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# TechnoSkeptic

*Random Notes on Technology & Class Struggle*

Free

**Big Brother Covets the Internet**

**THE CHIAPAS UPRISING AND THE FUTURE OF CLASS  
STRUGGLE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

**A Computer Spy Unmasked**

**Is It Anarchy on the Internet?**

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This magazine collects together several texts concerning the meeting of technology and class struggle. All of them were taken from different internet sources and so the point here is to make these documents available to a wider audience.

This is a one-off magazine assembled mainly by a single individual.

Thanks to Kim and to Paul.

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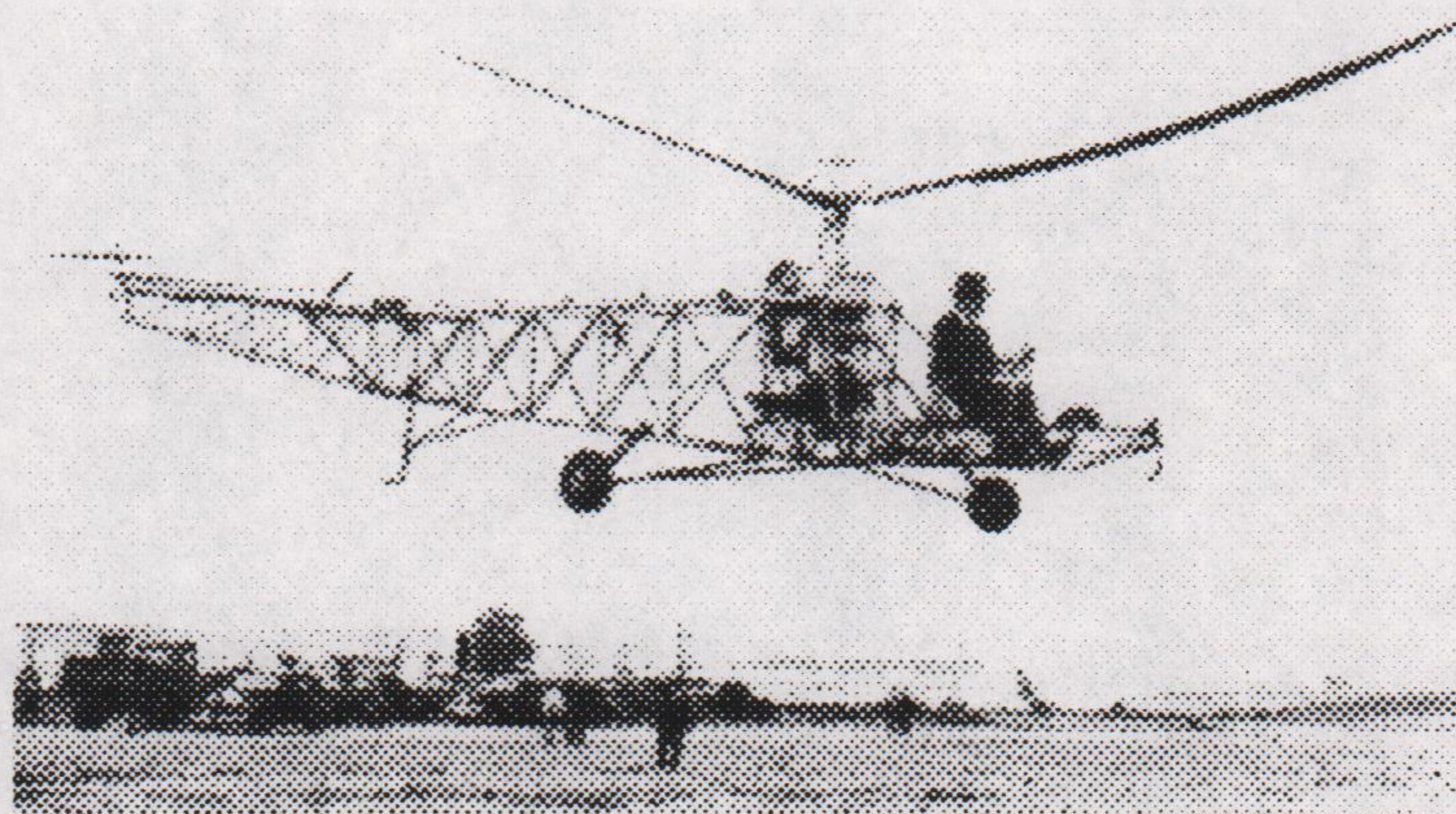
Winter 1995

# Editorial

The meaning of technology is more and more contested within radical movements. The archetypal positions are those of technophilia and technophobia. Technophiles emphasise the potentially liberating aspects of technology such as the labour saving possibilities (abolition of work through automation) or greater communication (providing for the first time the conditions for a world community). Anti-techno thinkers argue that not only is technology itself alienating but that it requires an economic base to support it which must be either capitalist or just as harmful. While both of these currents produce useful material, both are one-sided ideologies which cannot deal with the complexity of a radical opposition to this society. At its worst, technophilia degenerates into worship of capitalist technology as it is, of capital in its physical form. Technophobia (present in deep ecology & anti-civilisation communism) at worst is a moralism, putting forward a life-style that is impossible to live. Technophilia obviously helps bolster the capitalist market, but techno-fear is also used as a basis for niche products (green consumerism) and for clever advertising (e.g. there is a Holsten Piss ad which is a pretty funny take on cyber-hype).

It seems that an understanding of technology must draw from the best elements of both tendencies whilst rejecting the black and white opposition they each pose. This zine collects together four articles which fall in the middle ground where most of us choose to live.

The current wave of techno-worship that is found in radical movements is influenced by more main-stream theories. Various journalists, writers and pundits influenced by futurologist Alvin Toffler, put forward the suggestion that current info-tech such as the internet, virtual reality, satellite comms, mobile phones, faxes and so on form the technological base for a new wave of civilisation. This new, diverse society will engender a resurgence of local community coupled with greater global communication. Old, massive structures such as monolithic multinationals and centralised states will be replaced by more open social relations. This popular amongst the (techno-)industrial promoted by various Toffler has interesting way society is changing, away from the fact that ideologue. The adoption liberatory nature of the technology is the of modern capital. The Covets the Internet'' stupidities of today's Anarchy on the attack to fellow kind of rubbish. Both of



ideology has become rising sections of the bourgeoisie and has been post-modernist writers. things to say about the but there is no getting he is a capitalist of his ideas about the whole swathe of new adoption of the thought article "Big Brother demolishes many of the cybertheorists. "Is It Internet?" narrows the anarchists that spurt this these articles give

important information for radicals who are using or thinking of using the internet for subversive activity. This is true also of "A Computer Spy Unmasked" which should give hackers pause for thought. (An obvious consideration that must be made when dealing with the security services is that the story itself is just black propaganda, produced to sow confusion amongst those involved in computer intrusion. If this is the case then we still know that the security services are targeting hackers, if not for infiltration and control, then as targets for disinformation. Regrettably, the story rings true as the computer underground has an ignoble history of its constituents turning grass as soon as they are caught. See for instance "Cyberpunk" by Hafner & Markoff or "Hacker Crackdown" by Sterling).

The article "The Chiapas Uprising and the Future of Class Struggle in the New World Order" by Harry Cleaver is not aimed at destroying myths about the internet, but instead gives information about how the medium was used to build solidarity and communication around the Chiapas rising. This text details the way modern technology is used by radicals, but does not touch on any of the problems that the internet raises. Its strength and its weakness is to look at struggle as it actually is. This goes not just for its comments on technology but for its central theme, the struggle in the Chiapas. Cleaver reports much interesting information on the fight of the Chiapas Indians but (typically for an autonomist) is extremely uncritical of the weaknesses

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# Big Brother Covets the Internet

by Daniel Brandt

"The Internet offers intelligence agencies an amazing potential source for information collection and for monitoring the activities of their targets. They not only can plug into communications through the names of senders and receivers of e-mail, but also through keyword monitoring of messages as they have done for many years. If you add e-mail to their monitoring of telephone and other credit card transactions, they can get a very complete picture of a given person's activities.

"On my long trips to the United States for university lecturing and other activities, such monitoring enables them to know my every flight, hotel and car rental, and local contacts, not to mention my complete itineraries. All this prior to my flight from Germany to the U.S. Add to this my other calls and bank transactions and you have almost every imaginable detail. It is a perfect system for spy agencies and getting better all the time."

-- former CIA officer  
Philip Agee

What the government giveth, the government can taketh away. This message has been received by Internet watchers recently, as Big Brother begins to confront the issue of online computer security. Internet hacking is at an all-time high, the

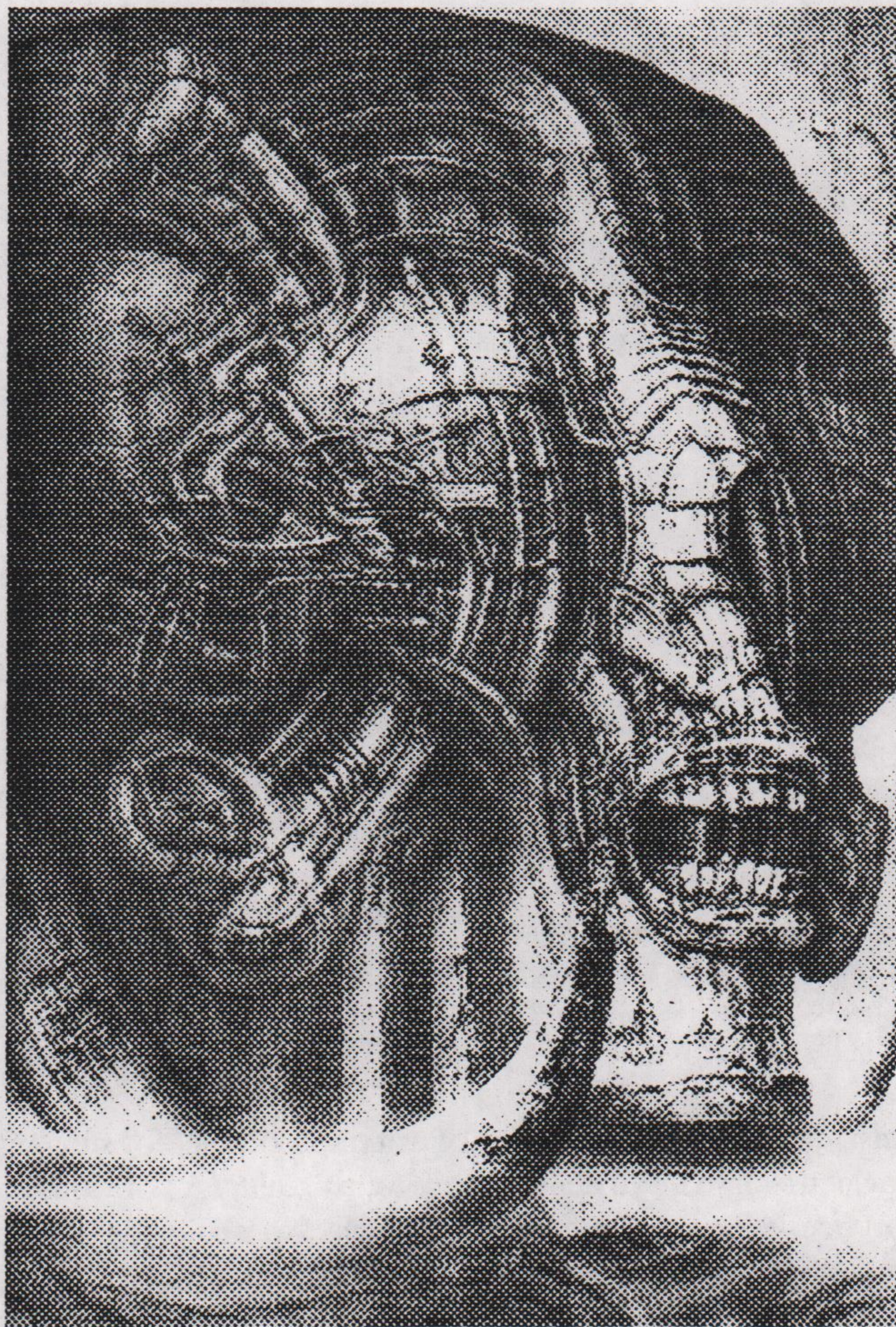
Pentagon claims, just as big business is buying into the Internet in a big way. Something has to give.

