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A Few Words: *Avoiding Moral Vanguardism*

“What power fears most is anonymous, generalized rebellion. [...] by the use of monograms and programmes we see the creation of an identity that separates revolutionaries from the rest of the exploited, making them visible to power and putting themselves in a condition that lends itself to representation.”

— from *At Daggers Drawn*

Anarchists have generally agreed that a world free of authority, hierarchy and domination could not be created using vanguardist means. Thus, anarchists have usually avoided the formation of political parties or similar organizational forms to “lead the people” to revolt.¹ But other subtle forms of vanguardism can easily creep into our methods and practice if care is not taken to avoid them.

Probably the most widespread form of vanguardism in anarchist circles is that which proposes a kind of evangelistic educational practice intended to spread anarchist ideas among the exploited classes. But I have discussed the problems with this approach before and want to examine another form of subtle vanguardism: moral vanguardism.

In the struggle against the institutions of domination, attack is essential. The social relationships that enforce this social order must be overturned, and this requires the destruction of the projects and structures of the ruling order. While it is true that in order to move toward social insurrection and revolution, such attacks must expand and become generalized, it is absurd to use this necessity as an excuse for doing nothing now. Facing this social reality that is impoverishing our lives and poisoning this world, every act of revolt is justified. But where widespread social insurrection does not exist, it is of great importance not to create a role or image of what one comrade called “specialists in destruction” and “specialists in revolution” for ourselves.

¹ I have little knowledge of the nature of the “Liberal Party started by the Magon brothers in Mexico in the early 1900’s as part of that revolution, but Petr Arshinov’s “Organizational Platform” developed in 1926 had vanguardist connotations clear enough to cause most anarchists of that time

There are a number of factors that can play into creating this specialist role. Since acts of vandalism, sabotage and destructive attack are, in fact, relatively common responses to alienation, frustration with the realities of social existence and boredom with a life where most relationships are commodified and most adventures outlawed, it is clearly not the fact that conscious revolutionaries and anarchists carry out such acts that leads to this specialization. Rather the problem lies in the way in which social, political or moral agenda behind the attacks are dealt with.

Exploited individuals without a conscious revolutionary perspective who attack something that diminishes their existence are acting only for themselves in the immediate present and so feel no need to communicate the reasons for their actions. Anarchists and revolutionaries — though hopefully also acting for themselves — carry out their actions in the context of an ongoing project of revolt, and so they often have reasons for wanting to communicate why they took a particular action. So communiqués, signed or not, are issued explaining why a particular act of sabotage, vandalism, arson and so on occurred.

Just as it would be too simple to merely reject this sort of action, it would also be too simple to reject the use of communiqués. In specific circumstances, attacks of this sort with a corresponding explanation may be quite significant in the expansion of social struggle. But if such communications create and/or reinforce a separation between conscious anarchists and the exploited, they become an obstruction in the path of generalized revolt and self-organization.

In the United States, the most common attacks made by anarchists and revolutionaries in recent years have involved the sabotage of environmentally destructive enterprises, animal experimentation and the development of genetically engineered organisms. Communiqués have played a major part in making these actions known. At the same time, the wording of the communiqués, the ways in which they are signed and even the ways in which the actions themselves are communicated often leave a general impression of groups that specialize in the use of sabotage and arson in defense of the earth and its “defenseless” non-human creatures. If the repeated use of specific names in connection with these actions helps to reinforce this image of specialization, what is probably far more significant in separating those who carry out these actions from the exploited and their struggles is the moralistic language that is so frequently used in the communiqués. The image put forth is that of a moral vanguard of earth defenders and animal defenders putting themselves on the line in defense of the defenseless. It may be that most people who are carrying out these actions do not see themselves in this way, but their communiqués often reinforce this image by substituting moral arguments for a thorough analysis of the relationship of these specific aspects of exploitation to the totality of this exploitative society.

“The fact that the occupiers center the outcome of their actions of self-organization egoistically around themselves is the best guarantee of the authenticity of what they say.”

— from *Against the Legalization of Occupied Spaces*

The various acts of sabotage, vandalism, reappropriation and other forms of revolt carried out by exploited individuals who do not describe themselves as “revolutionary” or “anarchist” have their basis in the very egoist desire to take back their own lives and find their own pleasures and adventures. Often the situation in which such actions take place encourage an expansive egoism in which collective self-organization provides the basis for trust. Those with causes may change their cause at any time — in line with the latest political fad — and will be viewed by most of the exploited like any other politician.

If we anarchists would also act above all for ourselves against our own domination and exploitation, this would provide us with an authentic basis for expressing the reasons behind our actions. If our analyses provide us with a clearer understanding of how and why to act against domination, our actions will, nonetheless, not be those of a vanguard, but of expansive egoists seeking others with whom we can create that that insurrection that will be the collective self-organization of the individual struggle for freedom.

to oppose it.

Against Compromise

Compromise is always a matter of renunciation, of giving something up. Therefore, those who portray the refusal of compromise as a closing down of possibilities are perpetrating a swindle, a precise reversal of reality. Compromise functions through reduction. Each individual gives up a bit of herself here, a crumb there, and on and on until all that was, in fact, individual is worn away, and everyone is a cipher equal to each other, an equality defined as each being nothing.

The only possibilities that can exist in such a situation are those that are acceptable (or at least bearable) to all. In this way, the possibility of exploring anything new, any initiatives that open out to elsewhere, is subject to the exigencies of the survival of the group as a whole. Every group formed through compromise, through coming to an agreement by renouncing differences exists in a precarious balance. The repressed singularity of each of its members surges below the surface. And so the unknown — whether a catastrophe striking from the outside or a new initiative from within the group, a proposal to experiment — is always a threat to such groups. Therefore, for the most part, they avoid experimentation, stick to the agreed upon program and only carry out “initiatives” that are really just simple repetitions, maybe with minor adjustments, of what they have always done, in other words, rituals. Doing anything else could create a rupture that would allow the full deluge of difference, of individual desires, passions, ideas and dreams, to burst forth actively in the world with all the conflict this would inevitably involve.

The groups that are brought together by a coercive necessity imposed by the ruling order — nation-states, workplaces, bureaucracies, etc. — maintain their balance through laws, rules, chains of command, methods of discipline and correction, punishments and methods of isolating those who do not conform. Because the state and capital do not allow any “outside” to exist anywhere in the world, the coercive institutions through which they operate are imposed upon everyone, and so force everyone to compromise to some extent. Thus, for example, in order to fulfill our needs and desires and to carry out our projects, those of us who desire a world without money, property or commodity exchange are forced by the current social order to deal with all of these things on one level or another — by working, by stealing, by begging, by offering goods and services in exchange for whatever it is we want. But coerced compromise can nonetheless be met defiantly and with dignity, and one’s singularity is maintained in this defiant attitude.

Having to deal daily with the humiliation of the coerced compromises imposed by the ruling order, certainly in our struggle against it we do not want to leave any place for compromise. Since this struggle is precisely against domination and exploitation, it is the place for experimenting freedom. And from an anarchist perspective (by which I mean a perspective that rejects all domination, all hierarchy, all authority), this means the freedom of each individual to determine her own life in free association with whom he chooses. Of course, this rules out any negotiation with the state or other ruling institutions. If we compromise with the ruling order in the way we carry out our struggle, then we are already defeated, because such a compromise would place the determination of the conditions of our supposed struggle against this social order into the hands of those whose interests it serves. They would define our opposition; they would define our struggle. Autonomy would cease to be anything more than a fine-sounding abstract word to be flung around for the warm feeling it gives us.

