



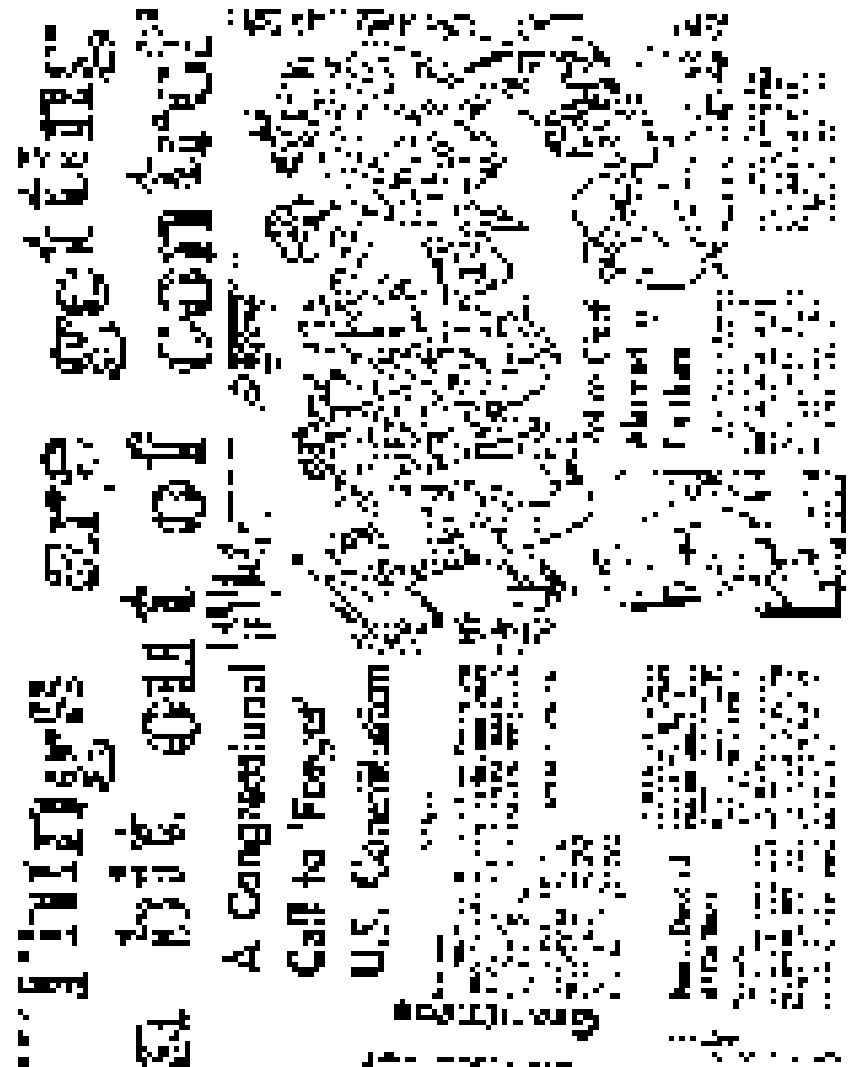
Insurgency Culture Collective

i Practical Anarchism Series i

"Knowledge Should Be Free"

The Anti-Mass:

Methods of Organizing for Collectives



The Anti-Mass: Methods of Organizing for Collectives

survive with the visibility that we are accustomed to [as a counterculture – ed.]. The lifestyles which declare our opposition re also the ones which make us easy targets. We must not mistake the level of appearance for new cultures. The whole point is not to make a fetish of our lifestyles. In the psychedelic atmosphere of repression, square is cool.

Always keep part of your strategy underground. Just as analysis helps to differentiate the enemy so it should provide you with different levels of attack. Mao says: “Flexibility is a concrete expression of initiative.”

Going underground should not mean dropping heroically out of sight. There will be few places to hide in the electronic environment of the future. The most dangerous kind of underground will be one that is like an iceberg. The roles created to replace our identities in everyday life must become the disguise of the underground.

An underground strategy puts the impulse of confrontation into perspective. We must fight the planned obsolescence of confrontations which lock us into the time-span of instant revolution. Going underground means having a long range strategy – something which plans for 2004 [and beyond]. The iceberg strategy keeps us cool. It trains us to control our reflexes and calculate our responses.

The underground strategy is also necessary to maintain autonomy. Autonomy preserves the organizational form of the collective, which is critical to the sharpening of its politics. Nothing will be achieved by submerging ourselves in a chaos of revolutionary fronts. The principle strategy of the counterfeit left will be to smear over differences with appeals of class unity that no longer exist. An underground strategy without a revolutionary form of organization can only emerge as a new class society. To destroy the system of oppression is not enough. We must create the organization of a free society. When the underground emerges, the collective will be that society [an underground strategy means that we are creating the new society within the shell of the old with our activities remaining low profile and off the radar scope of the Spectacle Society (the capitalist press and Big Brother) until the future revolution when they will be sufficiently developed to displace the collapsing status quo and form the foundation of the new society – ed.].

The Anti-Mass:

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By
The Red Sunshine Gang

Berkeley 1970

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which is embedded in every aspect of our lives. Our language poses questions by making us choose between opposites. The imperialist creates the anti-imperialist. Before 'cool' there was hot and cold. 'Cool' was the first attempt to break out of two-sidedness. Two-sidedness always minimizes the dimensions of struggle by narrowly defining the situation. We end up with a one-dimensional view of the enemy and of ourselves.

