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On “ethics”, “sabotage” and “terrorism”

Alfredo Cospito

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Siamo anarchici e siamo molti
E la vostra inane legge
Non ci doma né corregge
Né ci desta alcun terror
Guerra, guerra e guerra sia!
L' ideal per cui pugniamo
No, non teme i vostri orror
Siam ribelli, e forti siamo,
il terror degli oppressor!
I potenti della terra
(Anarchist chant)

“Anyone with some common sense, who has even a distant notion of what the nature of the no Tav movement is and of the ethical framework within which this struggle expresses its 20-year-long resistance, can see that I was not there with the intent to pursue terror or worse”. Mattia

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“On the other hand, those who struggle have learned, with intelligence, to channel even those strong and impetuous passions that are born of the many hits we took, like when a friend lost an eye from a tear gas grenade or when another came close to death”. Niccolò

“Military and paramilitary attacks, indiscriminate violence and weapons of war belong to states and those who emulate them”. Chiara

“We are accused of having acted to strike people or at least of having no regard for their presence, as if we had no regard for the lives of others...In relation to the accusation of terrorism I have no intention of defending myself. The solidarity we were shown from the moment of our arrest up until the present day has gone far to dismantle this daring incrimination”. Claudio

“Your words, as well as sounding proud, sound just, in the sense that they are both “ethically upstanding and attuned”. Open letter to Chiara, Niccolò, Mattia and Claudio

“The prosecution wanted to create dissociations, namely, to push the movement to distance itself from its own power...We can say, quite plainly, that the movement held out by fully grasping what was at stake...The demands made by the prosecution are what in lawyers’ jargon is called “fence-sitting”. Go ahead and give them the minimum sentence, but convict them of terrorism”. Open letter to Chiara, Niccolò, Mattia and Claudio

We can quite plainly say that the ‘movement’ has secured yet another victory. Not only has it managed to market a watered-

of the assemblies of “people” which by now have become instruments in the politics of fiction. It would be enough to stop placing limits on action. That’s all you’d need to open up new perspectives, to come out of the spectacle of “participatory” and “civil” politics. Finally, for once let me be the one to distinguish between those who love the slow labouring of the social sphere, of harmless sabotage, and those who like me, believe that between two points the straight line of violence without barriers is the shortest, the most effective and the happiest.

Alfredo Cospito

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ing a social class, the bourgeoisie, sometimes in an indiscriminate way. In spite of what certain insurrectionalists might say, terrorism is part of our history, the history of anarchism. Today there continue to be anarchists who, regardless of penal codes and political correctness, are not shocked when they are defined terrorists. It doesn't shock them because they know that their actions of social revenge can terrorize an entire class: the bourgeoisie and the managerial class. They are not shocked because they know they are at war by all possible means, whatever the cost. When these anarchists were taken, they claimed their actions with pride in front of people, judges and courts, taking responsibility but never pontificating about "ethically" just actions, never ranting about an elusive and laughable "ethical framework" which is only the product of an irrepressible, irresistible and clumsy desire to "cover one's arse".

To be clear, I don't have anything against a technical defense – I don't see anything wrong with 'covering one's arse', I also did it with the abbreviated trial but let your lawyers be the ones to do it (within the realm of decency of course, provided one has an ounce of decency to begin with) and most of all, don't shit on other practices because you feel "ethically" superior just because you haven't touched a hair on anyone's head. Don't cloak your legal "victory" in "ethics". It is true that today, to the state, you are not terrorists but saboteurs, you have legitimised and disarmed sabotage, but in this I see no "victory", only another step towards the alignment and adjustment to an existent that you profess to fight against. Whatever happened to those sharp "daggers drawn against the existent"? Your words in court have unwillingly dragged me into this "ethical" diatribe.

Remaining silent would have meant me supporting the false "ethical" relationship used by people and judges about good saboteurs and evil terrorists. I think the time has come to break this "ethical framework" imposed by a no tav "movement" that so faithfully mirrors this reality, the child of democracy and false opponent of the existent. It would be enough to ignore the cheers and hisses

down, inoffensive and whiny version of sabotage, but simultaneously, it has used its superior "ethical code" to blacklist all violent direct action that goes beyond striking a compressor with a Molotov. The courts have also won, by managing to impose boundaries that good kids shouldn't cross, if they want to avoid anything more than a sounding spanking.

For that matter, the victory for the courts has been sweeping, because through the terroristic prospect of years and years of prison, they made sure that comrades themselves – with their own statements – were the ones to draw up the boundaries that could not be crossed.