"Hackers are even better than communists," says one Washington activist who deals with

safeguards and a computer security budget in the hundreds of millions of dollars, attempts were made to break into the Pentagon's computers on 254 separate occasions in the last twelve months alone, almost always through the Internet.... NBC News has learned that intrusions into the Defense Department's computers go unreported 98 percent of the time -- 98 percent! -- often because no one is aware information is being pirated. Pentagon officials are worried the nation's security is being compromised.

Only Joe McCarthy knows how Robert Hager came up with a figure of 98 percent for undetected break-ins, and then pretended it was worth repeating. Hager continued with his voice-over and began talking about hackers breaking into one nameless hospital's records and reversing the results of a dozen pap smears. Patients who may have had ovarian cancer, Hager claimed, were told instead that they were okay.

If this were an isolated story, then the Newsgroup subscribers on <alt.conspiracy> who reacted to Hager's segment, by speculating that something must be behind it, might be dismissed for weaving yet another paranoid thread. But here I have to agree that even if you're paranoid, they still might be after you. On this story, at least, NBC seems to be the



civil rights and electronic privacy issues. Several weeks later, on November 22, 1994, NBC News with Tom Brokaw underscored his point with an alarmist segment by Robert Hager:

A Pentagon unit is poised to combat unauthorized entries into some of the world's most sensitive computer systems. But despite all the

mouthpiece for larger forces.

"Organized Crime Hackers Jeopardize Security of U.S." reads the headline in "Defense News" (October 3-9, 1994). This article reported on a conference sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a prestigious Washington think tank with close connections to the intelligence community. Dain Gary from the Computer Emergency Response Team in Pittsburgh, a hacker-buster group funded by the Pentagon, claimed that "there are universities in Bulgaria that teach how to create more effective viruses." Mr. Gary did not respond to my letter requesting more information.

The government started the Internet, and then over a period of years it lost control. This was partly due to the unique architecture of the Internet, which has its roots in a 1964 Rand Corporation proposal for a post-Doomsday network. Rand's

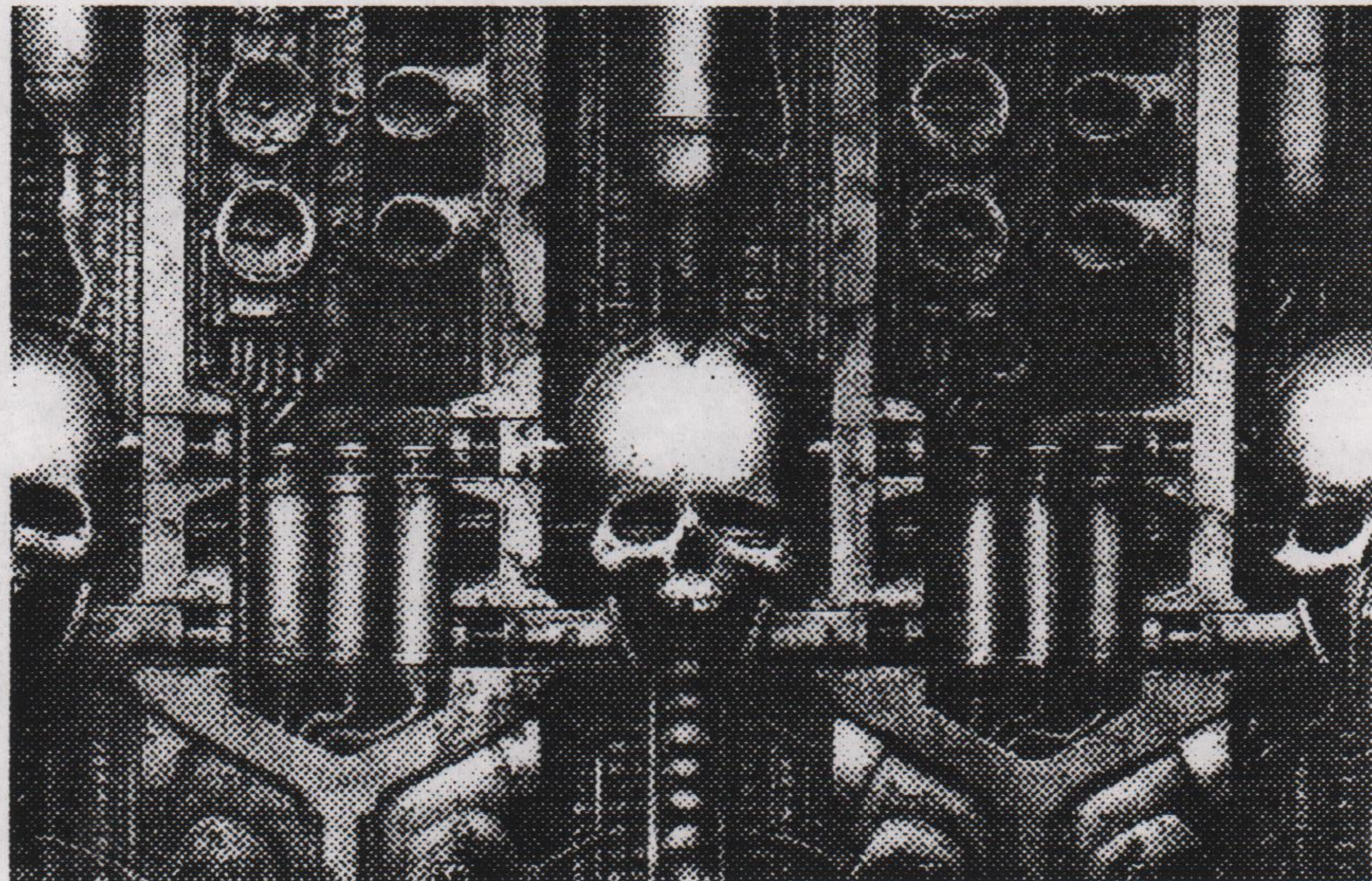
idea was that information packets could contain their own routing information, and would not have to rely on centralized switching. Anarchy, it seems, is the best antidote to vulnerable communications systems.

Recently the government, due to a combination of tight budgets and a trend toward deregulation, has allowed big business to take over the main conduits, or "backbone" of the Net. Corporations smell a huge potential cybermarket, and are investing money to get themselves positioned on the Net. They want to be ready when it comes time to harvest the expected profits.

Today we have a global network with 30 million users. No one is in control, and no one can pull the

plug. If one telecommunications company decided to shut off the segment of the Net that they administer, other companies could simply route their traffic around them. And if it weren't for password protection and the "firewalls" installed by corporations to protect their local turf from other computers, each of Internet's users would have access to all the other computers on the Net.

Passwords and firewalls don't always work. A hacker who burrows in and obtains the right sort of access can watch the passwords of other users fly by, and can capture them for later use. In November 1994,



General Electric's robust firewalls were circumvented by hackers, according to a company spokeswoman, and GE had to pull their computers off the Net for a week to revamp their security procedures. In two other incidents, a group of hackers calling itself the Internet Liberation Front managed to break into systems. On one they posted a message warning corporate America against turning the Internet into a "cesspool of greed."

So Big Brother has a problem. But it's not so much a problem of national security, except perhaps in the broad sense of economic vulnerability. Defense and intelligence systems that are classified are not connected to the Internet.

When the Pentagon complains to NBC about national security, what they really mean is that they might have to forego the convenience of Internet contacts with their contractors, and use other means instead.

No, Big Brother in this case is not the Pentagon, it's really big business. They're chomping at the Net's information bits, while the computer security problem is reining them back. Until this problem is solved, the Net cannot be used for serious commercial transactions. Big business seems to be feeding scare stories to the media, and the Pentagon

is helping them out by raising the time-tested bugaboo of national security--the only surefire way to scare Congress into repressive legislation. America leads the world in information technology, and the Internet is potentially a lucrative link in tomorrow's profit chain. If only those

pesky hackers would go away.

The hackers that do exist are grist for the system's disinformation mill, so if they didn't exist the system would probably have to invent them. The bottom line for those whose opinions matter is that the Internet has potential to help the rich get richer. Hackers belong in jail, of course, but there's also the Net surfer who's clogging bandwidth with idle chatter, or even swapping copyrighted material with their friends. Frequently this unprofitable silliness is subsidized by the universities. All big business wants from these folks is consumption -- they may browse through online catalogs and debit their credit lines, but forget all this virtual community stuff. It's got to go.

The way to reboot the system is to boot the little guy, and the best way to do this has always been to let the government bash some heads. The digital equivalent of this is the one-two punch of the Clipper chip and the Digital Telephony Bill. Clipper is an ongoing government effort to encourage the mass marketing of an encryption standard that can be tapped by them. It was developed with help from the National Security Agency (NSA), which is worried about the emergence of encryption that can't be easily broken by their supercomputers. The FBI's favorite is the Digital Telephony Bill, which was passed without debate by Congress last October. It forces telecommunications companies to modify their digital equipment so that the government has access to wiretapping ports when they come calling with a warrant.

Warrants? When was the last time the intelligence community took warrants seriously? Just in case a few of them get nervous while breaking the law, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 set up a secret court to issue warrants in situations involving a foreign threat. This court has yet to turn down a single request put before it -- even rubber stamps don't perform this well. All it would take is a vague rumor of a Bulgarian virus with Russian organized crime lurking close behind, and presto, a secret warrant is issued to tap the Internet backbone so that U.S. spooks can look for nasty digital germs. The judges aren't competent to evaluate technical rumors, and with their track record, no one pretends that they will call in their own experts. Why bother, since the proceedings are secret and there's no accountability?

But then, who needs a warrant? According to reports, the NSA, Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), and Canada's Communications Security Establishment, all practice what might be termed the "sister agency gambit." They do this by stationing liaison officers in each of the other agencies. When they want to tap their own

monitoring the Net today might be the security problem. Tomorrow the security problem may be solved, one way or another, and the Net will be used for commercial transactions. Then the excuse for monitoring will be the need to detect patterns of commerce indicative of money laundering, much like FinCen does today.



FinCen, the Financial Crime Enforcement Network, monitors Currency Transaction Reports from banks, and other records from over 35 financial databases, as well as NSA intercepts of wire transfers into and out of the U.S. This data is shared with the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), CIA, DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), IRS, FBI, BATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms), and the Secret Service. FinCen, which began in 1990, is an attempt to track, cross-reference, and apply artificial-intelligence modeling to all the relevant data from government agencies. Now they are floating a proposal for a deposit tracking system. When the Internet begins carrying financial transactions, FinCen is sure to be poking around behind the scenes.

citizens without a warrant, they just call over the liaison officer to throw the switch. Now it's called "intelligence from a friendly foreign agency" and it's all legal.

Particularly with the Internet, where jurisdictional problems involve many nations, this sort of transnational cooperation will be the rule rather than the exception. The excuse for

One characteristic of the Internet is that surveillance on a massive scale is easy to accomplish. With telephone voice or fax transmissions, the digital signal is an approximation of the analog signal. Massive computing power, relatively speaking, is needed to extract the content in the form of words or numbers. This is called "speech recognition" for voice, or "optical character recognition" for fax. Data on the Internet, on the other

hand, is already in the form that computers use directly. Moreover, each packet conveniently includes the address of the sender and receiver.