Learn to be shrewd. Our first impulse is always to define our position. Why do we feel the need to tell them? We create space by not appearing to be what we really are.

Shrewdness is not simply a defensive tactic. The essence of shrewdness is learning to take advantage of the enemy's weakness. Otherwise you can never win. The rule is: be honest among yourselves, but deceive the enemy.

There are at least three ways of dealing with a situation. You can neutralize, activate, or destroy. Neutralize is to create space. Activate is to gain support. Destroy is to win. What's more, it is essential to learn how to use all three simultaneously.

Struggle on many levels begins with the activation of the senses. We must be able to conceive of more than one mode of acting for a given situation. The response, *i.e.* method of struggle, should contain three elements: 1) a means of survival; 2) a method of exploiting splits in the enemy camp; 3) an underground strategy.

The fundamental tendency of corporate liberalism is to identify with social change while trying to contain it. Wouldn't it be ironic (and even a relief) if we could turn the threat of co-option into a means of survival?

The fear of co-option often leads people to shun the challenge of corporate liberals. Some purist revolutionaries prefer not to think about using the co-opter for their own purposes. Too often the mentality of the 'job' obscures the potential for subversion.

The existence of corporate liberalism demands that we not be sloppy in our own thinking and response. The strength of the position is that it forces us to acknowledge our own weaknesses – even before we engage in struggle against it. The worst mistake is to pretend that the enemy does not exist.

Introduction

The writers of this pamphlet were a part of the counterculture in Berkeley, California which began with troops returning from World War II and evolved in the late 1960s and early 1970s after the Free Speech Movement and as a reaction to the Viet Nam War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement and a general rebellion against "The Establishment". They quote counter-culture writers and Mao Zedong, but are specifically critical of both Leninism and Liberalism. They criticize mass society, TV ideology and following leaders and urge people to organize themselves.

The Anti-Mass is reflective of Michael Bakunin's "Secret Brotherhood" and the Affinity Groups formed to organize Anarchist resistance in Spain prior to the 1936 Spanish Civil War. It has become the organizing model of choice for Do-It-Yourself organizers in the Anarchist and anti-racist movements in Mexico and the United States. Included in this edition are editorial notes to clarify and expand upon points of the original authors based upon our experiences using this model in Southern California. -Ed.

The Difference Between Mass and Class

Why is it important to know the difference between mass and class? The chances are that there can be no conscious revolutionary practice without making this distinction. We are not playing around with words. Look. We are living in a mass society. We didn't get that way by accident. The mass is a specific form of organization. The reason is clear. Consumption is organized by the corporations. Their products define the mass. The mass is not a cliché – 'the masses' – but a routine which dominates your daily life. Understanding the structure of the mass market is the first step toward understanding what happened to the class struggle.

What is the mass? Most people think of the mass in terms of numbers – like a crowded street or stadium. But it is actually structure which determines its character. The mass is an aggregate of couples who separate, detached and anonymous. They live in cities physically close yet socially apart. Their lives are privatized and depraved. Coca-Cola and loneliness. The social existence of the mass – its rules and regulations, the structuring of its status, roles and leadership – are organized through

the economy becoming a “service economy” (double-talk for workers all becoming servants after their jobs have been subcontracted or moved to another country; forcing them to take a new job or jobs as a servant), people who once thought that automation would enable the working class to live like the middle class, and primitivists who view all technology as an anti-christ – ed.]. Technological change has rescued them from the dilemma of a class analysis they were never able to make. With the elimination of working class struggle by automation (the automation of the working class [which actually has made workers more disposable and exploited – ed.]) the radicals have become advocates of leisure society and touristic lifestyles. This anti-work attitude leads to a utopian outlook and removes us from the realm of history. It prevents the construction of collectivity and self-activity. The issue of how to transform work into self-activity is central to the elimination of class and the reorganization of society.

Self-activity is the reconstruction of the consciousness (wholeness) of one's individual life activity. The collective is what makes the reconstruction possible because it defines individuality not as a private experience but as a social relation. What is important to see is that work is the creating of conscious activity within the structure of the collective.

One of the best ways to discover and correct anti-work attitudes is through self-criticism [introspection]. This provides an objective framework which allows people the space to be criticized and to be critical. Self-criticism is the opposite of self-consciousness because its aim is not to isolate you but to free repressed abilities. Self-criticism is a method for dealing with piggish [disrespectful] behavior and developing consciousness.

To root out the society within us and to redefine our work relations a collective must develop a sense of its own history. One of the hardest things to do is to see the closest relations – those within the collective – in political terms. The tendency is to be sloppy, or what Mao calls ‘liberal’, about relations between friends. Rules can no longer be the framework of discipline. It must be based on political understanding. One of the functions of analysis is that it be applied internally. [We need to be able to question our own socialization and build cooperative working relationships which respect the others in our collectives. Cooperative relationships are based on the desire to place the objectives of the group ahead of your personal ego (e.g. your goal is for the group to accomplish its objectives, not to have

The small group can be a stage in the development of the collective, if it develops a critique of the frustrations stemming from its external orientation. The formation of a collective begins when people not only have the same politics, but agree on the method of struggle.