A sad example of what I mean can be seen in what happened to the occupations struggle in Europe when a significant portion of this movement decided to “struggle” for legalization. What had originated as a movement of direct action and self-organization was largely transformed into a movement for social assimilation and state assistance. Those occupied spaces that refused to have any dialogue with the state often found themselves isolated, and in several instances — Germany providing the most profound example — the movement for legalization effectively provided the basis for crushing the occupations movement. In addition, the assimilation inherent in these negotiations has led to the disappearance of opposition or its deformation into purely symbolic and spectacular forms (the now disbanded Tute Bianche, which originated in legalized social centers in northern Italy, being a prime example of the latter).

But in the process of carrying out our revolutionary project it is equally important to refuse to base our relationships with our comrades on compromise. If indeed our aim is really the liberation of every individual so that each can determine her own life on her own terms with those with whom he feels affinity (and what else could the rejection of all domination be?), then there is no place for renunciation in the name of a greater good and, thus, no place for compromise. This does not mean that each individual must be isolated from every other individual. Clearly, in order to carry out activities together, we need to discuss our aims, our desires, our needs, our ideas, our aspirations. But the aim of such discussion — if we are seeking a world of free relationships — would not be to create a common ground through the denial of real differences, reducing everything to the lowest common denominator. Rather it would aim to clarify the differences, to bring out the singular desires and dreams of each individual involved, to discover the commonality that springs from our enjoyment of each others’ singularity (without forgetting

that we will not enjoy everyone's singular being), the commonality that is based on real affinity between unique individuals. Such affinity can only be discovered through developing a real deep knowledge of each other, a task which requires that our discussions have the precise aim of discovering our differences, what is unique in each of us, not of suppressing them in the name of a unity that will leave everyone dissatisfied.

The rejection of compromise in our struggle goes hand in hand with the rejection of formality. In order to create a formal organization, it is necessary to create both an ideological framework and a practical program on which the organization is based. The ideological framework marks the boundaries within which theoretical and analytical exploration is permitted, and the practical program marks the boundaries within which practical initiative and projects are to operate. Individuals who wish to participate in the organization must pare down their individuality in order to fit within these boundaries, renouncing those parts of themselves that do not serve the greater good of the organization as a whole. Thus, by its nature, the formal group comes to dominate that individuals who participate in it. Since this domination of the group over the individual stems from the boundaries set by the ideological framework and practical program that are the defining traits (along with membership roles and the quantitative delusion), one can say that it reflects the closing down of possibilities that is inherent in compromise.

While we anarchists are quick to discuss which methods of decision-making are most suited to our aims, we seem far less willing to talk about the contexts in which these methods are to be used. Within the context of a formal organization in which the theoretical and practical parameters of discussion are already set and the individuals involved in the decision-making process are members of the organization, i.e., parts of a greater whole, both unanimity and majority decision can only operate as a power over individuals in the group, since every decision must be made in terms of the needs of the organization as a whole. Thus, whatever decision may be reached through whatever method, it will always involve the submission of the individual and her desires and aspirations to the group as a whole.

In the realm of informality, where organization is temporary, with the aim of accomplishing a specific task, discussion does not have such parameters, the only parameters being the task at hand. Individuals can bring the whole of themselves, their dreams and passions, their ideas and desires, the whole of their imaginations into it. Since there is no formal structure the survival of which must be guaranteed, there is nothing to fetter the exploration of possibilities. Discussion can center around how to carry out whatever project is being explored in such a way as to realize the desires of each of the individuals involved in carrying it out. In this informal context, at least if it is to realize the singularity of each individual, there is obviously no place for a majority-based method of decision-making. Unanimity

is necessary simply because it is the only way to guarantee that the decisions made fully reflect each individual involved. In this case, wholeness is not seen as the trait of a group, but rather of each individual involved in the project at hand, who have come together on the basis of affinity, not unity in the name of a higher cause (even if that cause is called “revolution” or “anarchy”). So when significant differences arise there is no need to resolve them through negotiation and compromise. Rather those involved can recognize that they have reached the limits of their affinity and can therefore chose to go their separate ways continuing their struggles as they see fit. So though it is true that within a formal context even unanimity is guaranteed to be a power over individuals, within the context of informality it can be a tool for creating collective projects in which the interests of each individual involved have priority.

As an anarchist, I desire social revolution precisely because it opens the possibility for creating a world in which each individual is able to create her life as his own in free association with those with whom she feels affinity. Social revolution is, in fact, a rupture of existing social relationships, a breakdown of the functioning of social control and so opens out into the unknown, where possibilities for freedom and self-organization may be found. Formal “revolutionary” organizations and “alternative” institutions are formed precisely to avoid this opening into the unknown. How often have I heard some anarchist proclaim the necessity to find something to replace the state and capitalist institutions, as if these have ever served any truly human purpose! But the built-in limitations of these “revolutionary” institutions guarantee not too much will change. They are brakes on the upheaval that is bringing the collapse of the old world. And so they close down possibilities, enclosing them within their own framework, and the world of compromise returns, often with the added brutality of the moral judgments of true believers against those who go too far. The expansion of the possibilities opened up by the insurrectionary break, the full exploration of the panorama of self-determination and of the “collective movement of individual realization”, requires, above all, indomitable individuals who associate on the basis of affinity and the pleasure they find in each others’ singularity, refusing every compromise.

This method is better known in the United States as consensus, but I prefer this term since it distinguishes the method from social consensus, and in my mind lacks certain collectivist connotations that I associate with consensus.

The Machinery of Control: A Critical Look at Technology

“Criticizing technology [...] means considering its general framework, seeing it not simply is an assemblage of machinery, but as a social relationship, a system; it means understanding that a technological instrument reflects the society that produces it, and that its introduction changes relations between individuals. Criticizing technology means refusing to subordinate human activity to profit.”

– from *At Daggers Drawn*

Technology does not develop in a vacuum, independently of the social relationships of the order in which it develops. It is the product of a context, and so inevitably reflects that context. Thus, the claim that technology is neutral has no basis. It could not possibly be any more neutral than the other systems developed to guarantee the reproduction of the current social order – government, commodity exchange, marriage and the family, private property, ... Thus a serious revolutionary analysis necessarily needs to include a critical assessment of technology.

By technology, I do not mean simply tools, machines or even “an assemblage of machinery” as individual entities, but rather an integrated system of techniques, machinery, people and materials designed to reproduce the social relationships that prolong and advance its existence. In order to be clear from the start, I am not saying that technology produces social relationships, but rather that it is designed to reproduce them in accordance with the needs of the ruling system.

Before capitalism came to dominate social relationships, tools, techniques and even a number of machines had been created and applied to specific tasks. There were even some systematic applications of techniques and machinery that could be considered technological in the fullest sense of the word. It is interesting to note that these latter were applied most fully precisely where power required strict order – in monasteries, in the torture chambers of the inquisition, in galleys, in the creation of monuments to power, in the bureaucratic, military and police structures of powerful empires like dynastic China. But they remained largely peripheral to the daily life of the vast majority of people who tended to use tools and techniques that they created themselves as individuals or within their small community.

