

Proclamation of the Orange Free State

Roel van Duyn

February 5th, 1970

Of all the anarchist-inspired groups that have surfaced in recent years, the Dutch Kabouters display the keenest sense of humor — a quality which has never been in oversupply among anarchists. The Kabouters (meaning pixies, or elves) are an outgrowth of the Provo movement, a Dutch variant of the international New Left active for several years in the late 1960s. The Provos — short for provocateurs — devoted themselves to bringing political and social issues to public attention by means of protests, demonstrations, and “happenings.” Their activities were nonviolent and contained a large element of playfulness; indeed, many Provos considered it their purpose to bring out in their fellow citizens the repressed *Homo ludens*, or man of play, a term originally coined by the noted Dutch historian Johan Huizinga.

Like the Kabouters today, the Provos were particularly concerned with environmental issues, a subject of special significance in the highly industrialized and thickly populated Netherlands. In their journal Provo they published a series of so-called White Plans designed to combat urban problems. These ranged from the White Bicycle Plan for relieving automobile congestion in the center of Amsterdam to the White Chicken Plan (“kip,” or chicken, is Dutch slang for policeman), which would have garbed the police in white uniforms and assigned them the task of dispensing band-aids, contraceptives, and chicken drumsticks to the citizenry. The agents of the “social revolution” the Provos had in mind were to be not the proletariat but what they termed the “provotariat,” meaning hippies, students, and young protesters in general.

The foremost theorist of the Provos was Roel van Duyn, a philosophy student at Amsterdam University who was born in 1943. Van Duyn is now the leading spirit of the Kabouters. He identifies himself with the anarchist tradition, once declaring of the Provo movement that it regarded “anarchy as the inspirational source of resistance” and aimed “to revive anarchy and teach it to the young.” More specifically, he extols the ideas of Peter Kropotkin, particularly his vision of a harmonious balance between urban and rural life. In February 1970 the Kabouters announced the formation of their alternative community, calling it the Orange Free State (the Dutch royal house is the House of Orange). Among the “people’s departments” they established was a Housing Department, which proceeded to take over empty buildings in Amsterdam and make them available to the homeless; this activity proved unpopular with the authorities but drew considerable public support. In June 1970 the Kabouters ran in the municipal elections in Holland, winning seats on the city councils of several towns and capturing five of the forty-five places on the Amsterdam city council. Such political activity would appear to contradict the anarchist element of the

movement, but van Duyn's views manage to combine reformist tactics with the aspiration to a wholly new society embodying anarchist principles.

The proclamation of the Orange Free State illustrates that combination. It was issued in an English-language version, which, though faulty, has a playful spirit of its own. Some minor corrections of spelling, punctuation, and English usage have been made. I am grateful to Mr. Rudolf de Jong of the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam for making this document available to me.

Roel van Duyn is the author of two books, which unfortunately are not available in English. The best source of information on the Provos is the Autumn 1967 issue of the magazine *Delta: A Review of Arts, Life and Thought in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam), which was devoted entirely to this movement.

How does a new society emerge out of the old society? Like a toadstool upon a rotting trunk. Out of the subculture of the existing order grows an alternative community. The underground community of the mutinous youth emerges and is going to develop independently of the still existing authorities.

This revolution is taking place now. This is the end of the underground of protest and of demonstration; from now on we're investing our energy in constructing an anti-authoritarian society.

What we can use from the old society we will use: knowledge, socialist ideals and the best of the liberal traditions. The toadstool of the new society will feed itself with the juices of the rotting trunk until it's gone. The old society will wear out before our eyes; we will consume it. Here and there the toadstools of the new society will be dispersed. Elfin cities will federate themselves into circles of toadstools and they will create a world-embracing net: the Orange Free State.

Why is the old society perishing? Because it's unable to solve the problems it creates. The political tension between the existing authoritarian governments can result any moment now in a military catastrophe. The aggression of the official technology and industry towards Nature is systematically breaking down the biological environment and will result in apocalyptic disaster. Unknown epidemics, food poisoning and starvation, mass mortality amongst human beings and animals are inevitable unless the rise of a new society prevents it. A new culture with a new human being: the culture-elf, who will bring the tension between Nature and the old culture to an end. Who understands the animals and unites people in love, who will restore the unity of every living thing.

