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Which War: A one-shot publication of social reconnaissance

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Translated from Italian by Wolfi Landstreicher.

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Translator's Introduction

There are many different ways of looking at the world in which we live. Most people tend to look upon the surrounding reality as a fate that falls upon them about which they can do nothing. Even many people who call themselves anarchists fall into this way of thinking, letting their lives slip away from them. In the face of increasingly harsh times and, more specifically, repression against all forms of conscious revolt, it is certainly easy to fall into this way of thinking. But this isn't a useful way of examining our situation, because it provides us with nothing except an excuse to hide in our rooms, sacrificing our lives to the fears that our rulers use to control us.

If, instead of starting from these fears, we start from our own project of taking our lives back, we will realize that we are warriors in an ongoing social conflict, the conflict between the forces of domination and exploitation and those whose interests lie in the destruction of all domination and exploitation. This is a conflict in which there can be no compromise between the two sides. But we have one significant advantage. Since the power and wealth of those who rule us is the crystallization of the creative energy they steal from all those they rule, they need those they dominate and exploit. We, on the other hand, do not need them.

So, since we are at war with the ruling order, and since we have this one essential advantage, it makes no sense for us to throw up our hands in wide-eyed fright at the horrors our masters use to keep us in line. Rather we need to examine the world around us in order to understand how things lie so that we can better hone our attack against the ruling order. We need to do a continuous social reconnaissance.

Some anarchists in Italy published the texts below as a one-shot publication during a winter when several social struggles were in course. It was intended as a social reconnaissance made in the heat of conflict, not, as they say, as "a careful investigation by cold ana-

lysts". I do not necessarily agree with every word of these texts, but I feel that they express a way of looking at the world from which we can learn, a way that assumes that we are not victims, but individuals capable of fighting against the social order that steals our lives, individuals who are already at war with this society, to the extent that we are acting to make our lives our own here and now. In this context, the only sensible way to look at the existing world is in terms of understanding the terrain on which we fight and what tools and forces are at our disposal for battling the world that steals our lives from us.

—Wolfi Landstreicher

ers to the benefit of the usual few. But aren't we all victims of the same lethal muteness? And on the other hand — if we want to start speaking and raising our voice — we must take into account that the language of revolt and suffering cannot resemble that of power and privilege. When one becomes aware of this, only then does one comprehend that there is no dialogue, no understanding, no agreement possible with the other side. Then one throws out the political and union ballast and begins to intervene autonomously in the social stir, supporting, without any shopkeeper's interest, anyone who is no longer willing to submit, pursuing the possibilities that open before us, all to be discovered.

With its repressive operations, the ruling order shows us in negative what they really fear: not so much the current position conquered by its enemies, in itself insignificant, as the further attacks that this would allow. Come on, let's set aside panic and victimistic complaining. In a society in decomposition, it is certainly easy to remain buried under the flood of its rubble, but it is equally true that its possible points of rupture multiply. It is thus a question of looking for them and trying to break them down. The discomfort against this world without meaning is mounting; it is no longer a discussion made *by* and *for* a few subversives in the enclosure of their spaces, but it is becoming a common feeling capable of transforming itself into action and blocking state projects in course.

In the course of a few weeks, an entire region has mobilized itself, a wildcat strike has paralyzed some cities, the fire brigades have taken to the streets because they refuse to be militarized... and it is a list that could be lengthened at any moment. We are not yet at grips with a fire, it is true, but it is still a matter of live embers on which it is possible to blow. Just as it is possible to blow on other, apparently inert embers that the breath of revolt may be enough to ignite. Looking around in order to distinguish the places of malcontent and there incite the minds. Intervening in every conflict in order to sabotage pacifying negotiations. Arousing social hatred where fatal tolerance is in force. Ceasing to tail power — political, economic or judiciary as it may be — like a shadow faithfully following its dates and priorities, abandoning the space in front of the palaces of power and the court buildings in order to move everywhere.

Perhaps what is still missing is the attempt to link the struggles that are going on, to create bridges that allow all those who are protesting to meet and recognize each other. Because the reasons that pushed the inhabitants of Scanzano Jonica to block the roads of Basilicata are not really different from the reasons of the transit workers who blocked traffic in Milan. The former, like the latter, are treated as mutes presented in a representation written by oth-

A dream.

A great storm is blowing in the world, people and things move, tossed about, in search of shelter. A fixed path leads to an ancient building on which a huge sign appears: "Don't turn around." People and things struggle, but the storm pushes them into the building, toward a room with unsteady walls. Here people and things are named, while even the wind seems to wait expectantly. Each name unleashes forces — it is all a game of routes, collisions, associations — that bit by bit align themselves and arrange themselves in distinct camps. Sometimes, in the Room of Names, the air is agitated, people and things rebel, ending up by aligning themselves nonetheless. A stifled cry, an inarticulate, almost animal-like language resounds in the air.

Outside someone notices confused voices, like in a memory. He stares at the sign, turns suddenly, defies the storm, even if just for a moment, and makes his way towards the others. Something beats continuously against the walls of the building. In the storm such movements are almost imperceptible, and yet they change the lines of the world.

It seems more and more obvious that the present social organization does not try to be loved for its results, but rather solely on the basis of its enemies. If the subjects of this totalitarian democracy accept what exists, it is only from fear of the worse things that could happen. This is why the threat of the "worse thing" must be continually put on display, named, hinted at, instilled. If there is a feeling that increasingly pervades the streets and corners of society, in fact, it is fear. A mute, grey, almost indefinable fear. The fear of remaining jobless, of not being able to pay the rent or mortgage,

the fear of going crazy or that, felt by more and more people, of the police, of repression, of prison.

The Enemy is the last card of a bankrupt world, the excuse of those who no longer have reasons, the bluff of a system that continues to raise the stakes knowing it has used up all its chips. The enemy is anyone who gets in the way of the peace of the market and the order of uniforms. The external enemy turns back to the internal enemy and vice versa in an endless game of mirrors. The enemy is called “terrorist” and is capable of every metamorphosis: one day he is the Iraqi in Iraq, guilty of opposing the occupation of his land and the slaughter of his people with arms; the next day it is an Iraqi in Milan, perhaps in the clothes of a transit worker guilty of leaping past the union bureaucracy. Foreigner by definition, more and more often the enemy is becoming the rank-and-file union member, the anarchist, the communist, the self-organized student, the enraged unemployed person.

If terrorism is — in accordance with its historical definition — the indiscriminate use of violence with the aim of conquering and maintaining power, then governments, armies, police, banks and the entire industrial system are terrorists.

If terrorism is — in accordance with the language of the state — the practice of self-organization, of direct action against the oppressors and their structures of death, then we are all terrorists, we ourselves like anyone who wants to radically transform current social relationships.