With the rise of capitalism, the necessity for the large-scale extraction and development of resources led to the bloody and ruthless expropriation of all that had been shared communally by the newly developing capitalist ruling class (a process that was extended internationally through the building of colonial empires) and the development of an increasingly integrated technological system that allowed the maximum efficiency in the use of resources including labor power. The aims of this system were increased efficiency in the extraction and development of resources and increased control over the exploited.

The earliest applications of industrial techniques occurred on board mercantile and naval ships and on the plantation. The latter was in fact was a new system of large-scale farming for profit that could develop at the time due to the dispossession of peasants in Europe — especially Britain — providing a quantity of indentured servants and criminals sentenced to hard labor and the development of the African slave-trade that tore people from their homes and forced them into servitude. The former was also largely based on the dispossession of the exploited classes — many of whom found themselves kidnapped and forced into labor on the ships. The industrial system imposed in these contexts did not so much have a basis in an assemblage of manufactured machines as in the method of work coordination in which the workers were the gears of the machine and if one failed to do his part it would put the entire structure of work at risk.

But there were specific aspects of this system that threatened it. The plantation system, by bringing together various dispossessed groups with differing knowledge and experiences, allowed interactions that could provide a basis for illegal association and shared revolt. Sailors who lived in slave-like conditions on the ships also provided a means of communication between different places creating a kind of internationalism of the dispossessed. The records of illegal associations and insurrections around the north Atlantic seaboard in the 1600's and 1700's involving all races of the dispossessed with little evidence of racism are inspiring, but it also forced capitalism to develop its techniques further. A combination of racial ideology and a division of labor was used to form rifts between black slaves and the indentured servants of European ancestry. In addition, though capital would never be able to do without the transportation of goods and resources, for economic as well as social reasons it began to shift emphasis to the manufacturing of resources into goods for sale on a large scale.

The reliance on small-scale artisans to manufacture goods was dangerous to capital in several ways. Economically, it was slow and inefficient and did not place enough of the profit into the hands of the ruling class. But more significantly the relative independence of the artisans made them difficult to control. They determined their own hours, their own work speed and so on. Thus, the factory system

that had already proven fairly efficient on ships and plantations was applied as well to the manufacturing of goods.

So the industrial system was not simply (or even primarily) developed because it was a more efficient way for manufacturing goods. Capitalists are not particularly interested in the manufacturing of goods as such. Rather they manufacture goods simply as a necessary part of the process of expanding capital, creating profit and maintaining their control over wealth and power. Thus, the factory system — this integration of techniques, machines, tools, people and resources that is technology as we know it — was developed as a means for controlling the most volatile part of the production process — the human worker. The factory is in fact set up like a huge machine with each part — including the human parts — integrally interconnected with each other part. Although the perfecting of this process took place over time as class struggle showed the weaknesses in the system, this central aim was inherent in industrial technology from the beginning, because it was the reason behind it. The Luddites recognized as much and this was the source of their struggle.

If we recognize that the technology developed under capitalism was developed precisely to maintain and increase the control of the capitalist ruling class over our lives, there is nothing surprising about the fact that those technical advances that weren't specific responses to class struggle at the work place have occurred most often in the area of military and policing techniques. Cybernetics and electronics provide means of gathering and storing information on levels never known before, allowing for far greater surveillance over an increasingly impoverished and potentially rebellious world population. They also allow the decentralization of power without any loss of control to the rulers — the control resides precisely in the technological systems developed. Of course, this stretching of the web of control over the entire social sphere also means that it is very fragile. Weak links are everywhere, and creative rebels find them. But the necessity for control that is as total as possible moves the rulers of this order to accept these risks, hoping that they will be able to fix the weak links quickly enough.

So technology as we know it, this industrial system of integrated techniques, machinery, people and resources, is not neutral. It is a specific tool, created in the interests of the ruling class, that was never intended to serve to meet our needs and desires, but rather to maintain and extend the control of the ruling order. Most anarchists recognize that the state, private property, the commodity system, the patriarchal family and organized religion are inherently dominating institutions and systems that need to be destroyed if we are to create a world in which we are all free to determine our lives as we see fit. Thus, it is strange that the same understanding is not applied to the industrial technological system. Even in this age when factories provide no space for any sort of individual initiative, when communications

are dominated by huge systems and networks accessible to every police agency and which determine how one can use them, when the technological system as a whole requires humans as little more than hands and eyes, maintenance workers and quality control inspectors, there are still anarchists who call for “taking over the means of production”. But the technological system that we know is itself part of the structures of domination. It was created to more efficiently control those exploited by capital. Like the state, like capital itself, this technological system will need to be destroyed in order for us to take back our lives. What this means with regards to specific tools and techniques will be determined in the course of our struggle against the world of domination. But precisely in order to open the way to possibilities for creating what we desire in freedom, the machinery of control will have to be destroyed.

No Act of Revolt is Futile

Class struggle exists in all of the individual and collective acts of revolt in which small portions of life are taken back or small portions of the apparatus of domination and exploitation are obstructed, damaged or destroyed. In a significant sense, there are no isolated acts of revolt. All such acts are responses to the social situation, and many involve some level of implicit complicity, indicating some level of collective struggle. Consider, for example the spontaneous, mostly unspoken organization of the reappropriation of goods and sabotage of the work process that goes on at many workplaces; this informal coordination of subversive activity carried out in the interest of each individual involved is the best anarchist conception of collective activity, because this sort of collectivity exists to serve the interests and desires of each of the individuals involved in reappropriating their lives and carries within it a conception of different ways of relating free of exploitation and domination. But even apparently lone acts of revolt have their social aspects and are part of the general struggle of the exploited. Both for this reason and because of the personal sense of joy and satisfaction that the individual finds in such acts, it needs to be recognized that no act of revolt is futile.

Capital, the state and their technological apparatus constitute a worldwide social order of domination. It is therefore necessary for the rebellious struggles of individuals to come together in order to create social revolution. Since even individual acts of revolt have a social aspect and are often more collective in nature than they appear due to implicit complicity, such a development is not so far-fetched should the right circumstances arise. But to be very clear, I am not talking about waiting until the right circumstances occur to act (all too often an excuse for passivity), but rather about seizing the opportunity in the ongoing practice of revolt of taking it further whenever one can.

Social revolution is a rupture with our current mode of existence, an upheaval of social conditions and relationships in which the functioning of political and economic institutions break down. As I see it, the aim of anarchists in this situation is to struggle for the complete destruction of these institutions — the state, property, work, commodity exchange, the technology of social control, every institution of domination — in order to open the field of possibilities for self-organization. Thus, the revolutionary project is essentially negative and destructive. Our aim is not to create counter-institutions to replace the state and capital, but to put an end to

the current global situation in which a few determine the conditions under which everyone lives, so that every individual becomes free to create life on their own terms in association with whom they choose. So it is not a political struggle, an attempt to put a political program into effect, but rather a social struggle. It is fitting for a movement that opposes all hierarchy and leadership that we should not offer models for a post-revolutionary society. In fact, ideally, there would be no “after the revolution”, but rather an ongoing tension of expanding possibilities, a fluidity of social and asocial relationships that refuse to congeal into institutions but rather center around the creation of desires, interests, projects and passions always based on the conscious refusal to be ruled. Thus, I am talking of a total transformation on all levels of existence that never ends, a leap into the unknown of freedom that offers no guarantees except those that may be found in the resolute determination of every individual never to be ruled again.