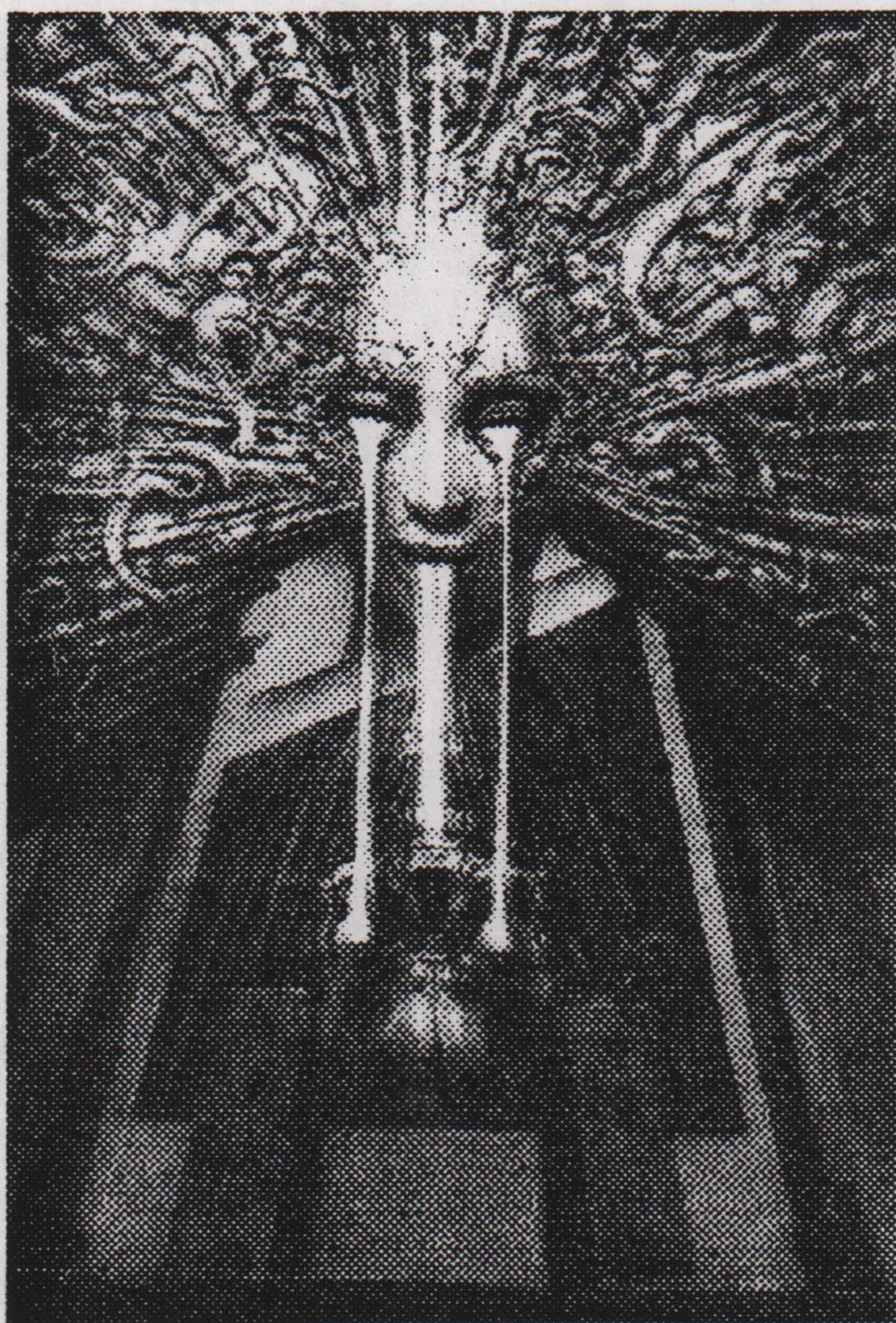
It's a simple matter to tap an Internet backbone and scan every packet in real time for certain keywords. With voice and fax, it's only practical to capture specific circuits, and then examine them later for content. On the Internet, even encryption doesn't solve the privacy problem, because the Net is also ideal for message traffic analysis. A stream of encrypted messages between two points could be detected by a computer, which then spits out a report that's sure to attract attention. Each end of this stream is now identified as a target, which means that other types of surveillance are now practical. The Internet, in other words, increases opportunities for surveillance by many orders of magnitude, with or without encryption.

Those who have the resources can try to befuddle the spooks who monitor them by disguising their transactions. Shell corporations, off-shore banks, and cash-intensive businesses will still be popular with money launderers. Seemingly innocent transactions will slip through the net, and for the most part only the little guy without transnational resources will get caught.

Which is exactly the point. The little guy on the Net is surfing on borrowed time. There are too many pressures at work, too many powerful interests to consider. The Net is too important to the Suits -- if not now, then soon.

If it were only a case of Us and Them, it would be easier to sort it all out. But the self-styled Internet Liberation Front, and similar types

with hacker nonethics, are part of the problem as surely as the greedy capitalists. Nor is it easy to see much hope in the way the little guy -- the one who obeys the law -- has used the Internet. The entire experiment has left us with 30 million connections but very little public-sector content. Apart from the sense of community found in Newsgroups, list servers, and e-mail, not much is happening in cyberspace. And just how deep is this community when the crunch comes? Not nearly



as deep as the counterculture of the 1960s, and look what happened to them.

Rand Corporation, meanwhile, is churning out studies on cyberwar, netwar, and information warfare. The Defense Department, at the urging of their Advanced Research Projects Agency (which started the Internet), recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Justice Department, at the urging of the FBI and the National Institute of Justice. This memorandum

anticipates a coordinated effort on high-tech applications for "Operations Other Than War" and "Law Enforcement." The game is on, and the high-tech high rollers are getting it together.

The neat graphics and sassy prose in "Wired" and "Mondo 2000" magazines notwithstanding, the Net-surfing culture is more virtual than real. Cyberspace cadets are no match for the real players, and it's going to be like taking candy from a baby. Lots of squeals, but nothing to raise any eyebrows. It's all so much spectacle anyway. Guy Debord (1932-1994) summed it up in "Society of the Spectacle" in 1967, when Rand was still tinkering with their Doomsday idea:

The technology is based on isolation, and the technical process isolates in turn. From the automobile to television, all the goods selected by the spectacular system are also its weapons for a constant reinforcement of the conditions of isolation of "lonely crowds." The spectacle constantly rediscovers its own assumptions more concretely.... In the spectacle, which is the image of the ruling economy, the goal is nothing, development everything. The spectacle aims at nothing other than itself.

Then again, the Spectacle does make for excellent Internet watching, once silly notions like "information wants to be free" are discarded, and the drama can be enjoyed for what it is. Basically, it's one more example of something that happens frequently in history. The little guy thinks he has created something new and powerful. He's so busy congratulating himself, that when the Big Dogs begin to notice, the little guy doesn't. In the end, it's merely another dog-bites-man nonstory that won't be found on NBC News. This just in: "Little guy gets screwed."

## THE CHIAPAS UPRISING AND THE FUTURE OF CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

by Harry Cleaver, University of Texas at Austin  
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*If you have come here to help me, You are wasting your time ... But if you have come because Your liberation is bound up with mine, Then let us work together.*

Aboriginal Woman

Is the armed uprising of the Zapatista National Liberation Army in the Mexican state of Chiapas just another protest by the wretched of the earth in a 500 year history of resistance? Is it just another foredoomed repetition of earlier, failed Leninist attempts to organize the peasantry to join the party and smash the state? Or, are there things about the uprising which are going to have profound effects and can teach us something about how to struggle in the present period? The answer, I think, is that the actions of Mayan Indians in Chiapas and the way they have circulated in Mexico, to North America and around the world do indeed have some vital lessons for all of us.

### The Electronic Fabric of Struggle

The most striking thing about the sequence of events set in motion on January 1, 1994 has been the speed with which news of the struggle circulated and the rapidity of the mobilization of support which resulted. In the first instance, from the very first day the EZLN has been able to effectively publicize its actions through the faxing of its declarations, and subsequent communiqués, directly to a wide variety of news media. In the second instance, the circulation of its actions and demands through the mass media (effective because they were totally unexpected and on enough of a scale to constitute

"news") has been complemented and reinforced by a spontaneous and equally rapid diffusion of its demands and reports on its actions through computer communication networks which connect vast numbers of people interested in events there both inside and outside of Mexico.

This diffusion, which flashed into conferences and lists on networks such as Peacenet (e.g., [camet.mexnews](mailto:camet.mexnews)), the Internet (e.g., Mexico-L, Native-L, Centam-L) and Usenet (e.g., [soc.culture.Mexican](mailto:soc.culture.Mexican), [soc.culture.Latin-American](mailto:soc.culture.Latin-American)), was then collected, sorted, compiled and sometimes synthesized and rediffused by particularly interested parties in the nets. For example, the Latin American Data Base at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque began to issue a regular compendium of Chiapas News. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy began to issue Chiapas Digest. The Mexican Rural Development discussion group of the Applied Anthropology Computer Network began to compile news and analysis and make it available through an easily accessible gopher site: Chiapas-Zapatista News. The Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas has duplicated those files at its own Lanic gopher site. Information about the existence and paths of access to these sources were passed from those in the know (Mexican specialists) to those who wanted to know (anyone interested in the uprising).

As EZLN documents and news reports circulated they generated and were quickly accompanied by discussion, additional information from those with an intimate knowledge of Chiapas (e.g., academics who had done research in the area, human rights advocates concerned with its long history of abuse) and rapidly multiplying analyses of the developing situation

and its background. All of this electronically circulated information and analysis fed into more traditional means of circulating news of working class struggle: militant newspapers, magazines and radio stations.

### The Anti-NAFTA Background

The rapidity of this diffusion has been due, to a considerable degree, not only to the technical capacity of such networks but to their political responsiveness and militancy. Basic to this rapid circulation of news and analysis of the uprising in Chiapas, has been the experience of the struggle against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Over the last few years the fight against NAFTA took the form of growing coalitions of grassroots groups in Canada, the United States and Mexico. In each country a broad coalition, such as the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, was constituted by knitting together several hundred groups opposed to the new trade pact. That knitting together was accomplished partly through joint discussions and actions and partly through the sharing of information and analysis about the meaning and implications of the agreement. Increasingly, computer communications became a basic political tool for extremely rapid sharing among groups and individuals. The same processes of communication linked the coalitions in each country in a manner never before seen in the Western Hemisphere. The Anti-NAFTA campaign as a whole has sometimes been called an "unholy alliance" because alongside the grassroots networks which make up the bulk of the movement a variety of conservatives added their voices to the condemnation of NAFTA, including the leadership of the AFL-



CIO and politicians like Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot. Such political manoeuvres to co-opt or recoup an autonomous movement are typical of American politics (whether in the U.S., Canada or Mexico) but these efforts have failed and the character and organization of the movement as a whole survives. Although the anti-NAFTA movement was unable to block ratification of the agreement, efforts to monitor the impact of NAFTA in order to facilitate struggle against it are ongoing and the goal is clearly its cancellation.

### **A New Organizational Form**

Beyond the particular issue of the agreement, the process of alliance building has created a new organizational form --a multiplicity of rhizomatically linked autonomous groups-- connecting all kinds of struggles throughout North America that have previously been disconnected and separate.

The responsiveness of this organizational form to the EZLN declaration of war derives from its composition. From the beginning, the building of alliances to oppose NAFTA involved not only the obviously concerned (U.S. workers threatened with losing their jobs as plants were relocated to Mexico, Mexicans concerned with the invasion of U.S. capital) but a wide variety of others who could see the indirect threats in this capitalist reorganization of trade relations, e.g., ecological activists, women's groups, human rights organizations and yes, organizations of indigenous groups throughout the continent. Through the years of struggle against NAFTA position papers circulated, studies were undertaken, discussion raged about the interconnections of the concerns of all these groups. The anti-NAFTA struggle proved to be both a catalyst and a vehicle for overcoming the separateness and isolation which had previously weakened all of its component groups.

So, when the Zapatista

National Liberation Army marched into San Cristobal and the other towns of Chiapas not only did those already concerned with the struggles of indigenous peoples react quickly, but so did the much more extensive organizational connections of the anti-NAFTA struggles. Already in place, and tapped daily by a broad assortment of groups were the computer conferences and lists of the anti-NAFTA alliances. Therefore, for a great many of those who would subsequently mobilize in support of the EZLN the first information on their struggles came in the regular postings of the NAFTA Monitor on "trade.news" or "trade.strategy" either on Peacenet or through the Internet. Even if EZLN spokespeople had not explicitly damned NAFTA and timed their offensive to coincide with the first day of its operation in Mexico, the connections would have been made and understood throughout the anti-NAFTA network.