Therefore we can say, quite plainly of course, that the 'movement' held on by fully seizing the limits that power wanted to impose, transforming the act of burning the compressor into a spectacle, into mediation, into politics, into a complete and utter recuperation of sabotage. In the eyes of people and judges, everything that goes beyond this democratically accepted and non-violent vision of sabotage becomes terrorism. In this light, Nicola and I who shot a man and refused to limit ourselves to the destruction of things, are terrorists.

Through their statements, the no tav anarchists have in fact embraced this vision, giving it value, affirming it. According to the superior 'ethical code' of a large part of the "movement", those who strike people weapon in hand, are terrorists. To the calculative and well-meaning ethics of "sabotage", I prefer terrorism, with its clear, wicked and distinctly linear logic. To the "lack of rhetoric" and "serene obstinacy" of "sabotage", I prefer violence, the lack of calculation and the "recklessness" of those who shoot without thinking about the criminal consequences. To the superior "ethical code" of those who have lawyers dictate their positions, I prefer the irrationality and genuine "ultra-violent" and "truculent" "rhetoric" of anarchist nihilism.

Even if only for a question of style, in the tragicomic theatre of good and evil, I prefer to play the role of the evil anarchist. It

seems a thousand years ago that the very same anarchists who today stuff their faces with moderation and “ethnically upstanding and attuned words”, were shouting scandal at other anarchists, accusing them of dissociation, blaming them for being “good people” at the service power for much less. Times change as do people... unfortunately.

It is you, no tav anarchists, who have put me in this little theatre with the statements you made to judges; with the silences you upheld when the leftist intelligentsia distanced itself from our terrorism in support of you. Distances that were taken in the name of an “ethical framework” that you made your own, in sly, political and allow me to say, opportunistic ways. We shared the same prison, the same isolation. We are tied through a common thinking, a common belonging. You still define yourselves anarchists, don’t you? Your beloved no tav movement worked hard to stop you from breathing in our air, to avoid you getting confused with us terrorists. From you there was only silence, a complicit silence that is very similar to consent. A consent that was confirmed by the statements you made to the judges. Up until the moment you were “freed” from these prison sections, there was never a word uttered about the terrorists who would remain within them.

When your friends, no tav activists and various Perino-type people¹ talked about the gulf between sabotage and attacks on people, the “moral” and “ethical” gulf that exists between you the saboteurs and us, the evil terrorists, you were careful not to use clear words, dotting your *is* and crossing your *ts*² ...back then there re-

¹ Alberto Perino is an ex-trade unionist and long-term leader of the no tav movement.

² This is a reference to an Italian text ‘i punti sulle i’ (‘the dots on the is and crosses on the ts’) an anonymous response to the communiqué claiming the kneecapping of Roberto Adinolfi. The text came out before the arrests of Nicola Gai and Alfredo Cospito and is regarded by some as an act of dissociation with their actions.

ally was a need, but perhaps a show of sympathy for our action *at that moment in time* would have created some problems for you.

Today, in order to beg for “solidarity” I would have to dogmatically rise “above” the “polemics” and from my “high horse” as a “coherent” revolutionary prisoner, in a balanced and impartial way, wisely uphold that deep down all practices and positions amount to the same thing. That there are “a thousand ways forward and only one horizon”. That the only terrorism is the terrorism of states. That unity forges strength, that the “movement” should not be split. I should wisely uphold these and other conveniences. Better to overlook the fact that in practice, it is almost always the same “paths” the same actions that materialise, those that are more easily sold to people, less risky for ourselves and for others, those that are light years away from actually affecting anything, from truly causing harm.

Better to overlook the fact that in the history of anarchism there have been and continue to be anarchists who have defined their own actions as terrorist ones. Better to overlook the fact that a “movement”, united at all costs, rather than making us stronger, impoverishes us, forcing us to compromise, to mediate, transforming us into politicians and opportunists. If I really must have a role in this play I want it to be that of the evil terrorist. I don’t particularly love the role, but after the statements you made to the judges, I don’t have a choice. In the play that you have helped put together, there are only two roles, the evil anarchist, the terrorist who spills blood, and the good anarchist, the “saboteur” who, in a humanitarian vein, only strikes things, who establishes a superior “ethics” with the penal code to hand and who judges the “morality” of an action solely on its politico-strategic usefulness and on the basis of whether it is more or less acceptable to its movement of reference: no tav, no dalmolin, no mose, no muos...whatever it may be.

It’s not for me – if this is how things are, better to be a terrorist. Anyone who knows a bit about the history of anarchism knows very well that at times, anarchists have practiced terrorism, strik-