Not Just Producers

The worker has been recruited by the business. Not only for what remains of her productive capacity, that is for what his specific competence allows him to furnish to the structure that directs and uses her in exchange for a wage, but also for her participation in the management of the qualitative processes. What does it mean?

It means that one of the possible solutions for capitalist troubles is given by “total quality”. On the basis of this concept it could go out into a future that is already at the door, leaving behind the difficulty of disposing of goods on the market. Each enterprise no longer works to find clients, but rather to forcefully characterize the “quality” of its products, distinguishing from them others and seeking to achieve the best.

But in order to make the quality of products increase, it is necessary to restructure the entire productive process, dividing it into separate processes each one determining the others. It is as if one sector is the client of another within a single enterprise. This creates the situation in which when the sector that commissions a part as a product receives it (in order to continue production), this sector controls it, insisting on demanding the best, and obliged to report the poor functioning of the previous sector to the management if the part does not correspond to what was requested. And it continues in this way until the productive cycle is completed.

Thus, the individual processes into which production is divided (within a single enterprise) cause the workers to participate not only in production (participation that is already somewhat circumscribed in the large productive units to the extent that the introduction of automation has transformed the classical process), but primarily in control.

The incentives to quality are in fact a carrot dangling under the nose of the workers that transforms them into productive police inside the enterprise, definitively dismembering every trace of unity, every memory of solidarity.

— Canenero

Revolutionary Solidarity: An insurrectionary anarchist perspective

“Solidarity lies in action. Action that sinks its roots in one’s own project [...] that above all makes us free ourselves...” — Daniela Carmignani

Revolutionary solidarity is not essentially a question of moral, financial or physical support, but something far deeper, because it is essentially egoistically centered. The basis for revolutionary solidarity lies in recognizing one’s own project of revolt in the struggles and actions of others and thus seeing these others, at least potentially, as accomplices in struggle.

Therefore, revolutionary solidarity can only exist when one has a clear project of revolt from which it can sprout. The nature of the insurrectionary anarchist project is the reappropriation of one’s own life in open conflict with every form of domination and exploitation; it is the overturning of existing social relationships and the destruction of all hierarchy and authority and of the commodity system with the aim of opening the fullest possibilities for free association. It is this that forms the basis from which I, as an exploited individual fighting to take back my life and a conscious insurrectionary anarchist, determine and express revolutionary solidarity.

From this it should be clear that I see no possibility for solidarity between insurrectionary anarchists and any group that claims to lead, represent or even (like so many politicians of the democratic left) serve any struggle. In their specialized role as spokespeople for (their version of) whatever specific struggle, hierarchy and authority already exist. They are contenders for power and, thus, its practical accomplices. So it shouldn’t be surprising that at one point or another, the leaders of these groups begin to make demands of the current rulers, demands that are the first step to negotiation and taking one’s place within the current social order.

But every social struggle has many different layers and facets. While various political, union or guerrilla groups strive to impose their “service” on the struggles of the exploited and excluded, many individuals go on carrying out their struggles autonomously, organizing their attempts to take back their lives and attack what

stands in their way in free association with others of their choosing. In any struggle, we find our accomplices, those with whom we can act in solidarity, among these individuals.

And what does it mean to act in solidarity with others in struggle? Above all, it means to carry on our own struggle against every form of domination and exploitation where we are. The state, capital and all the institutions through which they exercise their power constitute a totality, and every attack on a part, even the tiniest subversion, the least statement of self-organized revolt, is an attack on the whole. But there are points where my struggle more specifically intersects with that of others. This is where solidarity can have its clearest expressions. Consider, for example, the uprising that began in Argentina last December. It was sparked by economic policies put into play by specific institutions. These institutions have offices, functionaries, properties and connections with other institutions throughout the world and exercise their exploitative practices everywhere. Specifically targeted actions against these institutions and their connections anywhere in the world could provide a clear statement of solidarity with those in revolt in Argentina. Similarly, solidarity with prisoners' struggles could find statement in attacks against institutions, corporations and functionaries involved in the prison industry that are often involved in other exploitative projects that affect all of our lives. The possibilities are as broad as our imaginations.

In the same way, solidarity with anarchists who have been imprisoned is manifested by acting as their accomplices, continuing our struggles against the state and capital, the source of their imprisonment. Taking action that makes the link of complicity between our revolt and that of our imprisoned comrades obvious only requires a bit of knowledge and creativity.

Revolutionary solidarity is the active statement of a link between projects of struggle and revolt. It is a relationship of complicity, not of service or support (though under specific circumstances, in the context of mutual aid between comrades, one might incorporate some form of support into a relationship of solidarity). One enters into it in terms of one's own project, without compromise. Thus, as an insurrectionary anarchist, as an individual in revolt against every form of domination, exploitation and hierarchy, my solidarity is always only with those aspects of a struggle in which individuals act autonomously to take back their own lives and organize their own relationships and activities freely, striving to destroy everything that obstructs these attempts, particularly the organizations and leaders who claim to represent the struggle.

The force of insurrection is social, not military. Generalized rebellion is not measured by the armed clash but by the extent to which the economy is paralyzed, the places of production and distribution taken

over, the free giving that burns all calculation and the desertion of obligations and social roles. In a word, it is the upsetting of life. No guerrilla group, no matter how effective, can take the place of the grandiose movement of destruction and transformation. Insurrection is the light emergence of a banality coming to the surface: no power can support itself without the voluntary servitude of those it dominates. Revolt reveals better than anything else that it is the exploited themselves who make the murderous machinery of exploitation function. The wild, spreading interruption of social activity suddenly tears away the blanket of ideology, revealing the real balance of strength. The State then shows itself in its true colours – the political organization of passivity. Ideology on one side, fantasy on the other, expose their material weight. The exploited merely discover the strength they have always had, putting an end to the illusion that society reproduces itself alone – or that some mole is clawing away in their place. They rise up against their past obedience – their past State – and habits established in defense of the old world. The conspiracy of insurgents is the only instance when ‘collectivity’ is not the darkness that gives away the flight of the fireflies to the police, or the lie that makes ‘common good’ of individual ill-being. It is what gives differences the strength of complicity. Capital is above all a community of informers, union that weakens individuals, unity that keeps us divided. Social conscience is an inner voice that repeats ‘Others accept’. In this way the real strength of the exploited acts against them. Insurrection is the process that unleashes this strength, and along with it autonomy and the pleasure of living; it is the moment when we think reciprocally that the best thing we can do for each other is to free ourselves. In this sense, it is ‘a collective movement of individual realization’.

– from *At Daggers Drawn with the existent, its defenders and its false critics*

The State is One

On July 1, the International Criminal Court will begin its activities. Its proclaimed purpose is to prosecute “dictators and war criminals”. Though the Bush administration opposes it and Congress has passed a law forbidding people at all levels of government from cooperating with it, U.S. lawyers’ associations and human rights groups welcome it.