This one-shot publication is published by a few *internal enemies*. So the various Ministries of Propaganda describe us. Very well then. The name they give us corresponds to a space in which they want to enclose us: when not prison, the ghetto, isolation in its various forms. We are at war, even if the images of spectacular daily life try to make us believe the contrary. We have not chosen these social conditions ourselves, we can only choose from what position to fight. In order to do so, it is necessary to look at what is happening in our camp and in that of the ruling order at the same time,

of Scanzano have practically chased away the radioactive claims of Italian technocrats and ideally brought the blockades of South Korean worker and the bus drivers of Los Angeles close. The same is true of the workers of the railroad cleaning service and those of Fiat. If the form of the blockade is generalizing, it is because the circulation of commodities and people reduced to commodities is realized as a calamity which no union monk can brake.

And if, when everything else is blocked, solidarity and audacity were to begin to circulate?

“Giving battle”

Our five senses do not belong to us. Only one thing belongs to us, desire. We would like to live on *our own* behalf, throwing a glance on the world in order to seek out an activity of our own, fruit of the necessities and dreams that animate us and not timed by the rhythms of others.

In order to start doing this, we would need to avoid, as much as possible, moving in the way we are pushed by the conditioned reflex provoked by the hammer of repression. It’s a matter of escaping from the vicious circle into which they would like to lock us, distancing us from the social conflict and pushing us into a private competition between *us* and *them*.

If we intend to protest effectively against an arrest, why don’t we poke a finger in the thousands of electronic eyes which surround us, as was done recently in Milan? Doing so doesn’t necessitate concentration at a single point — thus, it avoids running up against possible disciplinary provisions like expulsion papers or warning of other kinds — ; it concretely disturbs social control, is an act the reasons of which relate to all and is therefore easily comprehensible to anyone, making it more difficult for it to be attributed to “those who have a bone to pick with the police because they arrested their friend.”

This moment is not only full of repression and a strange conspiracy between bustling normality and the unmentionable feeling of the end of the world. It is full of struggle and of possibilities. If from one side, “one has the impression that the method has been found to put the desert in motion, to unleash a sandstorm capable of covering every portion of the inhabited earth” (curiously, the first Gulf war was called “desert storm”), the earth and its inhabitants everywhere break through the order of suffering and passivity. The last several years have been lavish with insurrectional explosions that have brought a human faculty back into the streets that had been extensively mutilated by technological delirium: that of confronting problems together without mediation. From Albania to Argentina, from Ecuador to Algeria, dialogue among the exploited has come back to arm itself.

If it is difficult for the dangerous classes to autonomously organize themselves on the large scale and beyond categorical divisions – considering the progressive dismantling of the places in which capital, even if indirectly, united them – the ground is also slipping under the feet of political and union recuperators. The rulers have shown many of these lackeys the door, since there is less and less space for mediation and negotiation. Such reasonable negotiations – impossible in ordinary times for a capital squeezed in the vise of competition and continuous restructuring – are proposed to the enraged exploited precisely at the moment when they have already abandoned all reasonableness, thanks to the struggle. If revolts have trouble organizing their continuation, the firefighters of recuperation have trouble extinguishing their flames. Together with the conditions of a relative autonomy from the industrial world, the illusions of managing an increasingly uncontrollable and lethal technological and productive apparatus differently have gone away. Certainties have departed and will not return for anyone.

All this is no longer an ocean away, in those dictatorships that render revolt as legitimate as it is exotic in the eyes of the specialists in international solidarity, but a few steps from us. The blockades

what forces move below the empire of names and official declarations, beyond the eternal present of the media. Not at all a careful investigation by cold analysts. A social reconnaissance, if you will, of those who have the urgent need to live, any breach in both sides of the barricades for perceiving and practicing a different concept of force.

The Lottery, with its weekly payout of enormous prizes, was the one public event to which the proles paid serious attention. It was probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive. It was their delight, their folly, their anodyne, their intellectual stimulant. Where the Lottery was concerned, even people who could barely read and write seemed capable of intricate calculations and staggering feats of memory. There was a whole tribe of men who made a living simply by selling systems, forecasts, and lucky amulets. (...) Only small sums were actually paid out, the winners of the big prizes being non-existent persons. In the absence of any real intercommunication between one part of Oceania and another, this was not difficult to arrange.

A reality that everyone continually discovers for herself is that she is afraid above all of what he does not know. Well, nothing is less known, nothing is more mysterious, to human beings than their social activity itself. In fact, one of the essential characteristics of the industrial world is that within it we are witness to a growing gap between the activity that we carry out and our capacity to portray the consequences of such activity to ourselves. Due to the extreme compartmentalization and specialization of labor, due to a gigantic technological apparatus that makes us more ignorant every day with regard to the instruments that we use, we no longer

have an awareness of the significance of our actions. This is why the product of our own activity can be calmly falsified and artificially reconstructed for us.

Someone noted that it is easier — in terms of the real repercussions that the action has on the consciousness — to bomb an entire population than to kill a single person. A bombed population is only a flash of light on a screen, whereas the consciousness realizes the full weight of the reality of a murdered person. This is why the current society is able to make us tolerate a daily, scientifically organized slaughter: because it renders the relationship between actions and their consequences more and more opaque. In fact, one could say that domination is really the political organization of this opacity.

The reasons for a war

It is difficult to trace the primary cause of a complex event like a war with precision, not because it is impossible to find it, but because it is impossible to find just one cause. Our entire existence is the outcome of a continuous intertwining of concurrent factors. And yet this banal observation is able to throw those scientific minds that need a prop to which to cling into confusion. Why did the war in Iraq break out? To respond “due to the hunger for power” or “due to the needs of the ruling order”, however accurate, sounds far too vague and maximalist to many ears. But it would be a mistake to pass the possible motives for this war through a sieve in order to find the central one among them that can give us valuable indication, and discarding the others, since there is nothing negligible about these others.

Many commentators have noted that the military success of the United States in Iraq would have been the best propaganda ad for the presidential elections next November. Bush himself was surprised by the speed with which the Taliban regime fell: why not

the crime of “subversive association” will undergo further enlargement. In what sense? What does it mean to apply associative crime to all anarchists who move outside of the classical organizations, as is desired? Will it mean that supporting certain practices of attack, independently of any direct involvement in them, is enough to be accused of “subversive association”? In this sense, the fanciful crime of “psychic participation” has already been invented. Will they apply it to everyone, starting with anarchists? It is difficult to know. What is certain, however, is that this will involve everyone who moves in the sphere “of social opposition” and “widespread political violence”.

What Pisanu states about those who “strike and vanish”, those who practice “immediate and destructive attacks” in “small groups” with “minimal structure” and “autonomous base unity”, indicates that he fears widespread revolt. The “experts in anti-terrorism” push further: they maintain that this way of acting is “not very permeable” (or rather, is inconvenient for infiltration). The law must thus permit this squaring of the circle.

But the living conditions that this social order imposes on millions of people does more to incite revolt than any revolutionary group. As much as the ruling order strives to limit social conflict to one or more areas of the movement, it is clear that the practice of direct action belongs to a sea of anonymous individuals, men and women who don’t have any intention of submitting to the humiliations of those in power or of getting trapped in the web of politics. The evidence? The ever-growing number of attacks and acts of sabotage that light up the cold nights of our times pretty much everywhere.