Why should the collective be the primary focus of organization? The collective is an alternative to the existing structure of society. Changing social relations is a process rather than a product of revolution. In other words, you make the revolution by actually changing social relations. You must consciously create the contradictions in history.

Concretely, this means: organize yourselves, not somebody else. The collective is the organizational nucleus of a classless society. As a formal organization, it negates all form of hierarchy. The answer to alienation is to make yourself the subject, not the object, of history.

One of the critical obstacles to the formation of collectives is the transitional period – when the collective must survive side-by-side with a disintegrating movement and a mass society. The disintegration of the movement is not an isolated phenomenon but reflects the weakening of the major institutions in society responsible for our alienation. Many people are demoralized by this process and find it bewildering because they actually depend subconsciously on the continued existence of these institutions. We are witnessing the break-up and transformation of an institution integral to society – the mass market. The mass market is corporate structure which few people are sufficiently aware of to realize how it affects our political life. We really depend on our ‘leaders’ whether they be the Chicago 7 or 7up. Our understanding of the collective form of organization is based on a critique of the mass and the dictatorship of the product.

These contradictions make it imperative that any people who decide to create a collective know exactly who they are and what they are doing. That is why you must consider your collective as primary. Because, if you don't believe in the legitimacy of this form of organization, you can't have a practical analysis of what is happening. Don't kid yourself. The struggle for the creation and survival of collectives at this moment in history is going to be very difficult.

The dominant issue will be how collectives can become part of history – how they can become a real social force. There is no guarantee and we

Self Activity

Bad work habits and sloppy behavior undermine any attempt to construct collectively. Casual, sloppy behavior means that we don't care deeply about what we are doing or who we are doing it with. This may come as a surprise to a lot of people. The fact remains: we talk revolution at elementary levels.

There are two basic things underlying these unfortunate circumstances: 1) people's idea of how something (like revolution) will happen shapes our work habits; 2) their class background gives them a casual view of politics.

There is no doubt that the Pepsi generation [the 'Baby Boom' generation – hopefully, subsequent generations have learned from some of their mistakes, those who were coopted and those who sold out – ed.] is more politically alive. But this new energy is being channeled by organizers into boring meetings which reproduce the hierarchy of class society. After a while, critical thinking is eroded and people lose their curiosity. Meetings become a routine like everything else in life.

A lot of problems which collectives will have can be traced to the work habits acquired in the (mass) movement. People perpetuate the passive roles they have become accustomed to in large meetings [they come expecting to be told what to do by someone who is acting as a "leader" as opposed to the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) approach of coming with an idea of what needs to be done and not making a proposal unless they are prepared to take the action they propose – ed.]. The emphasis on mass participation means that all you have to do is show up. Rarely, do people prepare themselves for a meeting, nor do they feel the need to. Often this situation does not become evident precisely because the few people who do work (those who run the meeting) create the illusion of group achievement.

Because people see themselves essentially as objects and not as subjects, political activity is defined as an event outside them and in the future. No one sees themselves making the revolution and, therefore, they don't understand how it will be accomplished.

The short span of attention is one tell tale symptom of instant politics. The emphasis on responding to crisis seems to contract the span of attention

slaves. Beyond a certain point, the group becomes a meeting and before you know it you have to raise your hand to speak. The collective is a recognition of the practical limits of conversation. This simple fact is the basis for a new social experience.

Relations of inequality can be seen more clearly within a collective and dealt with more effectively. "Whatever the nature of authority in the large organization, it is inherent in the simple organization unit" (Chester Bernard, ***The Function of Executives***, 1938). A small group with a 'leader' is the nucleus of a class society. Small size restricts the area which any single individual can dominate. This is true both internally and in relation to other groups.

Today, the mode of struggle requires a durable and resilient form of organization which will enable us to cope both with the attrition of daily life and the likelihood of repression. Unless we can begin to solve problems at this level collectively, we are certainly not fit to create a new society. Contrary to what people are led to think, *i.e.* united we stand, united we fall, it will be harder to destroy a multitude of collectives than the largest organizations with centralized control.

Size is the key to security. But its real importance lies in the fact that the collective reproduces new social relations – the advantage being that the process can begin now.

The limitation on size raises a difficult problem. What do you say to someone who asks "Can I join your collective?" The question is ultimately at the root of much hostility (often unconscious) toward the collective form of organization. You can't separate size from the collective because it must be small in order to exist. The collective has a right to exclude individuals because it offers them an alternative of starting anew collective, *i.e.* sharing the responsibility for organization. This is the basic answer to the question above.

Of course, people will put down the collective as being exclusive. That is not the point. The size of a collective is essentially a limitation on its authority. By contrast, large organizations, while having open membership, are exclusive in terms of who shapes the politics and actively participates in the structuring of activities. The choice is between joining the mass or creating the class. The revolutionary project is to do-it-yourself.

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the school system. The secret is to gain as much pleasure in creating the form as in expressing the idea.

How do we defend adopting the style of advertising when its function is so oppressive? As a medium we think it represents a revolutionary mode of production. Rejecting it has resulted in the stagnation of our minds and a crude romanticism in political culture. Those who turn up their noses at ads think in a language that is decrepit. Using the ad technique transforms the person who does it. It makes writing a pleasure for anyone because it strives in orality in print.