### **From Communicative to Physical Action**

This same pre-existing fabric of connections helps explain why the incredibly rapid circulation of news and information was followed not only by analysis and written declarations of support, but by a wide variety of physical actions as well. What was surprising from the early days of January right through into February, was not the widespread and heartfelt demonstrations of support by tiny groups of leftists with traditions of international solidarity work, but the much more important rapid mobilization of other groups who not only took to the streets, e.g., the huge demonstrations in Mexico and

smaller ones scattered through the U.S. and Canada (usually at Mexican embassies or consulates), but who immediately dispatched representatives to Chiapas to limit government repression by subjecting its actions to critical scrutiny, documenting its crimes and publically denouncing them. There can be no doubt that their actions --and the subsequent rapid circulation of their findings and declarations-- contributed to blunting the states' military counter-offensive, helping (along with all the other forms of protest in Mexico and without) force it to deemphasize military repression, accept mediation and undertake negotiations with an armed enemy it quite clearly would have preferred to squash (if it could, which is by no means obvious).

### **Autonomous Indigenous Movement**

Particularly important in these actions were not only groups concerned with human rights, both religious (e.g. the Catholic Bishops of Chiapas, the Canadian Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America) and secular (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Mexican National Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations) --who have been increasing their capacity for such intervention in recent years-- but also the movement of indigenous peoples which has been organizing itself locally and on an increasingly international scale for some time now.

Within Mexico, over the last several years, Indian and peasant groups and communities have been developing networks of cooperation to fight for the things they need: things like schools, clean water, the return of their lands, freedom from state repression (police and army torture, jailings and murders), and so on. Given the fierce autonomy of the participating communities -- sometimes based on traditional ethnic culture and language-- these networks have been shaped like the

electronic web described above: in a horizontal, non-hierarchical manner. Indeed, one term often used by the participants in preference to "networks" --whose term "net" evokes being caught-- is "hammock," the name of a widely used, suspended sleeping device made from loosely woven string that reforms itself according to the needs (i.e., body shapes) of each user. These networks, which have been developed to interlink peasant and indigenous communities, not only connect villages in the countryside but also reach into the cities where neighborhoods created by rural-urban migrants retain close relations with their rural points of origin.

Many indigenous groups with clearly defined Indian culture and languages have not only organized themselves as such in self-defense but have reached out to each other across space to form regional and international alliances. This process has been going on in an accelerating fashion for several years, not only in Mexico but throughout much of America and beyond. Spurred into new efforts by the example of the Black Civil Rights Movement in North America as early as the mid 1960s (e.g., the rise of the American Indian Movement) and forced into action by state backed assaults on their land in South and Central America (e.g., the enclosure of the Amazon), indigenous peoples have been overcoming the spacial and political divisions which have isolated and weakened them through alliance and mutual aid.

In 1990 a First Continental Encounter of Indigenous Peoples was organized in Quito, Ecuador. Delegates from over 200 indigenous nations attended from throughout the hemisphere and launched a collaborative movement to achieve continental unity. To sustain the process a Continental Coordinating Commission of Indigenous Nations and Organizations (CONIC) was formed at a subsequent meeting in Panama in 1991. The central symbol and metaphor of the effort is the

Mayan image of the Eagle and Condor with intertwined necks. Tradition has it that the Eagle represents the peoples of North America and the Condor those of the Southern continent. The unity sought is not the unity of the political party or trade union --solidified and perpetuated through a central controlling body-- but rather a unity of communication and mutual aid among autonomous nations and peoples.

A second Continental Encounter was organized in October of 1993 at Temoaya, Mexico. One of the hosting groups at that meeting was the Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios (FIPI) and one of the members of FIPI was COLPUMALI from San Cristobal, Chiapas, one of the towns where the EZLN offensive began. COLPUMALI stands for Coordinadora de Organizaciones en Lucha del Pueblo Maya para su Liberacion, or Coordinating Committee of Organizations of the Mayan People in Struggle for Liberation. COLPUMALI is reportedly composed of 11 Mayan organizations from the three regions of Chiapas that have seen the most violent fighting since January 1st.

Faced with the violence of the Mexican military's counter-offensive, FIPI sent out a call to CONIC requesting that other Indians in the network come to Chiapas as observers to help constrain the state violence. CONIC responded immediately by organizing international delegations which travelled to the battle zones. When they arrived in Chiapas they were received by the local offices of the Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indigenas y Campesinas --made up of 280 indigenous and peasant organizations throughout the state. This kind of international publicity and pressure forced Mexican President Salinas to meet with 42 representatives of the Consejo on January 25th, a meeting which bypassed official political channels of mediation and legitimized (much to the chagrin of the state) the

autonomous political organization of the Indians. (Not only has the EZLN rejected government agencies but it has also explicitly rejected any mediation by representatives of any political parties. In a January 13th communique, the EZLN stated: mediators "must not belong to any political party. We don't want our struggle to be used by the various parties to obtain electoral benefits nor do we want the heart that is behind our struggle to be misinterpreted.") As a result of such international organization and action the positions of both the EZLN and the Indians of Chiapas more generally have been dramatically strengthened in their current struggles. It is that strength which has forced the government to the bargaining table.

### **The Roots of Organization: Self-valorization**

These new organizational forms have not been created ex nihilo but have emerged on the material grounds of the self-activity of indigenous peoples. In a period in which affirmations of national and ethnic identity have acquired dramatically negative associations in Europe because of the murderous brutalities being perpetuated in ex-Yugoslavia and in parts of the former Soviet Union, the formation of regional and international regroupings of indigenous peoples in America working together in mutual support provides a striking contrast.

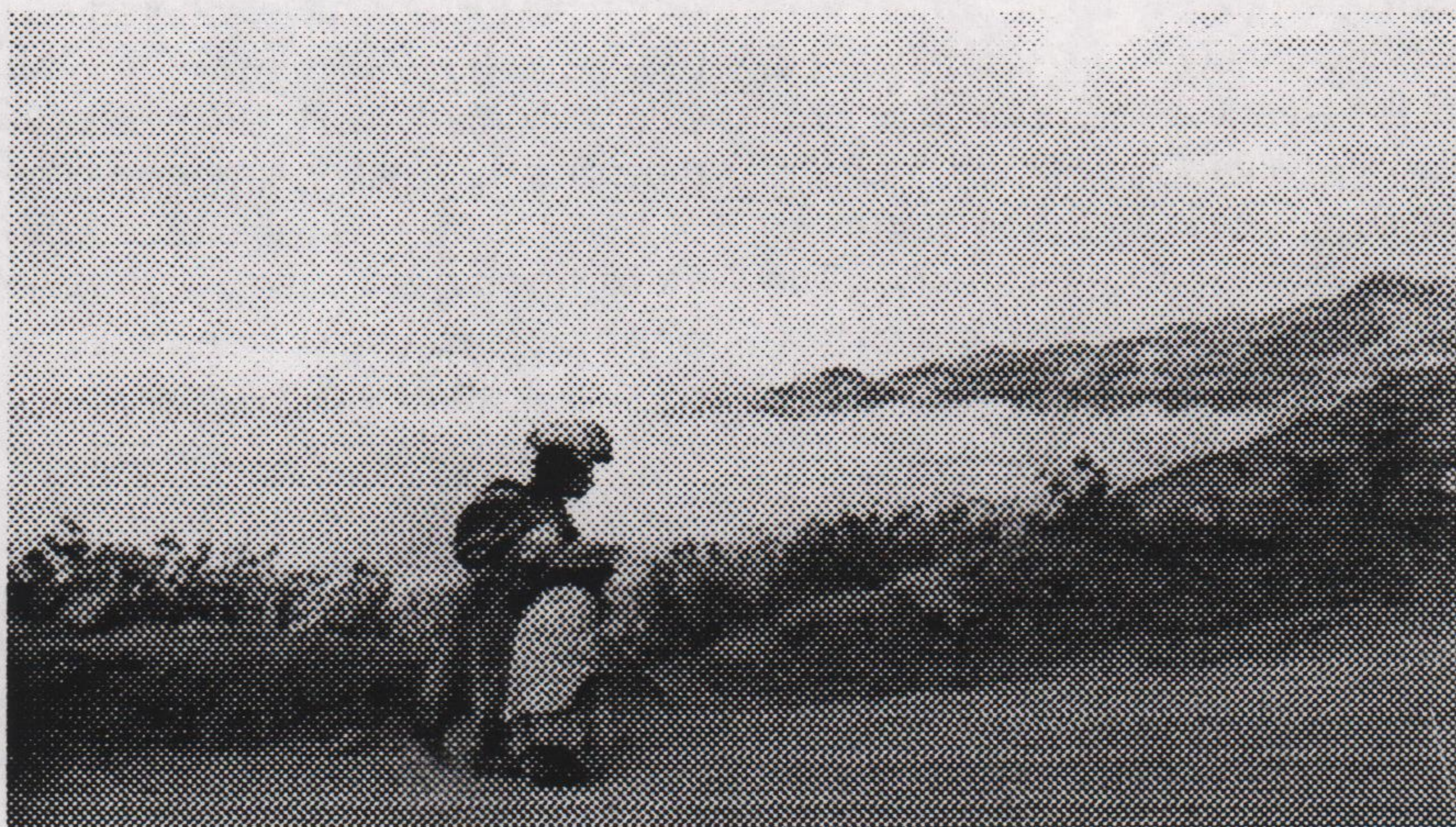
Strictly at the ideological level of national and ethnic identity, the situations in Central Europe and in America have superficial similarities --the affirmation of the right to self-determination within geographically defined spaces. The Bosnians, Serbs, Croates, Azeris, Georgians etc. all assert the right to their own land, languages and cultures, just like the indigenous groups in America.

But at a deeper level of the substance of the social relations embodied in those cultures, languages and relationships to the land there seem to be fundamental

differences. Whatever their differences, the desires and goals of the contestants in Central Europe appear to be inextricable (within the present political configuration) from the inherited structures of capital accumulation understood as structures of social command organized through the subordination of life to endless work. The post-communist politicians who have whipped national and ethnic differences into antagonism, hatred and violence show no sign of any social project beyond enlarging their share of social command. That such command should today take the form of mass slaughter, humiliation (systematic rape) and the destruction of communities, while tomorrow it may take the form of factory work, office work and mindless ideology is quite consistent with the experience of the last few hundred years of capitalism. To date, there is no evidence of any fundamental reorientation of the socio-economic order of Central Europe beyond a political reorganization and an enlarged use of market mechanisms to achieve accumulation. Certainly, fundamental questioning does exist among Central European peoples; there are individuals and groups with deeper visions struggling against the current holocaust. Unfortunately, their power is so limited as to make their voices largely inaudible in a region dominated by the sounds of war and hatred.

Among the Indian nations and peoples of the Americas, on the other hand, the affirmation of national identity, of cultural uniqueness and of linguistic and political autonomy is rooted not only in an extensive critique of the various forms of Western Culture and capitalist organization which were imposed on them through conquest, colonialism and genocide, but also in the affirmation of a wide variety of renewed and reinvented practices that include both social relations and the relationship between human communities and the rest of nature. The struggles of the Indians

in Chiapas are not only against their exploitation, against the disrespect with which they have traditionally been treated, against the brutality of their repression by private thugs, police and the Mexican military, against the theft of their lands and its resources, but they are also aimed at expanding the space, time and resources available to them for the elaboration of their own ways of being, their own cultures, religions, and so on. They are not fighting for a bigger piece of the pie, but for real autonomy from a social system which they understand very well has always enslaved them and sought to destroy their ways of life, a positive autonomy within which they can self-valorize, i.e., invent and develop their own ways of being. (This is not a process free of conflicts. See the discussion below about indigenous women's struggles.)



Such self-valorization has often been represented by outside observers, and sometimes by those involved directly, in terms of the preservation of tradition, of traditional ways and practices. As a result, indigenous peoples have often been seen as fundamentally reactionary, backward looking folks with static mentalities, conservative survivals of pre-capitalist times. The actual processes of social life within such indigenous communities, however, is much more complex and dynamic than is commonly recognized. From

orthodox Marxists who have seen only the "idiocy" of rural life and debated how to convert Indians and peasants into good proletarians to the mainstream political scientists and economists of the post-World War II era who saw only "irrationality" and debated how to modernize rural areas and make agriculture more efficient, it is not an exaggeration to say that urban intellectuals from all points on the political spectrum have misunderstood --unintentionally or because it served their purposes-- the lives and desires of peasant and indigenous peoples.