These actions often manifest a rage that has no political project, organization or initials with which to do publicity, nor any desire for self-celebration. These practices don’t have any privileged referent, don’t have anything to express to *anyone*, because potentially they are the revolt of *all*. If this is the threat the state fears, this is the path we should follow.

Interior has been calling for a modification of the penal code that would allow the arrest of anarchists, particularly those he identifies as “insurrectionists”, that cannot be caught through the usual “associative crimes” (“subversive association” – 270 – and “subversive association with the aim of terrorism” – 270 bis). The minister explains that these subversives don’t possess a hierarchical structure or organization, have no leaders and can strike anywhere in an autonomous manner, and that it is thus not possible to arrest them unless they are caught red-handed or with evidence linked to some specific crime.

This is where the state, involuntarily, gives us three very important indications: the law has no need of specific proofs, since its codes are a formality that can be changed in relation to the needs of the state; when Pisanu complains about the current legislation, inadequate for persecuting anarchists, he indicates in the negative that the advocacy of civil rights of the democratic state is nonsense; the state feels weak in the face of widespread revolt.

We are facing yet another step forward toward democratic totalitarianism. From the Rocco code to now we have been witness to an ever greater sharpening of the laws against opponents of the state, against subversives and rebels. The spirit and letter of the fascist law, with regards to the crime of “subversive association”, was more limited and precise. Compared to the democrats of today, the infamous Rocco was more an “advocate of civil rights”, from the moment that Mussolini’s regime systematically violated its own laws and could well allow some freedom *on paper*.

Democracy, however, needs to show a greater coherence, at least formally, between codes and reality. In fact, from the end of the 1970’s until now, the addition of the aggravating circumstance “...with the aim of terrorism” (270 bis) has permitted the lengthening of sentences for all the crimes repressed as political, without however recognizing them as such, with the aim of ensnaring more and more undesirable individuals in the clutches of the Law. Now, if the new legislative proposals of the ministers and judges pass,

repeat the operation, while settling an old account left pending as well? Then there are those who prefer to emphasize the American administration’s need to avert public attention from the grave economic situation the country was in, victim of a crisis that, in the course of a few months, has involved some of the biggest national enterprises (Enron being one of them) and caused millions of jobs to disappear.

And what about oil? Iraq possesses the second largest oil reserve in the world. Various representatives of the American government, besides Bush, have strong interests the oil industry. And then, it cannot be said that the other countries that are rich in black gold are reliable, between an Iran dominated by an Islamic regime, a Saudi Arabia divided between Westernization and fundamentalism, a Venezuela in the hands of the populist Chavez, an Ecuador with ongoing internal unrest, an Algeria over which the winds of revolt and those of Islamic fundamentalism are blowing, a Libya cemented around Qadaffi, a Nigeria and an Indonesia with tottering governments. Many of these countries have expressed the desire to replace the money used for commercial transactions, abandoning the old dollar for the new euro. For the United States, controlling Iraqi oil would be the solution to quite a few of its problems.

Then, it is observed that a war of this sort constitutes an authentic experiment in becoming, with all the strategic utility that this includes. It is a conflict without UN approval, with a massive occupation of territory to carry out and a consequent popular resistance to suppress. A new challenge, of uncertain outcome, therefore needing verification on a limited field. What are the innumerable problems that will arise in such a context and how does one solve them?

But there is also the simple need on the part of the United States to affirm its “right” to control the world, which is manifested in this case in the question of the “weapons of mass destruction”. More than a pretext for unleashing a local war, this is a true and proper Trojan horse for imposing world domination. The key arguments of the political-economic doctrine that is at the base of the “war

on terrorism” can be summarized this way: almost all advanced technological production can be used to create weapons of mass destruction; in order to prevent any “rogue state” from using such productive processes, it is necessary that no governments except for those agreeable to the United States possess the capacity for making these weapons. In this way, the United States claims the right to constantly monitor all forms of industrial development spread throughout the world.

Of course, reflecting further, we could add other causes of this conflict. But would this really clarify the methods for our potential action? In Iraq, the American occupation troops and their allies have discovered a strong resistance that is assuming various forms. The best known is the form that is given space in the media, that is, the daily armed attacks that are decimating the allied forces (and one recalls that the United States had to leave Lebanon in 1983 and Somalia in 1993 precisely because of the high number of victims, unacceptable for a country afflicted by the so-called “Vietnam syndrome”). But it is also important to mention the thing that finds no place among the press releases reported in the daily papers because it would be too far out of tune with the chorus of praise for the western operation, such as the mobilization of oil workers that have blocked production going on strike (up to now it seems that not a single barrel of oil has yet come out of Iraq).

Who knows, maybe it is ultimately impossible to understand what might be whirling in the egg-heads of Washington. But certainly, it is quite easy to understand what is now passing through the rebellious heads in Baghdad. This seems sufficient to us.

If there is a strict relationship between requests for protection and government through fear, then it is not possible to separate what we call repression from the progressive loss of all individual and social autonomy. The request for protection is a reflection of an increasingly atomized life, subjected to the process that others describe as the disintegration of reality and that we would translate with the destruction of every direct experience of the world.

What does the guerrilla war, which is doing what no army could ever do (putting the greatest military power in the world into serious difficulties), suggest to us? What does the same old unpolished and hysterical propaganda against “terrorism” suggest? Why the continuous requests for new laws to more effectively repress the various forms of direct action that cannot be brought back into Politics and its rackets?

Domination is not a citadel for the powerful, but rather a social relationship. And the forces, in society, are not measured with census-taking. They arrange themselves and collide in unpredictable ways, opening unexpected breaches. The structures of control and repression, just like those of industrial poisoning are everywhere. That which seems far away is constantly before our eyes. The same is true for revolt and sabotage. Whatever the angle of attack may be, every truly self-organized struggle cannot avoid putting the present way of life into question. No perspective of revolt can neglect the question of autonomy, in values as well as in means.

The social storm doesn’t cancel the problems, it shuffles them and deals them out differently.

It’s easy to hit a bird that flies straight

When one seeks to critique this world, when one tries to reveal its mysteries, one heads out on an uphill path. This slope becomes steeper the moment one tries to point out an opening for change, to concretize the visceral hostility that dwells in our minds. At times, however, a stimulus arrives from the most unexpected parts, from those that we would never have imagined could help us to achieve clarity, precisely from our enemies.

Thus, the sorry figures who reside at Viminale, prey to the idiocy typical of those who may know what they are doing, but not what they are saying, make the totalitarian project that is innate in the state obvious. For several months now, the Minister of the

And, with regard to screens, the spread of social control would not be possible without the active intervention of the mass media. This doesn't just occur in the most common and banal way, when the mass media teaches the acceptance of police operations, justifying their actions and directly reporting their press releases. Their greatest contribution to the pervasiveness of state surveillance is given by the creation of a climate of social conformity capable of banishing any critical spirit. Many are the broadcasts that send us the same incessant message: if marshal Rocca is controlling our movements, if commissioner Montalbano is watching us night and day, why ever should we protest? But there is worse.

