possible. At the very least we should distribute their material and give whatever support we can when their boats visit Britain. We should raise awareness of their mission and do solidarity

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actions if and when they are arrested. Despite reservations, more Brits should volunteer to serve aboard Sea Shepherd vessels.

2) **Expand Neptune's Navy:** There is no innate reason for the non-existence of European Sea Shepherd style boats. This project could take years to come to fruition but would be immensely valuable as both a tool for direct action and a training ship for marine wilderness defenders.

3) **Sink 'Em My Hearties:** No massive organisation is needed to scuttle a whaler or similar ship. Serious thought should go on before such action is taken. 'Illegal' whalers should primarily be targeted as they are presently trying to expand their 'harvest'. All that holds us back is our fear.

4) **Investigate and Take Action off British Shores:** Research needs to be done, similar in scope to that needed for British land habitats, to find out which marine ecosystems are both threatened and within our capacity to defend. Solid conclusions should lead to solid action, setting national priorities for action.

5) **Skill Up:** Our circles should try to increase our watery skills. Scuba, ships, zodiacs, sailing, navigation – whatever. Worse case scenario is we have a fun time with little political payoff. Best scenario is we have fun and prepare ourselves for campaigns to come.

Defending Living Culture

Radical ecology has always taken its cue from indigenous resistance. Our crossed wrench and stone axe symbol holds the very essence of our movement; a fighting unity between primal people and those deep in industrial society who want to wrench their way out.

While the Fourth World survives enveloped within the borders of some First World countries, most indigenous people live in the Majority World. In Europe, only a minority of Sami live in any way similar to our ancestors. Thus as with biological meltdown, the struggle against cultural meltdown calls us 'over the water'.

Beyond the core the tribes are everywhere under attack. Many are engaged in large-scale resistance to leviathan: the Papuans, the Zapatistas and the Ijaw for example. Our circles have already done quite a lot of action to support these indigenous communities and this should continue. Here I am less concerned with them (cultures with significant populations capable of major action) than with those small shrinking wild societies that, if left without allies, will undoubtedly soon perish. I cover the work needed to aid struggling indigenous communities later at length in Task IV – Supporting Rebellions Beyond the Core.

There are many scattered individuals trying to help *endangered* primal cultures but no solid network that enables them to co-operate internationally. The nearest to what is needed is Friends of People Close to Nature (FPCN). FPCN has carried out serious no-compromise work around the world. Unfortunately, it revolves largely around a man who has severe problems working with other people and has dubious ideas around gender and race. Never the less, many practical things can be learned from this ‘network’.

FPCN concentrates less on solidarity actions than with getting out there and helping directly. Two examples of some recent campaigns illustrate their attitude.

Within the territory of ‘Tanzania’ live the Hadzabe – East Africa’s last gatherer-hunters. One band are typical. Pushed to the most marginal land, banned from using the only watering hole in miles unless they perform for tourists, their children abducted by soldiers and forced into schools; under siege from all sides by settlers & missionaries. While Western White trophy hunters armed with modern weapons zip around in Land Rovers decimating the local mega-fauna, Hadzabe hunters are jailed for hunting with bows and arrows in their traditional lands. They don’t have hunting licences, just an unbroken history thousands of years old.

FPCN activists visited the scattered camps to see how they could help. They provided basic humanitarian aid and protested against the local powers. Best of all, they hired a truck and rescued abducted Hadzabe children from enforced schooling and returned them to their families in the bush. There, as everywhere, missionaries are the advance guard of civilisation. The simple presence

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of ‘Westerners’ who decry the missionaries for the fools, charlatans and profiteers they are strengthened the tribal resolve.

“The hatred against these strangers grows among the Hadzabe. FPCN stands ready to sanction and assist with the burning out of churches on Hadzaland following a similar explosion where a church was completely destroyed by local tribespeople.”⁽²⁶⁾

Many thousands of miles away, the last gatherer-hunters surviving in the Philippines face similar threats. Like many tribes across the world, genocide has whittled down the Agta to the low hundreds. They are ‘Red Book’ humans! They have become landless refugees in their own land.

In 2001 FPCN raised £8,000 and purchased 10 hectares of stolen Agta tribal land in Dipuntian. This land is meant to be a base for a significant section of the Agta population and for action against local logging of the rainforest. FPCN have called for sorted Western visitors to help out on the reserve and in the resistance:

“I would suggest you stay here and look what can be done. Watch the non-hierarchic and soft way of Agta life, so you will perhaps love them and feel the need to protect them.”⁽²⁷⁾

FPCN is now trying to raise another £10,000 to buy an adjoining piece of land for another 100 Agta who want to stay. FPCN list a number of things western visitors can do at Dipuntian from ‘watch the small scale loggers not to cut the trees to Keep missionaries out of the place. The Agta feel safer when foreigners are around.’⁽²⁸⁾

In Task IV I go into detail about practical work that can be done to support rebellions beyond the core, much of which is directly applicable to the defence of primal cultures. So to avoid repetition I will not go into tactical detail here. The two campaigns mentioned above provide good examples of what might needed to slow cultural meltdown.

Defending Living Culture: Immediate Objectives

I will draw out some objectives to further us on the path to aiding tribes in general and gatherer-hunters in particular.

1) **Forge Links with Allies:** A real effort needs to be made to link up supporters of gatherer-hunters interested in solidarity actions and direct aid. The lack of a well functioning network is hindering activity. [In the first published version of this text I advocated ‘consolidating links with FPCN’. Unfortunately despite a lot of good will on the side of EF!ers FPCN’s *leader* had been obstructive, rude and downright difficult to deal with from the start. Other problems specifically around FPCN and the Agta have also surfaced. Despite this I believe they have done more to help out gatherer-hunters than nearly any other Western group. This should not blind us to the group’s serious problems, but instead underline the need for activists from our networks to learn from and in large part replace them.]

2) **Provide Direct Aid to Gatherer-Hunters, Starting with the Agta:** By aiding the Agta we can have a real impact on a perilous situation. Only £10,000 is needed to buy the adjacent land to the Dipuntian reserve. Raising a substantial proportion of the cash needed should not be impossible. Flights from Europe plus internal connections to the reserve cost just over £400. Once there living costs are low. This is an unusually cheap opening for on-the-ground support work, not to mention an amazing experience. Don’t let this opportunity pass by! [People didn’t – see below.]

The Agta are defenders of the local rainforest. Earlier I stated that the Philippines are one of the three hottest hotspots, in facing global biological meltdown one of our highest priorities. Here we have an opportunity to give direct aid and on-the-ground solidarity to an endangered gatherer-hunter community struggling to protect an ecology within one of the three hottest of the global hotspots, in one of the few Majority World countries with active EF! groups. The importance of any action on this field cannot be overstated.

Any involvement by our circles with the Agta would act as a jumping board, extending experience and contacts – thus enabling similar work elsewhere. [In January of 2003 four Leeds EF!ers went over to the Philippines with the

express purpose of helping at Dipuntian and working with EF! Philippines. Meanwhile quite a few in the movement had pulled together around the inspirational sounding project and raised the needed funds for the second land purchase – through a mix of benefit gigs, beer selling, personal donations and grants. Unfortunately Dipuntian was definitely different than is publicly stated. As the EF!ers said on return; “For the past year, much of SSP’s work on the Philippines has centred around the FPCNproject at Dipuntian... We provided publicity and volunteers, and secured funding to buy more land for the project. Having now visited and worked on the project we have made the decision to withdraw our support for it.” While this was very disappointing, to say the least, the visit was by no means a waste of time. Not only did the ‘fact finding mission’ uncover some, unfortunate, facts – it also forged links with Agta bands elsewhere and tribes throughout the islands, as well as supporting Filipino EF!ers. The Leeds visit achieved a number of decent things itself and has opened up the way to further, targeted action. More info can be found on continuing work and the probems involved on : www.eco-action.org/ssp.]

3) **Reconnect with Young Lions EF!:** Six years ago Young Lions EF! (South Africa) were aiding the San Bushman, setting up ‘bush skill’ training camps where elders taught the old knowledge to ‘assimilated’ San. The last we heard from them they were planning to smuggle a considerable number of San back into the Kalahari desert from which they had been expelled. We have heard nothing since despite some attempts at contact. YLEF! were an exceptional group, we must hope they’re alright. Serious attempts should be made to find out what happened and aid them if they are still active.

4) **Continue to Build Indigenous Solidarity Work:** Those struggling indigenous peoples we have aided so far (Ogoni, Ijaw, Papuan, Bougainvillian, Zapatista etc.) deserve our support. This will involve a lot of activity, but we are well on our way. A detailed look at what is needed can be found in Task IV. The last wild peoples call us ‘over the water’. I know some of us will answer them, yet we must be very careful not to cause damage with our good intentions – ‘Mosquito Coast’ style. These are incredibly delicate situations. Tribal people already have a plague of ‘do gooders’, what they need is allies. “Most tribes have no voice. They need people like us as allies because all the other potential

allies have agendas they want to impose in return for help. They are fighting for freedom, not for rights within our culture. Since freedom doesn't exist in our culture then theirs is truly the same."⁽²⁹⁾

Task Conclusion: Warriors for the Earth

To the land of these Isles most of us will return one day – dying, rotting, giving life. Until then, the wind and soil in our soul should direct us. When our leaps halt machines, our scythes cut through experiments, our wrenches disable diggers and our matches start fires – we are the land.

Though we love this land, we love this entire earth and thus the global crisis calls us 'over the water'. In the biological/cultural meltdown Britain's diversity is marginal. To confront the meltdown we will need to join the battle to defend the earth's last big wildernesses – on land and at sea. However, many of us will be unable to reach these global ecological frontlines and will have to fight to preserve fragments behind enemy lines. Above all else, the wild areas in the Mediterranean call us.

To slow cultural meltdown, the last remaining wild peoples must be aided in every way. If most of our species are ever to break out of this nightmare of our own making and find our way back to the earth, we will have a lot to learn from them.

Back in Britain, let's expand and escalate our action. In the conflict over road building, ecological direct action took on the STATE and WON. Let's zero in on particular attacks on wildness and stop them one after the other.

We have the power to defeat some of civilisation's attacks on the wild, both here and in the hotspots; will we unleash it? While community mobilising may win the day in some battles, sometimes 'vanguard' action is called for. Here lies a contradiction for us. The militant action needed could in fact alienate and hinder the (r)evolutionary process. It could result in increased state repression and a cut in public support. These are big problems but do not mean we should preclude militant action – for the price may be worth paying. After all, Thumb

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in the Dam struggles aim to protect ecological diversity while waiting not just for the possibility of global (r)evolution but the certainty of industrial collapse. As warriors for the earth we must put the earth first!