Yet, in the last 20 years or so peasants and Indians have succeeded in making themselves heard above the tittering of ideologues and planners. This has happened partly because of their own self-activity, the self-organization

described above, and partly because of fundamental shifts in the overall class composition which has made many much more willing to listen. Not only have the struggles of all kinds of "minorities" led to greater mutual interaction among them, but the qualitative critique of capitalism has led all kinds of people to seek out alternative sources of meaning that they may want to use in their own processes of self-regeneration and self-valorization. On the one hand, indigenous peoples themselves have organized around issues with a wider

audience, forming such groups as the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) -- one of those groups which has protested state repression in Chiapas. On the other hand, a seemingly endless assortment of individuals and groups from New Age romantics to militant ecologists have drawn on Indian ideas and practices to reshape their lives.

Nowhere has this been more obvious than in the ecological movement where many have explored indigenous attitudes and practices for inspiration in restructuring human relationships with nature. As a result it should come as no surprise to many that at the center of the conflicts in Chiapas today is land, just as in the days of the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata from which the EZLN took its name. Not only were the Indians of Chiapas mostly excluded from the land reforms that began in 1934 under the presidency of Lazaro Cardenas, but in the years since, local landlords have repeatedly used both legal and illegal means to grab more and more land away from the Indians. The process of original accumulation long ago became permanent and the processes of enclosure have been an endless torture for Indians in Chiapas.

Moreover, the explicit link between the EZLN declaration of war and NAFTA derived, in part, from the latter's contribution to enclosure of Indian lands. Using NAFTA (and an International Monetary Fund "structural adjustment program") as an excuse, the Mexican government changed Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution that protected communal land from enclosure and by so doing made legal its selling and its concentration in the hands of local agribusiness and multinational corporations. Already the Banrural, the government's rural development bank, is pushing forward with massive foreclosures against indebted farmers. The sale of foreclosed land to foreign agribusiness will help generate the foreign exchange to continue paying Mexico's foreign debt.

This is what the Indians have seen and this is what the EZLN has pointed out to the world. In late January, inspired by the EZLN's successes, thousands of peasants blocked entrances to a dozen banks in Tapachula, a Chiapan town near the Guatemala border. Their demands? the cancelation of debts and the halting of land foreclosures.

This on-going history of the expropriation of indigenous and peasant lands (which is accelerating the expulsion of people from the countryside into already horribly overcrowded and polluted cities) is why the EZLN has labelled NAFTA a "death sentence" to the indigenous population. A death sentence not only because individuals will be killed (many will be murdered and starved as they fight or retreat) but because ways of life are being killed. This is the history of capitalism which American Indians have suffered and resisted for 500 years. The valorization of capital has always meant the devaluation and destruction of non-capitalist ways of life, both those which preceded it and those which have sprung up seeking to go beyond it. It has come to be fairly widely recognized that among the vast extinctions caused by the ravages of capitalism have been not only animal and plant species but thousands of human cultures. The Indians in Chiapas, and those supporting them throughout the hemisphere are fighting to preserve a human diversity which is as valuable to all of us as it is to them.

### **The Refusal of Development**

It is the concreteness of the diverse projects of self-valorization which founds the Indians' struggle for autonomy, not only from the ideological and political fabric of domination in Mexico, but also from the broader capitalist processes of accumulation-as-imposition-of-work --which, in the South, goes by the name of "development".

In the North we come accross the

use of this term but rarely, usually in regard to plans to restructure the relationships between poor communities and the larger economy, e.g., community development, urban development. But in the South "development" has been not only the ideology of capitalist domination and of socialist promises but also a strategy of choice ever since the defeat of overt colonialism.

Since the beginning of the EZLN offensive, considerable commentary from both the state and a variety of independent writers have used the language of "two nations" to talk about the situation in Chiapas -- a term made commonplace by the Conservative British writer and statesman Benjamin Disraeli over a century ago. The two nations, of course, are that Mexico whose development will be spurred by NAFTA and "el otro Mexico" which is backward and left behind. The ultimate solution proposed, as always, is "development". Not surprisingly, within less than a month of the opening of the EZLN offensive, and following the defeat of the military counter-attack, the Mexican government announced that it was creating a "National Commission for Integral Development and Social Justice for Indigenous People" and promised more development aid to the area to expand those investments already made through its previous development project called Solidaridad. On January 27th it was also announced that these regional development efforts (and others in similar "backward" states) would be buttressed by World Bank loans of some \$400 million --loans which will increase the already staggering international debt which has been at the heart of class struggle in Mexico since the early 1980s.

The EZLN's published responses to these proposals have articulated the long standing attitudes of many of Mexico's peasant and indigenous populations --they have denounced these development plans as just another step in their cultural

assimilation and economic annihilation. They point out that there have never been "two nations"; Chiapans have already suffered 500 hundred years of the capitalist imposition of work --they have simply been held at the bottom of the wage/income hierarchy. Significantly, in their initial declaration of war, the EZLN wrote "We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on strike." (Not surprisingly, the states' negotiator Camacho Solis has called not only for an end to hostilities but for a "return to work".)

The Indians also know that further "development" does not mean the return of their land or of their autonomy. It means a continuation of their expulsion where they are reduced to impoverished wage earners or to a role well known to Indians in the U.S.: attractions within the tourist industry --a favorite "development project" for areas with "primitive" peoples. The government, one EZLN spokesperson wrote, sees Indians "as nothing more than anthropological objects, turistic curiosities, or part of a 'Jurassic Park'." Of government development programs? The people of Chiapas know them well: "The program to improve the conditions of poverty, this small stain of social democracy which the Mexican state throws about and which with Salinas de Gortari carries the name Pronasol [a so-called "social development fund"] is a joke which costs tears of blood to those who live under the rain and sun." In a statement issued on January 31st, the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee - General Command (CCRI-CG) of the EZLN pointed out that "The federal government is lying when it talks about us. . . . There is no greater rupture in communities than the contemptible death that federal

economic programs offer us."

But the free trade pact will open U.S. markets to Mexican exports, Salinas and Clinton have promised; Mexico will develop faster. This too the EZLN understands all too well. Chiapas is already an export oriented economy; it always has been: "the southeast continues to export primary materials, just as they did 500 years ago, and continues to export capitalism's principal production: death and misery." Is this just rhetoric?



The EZLN knows the facts in excruciating detail: "The state's natural wealth doesn't only leave by way of roads. Chiapas loses blood through many veins: through oil and gas ducts, electric lines, train cars, bank accounts, trucks and vans, boats and planes, through clandestine paths, gaps and forest trails. This land continues paying tribute to the imperialists: petroleum, electric energy, cattle, money, coffee, banana, honey, corn, cacao, tobacco, sugar, soy, melon, sorghum, mamey, mango, tamarind, avocado and Chiapan blood flows as a result of the thousand some teeth sunk into the throat of southeastern Mexico." Do Clinton and Salinas really think they can sell export oriented development to Indians who are already all too painfully familiar with the draining away of the wealth of their land?

NAFTA also opens Mexico to U.S. exports and from the Indians'

point of view the most threatening of these is corn, the basic food crop of the indigenous population and an important source of cash income. Although their rejection of cheap food imports has not received the same media coverage as that of rice farmers in Japan or French farmers in Europe (against the GATT), the story is the same: a recognition that a flood of cheap food produced with highly capital (including chemical) intensive methods in the U.S. will drive down prices and drive them from the land. Already they are suffering from low prices for coffee, another cash crop, due to a withdrawal of government support from that production, so their antagonism springs not from an overactive imagination but from bitter experience. (The economic impact from low coffee prices has been deepened by the disruption of the current harvest caused by the

states' military counteroffensive. While the government has apparently promised some US\$11 million in emergency aid, the Banrural as also said that it would not change its plans to foreclose on indebted farmers.)

The Indians also know that development means ecological destruction. The following passage from an EZLN document is sadly reminiscent of Karl Marx's earliest economic writings on new laws in Germany that made it a crime for peasants to gather wood in the forest. "They take the petroleum and gas away and leave the stamp of capitalism as change: ecological destruction, agricultural scraps, hyperinflation, alcoholism, prostitution and poverty. The beast is not satisfied and extends its tentacles to the Lacandon Forest: eight petroleum deposits are under exploration. . . . The trees fall and dynamite explodes on land where peasants are not

allowed to cut down trees to cultivate the land. Every tree that is cut down costs them a fine of 10 minimum wages and a jail sentence. The poor cannot cut down trees while the petroleum beast, every day more in foreign hands, can. The peasants cut them to survive, the beast to plunder.... In spite of the trend of ecological awareness, the extraction of wood continues in Chiapas' forests. Between 1981 and 1989 2,44,777 meters cubed of precious woods, conifers and tropical tree types, were taken out of Chiapas... In 1988 wood exports brought a revenue of 23,900,000,000 pesos, 6,000% more than in 1980... Capitalism is in debt for everything that it takes away."

The EZLN program would restore the land to its peoples. It would abolish the debts of farmers and demand repayment of the debt owed by those who have exploited the people and their land. The Indians of Chiapas would forget about "development" and begin the reconstruction of their world. They would not do it in one way, through a plan drawn up by a central committee; they would do it many ways, according

to their diverse understandings, worked out and coordinated through cooperative efforts.

### **The Autonomous Demands of Women Within the Indian Movement**

This refusal of development has grown to include the rejection not only of government sponsored, top-down development plans and projects, but also the reinforcement and strengthening of old injustices in Chiapan societies and culture. Alongside the struggle against land concentration, the exploitation of wage labor and political repression, there has also grown up a critique of racism (discrimination of latinos/mestizos against Indians) and of gender roles and the consignment of women to the bottom of society. The patriarchal character of Mexican society is well known; that of the Indian communities less recognized but often no less real. The struggle for the "survival" of Indian culture has also involved the struggle for its transformation --from within. In this case, as usual, those

who have suffered most have been at the forefront of the fight for change.

In traditional Indian society, when the good land was theirs, before they were pushed into poor forest lands often far away from good water sources, life was not so hard. Their agricultural practices were often land intensive rather than labor intensive and they were able to reap an abundant and diverse harvest. But as their land was stolen from them, and it became harder and harder to survive on fewer and fewer resources, life became increasingly difficult, especially for women. Some of their traditional tasks, such as food preparation and cleaning, have always involved a lot of work, but the situation worsened. For example, it is generally Indian women who must be up at the crack of dawn to grind corn for the day's bread: tortillas. It is generally Indian women who must haul water for cooking, drinking, cleaning and bathing. It is generally Indian women who cut firewood (now illegal) and haul it home for cooking. It is generally Indian women who do the cooking, and take care of the children, and of the sick. But hard



work makes strong women --if it doesn't kill them-- and such women have challenged their traditional roles.

This challenge found support in the EZLN and acceptance from its leaders. Not only were women encouraged to join the EZLN but they have been, according to all accounts, treated as equals to the point that many women have officer status and men and women are expected to carry the burdens of work and fighting equally. When Indian women organized in dozens of communities to produce a code of women's rights, the EZLN leadership composed of Mayan leaders --the CCRI-CG-- adopted the code unanimously. The "Women's Law" included the rights of all women, "regardless of race, creed, color or political affiliation", "to participate in the struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine", the right to "work and receive a just salary", the right to "decide the number of children they have and care for", the right "to participate in the matters of the community and have charge if they are freely and democratically elected", the right (along with children) "to Primary Attention in their health and nutrition", the right "to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage", the right "to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished", the right to "occupy positions of leadership in the organization [EZLN] and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces", and finally "all the rights and obligations which revolutionary laws and regulations give". According to one report, when one of the male committee members quipped "The good part is that my wife doesn't understand Spanish", an EZLN officer told him: "You've screwed yourself, because we're going to translate it into all the [Mayan] languages." Clearly, the passage of this Bill of Rights reflects both the problems and ongoing struggles of women within the diverse Indian cultures of Chiapas. What is unusual

and exciting about these developments is how those struggles are not being marginalized or subordinated to "class interests" but are being accepted as integral parts of the revolutionary project.