Thanks to television we have benefited from all the indiscretions of hidden video-cameras and microphones, gradually making them our habit. Why complain if someone invades our intimate life, when this is what we do as well with programs like "Big Brother" [*an Italian "reality" TV show* – tr.]? So as not to speak then of the things that put *your deeds* in the plaza, they urge *whoever has seen it* to talk, they invite one to become *the traitor*.

It is freedom of thought and action that is dangerous. The right knows it and fights it by demanding more security. The left knows it and fights it by appealing to a ridiculous "respect for privacy". But we, city-dweller-prisoners with such a long registration number, what are we waiting for to pull the walls of the prison of daily life down?

He turned suddenly. He made his features assume the expression of calm optimism that it was advisable to maintain whenever one turned toward the television screen.

To think and practice a different concept of force – here is the challenge that reality is hurling us. Only this effort of ideas and action will allow us to leap to the heart of circumstances.

Our existence develops in a sort of bell-jar of media and mercantile glass that abolishes direct relationships with our likes, with the environment that surrounds us, with the past. A concentrating city planning encloses us in tomb-like apartments while the technological system provides us with the prostheses for entering into its various artificial communities (telephone, television, computer linked to the Internet). Thus, crowded into cities, standardized in tastes and activities, we are increasingly isolated in our capacity for understanding and in our fears. Surrounded by objects that we don't know how to produce and that we are not able to repair, we live in the most absolute ignorance in an increasingly technologically equipped world. Even the simplest activities – such as procuring water – confirm our dependence on institutions and their centralized structures. If something is obstructed (due to a blackout or a simple traffic blockade), there is panic. The individual, powerless in the face of the Apparatus, begs protection from the latter. Fear and government through fear.

The well and the plague spreader

There is no peril, real or presumed, in society that is not suitably publicized by the instruments of information. The world is full of dangers, as grannies frequently repeat to young children. The threat is propagated and every aspect of the tranquil routine must be infected with it. It can't just be dreadful "Islamic terrorists" that cause fear; among other things, they strike countries that are far too distant from our own, and furthermore are easily recognizable in the figure of the immigrant of the day.

In order to produce substantial social effects, the threat must be simultaneously intangible and perceived as always present, even in the most ordinary things. It is like this with disease, with apparently innumerable medical bulletins for prescribing what we should do in order to protect ourselves from viruses and bacteria of every sort.

But microorganisms — if it is true that they cannot be touched or seen with the naked eye — don't have a face. They are also too far away.

In times past, when plagues afflicted Europe, in order to avoid the uncontrolled rising up of people plagued by loss and suffering, as well as poverty, and thus stem a revolt that would have put the constituted order and relationships of subjection to a difficult test, local powers created the figure of the plague spreader, since the idea of divine punishment was insufficient for placating minds. The plague spreader wears common clothes and his face is like everyone else's; he blends into the crowd, but he has a body that can be identified, he has a wicked purpose that can be defined; he is a man that can be placed before the fury of the masses, which might otherwise turn against authority.

Despite the passing of centuries, this figure has been kept alive up to our time. Once he devoted himself — according to legend — to smearing the walls of the city with his ointments and poisoning the wells; now he takes airplanes carrying the terrible germs of the epidemic inside himself. Here they are then, following in succession in this social myth, the businessmen who devoted themselves in the 1980's and 1990's to spreading AIDS around the world by flying from one continent to another, then the crowds of east Asians monitored and placed in quarantine in airports last year in order to avert the spread of the notorious pulmonary disease [SARS]. The enormous security apparatuses prepared for this purpose and the militarization of the airports were transformed into the practical translation of the commonplace according to which foreigners carry disease.

When some poisoned bottles of water that make several people ill are found in supermarkets throughout Italy in December, panic is created. Newspapers and television broadcasts immediately cry out about the plague spreader. Behind the cases of bottle poisoning, much too rapid and numerous not to have been organized, one could recognize the hand of the notorious “anarcho-

There are spies everywhere who denounce different and unusual thoughts and behaviors, but snitching is embodied in objects.

If you don't have something to hide, then what are you afraid of?

Through surveillance cameras installed everywhere, they can come to know our movements and activities. Through ATMs and credit cards, they are informed of our transactions. Through telecommunications systems, they can know *with whom* we speak, and also *about what* we speak. Through the Internet, they know what we work on and with whom. Modern technologies have perfected the techniques of social control to a point never before imaginable, allowing the transformation of the entire urban space into a concentration camp.

And yet, the majority of people don't think that they live in a police state, a situation — it is said — that would require a massive and constant presence of troops in the streets, with tanks at intersections and helicopters in the sky. A conviction that conceals a monstrous misunderstanding. A true police state is characterized by the vast efficiency of its techniques of control, control that can be entrusted to the physical omnipresence of agents (as in the old dictatorial regimes), or to the omnipresence of their technological instruments — as occurs today in all the democracies. But the fact of being constantly watched by an inanimate object rather than by an armed person doesn't change our suffocating condition, since there is always a guardian behind a surveillance camera. Progress has simply allowed those who hold power to replace menacing weapons with apparently innocuous technological prostheses. But the most efficient police state is precisely the one that has no need for putting police on display.

selves to keep on doing what we are already doing: that is to say, little or nothing.

Because, considering it thoroughly, this is precisely what we should concern ourselves with. How do we become truly dangerous?

Wherever you find injustice, the proper form of politeness is attack.

We are accustomed to thinking of repression as a kind of break with normality that has the aim of restoring the latter. But when repression itself becomes normality, consensus, control and punishment are merely three ways in which a single process articulates itself.

Social control is a constant operation on sensibilities, a gigantic and articulated “sentimental education” of the population. Its characteristic and its strength consist in rendering *natural* what is rather the result of very precise political and economic choices. In the face of something that seems natural, a simple given on which the human being has no grasp, one effectively suspends all judgment and advances into the most complete fatalism. Asking oneself if it is right or wrong to take a high speed train or turn onto the expressway, when one cannot do otherwise, simply appears to be nonsense. The same goes for the myriad of electronic and telecommunications devices that watch us every day. Their introduction never happens all at once, but rather progressively, thus giving the impression that the installation of surveillance cameras and the spread of magnetic cards don’t change the *substance* of the environment in which we live. In fact, an ensemble of details, when it is all done, becomes the substance. In other words, when the possibility of comparing new living environments with those of the past has already materially vanished, and in the place of choice and resistance, at most there remains the vague nostalgia for something that has been lost. In short, technology has replaced Morality and its control over individuals.

insurrectionalists” who, due to a prejudicial hatred against multinationals, decide to strike... the unknowing purchasers of mineral water. The choice falls on anarchists because, aside from the fact that they have distributed some texts which denounce the predation on the part of capital of the most precious of common goods and point out, as the method for opposing such a project, direct attack against those responsible for the present and future water disaster, the institutions and the masters, certainly not the defenseless drinkers. Reminded of an unhappy past, some anarchists immediately respond by writing *The Terrorist State Poisons the Water*, and the matter seems to have lost steam. But such experimentation with social panic — in which the media lynching of some enemies of authority played a complementary role — informs us quite well of the historical period into which we have entered. What will happen next time?