The current U.S. government opposition to the court can only be looked upon as a conflict over jurisdiction. The U.S. government has made it abundantly clear that it favors global policing and prosecution by carrying out numerous police actions around the world, sending in troops to arrest Noriega in order to prosecute and punish him here, making similar threats against Saddam Hussein and going on an extensive military search to track down Osama bin Laden for prosecution. From this, it is clear that the U.S. simply wants no competition in its current role as world cop, prosecutor, judge and jury. After all, a world criminal court may accidentally prosecute a good dictator or a good war criminal. Or, more significantly, this court may claim jurisdiction over bin Laden — and then where would America’s fine civilized tradition of capital punishment come in?

But in my opinion, Bush and his government lackeys are obviously missing the point. Global state institutions are probable among the best defenders of super-state and corporate power. According to one news story, this new court “closes a gap in international law by holding individuals, not nations or armies, responsible for the most horrific crimes. Here the capitalist/state version of “individualism” is upheld. States, corporations, the current social order are not responsible for the atrocities inherent in their functioning. Rather specific individuals (each more or less responsible for choosing to carry out the role assigned them by the social order) will provide scapegoats. Specific military and political officials (each, indeed, more or less contemptible) who have become a burden to the great powers will take the rap. Thus, once again, the “individualism” proclaimed so loudly by the democratic states acts as a tool for upholding the power of the state and capital, and so for suppressing real individual freedom.

The International Criminal Court, like the United Nations, the World Court and similar bodies, is an international state institution, which, like all state institutions, strives to maintain social peace by any means necessary. It clearly shows that like capital, the state is global, like capital, the state is one.

Hunger Strike in Spanish Prisons

From March 12 through March 18 there was a hunger strike in several Spanish prisons. The prisoners' demands were:

- The suppression of FIES¹ regime and all isolation units.
- The end of penitentiary dispersal².
- The release of all prisoners with incurable illnesses (like AIDS, cancer, etc).
- The release of all prisoners who have spent more than twenty years in prison (the maximum time allowed by law).

This mobilization was part of a collective struggle inside the prisons against the FIES units and for the dignity of the prisoners. This is a revolutionary struggle because it is not only aimed at a mere reform, but ultimately its goal is the disappearance of prisons, which involves a radical social change. It's a self-organized struggle, in which there aren't any leaders or representatives, neither inside the prisons nor outside, but only solidarity that grows between exploited people both from inside and outside the walls.

A hunger strike is an important moment of the struggle, but the repression is constant, so our struggle should be also.

FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL PRISONS AND THE SYSTEM WHICH HAS BUILT THEM

¹ FIES (Ficheros de Internos de Especial Seguimiento – Inmates Files for Special Monitoring) units are very hard isolation units in the Spanish prisons in which prisoners are subjected to total control all day. Their mail and phone calls are monitored, they have few opportunities to stay with other prisoners, their belongings are constantly inspected, and torture is customary. The prisoners who are included in these Files are the rebellious ones, those who don't submit to the prison authority.

² Penitentiary dispersal means that prisoners are sent to prisons far away from their homelands and their families and friends. This means mainly an additional punishment for the family and close friends who have to travel many miles (sometimes hundreds or more) in order to spend a few minutes with their loved ones in a visit.

A Tactic Expanded

In the early 1990's in Argentina, people involved in an organization simply called Hijos (daughters and sons), which consisted of people whose parents had been abducted and killed during the military dictatorship of 1976–83, came up with a tactic called the *escrache*, a public shaming of military officers who participated in the repression of that time. Since the beginning of the uprising in December, the use of this tactic has expanded. Increasingly people recognize all politicians as their victimizers and greet them with shouted insults, jeers, whistles and loud noise when they appear in public places. If the politicians refuse to leave a restaurant, stadium, theater or other public venue that they are visiting, they may be shoved around.

For example, on March 14, writer Jorge Asis, former ambassador to France and outspoken defender of former president (and Peronist) Carlos Menem, was booed and jeered by fellow diners at a restaurant where he was eating with his wife. A group of customers then approached him and shoved him hard against a table, which broke from the impact of his fall. He was taken to the hospital in an ambulance and treated for injuries to his back and chest.

It is to be hoped that the “alternative” and “progressive” politicians who hope to build their careers in the popular assemblies will meet with a similar welcome there.

Social Subversion or Terrorism?

It was inevitable that the events of last September 11 would provoke different and contrasting reactions. But as much as the causes can be discussed and the responsibility for the events fastidiously weighed, one would expect that the indiscriminate violence that crashed down on New York, Washington and Pennsylvania would have horrified everyone. At least, here in the west, where no one can claim to be immune to the humanitarianism with which our entire culture is saturated.

This is not the case. There are those who took delight in the news of the collapse of the Twin Towers, symbol of American economic power, and the partial destruction of the Pentagon, symbol of American military power, not caring about the general context of the events. The corpse of the enemy always gives off a pleasant odor, so an old proverb claims. We would even agree, if it were not that the aroma of American business people and military personnel who were killed was thoroughly smothered by a smell utterly unpleasant to our noses, that of all the other victims: the airline passengers and personnel, subordinates who worked in the towers for clerks to dishwashers, visitors and tourists present in the buildings, firemen who ran up to help, curious passersby who found themselves in the neighborhood at the moment of the collapse... The numerical disproportion between the former and the latter is so obvious that we ask ourselves who could ever have a nose that manages to take pleasure in such a faint perfume while at the same time ignoring the heavy fetor. We have been able to find no one except casuists, crypto-nazis and aesthetes.

As we know, the first are those who believe in the logic that the end justifies the means. In order to cause what they consider Good to triumph, they don't hesitate to justify what they deem to be Evil. Just like the terrorist Bush. It matters little then, if, immersed to the chin in Evil, accustomed to "necessary compromise", they end up losing their way and are no longer able to tell the difference. Slaughterers in good faith, in their eyes, torture lacerates but liberates, war annihilates but pacifies, terrorism standardizes but subverts. It is enough to present such a practice with a certain oratorical skill: minimizing its effects, keeping silent about its consequences, vindicating its inevitability. The inquisitors describe the torture that they inflict on their prisoners as "tools of persuasion", while the generals dissolve the piles of corpses with which they build their careers into "collateral damage".

Who knows what words these casuists will use to anesthetize the civilian deaths of September 11: “accidents along the way”?

But one can fall still further into degradation. One could, in fact, try to deny the indiscriminate character of these attacks. This is what the crypto-nazis do, evidently believing more deeply in the representative system than the voters and those they elect do, holding all Americans responsible for the operations carried out by their government. Since the concept of class responsibility seems much too difficult to define in a world in which every distinction seems to be fading away, and besides is terribly out of fashion, they prefer to opt for a more up-to-date ethnic-genetic responsibility since it is as easy to explain as a railway timetable. By means of this short-cut, the crypto-nazis overcome the contradictions between liberatory ends and oppressive means in a way that casuists were unable to. For them there really are no sad but unavoidable necessities; to exterminate a reactionary race is right. The road to genocide is open.