The culture-elf in the new society will have to solve the conflicts of the old society, which is doomed to disappear. His task will be to take away the tension between city

and countryside by means of a marriage, the tension between “responsible” commander and non-responsible soldier, between authority and subject, between government and people, by creating a new society in which everybody is responsible and is able to determine his own destiny, to conquer the tension between riches and poverty by collectivizing property. The culture-elf will contract the total marriage between the contradictions of the old society.

Across the old established order a new society will guide itself. To the provotariat the government in London is but a shadow cabinet, its mayors but shadow mayors, its cudgeling policemen but phantoms of a disappearing existence. Their laws, official chains and cudgels are losing their grip upon a new reality which we are creating ourselves.

The old society can’t take control over the struggle against the new one, not to mention winning that war. All by itself it is not capable of solving the problems of authoritarianism and mutilation of Nature. The old society can only survive by assuming the characteristics of the new one. Given the choice between destruction and assimilation with the new society it is forced to take the road of the nice revolution.

This revolution is in a hurry. The new society will therefore have to use all its knowledge about sabotage techniques to speed up the change from an authoritarian and dirty society to an anti-authoritarian and cleaner one. Actually the existence of an autonomous new society in the midst of the old order is the most effective kind of sabotage. But whatever the techniques the people’s army of saboteurs uses, it must always realize that it may not look like the armies of the old world in any respect. The non-responsible soldier in the old army is the symbol of what has to be overcome by the responsible saboteur of the anti-authoritarian people’s army. His sabotage will be selective because of that and by means of a persistent striving towards non-violence. And sabotage is not the only thing we have at our disposal. Erotics and pseudo-erotics are the other means of revealing the new world for everybody without exception.

What will the new society look like? It would be fundamentally wrong to try to give a complete view of the new society, which is the same thing as not knowing your new lover completely. It is the unknown that makes her attractive. But although we still have to explore our new lover, we already know her. Likewise the new society. It is not governed. It steers itself by involving everybody in taking of decisions about economics, planology, defense, environmental hygiene and all other affairs of public interest. Except for taking political decisions, for that can be forgotten, because the politicians as they exist now will disappear. When everybody is involved in taking decisions politicians will be superfluous and politics, which have always been power politics, will expire.

The new self-governing society is a council democracy. In factories, offices, universities and schools, councils will be formed by those who work there. In quarters, villages and cities the people who live there will also form councils. All councils will engage into one another in co-ordinating councils which can survey problems nationally and internationally and can act in a regulating manner. These councils will never use sheer

force. They won't have to, because they are directly and constantly controlled by their electors who give them strict instructions. The new society is a socialist one because it has abolished private possession of the means of production. But this socialism has nothing to do with the bureaucratic and centralised socialism of before. It is decentralised and anti-authoritarian. It leaves as many decisions as possible to the people on the spot, in their councils. It is not the socialism any more of the clenched fist, but of the interlaced fingers, of the erect penis, of the flying butterfly, of the moved glance, of the Holy Cat. It is anarchism.

In the first elfin city, in the first commune of the Orange Free State, Amsterdam, the provotariat took on February 5th, 1970, the following measures in order to proceed towards a new self-governing and independent society:

1. The foundation of people's departments, steer-groups of voluntary unsalaried civil servants. All their documents will be public. They have to answer to weekly meetings in which everyone can criticise.
2. For the time being the town hall of the new society will be: Athenaeum, Spui, Amsterdam.
3. The town hall of the old society will function as the Embassy for relations with the old community. The provo-counsellor will be appointed Ambassador.
4. The publication of a National Gazette of the Orange Free State and a municipal gazette from the elfin city Amsterdam. In these gazettes new measures will be announced.
5. The planting of a new National Monument at the Dam: an orange tree, symbol for the new society. You are invited to dance around it singing the new national anthem, "The Cuckoo Song."

AMSTERDAM ELFIN CITY
February 5th [1970]

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The Essential Works of Anarchism, Marshall Shatz (ed.), Quadrangle Books (1972).

www.archive.org/details/essentialworksof0000mars

The Kabouters (pixies or elves) were founded in 1970 in Holland, emerging from the Provo movement which was active in the late 1960s. The Provos (provocateurs) brought political and social issues to public attention through protests, demonstrations, and “happenings.” Their events were nonviolent and contained a large amount of playfulness and these tendencies were inherited by the Kabouters.

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