

Open letter to some Italian anarchists

Anonymous

We just finished reading your letter, that you wrote to us and all the French comrades. We read it with pleasure, finding in it multiple points we recognize ourselves in. We read it attentively, because it comes from the people who unfortunately have to face, before us and more than us, the repression. However, we must say that it also left a bitter taste and provoked a kind of discomfort.

We want to ask you: who are you talking to? What are you talking about? As your letter is addressed to the French comrades and formulates a precise critique against the “innocent” line of defence of the Tarnac arrestees, we wouldn’t like that in Italy you think “the French comrades” are all busy to collect signatures in the company of leftist wheezy intellectuals, in order to hand over certificates of good behaviour to the competent authorities.

Even though it’s true to say that some comrades decided to transform what should, in our minds as in yours, be a fight against the repression into a fight for the defence of some repressed, it’s also true that it’s their choice to do so, and that it’s not the chosen way of the whole French movement.

In France, the repression had unfortunately already hit other comrades, and didn’t start on November 11th. Fortunately, the sabotages continued to take place after this date; they haven’t stopped. Tarnac is not the centre of France, not for the State, and even less for the insurrection. It’s only an episode, and there is always the risk that more pathetic ones will follow. As you remark quite rightly, the “bad intentions” are the real aim of the repression. Failing to prevent the attacks, it attempts to stop the diffusion of the ideas, that promote openly the necessity and possibility of an insurrection (ideas that feed and are fed by action, a mutually vital relationship).

What is worrying about the Tarnac arrests, is not so much the behaviour of the state, which, for reasons you have clearly demonstrated, arbitrarily strike out at us. After all, the cops and the judges just do their dirty job. What is really worrying is these “bad intentions” that the state accused the Tarnac 9 of having, were publicly denied by the accused; the ideas become banal—[an incriminating book in the accused’s library is explained away as evidence of] a “grocer’s” simple “passion for history”. Also of concern, is that one accepts to adopt the role of “brave guys” (wearing the gold badge, with respectable references, and well-disposed to talk to the journalists and politicians, to conclude in sum, that their place is not in prison), not to be confused with mean roughnecks (who are not little saints, who stay mute in front of their enemy, to conclude, do deserve to rot in prison). This, you can be sure, hurts much more than the forced physical separation from some comrades.

A lot of Italian anarchists were known for their resoluteness; we've been surprised and somewhat amazed at the eagerness and the caution with which you formulate your comments (are the Alps truly so high that you reduce yourselves to criticising something in France, which you already hate in Italy?). You even go so far as to voluntarily ask us to be careful with some "mistakes". What mistakes? We're afraid to say it, but you are confused: there was no mistake in the Tarnac defence mobilisation. It chose its camp carefully.

With this point of view, your invitation to "know how to read repression", linked to the Victor Serge citation, is a real slip-up. It's precisely because they have well read Victor Serge (he who, when accused in 'the illegals' trial of The Band of Bonnot, made his defence by presenting himself as an intellectual, who had nothing to do with vulgar criminals) that some French comrades followed the ad personam defence. They have merely adopted the common idea that you should organize to each situation accordingly, that in each situation you can make alliances, that in each war against the state you shouldn't have any moral scruples or to burden oneself with an ethic — there are only strategies to apply. What ever it takes to get your friends out of prison is "good", whatever keeps them inside is "bad". That's all.

Where ethic implicates the totality of human existence, politics acts on some of its singular fragments. Opportunism is a constant in politics, because it steps in according to the circumstances. When these are favourable, you can be coherent. But when they are not favourable... That's why opportunism appears during crisis or urgent situations. The comrade who meets a civil servant (for example an ex-minister), pushed by the urgency of a judicial procedure (you have to get out of prison), is not so different from the comrade who meets a civil servant (for example a mayor), pushed by the urgency of a social mobilisation (you have to stop a mass redundancy, for example), and both of them are the son of the comrade who became a civil servant (for example Minister of Justice), pushed by the urgency of the war (you have accomplish the revolution). In these three cases, you do the contrary of what you say, finding good reasons (Oh! So practical! Oh! So concrete!), and the best intentions in the world. Urgency breaks the normal course of events, shatters all points of reference, suspends the ethic and open flings open the door to the contortionists of politics.

All this is evidence, it's almost banal, but only to those who think that the ideas and values aren't a whole part of the human being; and are exterior to it, as impartial tools to use- depending on the occasion. Nevertheless, if we think that the circumstances to which reality confronts us can also turn out to be different and contrary, but our thoughts, dreams and desires are unique, it becomes then hard to deny that it's especially in crisis moments that you must try to stay yourself. A perpetually open trap, in which it's easy to stumble and to fall. And in this case, what do we do? Either we can stand up, trying to learn from our mistakes, or we can start to crawl, boasting our tactical ability.

Ultimately, the insurrection in itself, is just an exceptional situation. There's no sense to behave like the hero of 'the Idea' outside of moments of rupture, if when they come, we suddenly position ourselves outside of them. It's like proclaiming to be at 'daggers drawn with the Existing' but then proceed to enter into relations with its defenders and false critics. To conclude, either we think that the means and the end are one and the same (the ethical interpretation of the struggle), or we think that the means and the end are separate (the interpretation of politics). We leave the middle paths — those that propose means without ends — to the philosophical frauds.

Each one is clearly free to choose the way he prefers to shape up (not pretending however that we must respect him, neither that the friendship will remain unchanged). Despite of all, we think

it's more necessary than ever to abandon this assumed political opportunism-which is present in France, but certainly also in Italy and the rest of the world. Maybe this opportunism would endow us with the capacity to better open the doors of the prisons and catch the attention of a lot of people, but we would be reunited with a mere shadow of the comrades that we previously knew and loved. In opposition to this opportunism, better the iconoclast fury of Renzo Novatore than the cunning advice of the repentant individualist anarchist Victor Serge.

Creatures of the marsh.

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