What we mean by the use of the ad technique is to physically use it. Most of the time we are unconscious of ads and, if we do become conscious, we don't act upon them – don't subvert them. Ads are based on repetition. If you affect one of them, you affect all of them. Know the environment of the ad. The most effective way to subvert an ad is to make the contradiction in it visible. Advertise it. The vulnerability of ads lies in the possibility of turning them against the exploiters.

Jerry Rubin says you should use the media all the time. At least he goes all the way. This is better than the toe-dipping approach that seems so common these days. Of course, there are groups who say don't use it at all and they don't. They will probably outlast Jerry since the basic technique of mass media is over-exposure. That is why Jerry has already written his memoirs. The Situationists say: "The revolt is contained by over-exposure. We are given it to contemplate so that we shall forget to participate."

We are not talking about the packaging of politics. **Ramparts** is the **Playboy** of the Left. On the other hand, the underground press is pornographic and redundant. **Newsreel's** projector is running backwards. And why in the era of **Cosmopolitan** magazine must we suffer the stodginess of **Leviathan**? We must prefer reading **Fortune** – the magazine for 'the men in charge of change' – for our analysis of capitalism.

There is no getting around it – we need new formats, entirely new formats. Otherwise we will never sharpen our wits. To break out of the spell of print requires a conscious effort to think a new language. We should no longer be immobilized by other people's words. Don't wait for the news to tell you what is happening. Make your headlines with presstype. Cut up your

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There are already a number of gatherings which appear to involve contact but in reality are grotesque facsimiles. The worst of these and the one most people flock to is the conference. This is a hotel of the mind which turns all into tourists and spectators. A lower form of existence is the endless meeting – the one held every night. Not to mention the committees formed expressly to arrange meetings.

The basic principle of contact between collectives is: you only meet when you have something to say to each other. This means two things. First, that you have a concrete idea what it is you want to say. Secondly, that you must prepare it in advance. These principles help to insure that communication does not become an administrative problem.

The new forms of contact have yet to be created. We can think of single examples. A member of one collective can attend the meeting of another collective or there may be a joint meeting of the groups as a whole. The first of these appears to be the more practical, however, the drawback is that not everyone is involved. There are undoubtedly other forms of contact which are likely to develop. The main thing is to invent them.

Editor's Note: Meetings are usually unnecessary unless you want to invite new people to an activity of your group, unless something must be exchanged face-to-face or unless it facilitates communication and creativity among several people for them to freely express themselves, exchange ideas and brainstorm. The problem with meetings is that they are time consuming and people usually can find something they would rather do that attend one – so it is hard to get people to even show up for one. Much of communication can be made more effectively by telephone, through e-mail or by the use of post office mail boxes (P.O. boxes should use initials for the name of your collective or something equally innocuous (an acronym or name which doesn't sound political) to avoid your mail being intercepted. If your box is tampered with, get a new one at a different post office.). This can allow activities to be coordinated among many collectives spread throughout large areas (like Southern California) where driving to meetings is time consuming and exhausting because of the distances you must travel. E-mail has the advantage of being a lot cheaper than a phone call, almost as fast and easier to get a hold of some people who maintain busy schedules. Of course, face-to-face communication is necessary to avoid the possibility of police eavesdropping on sensitive/secret communications and sabotaging our activities.

The Function of Analysis

Not only can there be no revolution without revolutionary theory, there can be no strategy without analysis. Strategy is knowing ahead of time what you are going to do. This is what analysis makes possible. When you begin, you may not know anything. The purpose of analysis is not to know everything, but to know what you do know and know it good – that is collectivity. The heart of thinking analytically is to learn over and over again that the process is as important as the product. Developing an analysis requires new ways of thinking. Without new ways of thinking we are doomed to old ways of acting.

The question of what we are going to do is the hardest to answer and the one that ultimately will determine whether a collective will continue to exist. The difficulty of the question makes analysis all the more necessary. We can no longer afford to be propelled by the crudest forms of advertisement – slogans and rhetoric. The function of analysis is to reveal a plan of action.

Why is there relatively little practical analysis of what is happening today? Some people refuse to analyze anything which they cannot immediately comprehend. Basically they have a feeling of inadequacy. This is partly because they have never had the opportunity to do it before and, therefore, don't know they are capable of it. On the other hand, many activists put down analysis as being 'intellectual' – which is more a commentary on their own kind of thinking than anything else. Finally, there are those who feel no need to think and become very uncomfortable when somebody does want to. This often reflects their class disposition. The general constipation of the movement is a product of all these forces.

One reason for this sad state of affairs is that analysis gives so little satisfaction. This is another way of saying that it is not practical. What has happened to all thinking can best be seen in the degeneration of class analysis into stereotyped, obese definition. There is little difference between the theory-mongers of high abstraction and the sloganeers of crude abstraction. Theory is becoming the dialectic of robots, and slogans the mass production of the mind. But just because ideas have become so mechanical does not mean we should abandon them.

glorification of the extended family. What they have is astrology, not a strategy.

Local action should be based on the global structure of modern society. There can be no collective action without collectives. But the creation of a collective should not be mistaken for victory not should it become an end in itself. The great danger the collective faces historically is that of being cut off (or cutting itself off) from the outside world. The issue ultimately will be what action to take and when. Whether collectives become a social force depends on their analysis of history and their course of action.