### Conclusion?

I began this brief discussion with a question about whether the revolt in Chiapas is just one more local revolt, or something more. I think it is much more. Once we understand its sources, motivations and methods, I think we can learn a great deal. It does not offer a formula to be imitated; its new organizational forms are not a substitute for old formulas --Leninist or social democratic. It provides something different: an inspiring example of how a workable solution to the post-socialist problem of revolutionary organization and struggle can be sought. The struggles of the Indians in Chiapas, like the anti-NAFTA movement which laid the groundwork for their circulation, demonstrate how organization can proceed locally, regionally and internationally through a diversity of forms which can be effective precisely to the degree that they weave a fabric of cooperation to achieve the (often quite different) concrete material projects of the participants. We have known for some time that a particular organization can only be substituted for the processes of organization at great peril. It is a lesson we have learned the hard way in struggle for, and then against, trade unions, social democratic and revolutionary parties.

What we see today is the emergence of just such a fabric of cooperation among the most diverse kinds of people, linking sectors of the working class throughout the international wage and income hierarchy. That fabric has not appeared suddenly, out of the blue; it has been woven. And in its weaving many threads have broken, and been retied, or new knots have been designed to replace those which could

not hold. It is not easy to construct a hammock, to use the Mexican word, but we see that it is possible.

In many ways the revolt in Chiapas is an old story, 500 years old. But it is also a very new, and exciting story. The EZLN offensive has taken place within and been supported by an international movement of indigenous peoples. That movement itself has established many connections with other kinds of people, other sectors of the working class, from blue collar factory workers fearing job loss, to white collar intellect workers using the most advanced technological means of communication and organization available. Ever since the rise of capitalism imposed working class status on most of the world's people, they have struggled. In those struggles isolation has meant weakness and defeat, connection has meant strength. Connection comes with mutual recognition and the understanding that struggles can be complementary and mutually reinforcing. As long as workers in the U.S. and Canada saw Mexicans as alien others, parts of the unknown Third World, capital could play the later off against the former. But struggles throughout the continent have forced a degree of integration that such blindness is becoming easier and easier to overcome. Part of the work of the anti-NAFTA movement involved the assessment of dangers and the discussion of alternative approaches in the light of diverse situations and needs. Part of the work involved circulating the results of that research and those consultations to a wider audience. The result has been the beginning of a transformation in the consciousness and understanding of the North American working class and a consequent growth in the ability to cooperate in struggle.

Today, the uprising in Chiapas results in continent-wide mobilization. But this is not the only such mobilization. Mexican factories which could once repress militant

workers with impunity are now subject to observation and sanction by workers from the U.S. and Canada who are increasingly intervening to constrain repression just as indigenous militants and human rights activists have intervened to help the EZLN. Multinational corporations who could pay off Mexican officials and dump toxic wastes into communities along the border are today subjected to increased scrutiny and sanction by workers and ecologists. When the EZLN demands, as it has, that Chiapan workers be paid wages equal to those North of the border, it is a demand heard, understood and supported by increasing numbers of those Northern workers whose wages are being driven downward by "competition" from the South. When the Indian communities of Chiapas fight for their land, it is increasingly understood by those elsewhere not as reactionary but as the equivalent of the struggles of waged workers for more money, less work and more opportunity to develop alternatives to capitalism.

Today, the social equivalent of an earthquake triggered by the EZLN on January 1st is rumbling through Mexican society. Every day brings reports of people moving beyond amazement and concern to action. Peasants and Indians completely independent of the EZLN are taking up its battle cries and occupying municipal government buildings, blocading banks and demanding their lands and their rights. Students and workers are being inspired not just to "support the campesinos" but to launch their own strikes against domination and exploitation throughout the social factory. How far these aftershocks will reach and how much they will change the world will depend not just on the EZLN or on the Indians of Chiapas, but on the rest of us.

Austin, Texas  
February 14, 1994.



*Mexican proletarians  
demonstrate their desire for a different  
new world from that founded by  
Columbus*



# Is It Anarchy on the Internet?

In a word, no. Considering that it was founded by branches of the U.S. government, and today is funded mostly by commercial companies, public and private schools, and the government, it seems like kind of a stupid question. But since countless pundits, some of whom even claim to be anarchists, have maintained that it is, I'd like to state why I think that the Internet does not fit any definition of 'anarchism' that I am comfortable with. The media seem to have adopted the practice of using the word 'anarchy' to describe what happens when a government fucks up more than usual--the civil war in Somalia being one of the more recent examples. Anarchists, on the other hand, use it to describe a system of social organization where people and communities take responsibility for their own lives and actions instead of depending on a government to do so for them. Anarchists, in other words, are describing a positive, proactive alternative to the current political system, whereas the popular press are describing the lack or failure of certain acts of the current system. So it's not surprising to see some of the various services of the Internet, which have pretty much had "anything goes" usage policies and have remained quite free from government controls since their inception, described by the press as "anarchic." What is surprising is that I occasionally see self-proclaimed "anarchists" who seem to agree with this! The thinking seems to go like this:

From a user's point of view, most Internet services are truly decentralized. Outside of any given site, there is no central administration, and what hierarchies there are tend not to be rigidly "enforced." Whereas, for instance, it is a crime to send certain items through the U.S. Mail, the internation and open nature of, and the enormous volume of information carried on, the Internet makes such restrictions on content

difficult (though not impossible) to enforce. In many areas, if you look hard enough, you can find a way to access the Internet for free although you often need to own a computer to do so. In other words, this philosophy seems to define the Internet in terms of what it isn't [not (usually) centralized, not (usually) censored, not (usually) expensive]. You'll notice that this fits very neatly into the "media" definition of 'anarchism,' but says nothing about the need for a positive alternative to government-dependent lifestyles, as required by the "anarchist's definition" of the word. The Internet is a very useful tool. It's both faster and, for most people, cheaper than the U.S. Postal Service. It's far cheaper than the telephone, and usually just as fast. It's also the easiest way I know of to get a message out to a large group of people at once. I also find that I get much more personal feedback from email messages than I get from zines, and sometimes even personal letters, probably because it's so much easier to do. But there are several downsides that we must keep in mind:

Any computer network or bulletin board is fundamentally classist, because most people simply don't have access to it. Whereas nearly anyone can receive paper mail or a telephone call, whether or not they have a permanent address, you must have access to both a computer and an appropriate account to use the Internet. Recognising this, groups in many cities are forming "Freenets," which offer (usually) free accounts with Internet email access, and often provide public-access terminals. But today, at least, the majority of people do not have access to these services.

While personal email can be quite useful, few if any of the services meant for large groups of people to use simultaneously, such as mailing lists (like the aaa-web) and Usenet (an enormous "bulletin board" system) end up being consistently

constructive (if, indeed, they are ever constructive at all!). Most are like a meeting where the person who shouts the loudest gets to be heard, and where those who aren't into screaming tend to eventually leave.

Spy writer Chip Rowe asked, "How much would you pay to spend your evenings and weekends with a room full of con artists, misogynists, computer geeks, snooty academics, rude teenagers, pushy salesmen, Iowa housewives, bad poets, Nazi sympathizers, certified morons, corporate suits, Elvis fans, recovering alcoholics, aging hippies, pockmarked pomographers, and overzealous FBI agents?"

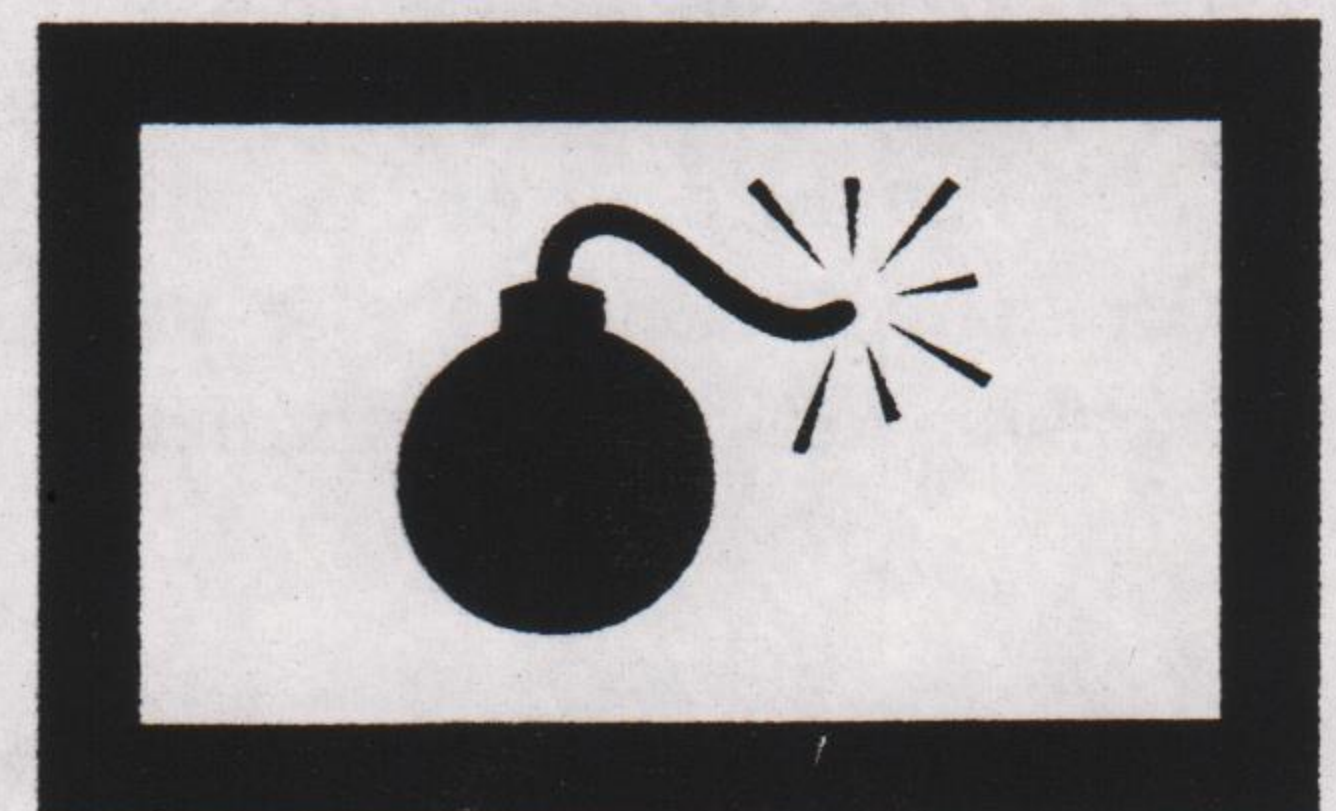
There's nothing available on the internet that isn't also served by other means, like letters and zines, albeit not quite as well, in some instances. None of the services that it offers add to our efforts, they simply make them a little more convenient. In other words, truly autonomous communities are no more likely to arise given the use of the Internet.

So while Internet services can be a great way to get the word out about the real, constructive projects that you and your community are doing, please don't fall into the trap of mistaking use of the net itself as something of any real value to the creation of an autonomous society.

-Craig

Any comments on this article?