Notes

1) From Harrison Ford's (!) intro to: *Hotspots: Earth's Biologically Richest and Most Endangered Terrestrial Ecosystems* by Russel A. Mittermeier, Norman Myers and Christina Goettsch, ISBN 9686397582

2) *Conservation Biology* by ME Soule and Bruce A. Wilcox, Eds., p. 166

3) 'The Chartist Anthem', in *The Jolly Machine: Songs of Industrial Protest and Social Discontent From the West Midlands* by M. Raven.

4) *Hotspots*, p. 37

5) *Ibid.* A number of the hugely important major tropical wildernesses are not presently included in the hotspot list. They are Amazonia, the Congolian Forest Block of Central Africa, New Guinea (i.e. West Papua and PNG), the Melanesian Islands – New Britain, New Ireland, Northern Solomons (i.e. Bougainville and Buka), Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. These areas are all under some level of attack – some heavy – but they all retain over 25% of their original area untrashed. The team that wrote *Hotspots* are in the process of writing a report on these areas. While they need defence, from the perspective of *global* triage they are not *presently* areas of highest *global* priority. Of course if industrialism continues for much longer these areas will almost definitely join the global habitat 'red list'.

6) While the Philippines does not appear in the overall 'top 9' list; when looking at plant endemism alone it is ranked ninth highest of all the hotspots.

7) See 'Farmageddon: Confronting Industrial Agriculture', *Do or Die* No. 7, p. 40

8) See 'Victory at Offham', *Do or Die* No. 6, p. 62

9) See 'South Downs Mass Trespasses '98: Notes on Packed Lunches and Revolution', Anon., South Downs EF!

10) Ecological and strategical importance are fundamentally different. Strategical importance relates to us, our abilities and what effect action at a specific site will have on our growth or collective power. Ecological importance relates to the intrinsic value of sites irrespective of our ability to defend them.

11) At the Rio Earth Summit nonsense in 1992, governments said they would catalogue their countries' biodiversity. The card-filers of the apocalypse have been busy and you can check out their handy work on the UK Biodiversity Website: www.ukbap.org.uk The website is being added to constantly and you can search it for particular habitat types nationally or locally, or look at biodiversity in your county generally. Some of the website is very useful, other parts blather.

12) The move into a cycle of large-scale daytime national mobilisations was a significant shift in strategy for animal libbers – catalysed by the unexpected mass explosion of the live export protests (See 'Shoreham: Live Exports and Community Defence', *Do or Die* No. 5, p. 75). After the sig-

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nificant victories of the '80s against vivisection and fur farming, animal libbers looked to escalate action against the largest cause of animal suffering in Britain. Their target – industrial agriculture. Their action against the meat/dairy industry – a vast target to say the least – though dramatic (just look at those meat trucks burn!) was a failure. Few animals were saved and the entirely covert nature of the activity seriously cut into 'recruitment' and 'outreach'. Industrial agriculture is just too big a target. Ironically the live export resistance opened a way out of this impasse.

13) *Common Sense and Sustainability: A Partnership for the Cairngorms - Executive Summary*, The Scottish Office, p. 4

14) *Biodiversity in Scotland*, The Stationary Office, ISBN 0114958157

15) *Ibid.* p. 287. Read: 'No Evolution Without Revolution: The Political Ecology of Wolves, Beavers, Sheep and Deer', *Do or Die* No. 6, p. 34

16) While crofters are some of the best allies of the Highlands and Islands nothing is without its contradictions. The growth of hugely damaging salmon farms is one example. The Crofters Union has recently been in increased contact with Via Capensina, the global peasant network which includes among others the Karnataka farmers and the Confederation Paysanne. For a good intro to reality for today's crofters read: *The Story of Crofting in Scotland* by Douglas Willis, ISBN 0859763447

17) See: 'Over Fishing: Causes and Consequences', *The Ecologist*, March 1995.

18) Though still globally minor in scale, industrial 'mariculture' is set to grow massively over the next few decades. From the salmon farms of the Scottish Hebrides to the slaveing of Caribbean fisheries, civilisation is attempting to manage sealife as it does landlife. All over the world considerable struggles are being waged between traditional fishers and industrial sea farming. See: 'Taking the Pisces: Struggles of the Fishworkers of India', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 251

19) 'Wildlife in Danger', *The Ecologist*, March 1999.

20) The Galapagos Islands are one of the two exceptional mini-hotspots which Myers et al. see as global priorities on a par with the 25 conventional hotspots.

21) 'Occurrences in the Ferocious Isles', *EF! Journal*, September 1986.

22) The 1974 seal cull ship sabotage at Sutton Bridge was one of the first acts of the Band of Mercy, predecessor of the ALF. See: *Animal Warfare: The Story of the Animal Liberation Front*, David Henshaw, ISBN 0006373240, p. 15

23) Notorious Vessel Meets Explosive End! : www.seashepherd.org/research/international/vill-duen.html (link broken)

24) 'How to Sink Whalers, Driftnetters, and other Environmentally Destructive Ships' by Sea Shepherd Agent #013, p. 343 in *Ecodefence*, Ed. Dave Foreman, ISBN 0963775103

25) See: 'Putting a Spanner in the Oil Industry's Works', *Do or Die* No.7, p. 66

26) 'Hadzabe: East Africa's Last Hunting and Gathering Tribe', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 267

27) For more information see: <http://www.eco-action.org/ssp/>

28) 'Hadzabe: East Africa's Last Hunting and Gathering Tribe', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 267

29) 'Tribal Round-up', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 264

III: Preparing for Crises

We must have the ability to defend ourselves, survive, and exploit crises in society including capitalist attempts to destroy us. The divided and industrial nature of today's society has already determined the instability of tomorrow.

“It is difficult for the British with their tradition of stability to imagine disorders arising beyond the powers of the police to handle, but already there are indications that such a situation could arise, and this at a time of apparently unrivalled affluence...”

“If a genuine and serious grievance arose, such as might result from a significant drop in the standard of living, all those who now dissipate their protest over a wide variety of causes might concentrate their efforts and produce a situation which was beyond the power of the police to handle. Should this happen the army would be required to restore the position rapidly. Fumbling at this juncture might have grave consequences even to the extent of undermining confidence in the whole system of government.”

– General Sir Frank Kitson, ex-Commander-in-Chief of UK Land Forces.

*“Imagine having no running water to drink.
Chemicals contaminate the pipes leading to your sink.
Just think, if the grocery stores close their doors,
And they saturate the streets with tanks and start martial law.
Would you be ready for civil war?”*

– dead prez.

The Myth of Stability

The myth is that though we may see crisis on the TV in other countries, Western Europe will be forever stable. This is an idea that our generation holds; oth-

er living generations are not so ahistorical – they, after all, have lived through history.

Our grandparents experienced the Second World War and all of its horrors and the cold war partition of Europe. Many of our parents were teenagers during the fall of the Spanish and Portuguese fascist regimes in the '70s, the rise and fall of the CIA-backed military coup in Greece, the May '68 revolt in France and serious social conflict in Italy in the '70s, to name but a few of Western Europe's recent crises. Not to mention internment of radicals, soldiers on the streets for nearly thirty years, bombings and guerrilla warfare in Northern Ireland.

For those who think 'that sort of thing couldn't happen here' it's worth remembering that Britain came perilously close in 1968-75 to a military coup spearheaded by leading industrialists, high ranking army officers and members of the secret services.⁽¹⁾

Social crises are regular occurrences in societies based on class warfare.

The Living Earth in Crisis

The crises we've known are likely to look pretty minor compared to what's on the horizon. Climate change and biological meltdown are already kicking off serious crises, killing hundreds of thousands and the ride hasn't even got going yet. The extremes of ecological instability are most visible at the ecological extremes – the Tropical, Arctic and Antarctic zones. However the evolving global crises WILL reach us in the Temperate zone. Things are gonna go a bit fucking weird. There is no way out of it; the ecological effects of yesterday's industry have already decided the ecological instability of tomorrow.

If the climate and life support systems of the earth destabilise, you can guarantee that society will also.

The Megamachine in Crisis

Economic crisis, though connected to crises arising from class struggle and ecological destabilisation, are capable of creating chaos in their own right. In the last five years of the twentieth century a wave of economic crises crashed whole

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economies; Albania, Russia, the Asian Tiger countries. In a globalised system the collapse of one economy can create a domino effect. For those assimilated into these fragile economies living standards get worse. Many people simply cannot afford to let things continue as they are.

The Indonesian uprising which ousted Suharto and the 1997 insurrection in Albania⁽²⁾ show what happens to regimes when their economies collapse. So, unfortunately, does the depression era rise of the Nazis.

Thanks to heavy economic manoeuvring, West European societies have not experienced the destabilisation that has swept East Asia and the Second World in the last decade. Their economies are inherently less robust than those of the core capitalist countries, but that does not mean that the core capitalist countries are 'untouchable'. Listen hard – you can hear the crash before the impact.

The Flesh in Crisis

The mass nature of industrialism – a society evolved to consolidate oppressor order – itself produces mass 'personal' disorders in the oppressed. Incremental changes in mental and physical health can seem trivial until a threshold is reached. Under certain circumstances these personal disorders can seriously re-order civilisation.⁽³⁾

With herd medicine and transport systems turning humanity ever more into a mono-culture, we can expect future epidemics to reap an unparalleled harvest of heads. In the meantime a divided society will continue to create divisions, not just between people but within people. Despite the glossy charade, such a fractured society is always on the edge of implosion. As in the past, it is just a matter of time and chance how soon it will be before the personal becomes political in a cataclysmic fashion.

Crisis Breeds Change

For all the reasons stated above it is highly likely that British society will be hit by serious crises within our lifetime. Any movement that does not take this into consideration is unlikely to survive. Crises by their very nature contain truckloads of both danger and possibility. Crises are moments of the extreme and when the shit hits the fan people look for extreme solutions.

Times of sudden (r)evolutionary possibility often arise out of war, chaos and social collapse. The period after both world wars saw massive revolutionary waves. The First World War brought us the Russian revolution as well as workers and peasant uprisings across much of Europe. The Second World War seriously damaged much of the social fabric of empire leading the way to insurgencies across the Third World. In turn the horror of the Vietnam War opened up fault lines across American society.

While insurrections have often arisen out of crises, crises may not be fertile ground for harmonious social (r)evolution. Though people look for extreme solutions, there are no 'pre-ordained' reasons why they will turn to anarchist ideas rather than authoritarian ones. In fact, libertarian tendencies in the people are likely to be heavily curtailed when confronted with the interwebbed complexity of industrial society, peoples alienation from their own food and the scale of modern warfare.

Hope for the Best – Prepare For the Worst

Once again this is where I depart from what I've earlier called the 'It'll be all right on the night' tendency. Two factors that are likely to in part decide what happens in a crisis are:

1) How well known are anti-authoritarian ideas?