In fact, the 'provinces' today are moving ahead of the centers in political consciousness and motivation. From Minnesota to the Mekong Delta, the revolt is gaining coherence. The centers are trying to decipher what is happening, to catch up and contain it. For this purpose they must create centralized forms of organization – or 'co-ordination' – as modernists call it.

The first principle of local action is to denationalize your thinking. Take the country out of Salem. Get out of Marlboro country. Become conscious of how your life is managed from the national centers. Lifestyles are roles designed to give you the illusion of movement while keeping you in your place. "Style is mass chasing class, and class escaping mass." (W. Rauschenbush, "The Idiot God of Fashion", *Women's Coming of Age*, eds. Schmalhausen and Calverton, 1931).

Local action gives you the initiative by enabling you to define the situation. That is the practice of knowing you are the subject. Marat says:

"The most important thing is to pull yourself up by your own hair, to turn yourself inside out and see the whole world with fresh eyes."

The collective turns itself inside out and sees reality.

Editors Note: Local action is about being in touch with how ordinary people live and understanding the problems of ordinary people both as they experience them and in the multinational context of the political economic forces which are at work influencing the events which they are experiencing. You see peoples lives and have the political education to interpret what you see for what it is. You learn not from going to lectures



What We Believe

We are Class War Anarchists. We believe that a conflict must go on between those who work for a living and our enemies who get rich off our labor but, do nothing until those who live off our labor are laid low and the society with power and privilege based on wealth and class is abolished in favor of a free society based on mutual aid, voluntary cooperation and personal freedom and responsibility. We advocate the methods of Revolutionary Syndicalism to win the class war against the corruption of the rich and powerful. We believe that all forms of non-capitalist non-exploitive non-authoritarian economic organization can co-exist in an Anarchist society in a Federation of free people, free communities and free workplaces. We believe that the first step towards the creation of a free society is for people to organize, educate themselves and assert their autonomy from the government, the capitalist and organized religion.

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Credits

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The Anti-Mass: Methods of Organizing for Collectives

Urban struggle requires a subversive strategy. Concretely, working 'within the system' should become for us a source of money, information, and anonymity. This is what Mao means when he says, "Move at night." The routine of daily life is night-time for the enemy – when he cannot see us. The process of co-option should become an increasingly disquieting exercise for them. [Being anti-mass means that we do not join political parties or liberal activist groups which function to suck the life out of political activists by occupying their time with unproductive activities. By 'working within the system', the author means having a job that can generate income which can be invested in revolutionary activity (as well as giving you food, clothing, shelter, *etc.*). It is also a way to be low profile so the government doesn't necessarily know who you are and have you under surveillance 24-7. Some kinds of jobs give you access to information which you can apply to your revolutionary activities or access to resources like free photocopies or computers which you can use for propaganda or other political purposes – ed.].

Exploiting splits within the enemy camp does not mean helping one segment defeat another. The basic aim is to maintain the splits. There are significant differences among the oppressors. These have the effect of weakening them. Under certain circumstances these splits may provide a margin of maneuverability which may be strategic for us. The main thing is not to view the enemy as monolithic. Monolithic thinking condemns you to one way of acting [There are no 'good' capitalists, but those in the ruling class are not a unite front either. They are constantly competing with each other for a bigger slice of the pie which they steal from the rest of us – a bigger slice of wealth, power or other intangibles. They also play many roles both in exploiting the rest of us, in maintaining the status quo and in the ways they interact with each other. Overall, this is about exploring ways we can weaken the authoritarian, economic and social control institutions of the system – ed.].

There is a tendency to see the most degenerate forms of reaction as the primary enemy. The corporations are consciously pandering to such ideas through films like "Easy Rider" which also attempts to identify with young males. The function of analysis is to break down and specify the different forces within the enemy camp.

The spaces created by these splits are of crucial importance to the preparation of a long range strategy. It will be increasingly difficult to

consumption (the mass market). They are all products of a specific organization. Ours.

Of course, no one sees themselves as part of the mass. It's always others who are the masses. The trouble is that it is not only the corporations which organize us into the mass. The 'movement' itself behaves as a mass and its organizers reproduce the hierarchy of the mass.

Really, how do you fight fire? With water, of course. The same goes for revolution. We don't fight the mass (market) with a mass (movement). We fight mass with class. Our aim should be not to create a mass movement but a class force.

What is class? A class is a consciously organized social force. For example, the ruling class is conscious and acts collectively to organize not only itself, but also the people (mass) that it rules. The corporation is the self-conscious collective power of the ruling class. We are not saying that class relations do not exist in the rest of society. But they remain passive so long as they are shaped solely by objective conditions (*i.e.* work situations). What is necessary is the active (subjective) participation of the class itself. Class prejudice is not class consciousness. The class is conscious of its social existence because it seeks to organize itself. The mass is unconscious of its social existence because it is organized by Coca-Cola and IBM.

The moral of the story is: the mass is a mass because it is organized as a mass. Don't be fooled by the brand name. Mass is thinking with your ass.