Finally, the aesthetes. Since they are all artists are something derived from this, aesthetes have no ideas to spread, no values to put into practice, no aspirations to realize. They only have eyes to fill with images, ears to load with sounds and mouths to stuff with witty remarks. And the stronger the images are, the louder the sounds, the more extreme the remarks are, the happier they are. Meaning is nothing; effect is everything. They have an illustrious precursor, Laurent Tailhade, the French writer who, in 1894, first threw out the statement *beau geste*, saluting Vaillant’s attack against the Cabinet with the immortal words: “What do the victims matter when the gesture is beautiful?” A year later, Tailhade, who frequented anarchist circles in order to break the boredom of his bourgeois life, lost an eye due to the explosion of a bomb in the exclusive restaurant where he was dining. Here, the aesthetes should consider the strange tricks played by fate, the next time they take a plane perhaps to direct a concert, perhaps to take a vacation on some pleasant Mediterranean island.

Our considerations do not arise only from the savagery that characterized these attacks, but also from the motivations that determined them. It seems clear to us that those who tried to grind the arrogance of American power to powder were not so much its enemies as its rivals, its competitors. This is why we have no reason to rejoice in either what happened or in why.

We would have to lose all hope in social transformation in order to consider anyone who does not think as we do as enemies to be slaughtered. We would have to be reduced to powerlessness in order to approve of those who, no matter what they’ve done, are on the other side of the barricades. We would have to have no self-esteem in order to feel gratified by the reprobation of others. We would have to renounce all love for life in order to unconditionally approve of death,

thus transforming utopia into nihilism, hatred into rancor, generosity into sacrifice,
social subversion into terrorism.

— Hapax

Beyond Selective Service

Among the possible changes I saw in the wake of the attacks of September 11 and the subsequent “war on terrorism” – that never ending excuse for continues US, UN and NATO military operations throughout the world – was the reinstatement of a fully operational draft. After all, the military does provide another place for storing excess people and may be useful in giving them a healthy dose of training in subservience, the acceptance of humiliation and the replacement of thinking with patriotic fervor. And with the drastic increase in the number of preventative police actions deemed necessary to “protect the American way of life” that this new war will inevitable bring about, more cannon fodder will be necessary to feed the poorly aimed American guns. So I was expecting to hear something about the possibility of the draft going back into effect. But it seems that at least some folks in the government hope to take things a little further.

On December 20, 2001, representative Smith of Michigan, in conjunction with representative Weldon of Pennsylvania introduced a “Universal Military Training and Service Act” bill before the House of Representatives. The bill was referred to the Committee on Armed Services. This bill, if passed, would make it obligatory for every male citizen between the ages of 18 and 22 and any other male of that age residing in the United States “to receive basic military training and education as a member of the armed services.” Women would be encouraged to volunteer under the same program, but without the obligation. Those inducted would be required to take from six months to one year of training (to be determined by the Secretary of Defense). But any one who has not finished high school will be required to do an additional six months of training. The only exemptions to this act are those with health problems, those already in military service and those in military academies. Religious conscientious objectors would be exempt from combatant training, but is required to undergo the rest of the training and to do national service of some sort.

This act, if put into effect, would go far beyond current draft laws and beyond anything the US has ever had. It would be a case of mandatory military service for all young men. It is obvious that this bill is being proposed now because of the atmosphere of fear and reactive patriotism brought on by the events of last September 11. Those who are promoting it (and Bush is among them) are hoping that people will be willing to accept the idea of such service in these times.

Though mandatory military service for all young men is new to the United States, it is the norm in much of the world. In countries like Italy or Greece, anarchists are always contending with this system, and strong anarchist anti-militarist activity is common. In addition, it seems that there are informal networks among anarchists in these countries that make it easier for those who refuse to cooperate with this system in any way to get around and continue to live their lives. We would do well to learn from the practices that have been developed in these countries as well as to examine draft resistance in this country, particularly during the Viet Nam war.

It is essential to let people know about this bill (I didn't hear about it until March, and very few people I talk with know about it — it apparently is not being well-publicized) and to make our own refusal to cooperate clear. It is equally necessary to make it clear that our refusal to cooperate does not spring from a pacifist morality, which could accept the compromise of "community" service, but from a vehement hatred of the state and all of its institutions that opposes to militarism and the state in its totality the violence of revolt.

A Call For Solidarity With Cypriot Anarchists

On April 18, there was a demonstration in Egomi, a city in Cyprus, outside of the home of the Israeli ambassador, to denounce the massacre of the Palestinian people. Many officials and diplomats were invited to the Israeli ambassador's party that day, to celebrate the anniversary of the establishment of the Israeli state. Outside the residence, demonstrators, including Palestinians and anarchist comrades, clashed with the police. In those confrontations, three policemen were injured and five people were arrested. Among the arrested there were three anarchist comrades. In the end, they were the only ones charged for the riots. One of them, Giorgos Karakasian was dragged onto the property of the Israeli ambassador's home and was heavily beaten and injured. The cops had to take him to the hospital later and then release him and after charging him.

Again on Tuesday, April 23, the police of Cyprus arrested the anarchist comrade, Giorgos Karakasian, claiming that this action was justified after further processing of the video-tapes showing the riots at the April 18 demonstration. In a search of his house, the police confiscated anarchist leaflets. Then the media in Cyprus launched a campaign of criminalization against anarchists. G. Karakasian is now in custody.

We call comrades to express their solidarity with the anarchists persecuted in Cyprus. It is up to each one's desire, imagination and possibility to act as seems appropriate.

A Letter From Marco Camenisch

End of February 2002

To the comrades,
To the authority of repression,

On the 18th of April, I'll have served a sentence of 12 years in Italy and I'll be extradited to Switzerland to be submitted to various trials with accusations that carry life sentences too.

I do not recognize any legitimacy for government and the repressive machine, consequently I'll exclude any statements in front of this machine and its representatives, except perhaps spontaneously in public, before the court.

I warn the repressive body not to repeat the extortion of false statements from my family, especially from my elderly mother and from my brother, both not able to be interrogated due to health reasons, through pressure and coercion, as happened after the death of a member of the Swiss Financial Police in 1989, for which I'm charged.

Due to personal reasons, like being too old, prejudiced health and social responsibilities and needs, it would not be possible and responsible for me and that long before, to take up arms and underground life again, in the antiauthoritarian struggle. But I continue to vindicate the necessity of a radical antiauthoritarian struggle against rule and exploitation always more aggressive and destructive (now through technological capitalism and its total war against individuals, societies, cultures and environments of the Earth community) and for ANOTHER NECESSARY WORLD, necessarily based on solidarity and antiauthoritarian and fair relationships among all individuals and communities of things, the non-human and human lives, that form the terrestrial community.

Marco Camenisch
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Italy

Captured In The Net *by Alberto*

Computer networks are continually mentioned: on TV, in specialized magazines, in the inserts in newspapers, in the photocopied pages of zines. The world of the media has attained the synergy among the most disparate technologies and their consumers scattered all around the planet. It is not necessary to transfer information using diskettes or other magnetic supports. The development of communications technologies allows the automatic exchange of data and the sharing of resources even between computers that are thousands of miles apart. And this is in real time. Lines of transmission, cables, fibre optics: under our feet a carpet of connections spreads out.

Electro-magnetic signals rebound from the subsoil to satellites. I speak: my voice produces an oscillation of pressure in the air. A microphone modulates the electronic current to a likeness of the sound. Through electric energy, a sonorous lecturer obtains a digital trace that is registered as a file, transmitted to a node in the network and set on the road toward the required destination in any part of the world.