In crises peoples perception of the possible widens. Ideas, which under normal circumstances are rejected out of hand, in moments of crises can be judged

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and seen to be sensible. However, they can only be judged if they have been put forward in the past. Thus anti-authoritarian educational work to the non-aligned⁽⁴⁾ majority today, can influence decisions over aims and forms of organisation they make in crises tomorrow.

2) How experienced and organised libertarian groups are.

In any crises in British society today the main course of events will primarily be determined by the elite and the previously non-aligned. However, history has shown that relatively small groups can have a decisive effect in moments of crises. Spain in the 1920s and 1936, Northern Ireland, the Ukraine in 1919 and the French resistance provide some examples.

I am not advocating organising an armed vanguard force to lead the people to revolution in times of crisis. I'll leave these ridiculous notions to the Leninists. I am saying that as groups which understand what might be coming and have the ability in part to affect it we have a duty to intervene in times of crises. It's our role as anarchists to stop authoritarian organisations – right wing or left wing – gaining ground in times of crisis. Or at least attempt to do so.

If a group is to have any effect it must:

- a) Have an intimate knowledge of its local area.
- b) Have a range of basic skills and resources available from those needed for fighting to medicine, printing and the use of communication equipment.
- c) Consist of members who through previous struggle have pushed back their fear barriers and extended their creative operational vision of the possible.
- d) Have an understanding of what actions authoritarian organisations are likely to carry out in moments of crisis.
- e) Have a number of members entirely unknown to the state as 'subversives'.

Thankfully, actions taken under other areas of strategy from Thumb in the Dam struggles to the growing of a combatative counter-culture prepare us in part for what might need to be done in crises. The experience 'affinity groups' get in the present from involvement in mass actions, anti-GM sabotage, strikes, hunt sabbing, monkeywrenching, animal liberation, pirate radio, general criminality and anti-fascist activity are all useful training for the unexpected future.

The anarchist scene in Britain is growing but it's still a small shoal in a sea of sixty million fishes. Nevertheless, it's easy to underestimate our ability to intervene in a crisis by concentrating on our present number of 'activists'. In fact one consistent aspect of crises is that when the barricades go up many 'ex-activists/militants' come out of 'retirement'.

Thanks to dole cheques and the low level of generalised class struggle, the British radical ecological and libertarian scenes have existed as 'alternative youth cultures'. These cultures have encapsulated the lives of tens upon tens of thousands of people over the last three decades.⁽⁵⁾ By their very nature youth cultures are cultures of the young, and when the young get older they usually leave. However, I believe that most of those who have 'left', 'dropped out of politics', 'got disillusioned', 'burnt out', etc. rejected not the principles of anarchism but the practice of activism. In times of social crises those who got off the hamster wheel will know that action is not only with purpose but in their interest. Those who have once stood up are likely to stand again.



(Counter) Revolutionary Rainy Day Reads

It's raining outside and unusually you're not feeling particularly passionate. Hell, why not read up on state counter-insurgency strategy? When it comes to insurrection and revolutionary struggle the state is highly efficient at assessing and learning from its successes and defeats. Sadly, radical movements rarely are. In times of relative social peace we have the space to learn from the past. If we ever need the lessons in the future we are unlikely to be able to do the reading. As well as studying 'our own' histories it is highly useful to read the 'other side's' view of things – not the propaganda it gives the people but the analyses it gives its own armies. Some of them are publicly available if you look for them and unlike the 'pie in the sky' rubbish radicals can come out with, they are useful, relatively undogmatic analyses of confrontations of strategy.

The first book worth reading is without a doubt the one from which this section's front page quote is from: *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peace-keeping* by Frank Kitson, ISBN 0571161812. Anyone who jokingly might think themselves a revolutionary should read this book – without a doubt a Machiavellian mas-

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terpiece. Kitson's career culminated in being the top bod in the British land army and along the way he helped screw insurrections in Kenya, Malaysia, Oman, Cyprus and most famously of all, Northern Ireland. Written at the beginning of the '70s, *Low Intensity Operations* has remained hugely influential, especially in the British and American military. In the words of the author's 1991 Preface it was written: "primarily to prepare the army to play a part in countering subversion and insurgency..." While a tad dated, as a practical how-to book on snuffing out subversion it should be read by us all.

A good introductory (though non-specialist and therefore less useful) is *Ragged War: The Story of Unconventional and Counter-Revolutionary Warfare* by Leroy Thompson, ISBN 185409369X. Its author has a decent pedigree from a USAF Ranger-trained special missions unit and seems to have spent most of the last three decades training some real oppressive scumfucks. Being recently published, this is by nature far more contemporary. *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* by Lt. Col. John J. McCuen, (ex-US Army General Staff) was published in 1972 and thus like *Low Intensity Operations* is heavily dated but well worth reading; not least for its vast and bi-partisan bibliographies.

While much of these books concentrate (understandably) on countering predominantly rural guerrilla warfare, to ignore urban counter-insurgency strategy would be a serious mistake. Northern Ireland is the classic Western case and radicals should devour anything they can find about it. The best available I'd say is *The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* by MLR Smith (Lecturer at Greenwich Military College), ISBN 0415091616.

The only serious attempt to breach this subject by British anarchists is the wonderful – but now very dated – *Towards A Citizens Militia* by Cienfuegos Press, ISBN 0904564339. It's a good introductory guide to principles of armed resistance, organisation and conduct of guerrilla warfare, the tactics of security forces, and the organisation and operation of civilian resistance movements. It's written by Stuart Christie, an Orkney-based anarchist who put his money where his mouth was – among other things famously attempting to assassinate Franco. It's practical, and at 28 A4 pages, quite concise. If you read any book in this selection read this one. Beware though – state technologies have advanced a lot in the last twenty years!

After a rainy day in with that lot you should be able to join the swelling ranks of counter-insurgency warfare trainspotters.



Visualise Industrial Collapse

The above sub-header is an oft used North American EF! slogan. Ecologically this civilisation (unfortunately probably not civilisation itself) is doomed – maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow but within the lifetime of our children’s children, our children or possibly even ourselves. We should not mourn for the death of this tyrannical, earth destroying culture but we should prepare for its end.

For the second time in this pamphlet I’m emphasising the need – in times of crisis, in times of stability – **TO KNOW HOW TO FEED YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMRADES!** We will not always be able to rely on the destruction and imperialism of industrial agribusiness to feed us like babies; nor should we.

George Bradford of the American anarchist magazine *Fifth Estate* is instructive in his essay ‘We All Live In Bhopal’. In the aftermath of the 1984 chemical explosion in Bhopal in India (which killed, and continues to kill, thousands), the population fled:

“The New York Times quoted one man, who said, ‘They are not believing the scientists or the state or anybody. They only want to save their lives... All the public has gone to the village.’ the reporter explained that ‘going to the village’ is what Indians do when trouble comes. A wise and age old strategy for survival by which little communities always renewed themselves when bronze, iron and golden empires with clay feet fell to their ruin. But subsistence has been and is everywhere being destroyed, and with it, culture. What are we to do when there is no village to go to?...”

“The corporate vampires are guilty of greed, plunder, murder, slavery, extermination and devastation. We should avoid any pangs of sentimentalism when the time comes for them to pay for their crimes against humanity and the natural world. But we will have to go beyond them, to ourselves: subsistence... We must find our way back to the village, or as the North American natives said, ‘back to the blanket’, and we must do

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this not by trying to save an industrial civilisation that is doomed, but in the renewal of life which must take place in the ruin.”

Until recently people were adept at subsistence even in Britain – birth place of industry. For most people it is only a few generations that separate their fingers from the soil. One does not need to go back to the times of the peasantry to see this connection. On an allotment site anywhere in Britain you’ll find elderly working class people who know both the satisfaction and the personal and political reasons for growing.

Subsistence skills can be learnt by us all, and passed on to our children. Non-industrial medicine must also be strengthened. In preparing for ‘the collapse’ we also build our autonomy and reconnect with living systems. There are few things more satisfying, and sensible, than sitting down to eat a meal grown by the combined powers of nature and one’s own hands. Let us rebuild the generational connection with the land now. And as Bradford says, “Let us do so soon before we are crushed.”

Counter-(R)evolution?

We should be so lucky (lucky, lucky, lucky)

In this section I have been talking about how we should prepare for a number of types of crises. I have not mentioned counter (r)evolution which I have largely dealt with in Task I: Growing Counter-Cultures. To many it may seem strange that I have separated ‘preparing for crises’ and ‘preparing for counter-revolution’ – surely a type of crisis?

My answer is that in this section I have been talking about what preparation our existing movement can make in anticipation of crises that are likely to be coming. On the other hand, discussions of counter-revolution presume a revolution worth countering – a class movement of vast scale. I have argued that in Western Europe only a significant working class counter-culture can seriously threaten the elite. That does not exist in Britain and no doubt is unlikely to in the immediate to medium term – if at all. In other words, preparations to

defeat counter revolution could only be made by a movement as yet not in existence in anticipation of crises that without its existence are unlikely to come.

As I argued earlier in Task 1, only a combination of military disaffection and an armed people has any hope of successfully defeating a counter-(r)evolution – ‘winning’ a civil war. I also argued that rebellions such as France in ‘68 will remain only temporary when they are not products of past struggles and a strong counter-culture that can not only propel a vision of the future but field considerable armed class strength.

Task Conclusion: Don't Call Up Blood

It is worth here underlining the point that we should not look forward to these moments of cataclysm with relish. Anarchist history is brim-full with stories of social crises leading to uprisings which have in turn lead to the extermination of libertarians.

All powermongers are our foes and as a result anarchists have a tendency to get it in the neck. While harmony can be born of crisis, the child is more often horror.

However, an understanding that crises are likely in our lifetime shows that being in a sorted counter-culture rooted in the land yet with an ability to act in conflict is in our own interest.

Radical groupings are essentially gangs (see Camatte!) and gangs are what you need to survive and prosper in times of crises.

Notes

1) The 1970s crisis and the secret state destabilisation of a succession of Labour governments is a rarely mentioned but extremely important part of recent British history: “A substantial section of the British Secret state and its allies in the Conservative party, business and the media believed, or found it useful to pretend to believe – the distinction is difficult to make – that British democracy, the state, and even the capitalist system itself was under threat from a resurgent left, spearhead by the trade unions and manipulated by the British Communist Party under instruction from Moscow...” – from *Lobster Magazine* No. 34, p.32.

Radical Right militias led by intelligence and military men were formed. Newspapers openly discussed the right circumstances for Army intervention in Britain while M15 orchestrated black propaganda against the Labour Cabinet and trade union leaders. Joint military and police operations were carried out at Heathrow Airport without government sanction. Plans were advanced to install an unelected government of ‘National Unity’ lead by Lord Mountbatten. No unsubstantiated conspiracy theory, this was first exposed in an autobiography by an ex-*Daily Mirror* executive who was actually at a meeting with some of the conspirators and a long time M15 agent. Similar manoeuvres within the military continued through to the mid ‘70s.