Primacy of the Collective

The small group is the coming together of people who feel the need for collectivity. Its function is often to break out of the mass – specifically from the isolation of daily life and the mass structure of the movement. The problem is that frequently the group cannot create an independent existence and an identity of its own because it continues to define itself negatively, *i.e.* in opposition. So long as its point of reference lies outside of it, the group's politics tend to be superimposed on it by events and crises.

people tell you how great you are (seldom will people compliment you – often you must not take credit for your work to stay clear of the law – so you must be satisfied with yourself) and you need to not bring personal quarrels into the collective to where they interfere with its effectiveness) and the practice of mutual aid and conflict resolution rather than liberal characterizations of people as oppressors or victims. The only discipline that is not repressive is the self-discipline fueled by personal enthusiasm and motivation. People are motivated in a group because they enjoy the comradery of their group and feel that the time they spend in the group is productive and makes a difference. People can not be forced to work, they must be motivated by what they perceive they will gain by participating in the collective as opposed to spending their time doing something else. This is why there is often a variety of levels of participation in a collective. Avoiding the pitfalls of mass “liberal” politics described in this pamphlet will help a collective not to reproduce disincentives to work that result in burn-out and people dropping out of political activity – ed.].

Preparation is another part of the process which creates continuity between meetings and insures that our own thinking does not become a part time activity. It also combats the tendency to talk off the top of one's head and pick ideas out of the air. Whenever meetings tend to be abstract and random it means the ideas put forward are not connected by thought (*i.e.* analysis). There is seldom serious investigation behind what is said.

What does it mean to prepare for a meeting? It means not coming empty-handed or empty-headed. Mao says, “No investigation, no right to speak.” Assuming a group has decided what it wants to do, the first step is for everyone to investigate. This means taking the time to actually look into the matter, sort out the relevant materials and be able to make them accessible to everyone in the collective. The motive underlying all the preparation should be the construction of a coherent analysis. “We must substitute the sweat of self-criticism for the tears of crocodiles,” according to a Chinese proverb.

Struggle on Many Levels

Struggle has many faces. But no two faces look alike. Like the cubists, we must look at things from many sides. The problem is to find ways of creating space for ourselves. The tendency now is toward two-sidedness

should promise no easy victories. The uniqueness of developing collectives is their definitive break with all hierarchic forms of organization and the reconstructing of a classless society.

The thinking of radical organizers is frozen in the concept of the mass movement. This form of struggle, no matter how radical its demands, never threatens the basic structure – the mass itself.

Under these circumstances it takes great effort to imagine new forms of existence. Space must be created before we can think of these things and be able to establish the legitimacy of acting upon them.

The form of the collective is its practice. The collective is opposed to the mass. It contradicts the structure of the mass. The collective is anti-mass.

Size of the Collective

The aim of any organization is to make it as simple as possible, or as Marshall McLuhan puts it, “high in participation, low in definition.” The tendency is just the opposite. Our reflex is to create administrative structures to deal with political problems.

Most people cannot discuss intelligently the subject of size. There is an unspoken feeling either that the problem should not exist or that it is beneath us to talk about it. Let's get it out in the open. Size is a question of politics and social relations, not administration. Do you wonder why the subject is shunted aside at large meetings? Because it fundamentally challenges the repressive nature of large organizations. Small groups that function as appendages to larger bodies will never feel like small groups.

The collective should not be larger than a band – no orchestras or chamber music please. The basic idea is to reproduce the collective, not expand it. The strength of a collective lies in its social organization, not its numbers. Once you think in terms of recruiting, you might as well join the Army. The difference between expansion and reproduction is the difference between adding and multiplying. The first bases its strength on numbers and the second on relationships between people.

Why should there be a limit to size? Because we are neither supermen nor

– in fact there is often no time dimension at all. This timelessness is experienced as the syncopation of over-commitment. Many people say they will do things without really thinking out carefully whether they have the time to do them. Having time ultimately means defining what you really want to do. Over-commitment is when you want to do everything but end up doing nothing [you ‘flake’ – you let other people down by not doing what you said you would do].

The numerous other symptoms of casual politics – lack of preparation, being late, getting bored at difficult moments, *etc.* are all signs of a political attitude which is destructive to the collective. The important thing is recognizing the existence of these problems and knowing what causes them. They are not personal problems but historically determined attitudes.

Many people confuse the revolt against alienated labor in its specific historical form with work activity itself. This revolt is expressed in an anti-work attitude [rather than expressing contempt for the parasites of the leisure class who exploit the rest of us, they seek to emulate them – ed.].

Attitudes toward work are shaped by our relations to production, *i.e.* class. Class is a product of hierarchic divisions of labor (including forms other than wage labor). There are three basic relations which can produce anti-work attitudes. The working class expressed its anti-work attitude as a rebellion against routinized labor. For the middle class, the anti-work attitude comes out of the ideology of consumer society and revolves around leisure. The stereotype of the ‘lazy native’ or ‘physically weak woman’ is a third attitude which is applied to those excluded from wage labor.

The dream of automation (*i.e.* no work) reinforces class prejudice [the reality learned by advocates of robotics is that someone must maintain the machines. The reality of computerization is that its “productivity gain” is actually a work speed-up characterized by monotonous labor and repetitive motion injuries – ed.]. The middle class is the one that has the dream since it seeks to expand its leisure-oriented activities. To the working class, automation means a loss of their job, preoccupation with unemployment, which is the opposite of leisure. For the excluded, automation doesn't mean anything because it will not be applied to their forms of work.