The idea that there might be concrete rebellion against the monopolization of water by economic forces certainly doesn’t please those who are appointed to defend this absolute commodification with ideology or direct repression. Not by chance, while commenting on the events, a journalist wrote — then revealing that the stakes were highest for a handful of anarchists in prison — that we should not “renounce either Farrarelle or Coca Cola”, nor “ever let ourselves be tempted by theories and practices (...) that oppose the springs of Nature to the dams of Industry” (*La Repubblica*, December 10, 2003).

The control that authority exercises toward the entire “social body” cannot just be entrusted to increasingly refined technological means. It still has need of ancient expedients; authority needs to give a face to the fears it generates; it needs this control, more and more stifling, to be accepted.

The plague spreader that judges, politicians and journalists create and display simultaneously becomes in this way the tool for management of the panic unleashed by increasingly unsound social pro-

cesses, and the most insidious enemy from which to be protected, on which to direct an increasingly dark eye.

In the faces of drivers in the peak hours one can discern what the sensibilities in the current world have become. Imprisoned in their steel carcasses, drivers throw the very fact of *existing* in each other's faces. This spreading resentment is a mixture of powerlessness and rancor, indifference and cynicism. Aren't these the distinctive traits of the *totalitarian man* of the 1930's? Precisely because social events exert a crushing weight on him, precisely because she perceives what surrounds her as a hostile world, the "convictions" of the isolated city dweller are abundantly manipulable; in fact, the less capable he is of understanding the product of his activity, the more she will think of acting according to her "convictions", all equally abstract, ephemeral, unverifiable, exactly like the mass media from which he absorbed them. Distant from any relationship with history and nature, she reacts to the immediate stimuli of a techno-sphere that now forms his sole living environment. Contrary to the Promethean dream of a nature completely controlled by man, technological domination has rendered the single individual fragile and frightened as never before in the face of the *objective world* — a world of prostheses, machines and anonymous crowds. Where does one find security?

The opposite of alienation is not control, this eternal police illusion, but rather autonomy.

Experiment on the world

When one says that the war in Iraq is a war for oil — besides being reductive since military aggression is always, simultaneously, political reconstruction and social experiment — the real significance of such an affirmation is not weighed. What, in fact, is oil today?

Many studies commissioned by the oil companies are in agreement in pointing to the exhaustion of crude oil resources in about

ecological catastrophe caused by the poisons of industrial society — , we can understand why the ruling order today feels the ground slipping under its feet. And wherever consensus becomes weaker, fiercer repression returns to prevail again.

Even though we are no longer in the 1920's, with a revolutionary threat strong enough to push a terrorized bourgeoisie to arm the black shirts* against subversives, like then, the ruling order is afraid, it feels vulnerable. Not being able to count on any applause for the cheap scenario that it is staging in an increasingly mediocre way, not knowing how to invent new dramatic strokes in order to rouse the interest of the public, it has recourse once again to the iron fist in order to force its spectators to remain seated in their place.

In 2001 in Genoa, the largest protest demonstration to happen in Italy in the past several years ended with a demonstrator being shot down, a generalized bloodbath through the city streets, an operating torture center on the outskirts — with the consent of the disingenuous supporter of the lawful state. But the repressive "excesses" that we are facing are not the reaction to anything that puts the security of the state in danger. Rather it is a matter of the preventive activity of *generalized persuasion* by a power that fears its own weakness more than the strength of its enemies. This is why it intervenes in advance, in order to avert possible advances from the other side of the barricades. It carries out hundreds of arrests with a dissuasive aim, criminalizes small, isolated acts because they are potentially reproducible, confines undesirable elements in order to prevent them from causing a great disturbance.

Displaying its apparatus, the ruling order also manages to instill the conviction among its enemies of their effective dangerousness: persuasive illusion that would like to push us to the contemplation of a false radical image rather than questioning ourselves about how to practice incisive action against those who are denying every freedom to us. The more convinced we are that we are being repressed because we are already dangerous, the more we will persuade our-

The sound of slippers

Let's discredit a commonplace. A strong ruling order is not based on mere coercion, but rather on the extension of consensus. The sound of the cadenced step of boots is able to inspire reverence and fear, but also rage and resoluteness; the silent dragging step of slippers induces the sleep of resignation. No police force in the world, no matter how fierce, can compete with an apparatus capable of instilling the dominant values day after day. This explains how the recent development of technology and the means of mass communication have permitted and accompanied the disappearance of the last dictatorial regimes scattered through the world, replaced by western-style democracies. Satellite dishes on the roofs of buildings have taken the place of the tanks at street corners. For years it had seemed that the modern state no longer had any need to show its muscle, being able to get what it wanted through enticement and deception. The use of the cudgel was reserved for the unruly few hostile to power, whereas the babble of the chatterer called television was enough to keep the majority of people in check.

Now the situation is changing. On the political level the system of parties has literally exploded, giving life to a constellation of flot-sam, of new formations absorbed by a substantial identity of programs and by a common insipidness. On the economic level, flexibility, introduced in order to bring together technical necessities and those of profit, has thrown thousands of workers and their families into precariousness. On the social level, relationships have progressively deteriorated, giving a clear path to the blindest and most relentless violence, without a future in which to hope, without even a past to regret, with a present that continually refers to its desolate emptiness, it is impossible to create social relationships immune from the rancor, boredom, competition and servility that are born in the crowd through the survival in which each tramples the other.

If we add to this the old phantoms that were thought to be buried — an endless war that expands into every area of the planet, an

ten years (not absolute exhaustion, but the exhaustion of the portion of oil that is extractable with an investment of less energy than what can be drawn from the extracted oil). The curve indicated for natural gas is not many year longer. The same studies inform us that all alternative energy sources (including nuclear power) wouldn't be able to satisfy even half of the current requirements. Not even considering that capital is lacking reserve plans, kept opportunely hidden for the moment, there is no doubt that the problem exists, and that it exposes some historical — if not downright ecological-planetary — limits of the present social organization. It is enough to consider that modern-day agriculture is 95% dependent upon oil (herbicides, pesticides, tractors, industries for manufacturing pieces of machinery and other tools, means for assembling and transporting them, industrial plants to allow all this and so on).

This *oil society* has so generalized the dependence on a single resource (even the extraction of water is subordinated to it, and not only for tubular wells activated by diesel motors) that the scarcity of such a resource is taking shape as a catastrophe. Alternative solutions or not, the sudden change will not be painless and the rulers know it. The war and the guerrilla operations in Iraq are there to confirm it. When agriculture itself, now entirely mechanized, cannot do without a system of death, there is nothing to reform in a society that has produced all this. When the country that claims to be the "beacon of democracy" (the United States) is home to more prisoners than farmers, all the chatter about clean energy and organic cultivation reveal themselves for what they are: the delaying of an ultimatum.