The parapolitical background to the ‘70s crisis is essential to any understanding of the death of the post-war consensus and the triumph of the Thatcherite radical right. It’s amazing to realise how near to the brink Britain really was! See *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* by Paul Foot, (Macmillan, 1988) and, *Smear: Wilson and the Secret State* by Stephen Dorill and Robin Ramsay, (Fourth Estate). These are still the best and most fully documented accounts of the Wilson plot.

2) After the collapse of the state-backed pyramid scheme much of the Albanian population were left destitute. As a result in 1997, “Albania experienced one of the most profound proletarian revolutions of the Twentieth Century. Virtually the entire armed forces mutinied whilst workers formed revolutionary councils and seized 80% of the country... the Albanian Government was not going to extinguish the Albanian revolution because there was no longer a government. The revolution had extinguished the Albanian state. The world’s investors began to panic. It took the armies of ten countries to crush the Albanian revolution and it was a close call...” ‘Kissing goodbye to their Koreans’, *Black Flag* No. 213, p.22.

3) Blatantly crazy millenarian revolts and the pro-peasant social reorganisation following the Black Death, are examples of the positive effects of past social ruptures, themselves arising from mass explosions of personal physical and mental health problems. On a similar but more depressing note we can look at the global rise of the West, enabled in large part by the mass deaths that Western disease brought to indigenous peoples.

4) I’m talking here about crisis as opposed to counter-revolutions. Counter-revolutions are essentially attempts by elites to counter and destroy the self-organisation of peasants and the working class – Roll back (r)evolution. While counter-revolutions by their nature presume the existence of large movements of the politically aligned, crises can break out when the majority of people are ‘non-aligned’. I do NOT use the phrase non-aligned to mean apathetic. Most people today

in Britain would not align themselves to any group of 'politicos' for a whole host of very sensible reasons.

5) Here I am talking about those who really lived inside the activist cultures of squatting, animal liberation, ecological direct action etc. In fact the sum total of all those involved peripherally over this period would probably run to over 100,000. Anyone who doubts this should note that despite most people who went to anti-road protests not being arrested there were 1,000+ arrests at Newbury alone! Similarly J18 was just below 10,000, while smaller RTSs have happened all over Britain. In the same period every weekend 'in the season' dozens of hunt sab groups were out in the field. At the turn of the '90s heyday of travelling tens of thousands were on the road at any given time. A high proportion of all those people would see themselves as anarchists.

IV: Supporting Rebellion Beyond the Core

The counter-culture must act in real solidarity with our struggling sisters and brothers on other islands. Aid them in whatever we can and bring the 'majority world' battlefronts to the boardrooms, bedrooms and barracks of the bourgeoisie.

“Our intention is to disrupt the empire. To incapacitate it, to put pressure on the cracks, to make it hard to carry out its bloody functioning against the people of the world, to join the world struggle, to attack from the inside.”

– Prairie Fire, The Weather Underground Organisation, 1974

“Mohammed Singh Azad. Sindabad! No apologies. Not a shot in the dark. This is a warning. The sleeping tiger awakes each and every morning. The time is now right to burst the imperial bubble. And my act of revenge is just a part of the struggle. A bullet to the head won't bring back the dead. But it will lift the spirits of my people. We'll keep on fighting. We've been a nation abused. Your stiff upper lip will bleed. And your pride will be bruised. I'll shake hands with the hangman. I'll wear the noose with pride. For unlike the British I've no crimes to justify. Pentonville will be my last place on earth. And then death will return me to the land of my birth.”

– Assassin, Asian Dub Foundation ⁽¹⁾

Solidarity is also a Weapon

All over this earth millions of peasants, workers and tribals are defending themselves and the land against constant assaults by capital. In every nation the war between the classes escalates and at present it is the rich that are winning most of the battles.

Ever since the radical ecological direct action movement emerged, one of its central themes has been support for struggles in the Majority World. The communities we have chosen to support have reflected changes in our worldview and how we see ourselves.

At first, only ‘non-violent’ struggles were given any support. This can be illustrated by looking at the Direct Action Empowerment Video – produced in early 1993. The film (which I like, despite some cringe-worthy moments) covers ecological conflicts around the world. The only Majority World struggles given space were the Narmada protests, the Ogoni in Nigeria and the Penan logging blockades in Sarawak. At the time, all three communities professed some sort of non-violence code. The tactic of ‘non-violent’ confrontation is pretty rare in the Majority World, for sensible reasons, so this selection is quite revealing. During the ‘90s most of our circles abandoned the ideology of non-violence and as a result we have increasingly been supporting those engaged in armed resistance to the global empire. Now perceiving ourselves as ‘revolutionaries’, we are engaged with revolutionary communities.

Originally our actions were media-centric, trying to bring press attention to the plight of our ‘adopted’ peoples. Now that we see ourselves involved in a growing network of communities in resistance, how do we engage in real solidarity?

Real solidarity with a rebellion abroad is (as the Zapatistas hammer on at us) creating rebellion at home. Only a truly global rising will put an end to class society/civilisation and give birth to a new world. Fighting not *for* them but *with them* against a common enemy. However, there are some important things that we are well placed to do. Below is by no means a complete list.

Direct Cash Aid to Struggling Communities

Thanks to exchange rates, small amounts of hard currency can have a much larger effect in Majority World countries than it does here. Providing practical financial aid for revolutionary groups abroad should not be seen as charity. It’s merely a tool of solidarity that we have available to us as a result of our position in the highly monetised capitalist core.

1) Money for Community Health and Survival

The types of low intensity warfare that many groups find themselves in are not fought out simply between soldiers and armed groups. They are fought out in the 'hearts and minds' of the community as a whole. A long established tenet of counter-revolutionary warfare is to firstly grind down the subsistence and health of a population. Secondly, at the moment of desperation, offer medical, educational and technical aid to families and villages within the conflict zone who are willing to take sides with the state and corporations. The carrot-and-stick approach aims to disconnect the population from radicals in its midst, and form counter-gangs to oppose them. By supplying aid money directly to struggling communities we can in part oppose this process through positive action. For instance one minor punk benefit gig in America paid for a Zapatista (EZLN) community to be connected up to clean water. One US/Mexican anarchist federation quickly raised enough money to set up a women's health clinic in Chiapas.

Regimes often purposefully spread diseases in rebellious populations and put up medical blockades. This is exacerbated by the fact that many struggling communities do not have basic immunity to Western diseases and live on marginal land, or in slums and shanty towns. Thanks to malnutrition they often have weakened immune systems from the start.

One Bougainvillian told me that due to the medical blockade by Papua New Guinea (PNG), £25 raised in Britain to smuggle in medical aid could save the life of half a dozen revolutionaries on Bougainville. If that's not a good deal I don't know what is! Saving the lives of six, self-described ecological revolutionaries, for the price of a couple of rounds down the pub and a curry!

2) Money for Refugee Camps

When people try to defend themselves and their land, the resulting military repression often forces a significant proportion of the population to flee over borders to the relative safety of neighbouring countries. The resulting life of the refugee can vary tremendously but is almost always hard, poor and cramped.

Often forced to rely on outside support, refugee communities sometimes find none at all.

When the Nigerian military cracked down on the Ogoni resistance against Shell Oil, around a third of the Ogoni fled their home villages, many of which had been razed to the ground. Thousands fled to camps in neighbouring countries where they lived for months in squalid conditions. A small amount of medical aid, clothing and funds were collected in Britain and sent over by a solidarity group and by Ogoni living in London. In a desperate situation this aid made a real difference.

However, it was still very little compared with what could have been raised. At the time the Ogoni were big in the newspapers and hundreds were willing to risk arrest in petrol station blockades across the country. Tens of thousands could easily have been raised by local groups. Even without public fundraising a sizeable amount could have been raised very quickly. At least 300 people took part in the petrol station blockades. If just those 300 people had each put in a fiver £1,500 could have been raised at the click of our movement's fingers – enough for a sizeable aid package!

Recently a couple of hundred quid was sent to Papua New Guinea. This paltry amount paid for a consignment of anti-malarial drugs for West Papuan refugees.

3) Money for Prisoners

Of course, any movement which gains any success will quickly find some of its number in prison. Being in prison in Europe is no picnic and our movement's prisoners desperately need more support than they get. Most of the problems we associate with prison support here are similar outside of the West but in more drastic ways.

Family visits, if allowed at all, are often costly both in travel and in bribes. In many Majority World countries a prisoner will not be fed from the prison budget but will have to rely on his community to supply either food itself or money to the prison in order to stay alive. (It's worth pointing out this used to be the case in many British prisons hundreds of years ago!) In the usually

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horrendously unhygienic conditions decent doctors also have to be paid for. Even the smallest 'privilege' can be impossible without bribes to prison officials. Legal aid will also have to be paid. This financial burden can cripple families. Increasingly, the time and energy a community used to put into revolutionary action has to be put into raising funds to keep its prisoners alive and relatively healthy.

Over the last few years British Anarchist Black Cross activists have raised hundreds of pounds for East European anarchist prisoners and their support campaigns. This money has been a large boost because hundreds of British pounds in countries like the Czech Republic and Poland translates into a lot of money. In the Third World this is even more the case. Ridiculously small amounts of money can make a real difference to those in cages in the colonies.

4) Money for Agitation and Propaganda

Why not sponsor a pamphlet, leaflet, book or poster campaign by an anarchist/ecological group outside of the West? You'll definitely get more propaganda for your pennies! As an example a donation of \$40 from anarchists in the US paid for a campaign of stickers, posters and leaflets by anarchists in universities across the Czech Republic. Another good recent example is the funding and provision of basic radio transmission and studio equipment by Black liberationists in the US to the anarcho-syndicalist Awareness League in Nigeria.

Travelling to and Joining their Struggle

Revolutionary tourism – a contentious subject! I would say that, despite limitations, Western activists can be very useful on the ground in Majority World struggles – as long as they take their cue from native groups and don't just follow their own agenda. This opinion is shared by the Mexican EZLN, the Free Papua Movement (OPM), the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), Anti-Dam communities in India and the Rainbow Keepers in Russia; all of

which have recently asked for foreign radicals to come to their lands. From the perspective of the volunteer, sojourns in others struggles can be extremely instructive.

Activists should only take part in this on-the-ground solidarity at the invitation of the communities themselves. In some situations, the presence of a foreigner can bring down hassle on the community and just be another mouth to feed. The communities will know what is needed and what is applicable.

Three years ago some EF!ers and friends published a great basic guide to what one can practically do on-the-ground in Chiapas. Though much of it will be inapplicable to other struggles, I urge anyone thinking of engaging in a bit of revolutionary tourism to read this book which goes into far greater detail than I do here.⁽²⁾

Essentially, the useful work that can be done by Western activists can be divided into work involving: 1 – Specialist practical skill and 2 – Work which involves very little specialist practical skill. I'll deal with these two areas separately.

