truktiw Komandoh, from West Berlin (@ 9:30/Feb. 9), who are anarchists who practice offstage what they scream and shake about onstage.

I'm not particularly interested in which band can sell the most records or attain more FM airplay, but rather why people so often support (without adding their criticism) bands whose primary message is HATE, HATE, HATE!!! Black Flag go further than most other "hardcore" bands, by snatching a generations-old symbol of anarchy (for their name and logo), and then by veering so far from what any real anarchist would suggest, that they become some kind of parody act. Parody acts are nothing new: the Plasmatics, the New York Dolls, and the Rocky Horror Picture Show all became famous and profited dollarwise. But I doubt that is Black Flag's real, ultimate goal.

If it is, then *your* financial contribution will be greatly appreciated by them. However, if their goal is for their band to be a serious expression of their disgust with the "system" as they perceive it, then they totally miss their mark. Whereas British and European punk bands usually have avoided sexist and racist manifestations with great regularity, that seems to be a very low priority for the L.A. "hardcore" bands. In terms of being crystal-clear from the social and political points of view, Britain's anarchist bands, such as Crass, Poison Girls, Flux of Pink Indians, the Mob, and Zounds have shone through with impressive consistency. And there are at least five other allied bands whose positions have been totally respectable from any anarchist's point of view not to mention the many more who are now identifying themselves solidly with the better-established groups' (Crass and Poison Girls) body of thought and practice. What's more, music on the British labels is often accompanied by concise, well-written reading material and artwork of high quality. Needless to say, these labels attempt to unify their theory and practice by remaining truly independent and usually do so at a lower cost to the purchaser than U.S. "hardcore" labels care to.

But it seems that in the "Land of the Free", an all-inclusive style of anarchist presence has not taken root among the youthful bands or youth in general. To see the reasons behind this, we'd first have to construct a radical critique of the historical forces bearing on youth culture in the U.S. vs., say, England. *Social Anarchism*, a journal available through Research Group One (in Baltimore), would be a reasonable forum for such a piece not here. But a couple of points may shed light on why anarchists among young people are very rare here. First, England and Europe have had for the past 200 years the broadest range of political alternatives from which to choose both in published thought and in living example. In other words, the forces of change and liberty (that is: The Left) have not been suppressed or omitted as they were and are in America. In Western Europe, Socialists, Communists, and Anarchists are known and respectable members of society as often as not. The U.S.'s power elites have rejected the concepts of sweeping change and fuller liberty in favor of change *only* through piecemeal, snail's-pace legislation and by "economic recovery". To be "radical" has come to mean "weird", and thus subjects one to various degrees of public and private condemnation. It took me over 20 years to develop a suitable system of social ideas for myself, so that I could feel at least semi-comfortable with myself in this hostile environment. I can't assume that I'm an odd case only typical in terms of my ability to adjust, and I've been very lucky, when I see what others have gone through merely to achieve their pathetic levels of self-hate. Maybe concrete elements of the system that tries to control us are to blame. This is a radical thought! And I *will* be judged accordingly. There is *no* doubt.

But still, this society's conservative oppressors can be rudely and deservedly awakened by young people who will take the initiative to change their own lives. With a literate background—obviously self-taught, as the schools do little to truly help in education—and by having an appropriate set of arguments, it's not complex to tell others exactly how and why property is theft, and why war is the health of the state. With only a little practice, we can tell the would-be influential "decision-makers" why they stink, and how they cheat and steal in order to make their ends meet. Obviously there are dangers, but they can be minimized through organizing among ourselves, and with clear purposes. A blanket statement of "life sucks" or "you're an asshole" leaves everyone in the dark. Who needs that?

Also, there is a tradition in this country of most white people occupying the fabled "middle class". Much of this fable is true, as whites whose parents have "white collar" or well-paying "blue collar" jobs have historically had a chance for more liberal and less oppressive "educations" than their black or Hispanic urban counterparts. A white kid from suburbia, despite the sterility and mediocrity of the surroundings, *does* have an awful lot going for him or her. Therefore, when coupled with that "liberal", monotonous "education", he or she may not have that much dissatisfaction with the system, from his or her position of relative wealth and privilege. Not everyone has it so good, and when you have it good, those who oppress and repress you are often very difficult to isolate and retaliate against. But when "middle-class" kids get into the working routine these days, without the lofty "benefits" of an engineering or business or law or medicine degree, the oppressors become more known and the alienation can heighten extremely.