If nazism was the "political organization of the platitude", we can well understand what epoch we have entered by listening to the conversations of our contemporaries.

What is shocking is how the coldest rationalism of bureaucrats can exist side by side — or rather, as if it is inexorably intertwined — with the most bigoted superstitions. The same people who remain skeptical, in their realistic good sense, in the face of the reasons that

reality piles up every day for the camp of subversion, then have diligent faith in the *Wanna Marchios* of every sort.

For example, what is the nationalist leader so often, if not a barker from telemarketing for whom social uprooting has prepared favorable conditions?

The quickest solution

Magic of propaganda and the uprooting of the masses, the Yugoslavia slaughterhouse. Political masterpiece of a bureaucracy that was able to salvage its power by launching the country into a desperate and fratricidal war when driven into the corner by the social disaster that it had itself generated.

In that part of the Balkans, different cultures, religions and languages live together and these differences have been exploited by governments on the basis of the necessities of the moment. At times, in order to gain the consent of some portion of the population, they were granted linguistic space and autonomy; but at other times the horrors of past wars were stirred up in order to cement everyone's adhesion to the federated state, sole instrument that could "hold such different people together" and avert the repetition of massacres. The ethnic discourse, in Tito's Yugoslavia, was always kept alive, like a background hum that was enticing and at the same time frightening.

The decade preceding the outbreak of the war had seen a country lost in mid-stream. On the one side everything that the bureaucrats had to dismantle in haste and fury — a productive system, a social model and the ideology that supported them — in order to keep in step with an external world that was changing more and more rapidly. On the other side, nothing.

The streets were full of the dispossessed that economic restructuring had declared useless, surplus. The wildcat strikes and agitation of those who tried to resist the change made the masters of the

cling to the sanctity and purity of the martyrdom of its children, which even leads those who reject militant religiosity to accept its apocalyptic categories, perhaps from political expediency. It is in this sense that the sympathy with which even secular revolutionary groups look at the kamikazes can be read.

When God makes use of human hands, everything — even indiscriminate slaughter — is justified, and when hope in paradise remains something heavenly, happiness can be found only in sacrifice and martyrdom. These are the words that those who are desperately seeking an Apocalypse that no longer holds any memory of the Millennium cry out to us.

For the moment, the ruling order controls the possibility that this need for the apocalypse could become the dream and practice of social revolt through the authority of fear. It experiments in a manner that is increasingly rapid and chaotic with social alarms with which it continues to hide real problems and ward off every subversive threat. Or else it opposes every more or less broad group that protests with the necessity of a supposed common good that is more and more obviously the good of Nobody, i.e., of the state. The police truncheon, in such a sense, only continues the work of scientists, city planners, "communication experts": social isolation. We live in an epoch of means, in which, behind its appearance of dead times, the continuous catastrophe of Progress hides and hatches enormous social conflicts.

To the lovers of freedom, "keeping their senses quite alert in the face of every humiliation that will be inflicted on them, and disciplining themselves until [...] suffering would no longer have opened the rapid descent of discouragement, but rather the rising path of revolt.

onto the earth. Its strength resides precisely in being a response to mass uprooting that is much broader and more violent than that furnished by ethnic and nationalist discourse. If it is true that the erosion of concrete links between human beings gives birth to their research into the mythologized form, with religious discourse, the community into which the uprooted are invited to integrate themselves is no longer the restricted one of ethnicity or nation, but the potentially immense community of believers. By welding the reference to single territories and specific populations with the *community of believers* (the Moslem *umma*, for example), religious discourse succeeds in confronting social fractures that have the whole world as their theater. Keeping paradise well locked up beyond the heavens, then, fundamentalists describe the planet as a place of corruption that it is impossible to redeem but that can only be governed harshly by the wise ones who incarnate the law of God.

This is how, for example, Islamic fundamentalist groups can penetrate into the heart of the social struggles of half the world, from Palestine to the outskirts of Paris, from Bosnia to Chechnya, in order to bend the immense force of the *refusal of the world* to the service of a political, economic and religious racket that has nothing to do with hopes for a liberated life.

Revolt itself changes form when it fuses with the project of God over the world. We think of the kamikazes who blow themselves up in the midst of civilians. They respond, sometimes simultaneously, to three needs. The first is that for desperate revenge of one who has grown up within a situation of such extreme dispossession as to no longer be able to take into account either her own life or that of others: It matters little whether it is those responsible or those who are merely passive spectators of the extermination. The second is that of one who knows that with his death the implacable hand of God is acting in history, in a struggle between good and evil that puts every ethical consideration aside and that redeems a whole life in sacrifice. The third is that of a piece of the world that has lost confidence in the possibilities of the future to such an extent as to

country tremble, but they collided with disillusion, with the veiled rancor of those who had seen all the promises of socialist propaganda betrayed and were no longer able to discern any future. The rage smoldered and no one could have guessed in which direction it would explode.

It is at this moment that the ethnic hum becomes a roar. The bureaucrats roar, certain that the only way to escape their own responsibility is to convince the exploited that the ones responsible for the crisis are the *foreigners in the fatherland*, so as to splinter them one against the other.

Many of the exploited roar, in the desperate search for a place in the world that has expelled them. At the same moment in which the economy classified them as mere surplus, the ethnic racket readmitted them to the dignity of the world dependent upon their faithfulness to a culture and a community. That this community no longer exists — or never did — is not sufficient for avoiding a black mail that binds the tensions and aspirations of the uprooted to the projects of the masters.

Everything is ready for war, only the consent of the western states, anxious to partition the Balkans after the implosion of the Soviet bloc, is lacking. This clear road arrives quickly, together with the supply of arms for the belligerents.

The horror of the civil war has completely proven the far-seeing Yugoslav bureaucrats, who watered the seeds of ethnic hatred for nearly fifty years, right. Bound to their command posts, they have been able to sign peace treaties, redesign borders, enter into and betray alliances with Westerners, demolish everything that impeded them from integrating into the world market to the sound of bombs. And all those that the economy considered as surplus? Simple, they were eliminated.

The danger of totalitarian interventions is that now, with the population and uprooting in rapid growth everywhere, entire masses of human beings are continu-

ally rendered superfluous in the utilitarian sense of the term. It is as if the political social and economic tendencies of the epoch secretly conspire with instruments contrived for fashioning human beings as superfluous things. The implicit temptation is well understood by the good utilitarian sense of the masses, who in the majority of countries are much too desperate to still be afraid of death. It is to be feared that concentration camps — which undoubtedly represent the quickest solution to the problem of overpopulation, economic superfluity and social uprooting — remain not only as a warning, but also as an example. Totalitarian solutions could survive the fall of their regimes in the form of temptations destined to present themselves again whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social and economic misery in a manner worthy of human beings.