On-the-Ground Solidarity Work with Specialist Practical Skills

The nature of the struggle will define what skills outside radicals can provide that might not be available or plentiful to struggling communities. In general, external specialist technological expertise is more useful in less urban struggles. I'll list just a few of the most obvious useful skills that have been requested by movements in recent years.

Medical Expertise: This is the one skill that without a doubt is always needed and never available enough to radical groups. Whatever form the struggle takes – violent or non-violent – resisters will get attacked by the state. Whether it is mass demonstrations, small blockades or guerrilla actions, those engaged in struggle risk injury and often death. Medical support on the ground can make all the difference. Whole movements sometimes operate with practically no medical support at all – at a terrible cost. This is especially true of indigenous groups such as the OPM.

Radio and Communication Technology: Many movements have got this sorted but many more have not. Communication technology needs divide into three areas: a) Internal organisational communication – such as radio links between different groups throughout a country and different cells on actions and demonstrations. b) External communication to the domestic population at large – such as mobile pirate radio systems c) International communication to movements and groups world-wide – such as mobile phones, long distance radio and internet set ups. Lack of electronic communication systems can leave movements – especially guerrilla ones – isolated within themselves, from the people as a whole and from international solidarity. They are by no means essential – and in some situations an unnecessary danger – but they can make the way easier.

Appropriate Technology: If you're good at turning rubbish into useful things, there is always a place for you. At whatever stage of struggle innovation is always needed. Bougainville showed how far you can get with appropriate technology – water power turbines running lighting and lathes for making home-made guns and coconuts fuelling cooking, BRA unit jeeps and pretty much everything else. However, be wary of any tendency to push development through technology!

Weaponry and Warfare: It's extremely unlikely that if a group has modern weaponry it will need Westerners to tell it how to suck eggs. However, if you're an ex-squaddie, you might be useful in some struggles – not so much as some sort of unpaid mercenary, but more for any specialist knowledge the state may have taught you.

On the Ground Solidarity Work NOT with Specialist Practical Skills

If you have little of the skills described above you can still – depending on the struggle – be of possible great use on-the-ground. As an anarchist Westerner one is in the peculiar position of, upon leaving the West, being able to do certain things merely because of the passport one carries or the colour of one's skin. The following is just a short list of some useful roles. It is worth underlin-

ing that these can largely only be carried out in situations no more intense than low intensity warfare.

Human Shield/Human Rights Observer: The presence of Westerners can decrease the likelihood of some forms of assault on communities. As an example, aerial bombardment and artillery are less likely if there's awkward Westerners who it's embarrassing to kill hanging about. In some situations making the state do its massacres by hand decreases the state's in-built military advantage. Sometimes the mere presence of a Westerner can cool a situation – albeit temporarily. Such work has been very useful in various places but most solidly in Chiapas. Situations are different between countries AND within countries. One activist who went to West Papua found his presence did have a positive effect in one area, a negative effect in another.

Media Work: As Western activists we have greater access to the international media than native communities. Though liberals put too much stock in raising the profile of struggling groups, it can make a real difference. Footage and reportage of strikes, rebellions, armed struggle, riots and general chaos can be the deciding factor that convinces a company it is not worth investing in such a trouble spot.

Travel Companion: The presence of a Westerner with limited 'immunity' to arrest, torture and disappearance can be very useful when exiled radicals attempt to re-enter their homeland. Airports and border crossings can be very dangerous. A Majority World friend told me once that despite being wanted by the state, when he was back among the mass of his people he felt relatively safe. But entering his country was terrifying. Would the patrolling secret police become suspicious and guess who he was? Would they check his passport was 'fully in order'? Alone in the airport, he could have been picked up and nobody would know that he had been taken. No outside support would come to a man no-one knew was missing. For this reason, a British activist went with him so that at least his people and solidarity groups would know they needed to look for him. Of course, the very fact of travelling with a Westerner can arouse suspicion so it is not always a good idea. One Kurdish anarchist was asked if she wanted such a travelling companion, but she believed in Turkey it would

make no difference. For her, possible torture or worse was merely the luck of the draw.

Prison Visiting: Westerners can sometimes get into places that might be difficult for locals. Also for different reasons there may be no organised prison visiting programme by a native community. Prisoners could be held in far off jails maybe hundreds of miles away from their friends and families. Visits by a prisoner's comrades may only result in the visitor himself being interrogated and possibly jailed. This is less likely for Westerners.

Agricultural Work: One of the commonest forms of on-the-ground solidarity with struggling peasant communities has been just getting stuck in and lending a hand with rural work. In the '70s Cuba was one of the New Left's favourite resorts and many US rads worked the sugar harvest. Similarly in the 80s bundles of British lefties went to Nicaragua to join agricultural work brigades. They in some small way acted like an international Red version of the WW2 Land Girls – enabling peasants (this time men and women) to go to the front without their land falling fallow. Putting aside (BIG) political differences over the nature of the Sandinista and Cuban STATES, the work these anti-imperialists did was practically useful (though minor in scale).

In Chiapas, 'Human Rights Observers' have taken part in the work of the communities too, rather than just hang about waiting for the next military incursion. At the time of writing, similar work is underway in Palestine where Israelis and foreign activists are picking olives in frontline Palestinian villages. This is in reaction to the shootings, by Zionist settlers and the army, of Palestinians doing the harvest on exposed positions. While I have put agricultural work under the general heading of non-specialist it would be foolish to underestimate the skill and labour involved in peasant work. Friends have remarked on their sudden-found frailty compared to much older Zapaitista peasants. Even those with agricultural experience will find the day demanding. But all are likely to find the work rewarding, and working with others can be the best way to really get to know them.

Hosting Majority World Radicals

For a whole range of reasons (safety, educational, economic, operational), Majority World radicals can crop up in the core capitalist countries. More often than not they join already existing communities of radical ex-pats, (see 'Immigrant Communities in Rome' below), but for some there may be no community to join. In these cases it is our responsibility to act as good hosts.

Arrival here can be very confusing and we can be useful simply in terms of aiding orientation. Also there are basic needs such as cash, food and accommodation – all of which might be beyond the reach of lone radicals. With ever more repressive state action against economically poor immigrants these basic needs will increasingly come to the fore. If they are here legally they will probably need help dealing with visas and travel arrangements.

Depending on the purpose and duration of their stay they may want help in projects here in the core aimed directly at helping their people, or they may wish to start conventional solidarity campaigns with speaking tours, newsletters etc. It should be left to them to ask what they want of us, rather than we presupposing what would be useful.⁽³⁾ We can also be of use in providing many types of information – from the political to the technical.

We can catalyse communication between them and members of other similar groups from their regions who may be in the core. Ironically it is often within the core that many groups from the Majority World meet for the first time. Logistics and state repression at home can be a major barrier to inter-movement/international discussion.

A recent example comes to mind. Despite a common enemy (the Indonesian State in particular and the capitalist system in general) communication between the East Timorese and West Papuan resistance movements has been rare.⁽⁴⁾ The beginning of renewed communication between the two movements in part came when people from both were introduced by common friends at a British EF! Winter Moot.

Such instances are bizarre but regular occurrences in history – during the 20th century anti-colonial wave it was within the core that many militants from different countries first met each other. The recent growth of a number of

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non-centralised libertarian ‘Internationals’ (People’s Global Action, Via Capensina, International Anarchist Federation, EFi, International Workers Association and many radical global internet networks), is easing communication between majority world radicals (and us in the core of course!) and our minor role as inter-movement communication enablers is likely to decrease but it is still unlikely to disappear.

Issues around security have to be given serious thought when hosting a foreign radical. The state(s) their groups are resisting at home are likely to have embassies and agents here. Whether or not their foes find out who they are and what they have been doing can decide life or death, freedom or prison when re-entering the home country. In many cases states share intelligence so it is not merely a case of avoiding foreign state interest but also domestic state interest.

Hosting Majority World activists is not just our responsibility – it can be immensely rewarding and illuminating.

Supporting Prisoners

Writing letters to prisoners in jails outside the core is one of the easiest – and most real – ways to aid our distant struggling sisters and brothers. Amnesty International rarely support those who are in prison for resisting something, as opposed to just saying something. So it’s up to us to support imprisoned libertarian and ecological saboteurs, rioters, guerrillas, politicians and tribal warriors. Anarchist Black Cross groups have been doing a brilliant job but it shouldn’t just be left to them. A letter from a far off land can help brighten a prisoner’s day and remind the wardens that people on the outside are looking in.

ChipasLink received a message from a Zapatista prisoner organisation in response to its letter writing campaign. Jose from the Autonomous Municipality of the 17th of November stated: “Morale had been extremely low due to a wave of recent arrests. We were feeling depressed. Letters from the UK helped raise morale and made us feel we were not alone. We want to say thank you.”

Solidarity Actions

For years we have been barricading ourselves inside corporate offices, disrupting AGMs, blockading petrol stations and going to directors' houses. These are all valuable and should continue but do they effectively hinder the system or do they largely symbolically oppose it? Let's first look at what we have done so far.

Our solidarity actions have usually had three objectives:

a) Raising the Spirits: Hearing that people far away care about you and have taken action, however small, can really raise the spirits.

b) Harassing the Attackers: The functionaries ripping the world will back down from individual attacks only if their profits or their wellbeing is threatened.

c) Exposing the Struggles: Actions increase awareness of both the individual struggle involved and the global struggle in general. This helps us here and sometimes builds direct aid for 'over there'.

Some solidarity actions over the last decade have needed meticulous planning like the Shell-Mex office occupation.⁽⁵⁾ Others like the daytime smashing of the Nigerian Embassy windows just took two dozen people with pluck.

These actions can sometimes have quite an impact. One office occupation yielded an internal report that stated the actions were harrowing company moral and public image. When loads of us around the country were doing blockades at Shell petrol stations it felt, to be honest, a bit naff. Occasionally we would close down a petrol station for a few hours or even half a day, sometimes co-ordinated across the country, but was it really having any effect? The surprising answer is yes!

After the Nigerian state/Shell executed Ken SaroWiwa, 21 of his 'co-conspirators' lay in jail awaiting a similar fate. Against expectation after months of suffering, the prisoners were released. Once outside the bars they wrote a letter to their supporters in Britain. The letter thanked everyone for their support and specifically mentioned the petrol station blockades as a major factor in their survival.

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The Shell campaign built up a head of steam over years and garnered significant mainstream support after Ken was killed (little of which turned into any meaningful aid). It was exceptional but not thankfully an absolute exception.

Most of the time the power of our actions comes from constancy, confronting targets over and over again. However in times of foreign crisis lone acts can be useful. A recent funny example was when ‘Those Pesky Kids’ invaded the Argentine embassy pulling down its flag and hoisting up the black and red. It will not make much difference on the Argentina streets but its image has travelled the world through papers and the web. Argentinian anarchists were really jollied up, their spirits raised.