In a more class-conscious Britain, however, everybody supposedly knows precisely what embodies "lower-class", "working-class", "middle-class", and aristocratic norms. This may explain why youth there have sought some type of relief from their parents' class restrictions, by initiating many more trends in terms of subcultures, dress, and music than young people here have in the past few decades. Thus, a band of middle-class American kids (now men) like Black Flag, may truly become distraught over urban squalor and unfairness in contrast with their upbringing but still, they didn't have those 16 or so years of being told just how low they were in society's terms as would a non-aristocrat or non-"middle-class" British kid. So when a young male is looking for an oppressor to take out his angst on, it may just as easily be his mother, or girls, or hippies, or jocks, if he has been isolated from the horror of the military, or the strongarm of the police, or the beatings of his father all by virtue of his middle-class youth. West Coast bands of the would-be hardcore variety seem to do just this: they pick on the oppressed as well as the oppressor in like measure treating both as the oppressor. What you get

BUT ANARCHY IS ITS HOPE.

is simple, all-inclusive hate for people in general. Where's the constructive element in that? Not only do Black Flag, Fear, and Circle Jerks not touch on the social relations responsible for the inequities they see, but they fall into the pit of misogyny, "queer-baiting", and racial misunderstanding from time to time with their tough-guy taunts at the audience and general abusiveness. I know *I* get too little flak from women, gays, and blacks to warrant singing disparagingly about them. What about you?

Mekanik Destruktiw Komandoh (MDK), on the other hand, know whom to hate and where the bulk of the blame should be awarded for modern society's traumas. They communicated this in their own distinctive, well-constructed way. They debunked the silliness of fascistic behavior with ease—and *not* by singling out part of the audience as the enemy. Even though they sang in German, by first telling those present briefly what the songs were about, in a meaningful way (not by saying "This song's about getting pussy!", as Black Flag's vocalist did), their intent became clear and their execution effective. These German anarchists engaged the audience through the camaraderie of a shared plight against government, militarism, and traditional male role models—and it's a fight we can *all* take part in, without denouncing our own inborn traits, over which we have no control. But who could seriously consider an active social struggle against hippies, women, gays, and non-whites? The KKK and the British Movement could. Fascists and rednecks could. But certainly not half-baked hardcore bands like Black Flag, who seem to be trying to feel fashionably angry, rather than looking for the powerful tyrants who already abound in every long-standing American institution.

The imagery of destroying power, not people, is something hardcore bands could learn from. Black Flag has a brand new T-shirt called "Police Story" right under their banner. It vividly depicts in a well-rendered cartoon a black cop sweating as someone (white and male, perhaps?) holds a loaded revolver inside the cop's mouth and says, "Make me come, faggot!" Shocking, isn't it? But where does the image get you? Nowhere. You can't reenact their "police story"—it's a fantasy where if you tried you'd be killed by one or many of the controllers of the state. And let's face it, even some anarchists have friends who are cops. Their friends may well be misguided, but which idea is more worthy of being made public: that cops are despicable and deserve as individuals all the contempt and violence you can muster, or that the *institutions they represent* should be toppled so that they are left without the authority and power to act? Violence only begets violence, and in violent times (all of human history—but not necessarily all of the future) the good, the bad, the beautiful, and the ugly all get murdered. No one wins.

From talking with MDK I made two worthwhile contacts which I hope to maintain and learn from. They are fellow anarchists who go the extra distance and publish written material, organize anti-state freedom festivals, and work to expand functional networks with others who feel as they do. Also, they are nice people who gladly listen to what strangers have to say. From talking with a fairly bright member of Black Flag, I learned that anyone who bothers him should "fuck off" as their other $7 T-shirt boldly implies. Wow! Some choice! Who do you suppose I'll write to and about in the future?

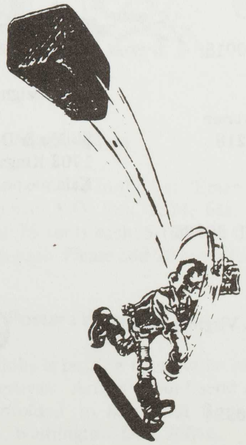
All through this article I haven't felt it pressing to "inform" anyone about how well the various players handled their instruments, or how "intense" or "tight" the bands were, or how the sound was. Both bands were loud, frenzied, and sincere-seeming. Punk and anarchist music invariably is, or it wouldn't deserve either title. But it's the content I chose to stress, mainly because that's what people walk away remembering most about—that which they can put into words and criticize as being different. If something is different in form alone, then its newness is partial and superficial. But if something is different in content, then at least that difference can be communicated to others fairly fully and without excess "artistic" license.

Anarchy is something that disenfranchised, isolated youths, and everyone else, too, can work on today and next year, without fear of being outdated; as long as the violent systems that would control us survive there is work to be done. An anarchist need not escape to the ease of alcohol or drugs to function socially; a creative reality (not the drunken, nicotined, doped-up hell of our parents' generation) can be so varied as to kill the need for sedation or hype. One doesn't strive to blindly hate, or dominate, or seek leaders in being an anarchist—that's the crux of the action and thought—everybody's welcome. All they have to do is to throw away their urge for power over others. It's no small task, but perhaps someday enough people will learn.

Thanks for tuning in.

Anarchy and Peace. Love,

Philo Virgin

P.S. Anarchists frequently have interesting and distinctive ideas and ways of social existence and interaction. And there are several productive anarchist punks in the D.C. area, as well as many other anarchists of various persuasions. If you'd like to talk with some, or discuss anything at all with me, you may write me:

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