Everything contributes to isolating individuals. Even wage demands are harder from the moment that the basis of conflict is broken up into a myriad of contracts that give workers the impression of being alone before the Company (this universe of constriction and bureaucracy that tends to spread to the entire society). Perhaps this is why forms of struggle are emerging that consist of blocking social normality as such, with strikers who more and more frequently abandon the workplaces in order to overflow onto the arteries of capital (highways, airports, sensitive points of urban traffic). From the moment that any material and ideal solidarity has need of common spaces, tensions toward solidarity are in liquidation together with an atomized society that privatizes places, vexations and anguish. When solidarity takes a new form, for the most part it takes over the empty areas of normality (places of transit not of life). No one now dreams of snatching anything from the masters in order to make it function differently like in the old ideals of emanci-

what is missing are human relationships, the meaning and pride of one's activity, the passions, the force of ideas, mutual recognition, the pleasure of adventure and effort. Only two prospects now correspond to the desert of hearts in these times of war: the Apocalypse and social revolution. Contrary to secular and rationalist illusions, the various forms of fundamentalism are not, in fact, a regurgitation of the past, but rather a *civilized* response to the breakdown of industrial society. The need for sacrifice is the reverse side of a world based entirely on utility and the commodity. Power has always drunk at both fountains.

Between earth and sky

Paradise. Religion has been able to gather the oppressed around the hope for it, soothing them with the obligation of patience and submission. But when paradise ceases to be something to wait for, becoming instead a place to conquer on earth, religious discourse leaves the quality of “opiate of the people” behind in order to become a detonator of the rage of the poor.

In the millenarian tendencies of the Christian Middle Ages, paradise was the place of abundance and freedom, and was supposed to descend from heaven for a Millennium: the Apocalypse would open the door to it, destroying the world of injustice, with a movement that welded human revolt and divine thunderbolts.

The idea of the Apocalypse conveyed the *absolute refusal* of a world that the disinherited could not think of as their own and gave form to a boundless dream, and an equally absolute promise of happiness. In this new era of means, however, the reasons for refusal pile up endlessly while the hope in a different life seems to have been destroyed.

The discourse of the new fundamentalism gives breath to this desperation that on the one hand no longer desires the end of the world and on the other hand no longer wants to bring paradise down

them with weapons are terrorists. The state, any state, that imposes its will with the threat of prison or poverty, is terrorist.

It is true, there is also another form of terrorism. When minds in pain, that wander through the infernal terrain of the commodity, renounce all hope, all vital tension, any joy of living, here and now, this is where their violence tends to empty itself of any consciousness and becomes gloomy. One who believes in God can abandon this unbearable human condition in order to reach the divine, setting off on the path of martyrdom. One who is lacking any faith can only vent their gall for this eternal desolate present. Religious or secular as they may be, it is no longer hatred for those who impose the daily sadness that guides their actions, but merely resentment toward anyone who accepts it.

However, this end of the world can be seen not just as a dusk, but also as a dawn the light of which enflames the heart and sharpens the vision of individuals who are inclined to strike their enemies. Their violence is never blind because they know how to distinguish between those who exercise authority (or strive for it) and those who suffer it, those who laugh at them from the height of their official chair and those who lament from the depths of their desperation. A violence, this one, that does not want to conserve any ancient privilege or demand any new right, but rather to reject them all, and that is born of the awareness that the gates of the prison society in which we are all locked up have no keys and thus will be broken open.

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master — that’s all.”

To those who feel completely uprooted, to the millions who are the damned of the Earth, reformism has nothing to offer. The promise of happiness must be at the height of what is missing. And

pation; unconsciously the feeling makes its way that one can only sabotage a world that is literally unlivable and in this way open new possibilities. Technological normality uselessly tries to sterilize the fruitfulness of the unexpected.

A favor to return

The wildcat strike has come back. We almost didn’t know what it was anymore, we had lost the memory of it.

And yet for many years it had made the masters’ knees tremble, causing the rediscovery of the joy and pleasure of insubordination among those forced to work. Finally, a handful of irresponsibles have decided to dust off this old friend of the *enraged*, pulling it out of the box where responsible adjustment and civil democratic dialogue had buried it for many years. But these irresponsibles have a particularity: they are the drivers of the streetcars and buses that deposit us at work, at school or at the supermarket every day. And without them, everything stops. This is the impudence that has caused the politicians and masters to get so furious, and it is also the same thing that has managed to fill the heart of so many of the exploited who have seen in the transit workers a rediscovered possibility. A kick in the stomach to imposed rules, a way out from the fraudulent limits of union negotiations, an effort that, for once, has tried to start from self-organization and not from the policy tables.

The transit workers have banished the union hypocrites, accustomed to speaking in the name of all, to the role that lies within their competence: that of the bureaucrat, of the punctilious compiler of lists with the names of rebels (participants in the strikes and pickets), of the attentive and devoted complicit guide of the police. Thus, for once, the unions — that had guaranteed the government that they could control and manage the struggle — have found themselves with a fistful of wastepaper, the union cards that many workers have torn up.

For the first time in many years, the wildcat has forced the regional governors to mobilization. And when it is the police who make the streetcars run, everything becomes clearer: in social struggle everyone gets what s/he manages to conquer through force. On one side there is the force of the exploited who organize themselves autonomously and on the other side that of the state and the masters, of the police and propaganda.

The government for its part has done no more than repeat the same old song, good for any and every season: “the transit workers are urban terrorists”.

In the meantime, the struggle of the irresponsibles continues and extends itself, armed with the solidarity that has marked it from the beginning. The wildcat strike that began in Milan has reached the majority of Italian cities — despite criminalization, disciplinary and penal procedures started by managers and judges — and it doesn’t appear to have any intention of stopping.

For our part, we who are not transit workers, we can only hope that the cat has nine lives and is an example for other workers. Let’s take advantage then of the time the transit workers give us by preventing us from going to work, from attending school, from burying our lives in a world of commodities. Let’s grasp the occasion in which we can travel on foot in order to rediscover a world no longer enslaved to time, in order to learn to enjoy the taste of absenteeism. Who knows, as we look around ourselves and talk among ourselves, perhaps a fitting manner of returning the favor will come to mind.

“The young people who protest the police” — a lady says — “I don’t understand them. At bottom, we are not in a dictatorship at all,” she adds, while the bus onto which she climbed has been escorted now for some months in certain neighborhoods by a police squad, with police who can board at any time in order to carry out surprise checks. Might the proposal of the left to send police onto the streetcars during the next wildcat strike of drivers clarify her ideas? It is really true that the people of capital are a stoic people.

sorrow and death: our stomach protests, overwhelmed by a feeling of nausea. This doesn’t prevent any of us from living in the midst of violence, justifying it, applauding it, employing it. Let it be said once and for all, every absolute condemnation of violence is hypocrisy. The world will never be a convent where peace of the senses and stomachs rules.

Thus, it is interesting to note how those who verbally rail the most against violence are the same ones who make extensive use of it, after having institutionally taken it away from the single individual. Being the one who holds the monopoly on violence, drawing enormous benefits from it, the state does not love competitors and defends itself against them. On the one hand, it sprinkles violence with brimstone, in a way that makes it feel untouchable to anyone who has the boldness to approach it. On the other hand, when the subterfuge fails, it has recourse to slander against anyone who refuses to deprive themselves of such a possibility.