Other solidarity actions, notably those done for the Zapatistas, have succeeded to differing levels in raising the spirits, harassing the attackers and exposing the struggles. Over the last decade I think our solidarity actions, given our numbers, have been remarkably successful in achieving these objectives. Sometimes, though, it could be said that we are using Majority World struggles as scripts with which we can act out our own politics.

The Clouds are Gathering?

The type of solidarity actions described above should continue but let’s face it – they rarely hinder the system, but symbolically oppose it. Symbolism has a lot of power – but not as much as force.

In 1997 a British/South African mercenary outfit acting for British mining giant RTZ was planning, from their London offices on the Kings Road, to burn up the rebel held territory in Bougainville. Carpet bomb the heart of the resistance. Helicopters were to rain down bombs and bullets on friends, families and forest. Poison. Fire. Blood.

The mercenaries would be richer and the murdered land would be back under control – ripe for mining again. Thankfully this plan was scuppered at the last moment by an uprising on PNG that forced the mercenaries out of the country.

Imagine that had not occurred and put yourself in the shoes of one of the self-described ‘ecological revolutionaries’ on Bougainville, looking the 1,000s

of miles from the Jaba river valley to the streets of London. What would you do if you could be on the Kings Road in London rather than a jungle in the Pacific awaiting death? Hold a banner? Shout at a few people? Occupy an office?

If such a situation arose again, and it will, what will be the reaction of our circles? While British mercenaries on PNG were preparing to decimate Bougainville, Greek and Italian troops were crushing the Albanian insurrection. It is likely that Western European troops will be increasingly used to counter revolutions in the Majority World. *Direct action must be used to hinder the functioning of the militarised arms of capital when they reach out to destroy libertarian and ecological rebellions.* We are where they are based. We are where the guns are produced. Sited as we are in the heart of the beast small amounts of intense action can have a disproportionate affect.

It's worth taking a quick look back at what attempts at solidarity were made by previous generations of capitalist core radicals.

In the 1960s and 70s western solidarity with the Vietnamese struggle⁽⁶⁾ took many forms, most of which was pretty useless. As an American Indian Movement activist put it: 'holding candlelit vigils and walking down the street does not constitute "acts of solidarity" with those engaged in armed struggle.'⁽⁷⁾ However there were rare actions with real effects. The German left wing urban-guerrilla group, the Red Army Faction, attacked a whole array of US army targets. One of its most successful actions was a major attack on a key US base from which the laying of mines in Vietnam was organised. Across the water the Weather Underground bombed the Air Force wing of the Pentagon. The consequent flooding crashed the central computer of the US military's global communication system. These two acts had a real effect. By 'bringing the war home' they directly joined the struggle in the jungles of Vietnam and contributed to the crippling of US military morale. That both actions were born out of a 'politics of despair', (arising from the orchestrated apocalypse in Vietnam and the self pacifying, racist and delusional character of 'mother country radicals'), did not diminish their utility in supporting rebellion beyond the core, merely the ability of the organisations carrying them out to survive.

From the perspective of domestic (r)evolution most of the '60-'70s European guerrilla movements were counterproductive. Irish Republicanism and Basque

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Separatism (Europe's longest running armed struggles) were both expressions of communities in rebellion. The European New Left guerrillas, on the other hand (with the exception of Italy), were largely the project of middle class student radicals with little social 'base'. Often seeing themselves as vanguards who would lead the working class to victory, they became self destructive cliques that probably even regressed the building of (r)evolution in their countries.

This does not however detract from the fact that some of things they did were extremely effective 'fourth column operations' carried out in time of war. Given the absence of generalised struggle in the capitalist core these radicals were given a choice. They effectively decided to defect. While other New Left formations immersed themselves in (largely futile) domestic (r)evolutionary activity (such as supporting unions) the Weather Underground concentrated on the 'global struggle'. Their (amazingly arrogant) attitude to the rest of their country was summed up well when they reacted to an opposing left wing groups slogan 'Serve the People'. Weather replied that they would "fight the people if to do so would further the international revolution."⁸

The question is not whether 'vanguard adventurism' is a way of rousing domestic (r)evolution (it isn't) but whether the potential gains to revolutions elsewhere outweigh the negative effect it has on domestic social evolution. To a certain extent a pretty stupid question, but a real one posed by the contradictions inherent in the 'global struggle'. It all depends how one weighs up at this point in time (r)evolutionary possibilities in the core – and political activists relationship to such possibilities if they exist – and (r)evolutionary/anti-enclosure struggles in the Majority World.

If we came to the conclusion that as a movement we were going nowhere yet were either in a position to: a) significantly aid an allied struggle with a better chance of success, or b) significantly decrease the level of violence visited on friends being drowned in blood; what would we do?

Any really effective action might bring down a level of repression that our circles could not survive. Yet if serious action is not taken *solely so as to avoid personal hardship* (rather than for any *real* strategic reason) we are guilty of 'posing as progressives' while accommodating ourselves to power. It is worth

here repeating the well known quote by Black Panther Assata Shakur. Back in 1984 she said:

“It is the obligation of every person who claims to oppose oppression to resist the oppressor by every means at his or her disposal. Not to engage in physical resistance, armed resistance to oppression, is to serve the interests of the oppressor; no more, no less. There are no exceptions to the rule, no easy out...”

In fact the question is not just one concerning ‘armed resistance’.⁽⁹⁾ If ‘non-violent’ action is *actually effective* (not merely symbolic) it too results in severe repression. At present a number of Animal Liberationists are in prison for waves of fire bombings which the ALF press office would correctly describe as ‘non-violent’. The repression that has followed each wave of action has been considerable. One could guarantee at least the same level of repression if ecological circles ever took the road of some solidarity movements in the past.

The guerrilla movements were crushed by state repression and internal dynamics. Jail and death was the fate of many of our forbears. *I for one have no desire to join them but it is important that we look at their stories and think seriously about these issues.* Sadly, it has to be said that in many ways the urban-guerrillas never fully escaped the symbolic political terrain they had evolved in. Looking at their targets one sees again and again globally unimportant army bases, recruiting offices and the like. Despite being very direct, their actions, with some notable exceptions, were rarely very targeted. Most of the armed action was relatively minor in scale and, of course, armies are designed to sustain and survive mass death and destruction. Attacks on key armaments factories for instance would have had considerably more on-the-ground effect in Vietnam.

There are serious questions here about strategy, racism, symbolism, violence, the nature of sacrifice and our position in the global slavery pyramid. These ideas have to be thought through, all the time rejecting both a cult of violence and an internalisation of passivity.

Immigrant Communities Within 'Rome'

The Terrorism Act which passed into law in 2000 was seen by many as part of a clampdown on the 'direct action scene'. It is likely that some of its powers will to be used against us in the future, but as targets of the new legislation we are peripheral. The main targets are undeniably Irish Republicans and immigrant communities. The newly proscribed organisations are almost all British wings of Majority World organisations – mostly Communists or Islamists. This should come as no surprise – states have always worried about immigrant communities becoming 'enemies within'.⁽¹⁰⁾

Until last century the individuals and institutions of Western power were largely out of reach to the far off peoples they massacred. With the growth of international travel and increased immigration into the core capitalist countries this is no longer the case. [This section was written before the attacks on the Pentagon and the WTC] Some of these organisations have been sending fighters to Majority World battles and carrying out attacks in the core. We may have sent footballers to Chiapas⁽¹¹⁾ but Islamists have been sending guerrillas to Yemen. No surprise who got proscribed.

Whether Islamic or Communist we should have no illusions about the authoritarian nature of many of these groups. It is hardly likely that anarcho-athiest types are likely to make common cause with religious nuts of any persuasion but there are often calls to build 'anti-imperialist unity' with immigrant community commies.

The best example of a left-wing immigrant community is that of the Kurds. Kurdish groups here in Britain retain direct communication with their respective organisations both at home and throughout Europe. The demonstrations, occupations and immolations in London – and throughout the Kurdish diaspora – that followed the trial of the leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) were highly co-ordinated. The Kurds have been very active in supporting struggles in Britain such as the Liverpool Dockers – taking part in marches and raising money. They have turned up en masse at two arms trade blockades and were some of the most up-for-it people on Mayday 2000 in London. In Germany there is a much larger Kurdish population and though the PKK has

been proscribed for years, attacks on Turkish interests have continued. In fact the PKK remains one of the largest left-wing organisations in Germany.

Another good example is the Palestinians. The 1970s saw Palestinian organisations (chiefly the PFLP) carrying out attacks on targets in the core related to their struggle. While the level of attacks in the West by Palestinians has decreased, there are still reasonably regular outbreaks. As I write two Palestinians are serving time for bombings in London in 1994.⁽¹²⁾

On the face of it there is a good argument for working with these communities, but the case of the Kurds throws up important questions which are widely applicable. The PKK and its various offshoots and rivals are largely Stalinist parties whose political aim is in total contradiction to liberty and ecology. This reality can result in serious problems – here as well as in Kurdistan.

A few years ago members of the London 5th of May Group (Turkish/Kurdish anarchist exiles) were threatened by a Kurdish Stalinist sect. Back in Turkey the same sect has murdered two anarchists, one on the streets and one in prison. Ironically, the British wing of the same sect was appealing for solidarity for the PKK prisoners in their struggle against control units.

Around the same time the flags of Turkish Stalinist parties were held aloft in Parliament Square on ‘our’ Mayday 2000. If they had been held up by white English people I am sure our circles would have forced them down. The emblems of authoritarian socialism are the tombstones of libertarians past, present and future. How would we feel if Turkish anarchists marched alongside the banners of a gang that had executed one of us?

‘Anti-imperialist unity’, despite its seeming attractions, can be worse than vacuous. It can mean unifying with priesthoods of new imperialisms. A true opposition to Empire requires us to choose those communities and organisations we organise with carefully.

This does not mean we should not practically engage in struggle alongside groups we are bitterly opposed to. During the march for the Liverpool Dockers it would have been ridiculous for us not to be part of the demo because it contained a contingent of Kurdish Stalinists – who were there in an inspiring show of genuine class solidarity. (As ridiculous as, say, refusing to take part in the Newbury Bypass protest because FoE is involved, with its pro-indus-

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trial stance.) However such unavoidable contradictions arise largely within the realm of advancing (r)evolution at home (Task I). Here we are concerned with supporting rebellion beyond the core (Task IV).

While the dynamics of (r)evolutionary struggle may decide our bedfellows for us, we can still decide who to actively support. Here I am talking about actions, money, resource sharing and solidarity. Giving support to organisations here which stand in opposition to libertarian tendencies at home (not to mention the interests of the people and planet!) is worse than nothing.