The automation of the working class has become the ideology of post-scarcity radicals [including all those who believe the capitalist hype about

Remember, Alexandria Kollontai warned in 1920, “The essence of bureaucracy is when some third person decides your fate.”

Contact Between Collectives

The collective does not communicate with the mass. It makes contact with other collectives. What if other collectives do not exist? Well, it should take to itself until the day they do. By all means, the collective also communicates with other people, but it never views them as a mass – as a constituency or audience. The collective communicates with individuals in order to encourage self-organization. It assumes that people are capable of self-organization, and given the alternative, they will choose it over mass participation. The collective knows that it takes time to create new forms of organization. It simply seeks to hasten the crumbling of the mass.

Much of the problem of ‘communication’ these days is that people think they have got to communicate all the time. You find people setting up administrative functions to deal with information flows before they have any idea that they want to say. The collective is not obsessed with ‘communicating’ or ‘relating’ to the movement. What concerns it is the amount of noise – incessant phone calls, form letters, announcements of meetings, etc. – that passes for communication. It is time we gave more thought to what we say and how we say it.

What exactly do we mean by contact? We want to begin by taking the bureaucracy out of communication. The idea is to begin modestly. Contact is a touching on all sides. The essential thing is about its directness and reliability. Eyeball to eyeball.

Other forms of communication – telephone, letters, documents, *etc.* – should never be used as substitutes for direct contact. In fact, they should serve primarily to prepare contacts.

Why is it so important to have direct contact? Because it is the simplest form of communication. Moreover, it is physical and involves all the senses – most of all the sense of smell. For this reason, it is reliable. It also takes account of the real need for security. Those who talk about repression continue to pass around sheets of paper asking for names, addresses, and telephone numbers.

favorite magazine and put it together again. Cut big words in half and make little words out of them – like ENVIRON MENTAL CRISIS. All you need is a good pair of scissors and rubber cement. Abuse the enemy’s images. Turn the Man from glad into a Frankenstein. Making comic strips out of great art. Don’t let anything interfere with your pleasure.

Don’t read any more books – at least not straight through. As G.B. Kay from Blackpool once said (quoting somebody else), “Reading rots the mind.” Pamphlets are much more fun. Read randomly, write in the margins and go back to comics. You might try the Silver Surfer for a start.

Editor’s Note: The book ***You Can’t Blow Up A Social Relationship: The Anarchist Case Against Terrorism*** rightly points out the dangers of playing to the press. Noam Chomsky’s ***Manufacturing Consent*** describes why the capitalist press should not be our press agent. The easiest way to describe this is that we should not make a SPECTACLE of ourselves (to use the Situationist term). It is important not to be dependent on the capitalist press. We need our own media. This role is being served by DIY zines, DIY new services on the e-mail and Internet like A-Infos and by web pages (although we must remember that many people either can’t afford a computer or don’t know how to use one). Art is also an important medium of communication. This is why Punk Rock and Hip Hop have been important media for political expression and why poster art was important to people like the Anarchists in the 1936 Spanish Civil War and the Situationists in the Paris General Strike of 1968. Reading is good, but the corporatization and novelization of the press and bookstores to where 500 and 1,000 page novels abound dissuade people from learning. No book should be over 100 pages if you actually expect people to read it rather than being intimidated and shorter pamphlets written in plain language are more effective than a college or technical essay. Organize and title the ideas in your pamphlets (as chapters) to make your train of thought easier to follow. Don’t use quotes unless you are relying on the expertise of others to make your point. For example, an essay on Mutual Aid should cite quotes which describe how Anarchists describe Mutual Aid. Or perhaps a writer has already described an idea you wish to illustrate so you would briefly quote them. Infoshops and independent bookstores have proven an effective medium for circulating ideas in print, lectures, organizing, free schools, workshops, etc. where there have been communities willing to make the commitment necessary to keep them open (see the bills get paid, do volunteer work, etc.).

Priority of Local Action

The collective gives priority to local action. It rejects the mass politics of the white nationalists with their national committees, organizers, and the superstars. Definitely, the collective is out of the mainstream and what is more it feels no regrets. The aim of the collective is to feel. New thoughts and act new ideas – in a word to create its own spaces. And that, more than any program, is what is intolerable to all the Xerox radicals trying to reproduce their own images.

The collective is the hindquarters of the revolution. It makes not pretense whatsoever in regard to the role of the vanguard. Expect nothing from them. They are not your leaders. Leave them alone. The collective knows it will be the last to enter the new world.

The doubts people have about local action reveal how dependent they are on the glamour of mass politics. Everyone wants to project themselves on the screen of revolution – as Yippies or White Panthers. Having internalized the mass, they ask themselves questions whose answers seem logical in its context. How can we accomplish anything without mass action? If we don't go to meetings and demonstrations, will we be forgotten? Who will take us seriously if we don't join the rank and file?

Slowly you realize that you have become a spectator, an object. Your politics take place on a stage and your social relations consist of sitting in an audience or marching in a crowd. The fragmentation of your everyday experience contrasts with the spectacular unity of the mass.

By contrast, the priority of local action is an attempt to unify everyday life and fragment the mass. This level of consciousness is a result of rejecting the laws of mass behavior based on Leninism and TV ideology. It makes possible an enema of the brain which everyone so desperately needs. You will be relieved to discover that you can create a situation by localizing your struggle.