So let’s imagine when the weapon is pointed against the state itself! Yesterday the nazis called the population to beware of the partisans because they were all “bandits”, today democrats do the same thing with all rebels, thought of as “terrorists”. In every era and latitude, power needs to demonize its enemies. Thus, after the confiscation of violence, there is the confiscation of the words that signify it. After the hypocritical condemnation of violence, there is the hypocritical condemnation of terrorism. A state, the enemy of terrorism? Impossible, it is a contradiction in terms. At minimum, such a state would have to disband the army and the police, a prelude to its own disappearance. In fact, terrorism is characterized by being indiscriminate violence in the service of power. Soldiers who bomb entire territories, making thousands of victims among civilians are terrorists. The men in uniform who charge demonstrations, smashing the heads and breaking the bones of anyone who appears before them, are terrorists. The judges who support them with laws, the politicians who give them orders, the industrialists who furnish

of the past, in order to redeem their suffering, in order to again take up the thread of their revolt. Turning around to gape before political programs for the future: this is the cause of their defeat.

From the scarcity of water to that of oil, from necrotechnology to the nuclear industry, from the very real abstraction of the financial game to the continuing liquidation of productive systems, capital now exists in a constant flight forward, of which permanent war is simultaneously the product and the mark. Like a clumsy elephant in the classical china shop, each of its movements is the cause of disasters which it remedies with even worse disasters. The processes that it triggers are now so quick and deep as to produce social and environmental effects that are uncontrollable for the rulers themselves. Increasingly, the children of capitalist violence are tossed about from one side of the planet to the other. Far too numerous to be absorbed in industrial production, they are treated as mere demographic growth to keep an eye on and, if necessary, to eliminate. From shantytowns to concentration camps for undocumented immigrants, from the outskirts of metropolises to the ghettos of occupied territories, the reservations of the market paradise sprout up everywhere. With what hope of stemming the hatred that is the only capital accumulated by the exploited? It is much too late for lessons in civic education.

Brimstone, gall and fire

— Look, there is someone standing in the middle of the street and he has a smoking weapon in his hand. Whoever could it be? — A dreadful terrorist, there is no doubt. — No, wait, he is wearing a uniform; he is a brave guardian of order...

There are truly few words capable of provoking an almost unanimous indignation. *Violence* is one of these since it brings back blood,

Democracy

In these “vile and desolate” times, the control of the masses is, as never before, the priority of democratic regimes: democracies are totalitarian dictatorships that take refuge behind the veil of the constitution in order to reduce us to slavery, prevent us from developing an autonomous thought that goes beyond the plasma of our television set. Television is the atomic bomb of our day: every day it mows down unknowing victims reducing us to hamsters, free to go round on the wheel, but only in the enclosure of our cages.

[Here, in the Italian text, there is a long list of actions of the rulers and their lackeys against the exploited, and particularly against those who dare to rebel. It is not so important for those in English-speaking countries to know all these details, as to examine the situation in their own country and look for the means of fighting against it there]

Uncertainty is also penetrating into the camp of the rulers. The increasingly massive use of state terror is evidence that the current ruling order, equipped with a technological and military apparatus without precedent, is still socially extremely fragile. This is why its objective consists in making sure that the civilized continue *not to talk with each other*, prey to an empty anxiety without reference that the various Ministries of Fear try to direct toward the scapegoat of the moment.

It is not a strong power that sends the political police to an institution of higher education because some students displayed a banner against the war in Iraq.

The most important aspect of the struggles that are going on, that block normality and its deafening chatter, is precisely that they bring dialogue into the streets, rendering it *practical*. Very often what is born in terms of human relations is more interesting — and more intelligent — by far than the very demands that are at their origins.

As we all know, the less banal and inoffensive the activity, the more the people who practice it will cease to be so.

Dialogue between dream and memory

The traveler who found herself visiting the Kabyle region, in northwest Algeria in these past few years, would certainly be surprised at the deteriorated condition of the police stations. The things standing out on the horizon are only the deserted and looted remains of the sinister buildings that once inspired so much fear in the locals. Indeed, because the police have had to abandon their posts in the region driven out and stoned by the insurgent population.

In the spring of 2001, the killing of a student — which happened precisely in one of those stations — made the rage of the population, which was scarred by the worsening of the economic situation and the arrogance of the military masters of the country, explode. The movement born from these events has involved all the inhabitants of the region and is organized in a horizontal manner in village assemblies in which decisions are made through unanimity. Without leaders and autonomous from parties, this movement has been able to keep the forces of the state in check for two years, chasing the police out of the territory, sabotaging elections, attacking the offices of administrative and judiciary power.

In every corner of the planet, insurrectional flare-ups follow one after the other but always seem fated to burn out much too quickly. What is surprising about the Kabyle insurrection, however, is its duration. So let's try to take a look at the totality of circumstances that have allowed them to resist for so long.

At the time of the uprising, life in the villages was not yet conquered in all of its aspects by capitalist modernity nor completely demolished by past state socialism. The habit of autonomy and the mastery of the techniques of subsistence has survived, and with this the meaning of concrete dialogue among the inhabitants — since they still have the tools for acting well in hand and the capacity for using them, it is easier to discuss what they want to obtain and how. Relationships of mutual solidarity and common pride are still

alive, together with a collective memory that carries within itself the marks of an age-old tradition of resistance to every invader.

Thus, the revolt has been able to avail itself of *concrete spaces* of direct dialogue and self-organization, broadening the networks and social relationships of the life of the villages. At the same time it has occupied an *ideal space*, fishing out from history the ancient organizational model of the tribes — the *aarch* — that reached its peak in the struggle against the French occupiers in 1871. Uniting these two levels that were already present in their reality, even if in a disconnected way, these rebels have found what every revolt must be able to build very quickly if it is to survive and strengthen itself — and what more and more often must be invented from nothing.

It is noted that every insurrectional rupture is an opportunity for learning something, the opening of a space in which to experiment with freedom and get to know its enemies. The Kabyle uprising of 2001 exploded at the end of a twenty-year journey through innumerable risings, in which the history of Algeria has been the history of the struggle of the Algerians against the *hogra* — a term that is always used to indicate the arrogance and abuse of the rich over the poor, of the powerful over the population. A twenty-year period in which the rebels, uprising after uprising, have learned to call governments by their right name, murderers. A twenty-year period in which Algerians have been able to directly examine the morality of the Islamic fundamentalist, so much so as to be horrified by it. A twenty-year period in which parties, which seek to profit from the rage of the exploited in order to cut themselves a slice of power, have been exposed for what they are, traitors.

In short, a twenty-year period in which the insurgents have been forced to rediscover the necessity of acting for themselves, in which the problem of self-organization has been posed by the reality of the struggle itself.

Insurgents always proceed with their backs to the future. Their gaze remains turned toward the oppressed