

News & Reviews

Various Authors

1998

Reviewed by Allan Antliff unless otherwise noted

The Uncontrollables vs the Grotesque Frame-Up Against Anarchists in Italy: Dossier, 1997 documents the Italian government's efforts to target Italy's anarchist movement using the confession of an activist's former lover. The government is using her testimony to pin numerous unsolved kidnappings, bank robberies, and direct actions (attacks on energy pylons, etc.) on over 50 anarchists.

Authorities have raided numerous homes, anarchist centers, bookstores and publications in their quest for evidence. A trial which began last summer focused on four anarchists who were caught in 1994 robbing a bank—Alfredo Bonanno, Jean Weir, Carlo Tesseri, and Christos Stratigopoulos.

Weir and others publish Elephant Editions books and the Bratach Dubh pamphlet series (available in English through AK distribution) which offer important theoretical perspectives on anarchist strategies of resistance (affinity groups, illegalism, sabotage) as well as penetrating analyses of the evolution of capitalism and new possibilities for revolution opening up. For a copy, write B.M. Ignition, London, WC IN 3XX, England.

Rabble Review: Encouraging a Healthy Disrespect for Authority, Summer 1997, (PO Box 4710, Arlington, VA 22204; \$4) is a new anarchist quarterly edited by Tom Wheeler.

Its purpose is to “call into question every form of corporate domination in our daily lives”—surely a tall order given the pervasive influence of totalitarian institutions. This issue covers fast-food restaurant behavior modification, the political “feudalism” of American public life at the hands of corporations, the co-optation of the internet as a business tool, and an exchange between two punk bands, one of which (“Padded Cell” Tm) is sliding into corporate status at a rapid clip.

War Crime #5 (1997). PO Box 2741 Tucson, AZ 85702 USA; \$2; irregular. This is an odd mix. Among other things we get a Mumia update, a circular from the Polish Anarchist Black Cross, two band interviews, a “How to Make Tofu” feature, and obscure zine reviews. The journal lacks focus, and it shows.

(Note by Peter Werbe on *War Crime #7*. This issue contains the focus Allan felt #5 lacked. It features an interview with a member of the Black Autonomy collective, a history of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, news of Daishowa's war on the Lubicon people, vegan recipes, and more to make a nicely rounded issue.)

Melancholic Troglodytes No. 1 (397/1996), Box MT, 121 Railton Road, Heme (the Hunter) Hill, London, SE24, UK is bilingual, (English/Arabic), focusing on Iran by combating the mullahs with ribald humor and the pre-industrial paganism of both East and West. Unfortunately, the articles aren't very coherent or well-written. Lengthy attention to the Kan-ii-Kazi militarization of pre-industrial Japan or the Zanj slave revolts in medieval Persia pull up short when the authors attempt to draw conclusions relevant for the present day.

Earth First! Action Update, #42 (Septemberish 1997), Dept. 29, 1 Newton Street, Manchester, MI IHW, UK, is packed with information, contact addresses, and news of ongoing campaigns, including numerous successful ones.

More to the point, you can keep abreast of important international actions (Shell Oil protests, for example) and new, innovative direct action tactics being employed in the UK.

It also includes an excellent primer on the advantages of affinity groups, which offer a “non-hierarchical, participatory, flexible and friendly” means of organizing attuned to anarchist principles.

Class War, (Summer 1997) 50 p/\$2.00; PO Box 4.67, London E83QX UK. This edition announces itself as the final issue and the dissolution of the organization of the same name. Whenever I encounter proclamations regarding the dissolving of a revolutionary project, I am always struck by the paradoxical nature of the act: the ideas that gave birth to the project necessitate the project itself be dissolved!

The majority of UK’s anarchist Class War Federation responded to its apparent stagnation, hierarchy, “platform” bickering, and little growth by deciding to disband. They hope this will lead to new ideas for collaborative work that can move Class War’s politics “beyond the shadow of the left.”

So what are these politics? The Class War Federation always put the working-class on the front burner of its program, but beyond this there was confusion as the organization sought to shape this class in their own revolutionary image. In effect, Class War carved out a ghetto of correct “working-class” politics, in part by pillorying anarchist organizations that made no claim to be class-based, such as Earth First!, for so-called “lifestyle leftism.”

Ironically, Class War generated its own puritanical brand of “lifestyle” (macho “working-class” violence) along with leftism of the worst sort. Fixated on a pseudo-Marxist program of working-class separatism, the organization failed to recognize the full range of anti-capitalist struggles underway, and this failure led straight to the full-blown sectarianism that lies at the root of its problems.

That said, I still admire Class War for what it achieved over its short spark of existence and lament the organization’s demise. But then, I may be speaking too soon-apparently the minority faction based in London continues to operate and put out a paper.

FE Note: Yes, Allan, they’re baaack! The new *Class War* can be had for a donation and a SAE from BM Box 5538, London WC IN 3XX, UK.