The euphoria that accompanies the development of the new technologies is understandable in managerial and university environments, and in research laboratories. One might be surprised to see certain environments that describe themselves as “anti-capitalist” sharing in these feelings of joy. But thinking it over, it is not so strange. Doesn’t the myth of the machine make up a part of the marxist cosmology? This is what I asked myself when I again picked up an essay by Hans Magnus Enzenberger from the 1970’s entitled *Elements for a Theory of the Media*. Between banalities and irrelevant considerations, the author makes himself the interpreter of an attitude toward the mass media that continues to find adherents.

In Enzenberger’s work a heavy Marxist theoretical framework is not lacking. Affirmations such as: “it is the mass character of communications technology that imposes its expropriation from bourgeois hands — historically linked to the invention of the book — and the social use of mass media,” or “the proletariat of the free socialist society will take up the task of making the media truly productive for the first time”, simple notes of folklore compared to our times. But there is something else that renders the writing of the German author current. In about thirty pages, we find considerations that could be shared by many apologists for domination.

For example, Enzenberger starts by declaring his belief in the possibility of interactions between those who transmit and those who receive (feedback), through the free connections, through communications. Even Habermas, a sociologist of the Frankfurt school, maintains in *The Theory of Communicative Activity* that speakers could construct a new society not built through contact, communication, mutual understanding: mass media becomes the artifice of a new world, with the advantage that emancipation does not require the bloodshed of revolutions. Along the same lines there are the writings of Vattimo — for what they're worth — who sees in dialogue and the mass media privileged places in which to exercise chance and form consensus.

“The communication networks could provide models for politically interesting organizations” (Enzenberger, 1970). The idea that network-based models of communication constructed according to the principle of interaction could be taken up as a model for a new social organization makes Enzenberger one of the forerunners of the theses of certain oppositional technophiles.

One often hears talk of libertarian, “rhizomatic” relations, in opposition to the vertical functioning of hierarchic systems. Of course, the computer network is an organization that lacks any administrative center. It functions when it expands, when it forms new connections, new nodes. Now, beyond the fact that the internet and other networks have functionally more important units — nodes that form the backbone of the network, others that coordinate its operations and furnish any technical and informational assistance to the users — it is said that, in fact, there is no switch that turns the system off. In this way, hierarchy does not disappear, but dissolves into the organization. The time of captains and leaders is over. The technicians and administrators advance. The network becomes a chain that imposes the exclusion of some and the participation, the consent of the domesticated, a social form that requires new adherents, that functions only if continually used.

The network is an essentially flexible structure. It manages to deaden the blows. Up to a certain point, it even functions when mangled and can easily be restructured. This poses consistent problems for those who move in the luddite perspective of destruction as well. A society in the form of a network that can endure blows? Where is the best place to strike? And how? Does sabotage only have symbolic value? These are questions that we will have to try to answer in the future.

Meanwhile, cybernetic society is organized as a web. The art of control doesn't require bosses politicians or police. What Enzenberger, in his hymn of praise to the mass media, calls “the industry of consciousness will be able to bear its fruit within the next decade. The de-braining machines of Ubu are being set in motion.

In the virtual plaza of the cybernetic citadel there are no longer masters. The slaves remain: they find none who gives them orders, but they continue to bow.

In The Whirlpool of the Passion

For once, let's be frank with ourselves. Willingly or not, we all have our heroes. We all have points of reference, people who have had a greater effect on us through their lives and work, and who, precisely for this reason, we love, respect and admire. And at times our admiration moves us to emulation, going back over the paths that our favorites have already blazed, following their example. But it is important to keep in mind that when gets the idea of imitating the endeavors of others, one must first ascertain whether one shares their greatness, having the same abilities. Otherwise, one runs the risk of encountering major problems.

In Zaire, the passion for Christ played a nasty trick on a preacher. Confident that his hero would not be unfaithful, he gathered the believers on the banks of the Kwilu river and announced that a miracle would take place: he would walk across the river "like Christ walked across the sea of Galilee". But the step was decidedly too long for his leg, and the preacher, upon entering the water, was engulfed in a whirlpool, disappearing from the sight of those present as seen by thousands gathered for the ceremony. The preacher was found after three days; for the record, he was not resurrected.

— Canenero

“Be Realistic, Demand the Impossible”?

We demand that the powerful listen — and they give us a hearing. We demand support from civil society — and we are praised. We demand publicity — and the journalists market us. We demand the power to be organized — and power organizes us. We demand democracy. And democracy is savagely applied. Once again, we let reality take us in hand. But perhaps we have understood that the real and the possible always go hand in hand until our lives are surrounded in the modesty of deferred desires and delegated dreams — first in the “adult world”, and then in that of employers, supervisors and politicians — that is the poverty of existence.

We demand the possible, and we get the possible. But maybe we have realized that the impossible is something we must go and take ourselves. We must take one more step, expand reality to our boundless measure, disarm authority and arm our desires. No one will grant it to us from their high seat of power; only our curiosity, our rage, our continuous attack can throw this door that has already begun to break wide open for us.

— Thanks to L’evazione and the writers of the leaflet that inspired this.

Death of a Despicable Man

Natalia Kexiopoulou is a 19-year-old student who came with her step-family from Abkhazia, a region of the former Soviet Union. From the time she was 14 years old, her father had been raping her regularly, threatening to send her back to Abkhazia — a place that she remembers mainly for the horrors of the conflict there — if she said anything. On March 11, he tried to rape her again in her office. She pulled out a knife to defend herself and stabbed her father to death.

It should be noted that her father was a man of some power, being a member of the security service of Vladimir Putin, Russian head of state. In addition, he may have been involved in “people trafficking”, that is to say, pimping.

Rapist, security agent, pimp — in other words a pig through and through. Acting in her own self-defense, Natalya did us all a favor, ridding the world of another petty authoritarian piece of shit. She was supposed to go to court on March 15. I have not heard what the outcome of that hearing was. I agree with the Greek anarchist group “Back to the streets” in their call for solidarity with Natalia Kexiopoulou and all who take direct action against those who exploit and victimize them.

* * *

ATHENS, GREECE (March 25, 2002) — The police station in Exarchia was attacked with molotov cocktails early in the evening, endangering one police guard, and damaging three police cars and two police motorcycles. The entrance to the station also suffered damages, and the police guard was kept at bay because his canopy was under attack. The Chaotic Guerrilla Army claimed responsibility for the attack. Their message proclaimed: “Solidarity with the demonstrators of Barcelona” and “Honor to Carlo Giuliani and to all those who have died in the social war.”

Different Here

We don't see or directly feel the effects of the bombing. Its destruction of houses and whole villages. Its killing of our friends, families and neighbors. We don't flee for our lives from the death and misery wrought by such systematic destruction.

Here, if you have legal documents and are not a foreigner, you are not expelled. If you are not an immigrant or poor here, the police don't harass you. Here the effects of soil, air and water contamination is not the same as that of the bombs exploding directly in front of your face. It's different here.

Instead everyday, while waving the flag of the U.S., 'citizens' watch with enjoyment images of villages and caves being bombed with sickening precision. One watches, but doesn't see.

These images erase the carnage, the smell of death, the blood strewn everywhere. "It is far from here, not of my concern," cries the detached loyal 'citizen'. "They did it to themselves by attacking the World Trade Center," which takes the personal and individual out of the equation.

But these images of carnage, if not approached with seriousness, could well cease to exist merely in the far off distance. They could become something we see, smell and feel directly.