Marxist authoritarian ideologies which are dying off throughout the core retain real power outside it. Radical immigrant communities reflect their political culture of origin, yet within many of these communities there will be libertarian and anti-industrial groups and individuals. It is our responsibility to seek them out and however we can help them aid their people and land.

Peasants and the Transitional Class

Unsurprisingly, the majority of the resistance to the global empire arises where the majority of its subjects and slaves live – the hilariously named ‘Third World’. To accept this is not to reject the reality of class struggle in the core capitalist countries but merely to accept the logic of maths and geography. The Third World is, after all, most of the world.

In the Majority World the global elite are faced with class enemies they have long since vanquished within the industrialised West – the peasantry and the transitional class. These two classes are the main human block to the elite’s expansion and consolidation over the majority of the planet.

Nearly half of the world’s population do not live in cities. Of these, hundreds of millions are hardly under the actual domination of capital at all. As peasants they retain relatively high levels of autonomy and have yet to be fully (or often even partially) enclosed by capital. For the actual domination of capital to expand that autonomy must be destroyed. They themselves and the land

they live on must be commodified; their land turned into 'resources' and they themselves into wage slaves.

In localities all over the Majority World the continuing class struggle between loggers, agribusiness, oil corporations, local land autocracies and the state on one side, and peasants and tribal people on the other is, in fact, the border war between the global economy and the land community. It is a border war that, despite heavy resistance from groups as diverse as farmers in India, river delta communities in Nigeria, the Zapatistas in Mexico and tribes in Papua, is largely being won by the wealthy. Of course people do not immediately submit to power and accept their position as wage slaves. Throughout the 'developing' world (a telling phrase) the new inhabitants of the cities fight back.

One would expect Western radicals to orientate themselves towards 'Third world' struggles according to their present class position, and the fact that our shared past is their shared present. Unfortunately many communists', liberals', greens' and anarchists' vision is still hazy, blurred by the misleading mythologies of Marxism. There sometimes seems to be an unbridgeable split between those who think that social change can only arise out of the core capitalist countries and those who believe it will be fought out in the 'Third World'. This really is a false dichotomy and both sides take their ridiculous scripts from the Left.

On one hand 'Third Worldists' have supported all sorts of authoritarian murderous gangs and governments on stupid basis like 'the nationalism of the oppressed is different than the nationalism of the oppressor'. (It should be almost banal now to point to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians or Ethiopia's offensives against Eritrea as just two examples of the nationalism of the oppressed becoming the nationalism of the oppressor.) Anyone saying anything like this cannot in any way be an anarchist and at this historical juncture should just be the cause of mirth. Lenin's bizarrely inverted version of anti-imperialism has a lot to answer for. In a sickening twist the 'What's a few massacres between comrades' tendency are often the first to condemn even the most minimal revolutionary violence in the West – "It's alright for niggers and chinks in far away countries to go killing each other in the cause of revolution but don't throw rocks at white english policemen – *they're* human too!"

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On the other hand the Marxist dogma of the fully developed industrial working class as the ‘revolutionary subject’ has led many to ignore the vast scale of struggle going on in the majority of the world. This is highly ironic considering that the European ‘proletarian glory days’, starting with the French insurrection of 1848 and ending with the crushing of the Spanish Revolution, were pushed forward by a class that today can be found throughout the Majority World but only on the social margins in the West. For the second time in this pamphlet I’ll quote at length from Bookchin’s seminal work, *The Spanish Anarchists*:

“The June barricades of 1848 had in fact been manned not by an industrial proletariat ‘Disciplined, united, and organised by the process of capitalist production,’[Marx] but by craftsman, home-workers, non-descript labourers of every sort, porters, unemployed urban and rural poor, even tavern keepers, waiters, and prostitutes – in short, the flotsam and jetsam of French society... These very same elements, nearly a quarter of a century later, were to man the barricades of the Paris Commune. It was precisely the industrialisation of France after the Commune – and with this process, the emergence of a ‘full-grown’ hereditary proletariat ‘disciplined, united, organised by the process of capitalist production’ – that finally was to silence the ‘crowing’ of the French ‘Red Cock’ that had summoned Europe to revolution during the nineteenth century. Indeed, much the same could be said of the Russian proletariat of 1917, so recently recruited from the countryside that it was anything but a ‘full-grown’ working class.”

“The great proletarian insurrections that seemed to lend such compelling support to the concept of proletarian socialism were fuelled primarily by social strata that lived within neither industrial nor village society but in the tense, almost electrifying force field of both. Proletarian socialism became a revolutionary force for nearly a century not because a well organised, consolidated, hereditary proletariat had emerged with the factory system but because of the very process of proleterianisation. Dispossessed rural people and craftsmen were being removed from disintegrating preindustrial way of life and plunged into standardised, de-

humanising, and mechanical urban and industrial surroundings. Neither the village and small shop as such nor the factory as such predisposed them to the boldest kind of social action; rather, they were moved by the disintegration of the former and the shock of the latter. Demoralised to the point of recklessness, déclassé in spirit and often in fact, they became the adherents of the Paris Commune, the Petrograd soviets, and the Barcelona CNT.”

“The very ‘half grown’ quality of the early proletariat, formerly peasants and craftsmen or perhaps a generation removed from such status, produced a volatility, intractability, and boldness that the industrial system and factory hierarchy were to attenuate in their descendants – the hereditary proletariat of the 1940s and 1950s, a class that knew no other world but the industrial one. For this class, no tension was to exist between town and country, the anomie of the city and the sense of shared responsibility of the small community, the standardised rhythms of the factory and the physiological rhythms of the land. The premises of the proletariat in this later era were formed around the validity of the factory as an arena of productive activity, the industrial hierarchy as a system of technical authority, and the union bureaucracy as a structure of class command. The era of proletarian socialism came to an end in a step-by-step process during which the ‘half grown,’ presumably ‘primitive’ proletariat became ‘full grown,’ ‘mature’ – in short, fully proletarianised.”⁽¹⁵⁾

Crammed into the growing Majority World metropolises, hundreds of millions today find themselves a part of this class in transition, caught in the electrifying force field between village and city. They face inhuman and desperate conditions as wage slaves within the city. They have memory of the communal experiences of the village that enable them to envision a different reality that they could create. They have vast potential collective power in the sheer numbers of young fellow shanty town/ghetto dwellers who share their class position. This is a potent revolutionary mix.

Many Majority World writers talk about this ‘village in the city’. Within the slums and shanties, old village system of kinship and communal decision making often continue to aid survival in a hostile capitalist environment. It

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is from these collectivities that mass organised squatter movements arise such as the Movement of the Landless (MST) in Brazil which challenge the urban autocracy and the rural latifundi.

It is this tension that propelled the insurrectionary hordes in 1997 to bring down Suharto and systematically burn out the mansions of the Indonesian elite. It should come as no surprise to hear the voice of Lucy Parsons echoing from Haymarket through a hundred years – “We shall devastate the avenues where the wealthy live!” The class that gave birth to Parsons today spawns innumerable children throughout the ‘developing world’.

I am NOT contending that rebellion and resistance do not and will not break out in the core capitalist countries. As long as society is based on class warfare ‘normality’ will be punctuated by episodes of rebellion and day to day opposition. Widespread insurrection and anarchist revolution are however another thing entirely. It is in the majority of the planet that the most seismic struggles are happening. For most of last century the resistance and transcendence of the oppressed ‘Third World’ global majority has faced two huge foes. The unity-in-opposition of two forms of capitalism: the Marxist ‘national liberation’ of native elites and the colonialism of Western elites has hamstrung the oppressed.

With the death of the USSR and the final ‘withering away’ of state socialism around the world, a growing unity is developing between movements of those who live on the land and those who live in the shanties. Increasingly libertarian and ecological new generations are taking the fore. It is this unity which more than anything else could reap the whirlwind, shaking capitalism to its foundations and maybe even replacing it with a more authentic world.

The Panthers – Militants of a Transitional Class

An interesting aside. Hugely influential to the radical wave that swept the west in the ‘60s and ‘70s was the Black Liberation struggle in America. Two examples stand above others. Germaine Greer says second wave feminism took its rallying standard – Women’s Liberation – in reflection of the concurrent Black Liberation struggles, (see her book *The Whole Woman*). The rebirth of Repub-

licanism in Northern Ireland arose largely out of the Civil Rights Movement, which took its name and in large part inspiration from American Blacks.

The Black Panther Party – itself deeply inspired by struggles in the Majority World – is often seen as being entirely urban in origin. In contradiction, David Hilliard, ex-chairman of the Panthers, cites the land-based culture of the Deep South which many Panthers or their parents were brought up in as highly influential:

“When I think about the influences that inspired the spirit and work of the Black Panther Party – many of which are still not understood – this culture figures large among them. Many of the most important members of the party – people like John and Bobby Seale and Geronimo Pratt, Bobby Rush and Fred Hampton – were imbued with the moral and spiritual values of their parents; and the work that went into the party, our dignity as an independent people, the communal ideal and practise that informed our programs, all stem in part from the civilisation of which my mother and father were so representative a part.”⁽¹⁶⁾

Luddite Attacks on Evolving Elite Technology

Just as we should oppose the militarised arms of capital based here, so we must slow the evolution of new elite technologies (weaponry for the class war) being developed here. One of the major aims of genetic engineering is to purposefully destroy the social fabric that keeps the land community together and fully incorporate the peasantry into the global cash economy. The threat is neutralised and becomes fuel for the machine’s further expansion.

GM sabotage throughout the world is growing. Here in Britain we can say that we have hindered the evolution of this technology considerably.

As the Luddites of today, we know that, given the continuation of this society, halting – forever – the development of new technological weaponry might not be possible. Even if we don’t succeed in stopping genetic engineering we have already slowed down the introduction of this technology. What this means in real terms is that we’ve succeeded in delaying the further degradation

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of the lives of millions of people. We have delayed for months, maybe years the ecological destruction, hunger, despair and domestic abuse that social dislocation brings. If that is all we succeed in then we have achieved much.⁽¹³⁾

By slowing technologies of enclosure we are defending the ability of Majority World peasant communities to rebel. More will suffer as a result of these enclosures than ever do in overt global policing operations/imperialist wars. Effective action against GM and other elite technologies are direct attacks on empire's power of expansion. Let's keep at it.

Smashing Up the Spectacle, Spectacularly!

The recent global resistance period has been hugely successful in building solidarity across borders and in supporting rebellions beyond the core. Radicals in every part of world have fought together on the PGA-called international days of action. This physical unity is immensely powerful. Beyond direct communication the conflict on the streets has itself an important message, one that cannot be diluted by the forces of mediation.