Earth First! Journal (November-December, 1997) PO Box 1415, Eugene OR 97440, \$4.00 Can/\$3.50 US. This issue contains informative exposes of the devastating environmental implications of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, NASA’s nukes-in-space program, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation plans to accelerate logging in the Pacific rim.

Various developments in the U.S. and Canada are also featured, such as the gutting of the California Environmental Protection Act and the duplicity of the social-democratic New Democrat government in British Columbia (BC), which claims to support logging reform while clear cuts continue to make up 92 percent of BC logging (with 82 percent cutting right up to the stream banks).

There is a report on the first road blockade ever to disrupt logging-as-usual in Virginia’s George Washington National Forest. Another article chronicles the 74-day blockade in Idaho’s Cove/Mallard forest, where EF!ers from the Rainbow Family of Love and Light carried out a complex strategy involving the suspension of activists in “co-dependent bipod/ tripods” over the logging roads.

Contra-Flow c/o 56a Infoshop, 56 Crampton St., London SE17, UK, covers actions in the UK, with “roving correspondents” providing reports on European activities. Each issue has an invaluable calendar listing upcoming events and actions. European news in this issue describes the disruption of the June 1997 EEC summit in Amsterdam, where anarchists made their presence felt.

There’s also a piece on the defense of squats in Berlin, as well as a report from a *Contra-Flow* activist who attended an Anti-Capitalist Economics gathering in Spain. Back in London, the September 25th International Day of Action in solidarity with the striking Liverpool dockers was kicked off by a “visit” to the home of Gordon Waddle, CEO of Liverpool’s Mersyside Docks Company. Then on to the headquarters of the Drake’s Temp agency, which recruits scabs for Mersyside.

Additional UK campaigns are featured, including updates on government persecution of animal rights activists.

Even though the immediate threat of nuclear war has diminished, the struggle against the existence of atomic weapons and nuclear power continue. Check out the stalwart quarterly, **The Nuclear Resister**, for information about

and support for imprisoned anti-nuclear and anti-war activists. Each issue contains action reports, a calendar of upcoming events, prisoner support information, jail writings and international resistance news. Subs: \$15 yearly; sample on request. Nuclear Resister, PO Box 43383, Tucson AZ 85733; nukeresister@igc.org.

—PW

Visions of Freedom, \$3, PO Box 13, Enmore 2042, Australia. www.cat.triode.net.au. The articles in *Visions of Freedom*, a pamphlet intended to recall the 1995 Visions of Freedom Anarchist Conference in Sydney, are written with humor, indignation and passion without presenting any party line. Included are critiques of the Australian government's complicity in East Timor, the academic establishment, the media and supporters of national liberation. Enough indignation remains, however, to direct it at other anarchists, for example some queer criticisms of the conference itself.

We find a picture of an accordion-playing faerie nun, Sister Mary Mary Quite Contrary, who livened the Pope's recent visit to Australia during which a Pope-Free Zone was declared. Her colleague, Mother Abyss of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence, delivered Sister Mary Mary's paper on Gay Rights, AIDS and sex education at the Visions-Versions conference.

The companion volume, *Versions of Freedom*, is unfortunately already out of print. Too bad; Peter McGregor's piece therein cites and thanks authors of insightful statements who have helped him to grasp anarchist visions while trying to make his desires a reality, including Vaneigem's observation, "I live on the edge of the universe and I don't need to feel secure."

I liked your Visions, friends. Let's dream together.

—P. Worbe

Social Anarchism is a thoughtful, undogmatic journal worth reading and supporting. Issue #24 contains a symposium on "the anarchist agenda" with contributions from Neala Schleuning, Howard Ehrlich and others; an essay by Mike Long entitled "Ebonics, Language and Power"; John Moore's commentary on "Dianamania"; Sean Burns's moving tribute to David Thoreau Wieck; poetry and more.

Also notable are the reviews, including Susan Packie's piece on publishing wonder woman Freddie Baer's marvelous book of collages and collaborations, *Ecstatic Incisions*, and Kingsley Widmer's review essay on Murray Bookchin's hideous *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*.

As someone who was vilified by Bookchin's book, I felt extremely gratified by Widmer's level-headed review. Widmer is no luddite primitivist, and has his differences with people Bookchin slams (he even thinks the book has "some good points to score"), but he's judicious enough, and rational enough, to see beyond Bookchin's "self-indulgently irate and egotistical polemic." Widmer clearly has differences with the *Fifth Estate*, but he is someone with whom one might be able to disagree in a comradely manner. His review is a breath of fresh air, perhaps the best all-around review of the Bookchin book.

Social Anarchism is good-looking and readable. Single issues-are \$4 and subs are \$14/four issues from 2743 Maryland Ave., Baltimore MD 21218.

—David Watson

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/351-summer-1998/news-reviews>
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