I hear the mechanical drone of World War III in the closer still distance as the Bush administration declares war on the world.

But it is still different here.

Here, as 'citizens' with silence and complicity, in total patriotic tranquility, we prepare the way for World War III.

— from *An Oppositional Voice*

"By now, it is well-known: when one wants to carry out a conquest and extend one's power, one starts by proclaiming to the four winds that such and such another people is of an inferior race, unworthy of governing themselves, hostile to every form of civilization. Histories, popular literature, travel books, geographies, statistics are ransacked; anthropology and ethnography are invoked to show with mathematical certainty that this race is treacherous, ungrateful, lazy, vile, murderous, savage, and that they deserve nothing but the gallows, and

grape-shot abroad. One proclaims before the world that one's own race is superior, chosen by god, predestined to bring the torch of science and law to the four corners of the earth; that the war being undertaken is a war for civilization and humanity or at least a war for defense and liberty..." (1912)

Like in Church *by Massimo Passamani*

A known and hospitable place. I think that for the most part this is the image we have of the assembly. We read in a journal or on a poster that there is a meeting, a debate, and we find ourselves seated, almost always in a circle (perhaps in homage to the Enlightenment idea of “Encyclopedia”, that really means circular learning), waiting for someone to introduce and elucidate the topic for us. If the theme of the discussion is specific enough, we are convinced that expertise is required and so participation is quite limited. On the other hand, if it is a bit broader and more complex, everyone has her say without any deference. And yet in the end, one always remains a bit frustrated.

This is because, whatever is actually being discussed that, upon consideration, encourages to take part, the assembly in which it takes place is viewed as external, a well from which one draws, and, for the most part, draws little. In this way, the criticism is focused on the assembly and never on one’s own participation.

Of course, we meet with people with whom we get along and do projects and initiatives outside the debates, but participation in an assembly as such is not the outcome of an inquiry and a ripened interest. There is hardly any element of continuity between the various meetings, the reflections that precede them and those that follow them. Just as no one asks us first what the topic of discussion means for us, so also there is little to remind us of it afterwards. At any rate, if one were to organize a meeting on the some topic after some time had passed, the discussion would start over again, each one giving a monologue in company.

In my opinion, this is not merely due to the insufficient determination of those who participate passively in the assemblies (even the act of speaking can be an element of passivity), but to something a bit deeper. In order to discuss together — in a meeting atmosphere, because in more limited contexts the discussion changes — it is necessary to have a determined set of words in common. The further one goes beyond the sphere of the specialty, the less one has to say. The proper words are lacking. This can be verified in many ways. If we take sufficiently specific contexts — let’s say that of anarcho-syndicalism or the occupation of spaces — and, for fun, proclaim the ten words that so often form the language and mental universe of those who are involved in them, we realize that one couldn’t even write a flyer.

Maybe someone will say I exaggerate. Perhaps. But I am certain that they are the very words that they do not manage to find when they encounter topics of a more general range.

Though it may seem strange, another limit is the necessity to perceive the immediately expedient twists and turns of the discussion at all costs. To achieve this aim that is somewhat forced, thought cannot always be freely developed. Ideas have need of empty space in which to move. And I believe that it is from this very emptiness that a real practice of liberation is born, a void that often brings rending where we thought the most solid unity existed.

As long as we meet to confront, let us say, more theoretical questions, delegation is reduced to a mere lack of deepening (which phenomena of charisma and subordination can determine) but when there are important decisions to be made that presuppose knowledge of the subjects upon which the possible choices bear, anyone who has a greater knowledge of the matter has the power to direct the discussion. Or rather, considering the disparity of knowledge and the precise will to impose one's resolutions, there is no better environment than this in which to meet. In the long run, the technique of participation obtains better results than what one would get through unilateral propaganda or with the *ex cathedra* lecture.

Power is really seeking to take away our words and our critical capacity to reflect in order to then give us the possibility of expressing our opinion on everything.

Nothing more can come to us from assemblies than what each of us as individuals strives to put into them. At best, those intuitions that our personal exploration suggests to us could be developed.

When there is no openness to listening, that is to say, to paying attention to new realms of thought, of one's own thought, we will always find ourselves saying the same things, whatever the topic of discussion may be.

Anchored to our faith like in a church (the name of which comes, perhaps not by chance, from the Greek *ecclesia*, that means, precisely, assembly), we repeat our rituals in order to go on back to our houses with little questioned as always. Until the next discussion.

News and Shorts

WARREN, ME (March 8, 2002) — Night lights, intended to allow prison guards to keep an eye on sleeping prisoners, were installed in the new Maine State Prison. These lights are often a mere two feet from the heads of inmates sleeping on the top bunk. Prisoners protested this subtle torture disguised as necessary control by dumping their food, uneaten, into the trash.

Anarchist insurrectionaries are not separate from the exploited. Their action is never an attempt to organize others; it is always an attempt to express their own subversive response to the world. Ultimately, all revolutionary initiative will have to be coordinated. But the revolutionary task is not primarily one of organization; the task is to express (whether in a text or an action, which both embody theory and practice) a subversive relation to the world. However big or small it may be, such an act is an attack against the old world.

NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA (April 2, 2002) — Unrest broke out on the island when police arrested a young Kanak for drunkenness and evading arrest. Over the Easter weekend, protesters damaged twenty cars. As protests continued, forty youths blocked the main road into Noumea, the capital. Police fired tear gas to disperse the young people, and somebody shot and wounded a cop. The newspapers have tried to associate this latest unrest with earlier ethnic clashes between the indigenous Kanak and the Wallisiens who come from the islands of Wallis and Futuna. But this simply seems to be an attempt to hide the real conflict that is so clear in this case, between people who want to live their lives and those who want to rule them.

GUATEMALA (April 17–18, 2002) — Peasant groups in the northern provinces of Alta Verapaz, Quiche and Huehuetenango stormed and occupied fourteen private and state-run coffee plantations with more than 12,300 acres of farmland on Wednesday. On Thursday morning, other protesters briefly blockaded the main highway connecting Guatemala City with the southern part of the country, but the author-

ities were able to remove the blockades after several hours. I have not heard whether the plantation occupations are still going on.

ATHENS, GREECE (April 29, 2002) — In response to a gathering of the Greek fascist group Xrysi Aygi (Golden Dawn), various anti-racist and radical groups, including more than 300 anarchists organized an anti-gathering. At about 6 o'clock, a group of seventy anarchists attacked the central office of Xrysi Aygi with sticks, stones and molotovs. Two fascists were badly injured when they caught on fire. Then, demonstrators headed to pedio tou Areos where the fascists were supposed to meet a little bit later. People occupied the area to prevent the fascists from gathering. Several fascist attempting to get to the area were beaten. Then people headed toward the square of Exarchia, where anarchists attacked police squads and a bank with stones and molotovs. Police responded with tear gas, but no one was arrested and only fascists were injured.

In the laughable pool of a holy water stoup, the hands of the believers masturbate god, who in the brief time of an electoral campaign becomes a christ on a cross who comes in their hands while the last capitalists play cards on the holy sepulcher.

Priests of black, priests of red, priests as yellow as a hyena's mucus, you will be forced to piss on the burning Vatican to extinguish the fire of the mind.

— Canenero

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