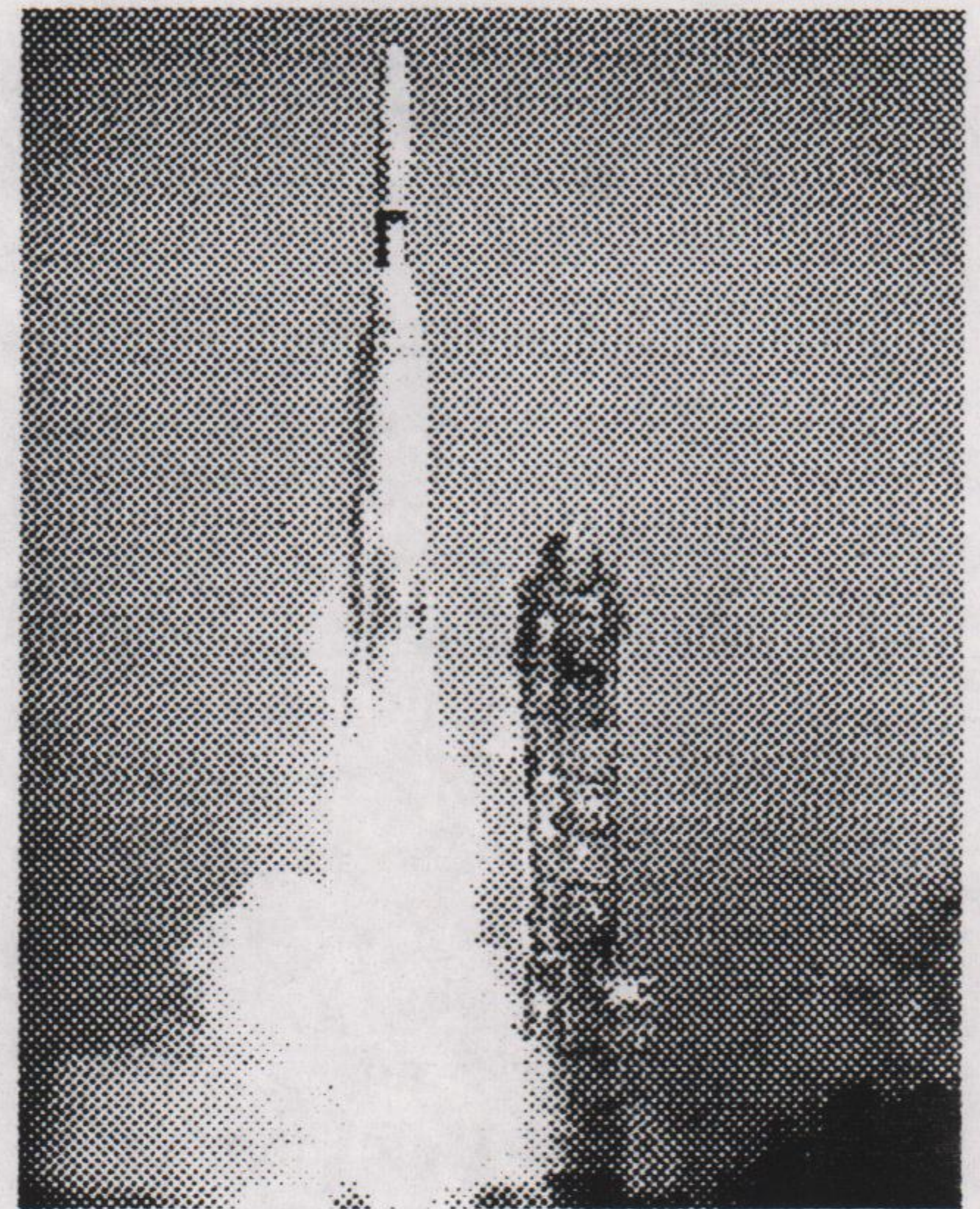
Send email to the address below!  
(stuntz@rhic.physics.wayne.edu)



## A Computer Spy Unmasked

For years Jean-Bernard Condat has undoubtedly been France's best-known computer hacker. Appearing on television talk shows, launching provocative operations and attending computer seminars, he founded the Chaos Computer Club France (CCCCF) in 1989 as France's answer to the renowned Chaos Computer Club in Germany. French journalist Jean Guisnel revealed this week in a book entitled *Guerres dans le Cyberspace, Internet et les Services Secrets* (Cyberspace War, Internet and Secret Services) published by the Editions La Decouverte (ISBN 2-7071-2502-4) that Condat has been controlled from the outset by the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire. A student in Lyons where he followed music and information technology courses, Condat was taken in hand by the local branch of the DST in 1983 after committing some "minor misdemeanor." The DST organized his participation in hacker meetings abroad. Guisnel said that from 1989 onwards "Jean-Luc Delacour, Condat's handler at the DST, decided that his protege was ready for bigger and better things." He asked Condat to start up CCCC, then worked to promote his public image in order that the largest number of hackers would gravitate towards him. The DST printed hundreds of T-shirts and thousands of post cards for him. When Thomson and Pechiney found that hackers were trying to break into their systems Condat enabled the French counter-espionage service to trace the intruders. When he was taking part in a television program in 1991 in which he was to demonstrate how to hack into a system his handler dictated what he should say in his earphones. Questioned by Intelligence Newsletter, Condat admitted he had worked for the DST over a 52 month period and written up 1,032 reports during that time. He claims, however, that he broke with the DST in 1991 and that he intends to shortly publish an account of what he calls his "turpitude." Whether true or not, Condat worked for several years for the SVP company before leaving it a few months ago to take over a key function: he is now system operator for the France forum on Compuserve.

Guisnel cites any number of cases of how "Internet is controlled to the bone" by such measures as turning around hackers, systematically bugging computer networks and manipulating newsgroups. "If no serious company should confide its correspondence to the network and if no government should use it to transmit sensitive information the reason is that the NSA is watching and that all the network's communications physically travel through the U.S., and very probably through computer filters at its installations at Fort Meade, Maryland," Guisnel said. He said the conclusion was that advanced encryption programs like PGP needed to be used if one wants to communicate in a secure manner on the Internet. Citing the debate raging in the U.S. over computer security which has made little impact in Europe, Guisnel called on France to authorize the use of encryption by everyone and criticized the country's reactionary policy in that score. He said the attitude, while defensive in nature, was all the harder to understand because its first consequence was to increase the vulnerability of French companies, to the benefit of NSA.

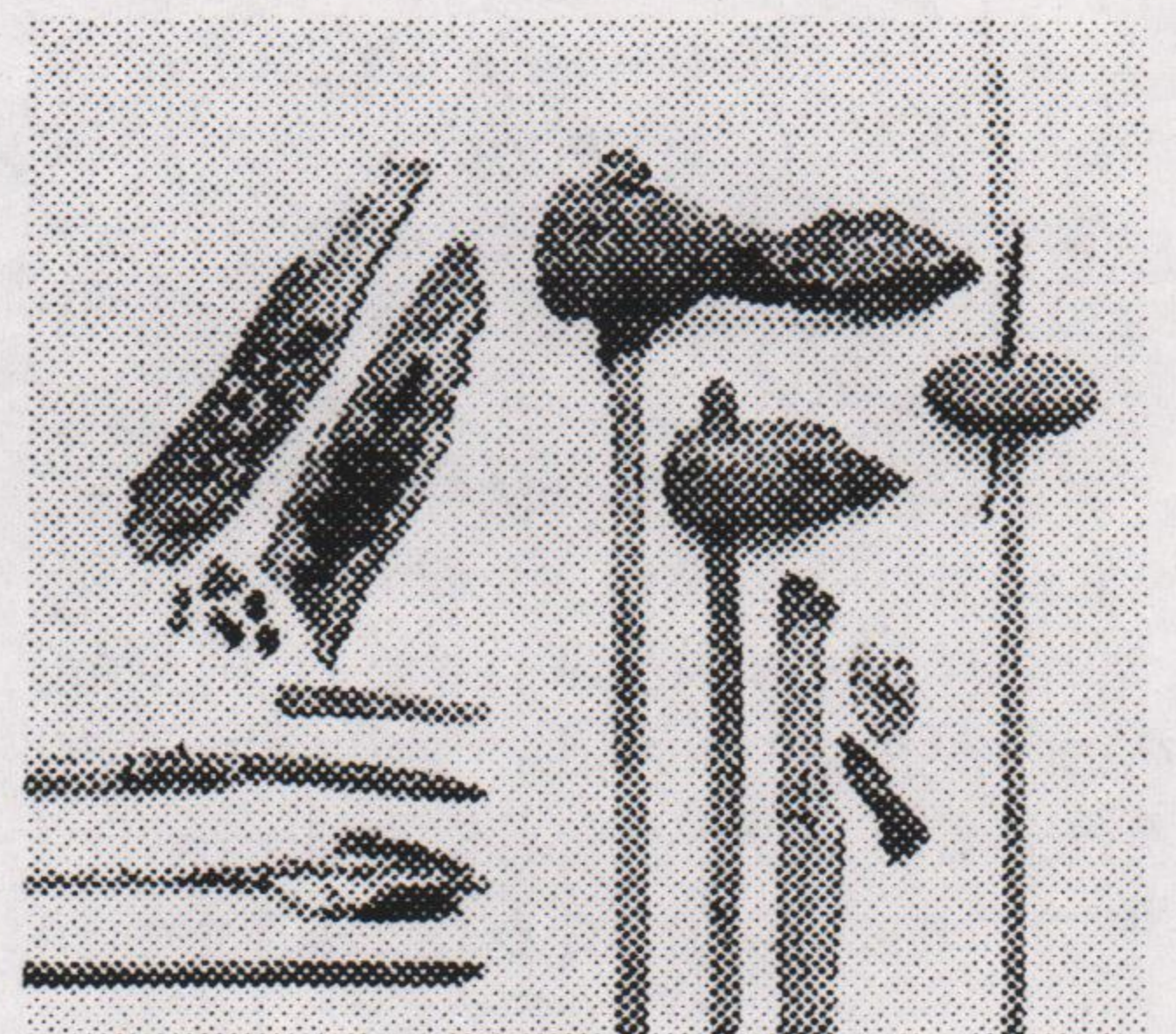


## Final Frontier, Final Straw!

CAYENNE, French Guiana, Nov 12 European space officials on a boat trip to Devil's Island were pelted with stones and mud by fishermen, state-owned radio said.

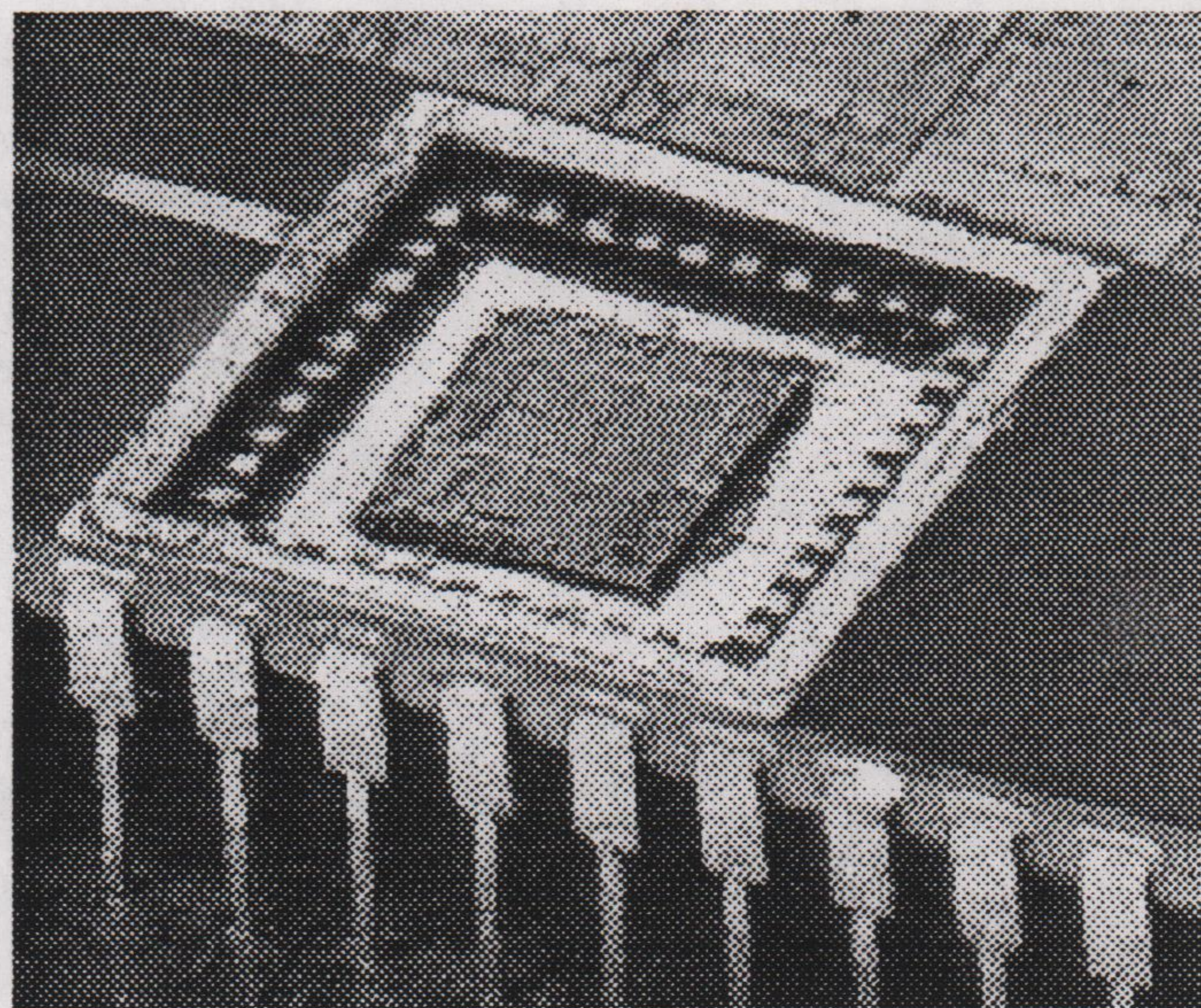
There were no serious injuries among the estimated 100 officials who had set out to visit the site of France's notorious former penal colony on Saturday, the radio said. Police escorted the boat back to shore.