“This is one important thing to remember about Genoa – because it was the G8 summit, all the world's media were there, and the news and the images of the rioting will have been carried back to almost every country in the world. The value of this, especially in much of the Third World is inestimable. Many people in other countries in the world imagine that everyone in the West lives a life of indolent luxury. Remember that Baywatch is the most popular TV programme in the world. This is the image that many people across the world have of life in the West. It is very valuable for them to see images of things they are familiar with – poor people fighting the police – taking place in the ‘rich’ West, leading them to see that the image they have been fed of the Western lifestyle is not all it's cracked up to be and that maybe there are people like them in the West fighting for the same things they are fighting for. The riots in Genoa will send a message of hope to people all over the world that right inside

the belly of the beast there are thousands of people who are against the system and are prepared to risk their own life and liberty to fight it.”⁽¹⁴⁾

For a moment Geno’s burning barricades effectively monkeywrenched the global image factory that aims to haemorrhage the self worth of peoples in the Majority World, to make more malleable fodder for the global economy.

The environment created by the ‘street’ at global conferences has also helped open up cracks in empire. The collapse of the Seattle era WTO negotiations a good example. Another is the increased bargaining power the protest has given Majority World elites. They, like all of their global class are scum, but any action that opens up divisions in the global ruling class while bridging gaps between the global multitude is great.

Task Conclusion: There is No Rosy Picture

While I tend towards believing libertarian social (r)evolution is extremely unlikely within the core, I don’t have a particularly rosy picture for the Majority World either.

The combined factors of social dislocation, the spread of adolescent culture, the increasing depredation of the poor – especially of women, growing religious fundamentalism, bad health, agricultural crises, climate crises, the quickening internalisation of all into the global economy, the continuing survival of authoritarian ideologies – Marxism and nationalism in particular and most of all the unparalleled disparity in any capacity for force between the Core and its colonial multitudes; all these factors lead to a pretty horrific future for the majority of the worlds population.

Presently the oppressed throughout the world are hamstrung, how long this will remain one cannot say. However there is no point in being absolutist. Just because the arrival of global freedom has been (maybe terminally) delayed does not mean that action is without purpose. By supporting ecological and libertarian rebellions and anti-enclosure struggles we aid the opening up of local freedoms and slow the devastation of the earth.

Notes

- 1) The track *Assassin* by ADF concerns the 'payback' one Indian revolutionary gave Sir Michael O'Dwyer, ex-governor of the Punjab. O'Dwyer had presided over the massacre of unarmed peasants and workers in Amiritsar in 1919. Nearly twenty years later Udham Singh shot him dead in London at a meeting of the East India Association. Singh was an electrician, trade unionist and in 1938 in Coventry the initiator of the first Indian Workers Association. The action both harrowed the English elite and lifted the spirit of many of his people. He was hung in Pentonville prison. The Indian Workers Association remains active today. For a good intro to Black resistance in Britain see *A Different Hunger* by A. Sivanandan, ISBN 0861043715
- 2) *The Zapatistas: A Rough Guide*, (Chiapas Link) ISBN 0904367992
- 3) Too often activists from other countries are pushed into reformist – and futile – trajectories by their liberal Western hosts. Indigenous groups especially are told to engage with the UN etc. While this idiocy is unlikely in our circles, other problems arise. Sometimes radical groups' own normal ways of behaviour can lead them to push their guests into an endless round of solidarity talks, meetings, pamphlet and newsletter writing. Often these are aimed primarily at the domestic group's own constituency and may be more of use to them than to the foreign group whose member they are hosting. This can waste time the guest could more constructively spend on studying and organising in their own communities interest. However the above mentioned activities can be very useful IF they build solidarity actions here and other forms of direct aid. If not, the relationship can descend to one of the foreign guest giving a bit of Third World political entertainment to the Western radicals.
- 4) In fact the Indonesian state has used classic divide and rule strategy by using ethnically Papuan Indonesian soldiers to suppress revolt in East Timor and ethnically Timorese Indonesian soldiers to suppress revolt in West Papua.
- 5) A lot can be learned from this action. See the article 'Sabbing Shell' in *Do or Die*, No.8, p.125
- 6) The struggle of the Vietnamese against America was unbelievably heroic, from which many lessons can be learned, but it should be underlined that Ho Chi Minh's regime was an authoritarian state that mercilessly crushed all opposition. Our enemy's enemy is not our friend!
- 7) See *Pacifism as Pathology* by Ward Churchill, ISBN 18 940370 73, p.79. A brilliant "intervention into the delusion, aroma of racism, and sense of privilege which mark the covert self-defeatism of mainstream dissident politics." Speaking as an ex-pacifist, I'd highly recommend it!
- 8) 'A Strategy to Win' by Bill Ayers in *New Left Notes*, 12.9.1969.
- 9) The whole concept of 'armed struggle' is rather nebulous in a similar way to its dualistic opposite 'non-violence'. The fetishising of guns – basically just tools – is often carried out with equal abandon by those who advocate their use and those who vehemently oppose them. What is 'armed struggle'? Is the destruction of a digger by explosives (as was the case in one action by the Welsh Meibion Glydwr) an act of armed struggle? If hand tools were used to the same effect (as

say at Manchester Airport) is that not armed? Is tossing a mollié/petrol bomb at a cop in Genoa not armed struggle? Was the machine gunning of the Spanish Embassy by the Angry Brigade (in which no one was injured) armed struggle? If so, was the smashing up of the Nigerian Embassy with hammers not armed struggle? If the definition of armed struggle lies entirely on whether guns are used, the concept is of little use to us. *We should not let tools define our activity, but our activity define which tools to use.*

10) It is not just in the realm of actions, bombings and the like that Immigrant communities become 'an enemy within'. Over the last few years immigrants have been at the forefront of workplace struggle. The combination in some immigrant communities of radicalism and low wages has resulted in prolonged strikes such as at Hillingdon Hospital and JJ Foods. Inner city riots by young Blacks and Asians are another example. However it is not within the scope of this task section to discuss rebellions within the core (Task I) whoever they are carried out by.

11) 'Easton Cowboys Go West' in *Do or Die* No. 8, p.248

12) In the crackdown that followed the bombings of a Zionist office and the Israeli embassy many Palestinian activists were raided. Samar Alami and Jawd Botmeh were convicted of the attacks and given 20 years after which they face deportation to Israel. They maintain they have been framed. See 'The Israeli Embassy Bombing and the Secret State' in *Do or Die* No. 8, p.224

13) 'The New Luddite War' in *Do or Die*, No. 8, p.95

14) 'Being Busy' by Anonymous (SDEF!), in *On Fire: The Battle of Genoa and the Anti-capitalist Movement*, p.41

15) *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years* by Murray Bookchin, p.281

16) *This Side of Glory* by David Hilliard, ISBN 0316364215, p.27

Conclusion: Fires in the Night

I hope the conclusion to this pre-history and future strategy will not be written in words – but in action.

I went to a funeral. An ending, but it felt like a beginning. Old Mick was a veteran squatter, rebel and thief. His most successful heist was the reclaiming of his life from those bosses and jailers who think they own us. For decades he lived in the gaps. No one made him into a wageslave. No dropout, he fought. He was no saint, but if ever there was a temporary autonomous zone, Mick was it.

His funeral was one of the best ‘actions’ I have ever been on. Mick wanted to burn in Lyminge Forest, a large part of which was saved from destruction by direct action. Funeral pyres are illegal, death rights have to be sanctioned by the state. Mick wasn’t going to take that, neither were his mates.

Thanks to a snitch the cops had got wind of the plan and a decoy was arranged to throw them off the scent. Meet up points were organised, phones rung. From all over the country vehicles arrived at the secret destination, appropriately marked ‘Covert Woods’ on the OS map. Over a hundred were gathered. Ten foot the pyre of ‘stolen’ wood rose, Mick’s coffin astride. Night came. Fireworks shot into the sky. Crackling fire, we saw Mick’s bones burn, back to the earth. For hours he burned. Some were lairy, some were silent. All of us knew that despite the petty daily bother, we were tribe and on the pyre was one of our elders.

Away from the roads, fearful in the dark – authority crept. The cops knew they had no power here. In the woods, a short confrontation. We were many, they were few. Behind our line – a fire. They listed their petty rules. Illegal gathering. Illegal land occupation. Not to mention illegal funeral. But they could do nothing. Just then a track on the sound system announced with base certainty: “The day belongs to The Man, but we shall control the night.”

Be the Spark

When we step out of legality, when we are masked by the night, when we become the earth, we are unconquerable.

These moments of collective power, of togetherness and tribe, are not limited to those times we mass together. In the dark in different places, different times, our sparks join together as one fire. Many of us will never meet each other; all the better, we'll still be one – but those who want to extinguish our flames will find it all the more difficult.

Sun Tzu counselled that even under attack an enemy will only fall through its own mistakes and weakness. The key to victory is not so much to defeat one's enemy, instead it is to make oneself undefeatable.

This is true for our aim, objectives and form. In a sense it is the 'depth' of our victory which is at stake; as victory, given our aim, is not in question. For we know one thing; civilisation is temporary, an aberration. The class war is vicious – but there can be only one winner, the wild. We aim to shorten civilisations rule, to hamstring its tyranny, to lessen its damage. How far we succeed will in large part depend on which objectives we set and which forms we grow.

Of course our networks have not come out of nowhere, but have evolved within struggle. Many of what others see as our weaknesses, are our greatest strengths – with us thanks to a rejection of past mistakes. Our tactics are pretty direct, our immediate objectives usually achievable, our forms relatively autonomous.

As the corporations and states grow ever more powerful they know they can win any 'symmetrical conflict'. What the strategists of authority view with horror is the potential 'network power' of increasingly direct, decentralised, oppositional movements. Their nightmare, our dream; but to reach our potential we must go far beyond ourselves.

Our strength is in our ability to take action and by doing so inspire others to take action. Not mass growth but cellular growth.

Rooting ourselves in the soil and the future, with keen strategy and an ever more tangible – but less visible – combative edge, we can get far stronger.

DOWN WITH EMPIRE! UP WITH SPRING!

Our tribes, our counter-cultures will grow. We'll prepare for the fight. No prostituting ourselves to the media, we'll grow in the shadows, but strike when needed. New technologies will attempt to track us, we'll have to evolve to throw them off the scent. Some of the old techniques will have to be abandoned, others picked up. No faces. No names. No Compromise.

For over a decade many on this island have fought for the earth. Yet if we are going to truly defect we will have to struggle harder, think quicker and live wilder. The long trek back to the earth and each other is only beginning. In writing this I merely hope to aid our navigation. Part One showed where we came from. Part Two pointed a few routes to the future. The four tasks are huge; yet with sensible objective-led thinking, luck and hard will, they are perfectly realisable.

Imagine the machines, the pylons, the factories, the labs, the tanks – broken by you.

Imagine the wind, the sun, the beautiful moments – lived by you.

Down with the Empire! Up with the Spring!

**“Whatever you can do, or dream you can – begin it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.
Begin it now.”
– Goethe**