How can we prevent local actions from becoming provincial? Whether or not it does so depends on our overall strategy. Provincialism is simply the consequences of not knowing what is happening. A commune, for example, is provincial because its strategy is based on petty farming and

Most people are willing to face the fact that they are living in a society that has yet to be explained. Any attempt to probe those areas which are unfamiliar is met with a general hostility of fear. People seem afraid to look at themselves analytically. Part of the problem of not knowing what to do reveals itself in our not knowing who we are. The motivation to look at yourself critically and to explain society comes from the desire to change both. The heart of the problem is that we do not completely imagine winning, except perhaps, by accident.

Analysis is the arming of the brain. We're being stifled by those who tell us analysis is intellectual when in reality it is a tool of the imagination. Just as you can't tolerate intellectualism, so you cannot act from raw anger – not if you want to win. You must teach your stomach how to think and your brain how to feel. Analysis should help us to express anger intellectually. Learning how to think, *i.e.* analysis, is the first step toward conscious activity.

No doubt you feel yourself tightening up because you think it sounds heavy ['deep', complicated]. Really, the problem is that you think much bigger than you act. Be modest. Start with what you already know and want to know more about. Analysis begins with what interests you. Political thinking should be part of everyday life, not a class privilege. To be practical, analysis must give you an understanding of what to do and how to do it.

Thinking should help to distinguish between what is important and what is not. It should break down complex forces so that we can understand them. Break everything down. In the process of analyzing something you will discover that there are different ways of acting which were not apparent when you began. This is the pleasure of analysis. To investigate a problem is to begin to solve it.

The Need For New Formats

The need for new formats grows out of the oppressiveness of print. We must learn the techniques of advertisement. They consist of short, clear, non-rhetorical statements. The ad words. The ad represents a break with the college education and the diarrhea of words. The ad is a concentrated formula for communication. Its information power has already outmoded

or conferences, but by being in the world and recognizing what is going on even when spin doctors are trying to tell you not to believe what you see with your own eyes. For example, it is hard not to recognize that the police are out of control once you have had a 9mm handgun pointed at you and been put up against a fence just for standing on a sidewalk talking to your friends in South Los Angeles. Local action means you take action locally, but you see the big picture.

The Dream of Unity

The principle of unity is based on the proposition that everyone is a unit (a fragment). Unity means one multiplied by itself. We are not going to say it straight – in so far as unity has suppressed real political differences – class, racial, sexual – it is a form of tyranny. The dream of unity is in reality a nightmare of compromise and suppressed desires. We are not equal and unity perpetuates inequality.

The collective will be subject constantly to pressure from outside groups demanding support in one form or another. Everyone is always in a crisis. Given these circumstances, a group can have the illusion of being permanently mobilized and active without having politics of its own. Calls for unity channel the political energies of collectives into support politics. So, as a precaution, the collective must take time to work out its own politics and plan of action. Above all, it should try to foresee crisis situations and their 'rent-a-crowd' militancy.

You will be accused of factionalism. Don't waste time thinking about this age old problem. A collective is not a faction. Responding to Pavlov's bell puts you in the position of a salivating dog. There will be no end to your hunger when who you are is determined by someone else.

You will also be accused of elitism. This is risky business and should not be dismissed lightly. A collective must first know what is meant by elitism. Instead of wondering whether it refers to leadership or personalities, you should first anchor the issue in a class context. Know where your ideas come from and what their relation is to the dominant ideology. You should ask the same questions about those who make the accusations. What is their class background and class interest? So far many people have reacted defensively to the charge of elitism and thus, have avoided dealing

with the issue head on. That in itself is a class reaction.

The internal is the mirror of the external. The best way to avoid behaving like an elite is to prevent the formation of elitism within the collective itself. Often when charges of elitism are true, they reflect the same class relations internally.

The ways of undermining the autonomy of a collective are many and insidious. The call for unity can no longer be responded to automatically. The time has come to question the motives and effectiveness of such actions – and to feel good (*i.e.* correct) in doing so. Jargon is pigeon talk and is meant to make us feel stupid and powerless. Because collective action is not organized as a mass, it does not have to rely on the call of unity in order to act.

“Does ‘one divide into two’ or ‘two fuse into one’? This question is a subject of debate in China and now here. This debate is a struggle between two conceptions of the world. One believes in struggle, the other in unity. The two sides have drawn a clear line between them and their arguments are diametrically opposed. Thus, you can see why one divides into two.” [Free translation from the Red Flag, Peking [Beijing], September 21, 1964].

Editor's Note: The idea of a “united front” is a myth of liberal/progressive politics and a mechanism which has been used by Marxists to try to take over other groups and movements. In the end the liberals will try to compromise your politics, bureaucratize them (tie them up in bureaucracy so nothing changes, or exploit them as a vehicle for political electioneering (getting someone elected). Marxists will try to subvert your politics and redirect your efforts to working on their projects. In a revolution, dissenters will be killed. These are the ultimate weaknesses of single issue politics. There is also something called “crossover politics.” This is what happens when we work with groups with similar political objectives where each group remains autonomous, but we provide mutual aid to others. For example: we have done this working with the Black Panthers, organizing against police racism and brutality and opposing the anti-immigrant initiative ‘Proposition 187’ in Southern California. This allows us to expose others to our politics without engaging in “mass politics.”