The fishermen say the European Space Centre has reduced their catches by dredging a river so that ships can bring in parts of Ariane rockets. The space centre has rejected their demands for compensation.



continues from page 3

in this struggle. He is probably right in saying that the Zapatistas are not just another Marxist-Leninist nationalist movement, for-doomed to repeat the horrors of "national liberation". But the EZLN's dallying with parliament, and its negotiations with the government should surely show that it cannot lead the struggle in an effective, uncompromising way. With all their talk of justice, democracy and revitalising 'civil society', the Zapatista spokespeople are reminiscent of the citizens' movements of Eastern Europe at the end of the 80's. Perhaps Subcommandante Marcos is as much in the mould of Vaclav Havel, as of Fidel Castro? If the class struggles in the Chiapas intensify, then it is highly likely conflicts will emerge between the Zapatista leadership and the peasant and proletarian masses they have tried to represent (if such conflicts haven't happened already). If Cleaver's ideology were situationist or "communist" (i.e. Barrotist) then he could *almost without thinking*, have categorised the EZLN as a representation of the proletariat, opposed



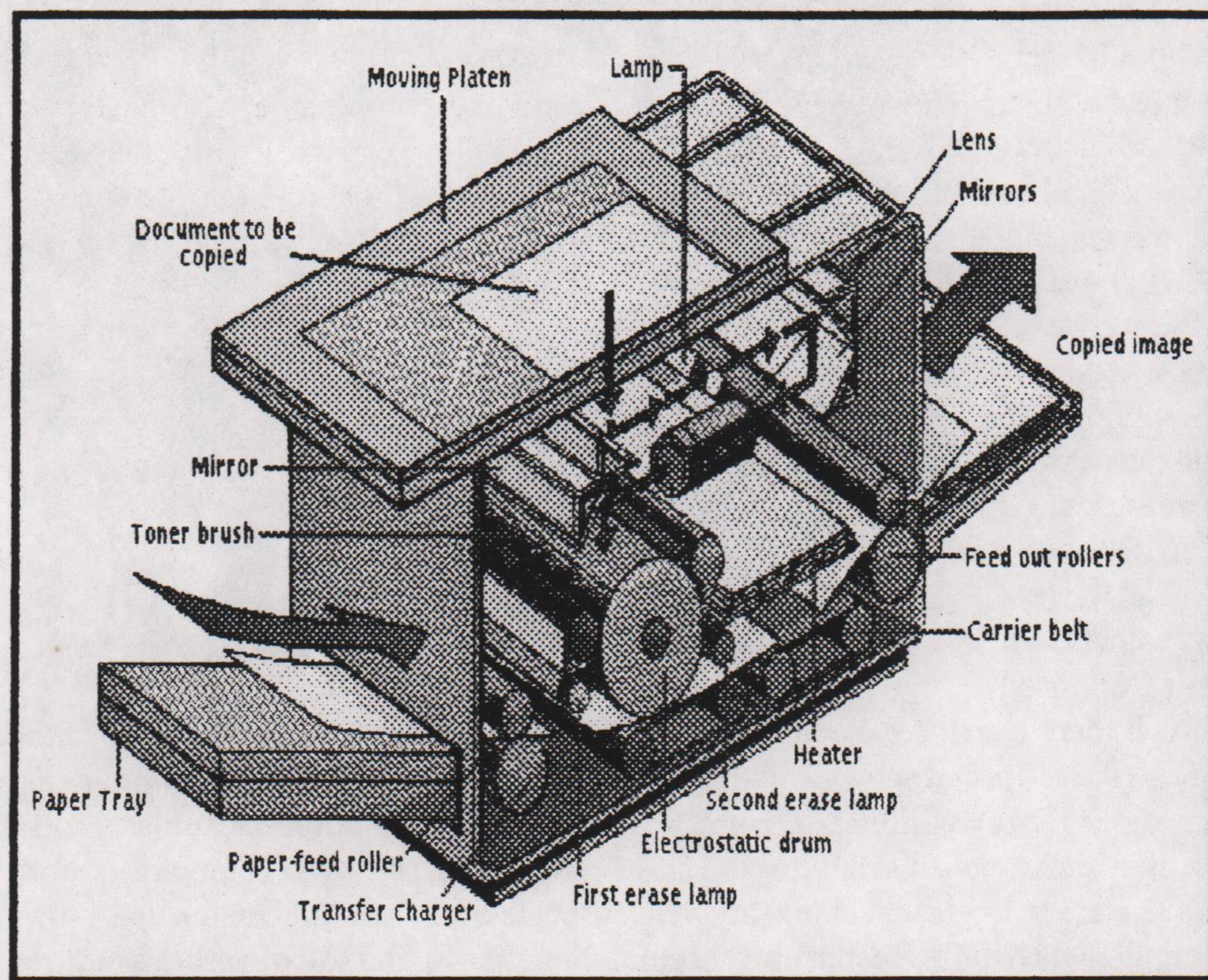
to the proletariat as revolutionary subject. (As if there were no dialectical relationship between the two categories; as if the land seizures, liberation of prisoners etc, would have happened anyway, without the EZLN's prior agitation.) This unthinking application of ideology is what all too often passes for revolutionary theory. It is also what makes autonomist marxism so refreshing: whereas the autonomist impulse is first and foremost solidarity and practical struggle, situ's and communists more often appear to be the quality controllers of the class struggle, checking-off which aspects of the struggle match up to their pre-existing requirements, writing off the struggles which fail to match up. It seems imperative to find some synthesis of these different tendencies, an attitude and activity, a form of engagement, which relates directly to the class struggle as it actually is but which doesn't rely on stifling criticisms based on the hard won lessons of the previous experience of our class.

The way in which technology is used has always been contested. The Coca-Cola company produces distinctive glass bottles for its product. The form the bottle takes has been carefully decided on by specialists employed by the company. The bottle is designed to withstand a certain amount of pressure without fracturing; the strength of the bottle has been weighed up against the cost to produce it. The shape of the bottle itself is a trademark of the company, and is designed as part of the product's image. Any changes to the form of the bottle must take into account the image the company tries to project. The Coca-Cola bottle is capitalist technology through-and-through. Nonetheless, if the bottle has been designed with a particular purpose, its purpose can be subverted. The bottle can be three-quarter-filled with petrol, then topped up with oil or soap. Add a petrol soaked rag and you have transformed the classically styled capitalist product into an ever popular example of proletarian technology.

There is a story about the invention of the steam engine. Steam pumps were in use in the 18th century which required the opening of a valve on each cycle. At one mill it was the job of a young boy to open this valve. This job would be extremely dull for the most domesticated worker, but for the boy in question it was just not on! He used a piece of wire to connect the valve to another moving part of the pump. The pump then worked continuously on its own, and the boy went off and played (but still earned his wages). Unfortunately, James Watt came by one day and saw what the boy had done. Watt nicked this idea and thereby "invented" the steam engine.

I heard this story years ago but could not find information anywhere that supported it when I tried recently. Perhaps its not true, or only half true. No matter. What I know to be true is that it is common for workers to come up with technological fixes to make their work easier. I've seen many workmates do similar things at various jobs and did this myself when I used to work as a printer. With one of the machines I used, running certain types of job, it was necessary to stand in front of the machine unloading each print as it came out (as they were too big to stack). But by extending the output tray with cardboard packaging, it was possible to make the prints stack. This meant instead of working intensely, it was possible to read a book or go and chat for five minutes or so between ten second bouts of work. This is typical activity seen in any workplace and amounts to developing technology in our own interests. Whereas capital develops technology to get us to produce more for less wages, we develop technology to allow us to work less intensely for the same wage.

Revolutionary theorists have always been reluctant to specify how a post-revolutionary society (communism, anarchy, call it what you like) will be. At best there are generalities about there being a community, and an absence of: the state, money, private property, alienation, nations, sexism, racism and so on. This attitude is completely correct; it is not possible to say how a society will be, when such a society will be (re-)made by people who are different from us, who have transformed themselves and their relationships with others, through massive class struggle.



Even so, it can be helpful to read utopian fiction, just to get some idea, a merest glimpse of how the world might be. All the best modern utopian fiction seems to be science fiction (or is that just my prejudice?!). 'Classics' in this field are "Woman on the Edge of Time" by Marge Piercy, and "The Dispossessed" by Ursula K LeGuin. Another less often mentioned book by LeGuin is "Always Coming Home", set long after the collapse of civilisation. The book examines a tribal society and is strikingly similar in its themes to the work of dead anti-civilisation dude Fredy Perlman. At the other extreme, are the "Culture" series of books by Iain M. Banks. These deal with a technologically advanced communist society. (Its technophilia gets almost queasy at times.) Reading these books can't provide any blueprint,

nor should they (one of the positive things about sci-fi is that few people take it seriously). But they give food for thought and can be just as inspiring as any political text.

What is communism? The horror of Russian style "state socialism" is what is normally meant by the word. But with its wage labour, commodity relations, class differences, state (prisons, police, borders) etc, this model is nothing more than a state owned capitalism. The word "communism" has been used by various radical currents, including some that attacked the Russian lie from that outset. Communism in this radical sense is as said above sometimes described as the negative of all the things we most hate about this society, or it is talked of as community. It has been described as "the free association of producers" and as a mode of production in which goods are produced for free not as a commodity to be exchanged on the market.

One of the interest groups that is organised through the internet is the freeware scene. Individuals produce software, computer programs, which are literally given away. These are distributed through computer networks and bulletin boards, some end up on the cover-disks of computer mags. Obviously these are of variable quality and usefulness, but some are genuinely impressive. Best example is the Linux operating system, and the programs that go with it. This system is an alternative to DOS/windows used on most PC's. It is far more advanced than DOS/windows, and in many ways more than the much hyped Windows95. The Linux system is produced collectively by many people from different parts of the world, collaborating together out of their own choice in order to produce a product for free. The free association of producers, production for use not exchange, international community: is this communism? Well maybe, but if it is, then communism is no big deal. Freeware may well reduce the revenue of commercial software houses a small amount. Certainly the communist impulse of those that produce for free is exemplary and should be recognised as such. But there seems little in this activity that truly threatens the status quo. Perhaps then the definition of communism should be refined more? Maybe the list of things to be abolished should be expanded? That would be clutching at straws. If communism is something that subverts this society, then it is not a list of changes to carry out, a programme to implement, or a set of aims and principles. What is subversive is the real movement that is always engendered by capitalism, the struggle of those without social power or social wealth against the conditions of their own existence. A future communist society is the victory of this movement over existing social conditions. And technology? What will be the technical basis of this society? There is little that can concretely be said (with the exception that a world community must have global means of communication and transport). More can be said of radical social struggles. On the one hand there exist various struggles directly against capitalist science and technology; the refusal of development (in Britain the anti-roads movement), the anti-nuclear movement, luddite strikes against new technology,

animal liberationists' attacks on research establishments and individual vivisectionists. All these have at least partly a proletarian class content. On the other hand the real movement utilises technology directly, from printing machines to fax machines, molotov cocktails to electronic mail. If it's not possible to speak clearly about the future, it can be said that communism as it exists today in the real movement that abolishes present conditions, both contests and makes use of technology as need arises.

Above it was stated that revolutionaries have been reluctant to specify exactly how the new society will be. But the fact is that many radicals still have their programmes ready for the proletariat to implement. The following quote from the Marx & Engel's communist manifesto, specifically attacking utopian socialists, can equally well be applied to many of today's radicals, from those with their detailed plans, to technophiles with their map to the future, to anti-civilisation communists with their map to the past. The implication of these people's politics is this:

“Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones, and the gradual, spontaneous class organisation of the proletariat to an organisation of society specially contrived by these inventors. Future history resolves itself in their eyes, into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their plans.”

