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Anonymous
Without Victory, Nor Defeat
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"Anarchists have always lost, they never won anything." It is not seldom one hears these words, even amongst the enemies of authority, with great reluctance or remorse. These kind of final sentences even sometimes interrupt the discussions on recent struggles, if they don't interfere with certainty in the discussions about the contributions of anarchists during uprisings, insurrections and revolutions of a past already bygone. Musing about proud columns of joyful anarchist militiamen – brandishing weapons, flags and striking up songs to arouse the heart – leaving Barcelona during that July 1936. One heaves a sigh of nostalgia that takes us straight to melancholia, very characteristic to many anarchists – according to a famous singer – to conclude fatally: *"We always lose, we are the black sheep of history."*

Nevertheless, even if hope can sometimes inflame the tender hearts of anarchists, we cannot forget that despair has also been an agony that has gone with many of their journeys. Lovers of the idea, they hated equally the oppressors. So it is that a passionate love that inflamed their lives of desires went alongside a ferocious hate that could strike ruthlessly and spill the blood of tyrants, their minions and their worshippers. But

why talk in the past tense? That universe, that vocabulary, that inner world of anarchists, did it really change? Are the hopes not inflamed when hundreds of thousands of people have risen up against the ruling regimes in many countries some years ago, during the so-called "Arab Spring"? The despair of seeing these uprising liquidated by a multifaceted reaction, did it not arm the hands of several of them to strike, once more? Nevertheless, no fatalism in that. That is elsewhere, as we will see…

If the anarchist idea proposes the destruction of authority and the social relations it induces, that doesn't forcefully imply a belief in the famous "dawning of liberty", final and irreversible. Actually, contrary to the logic of victory and defeat, anarchy is above all a *tension*, a practical idea that seeks evermore the destruction of all power. "Belief" hasn't got anything to do with that. If the horizon of anarchy doesn't stop at revolt, but also opens up towards social revolution, it is to destroy from top to bottom power. An addition of individual revolts is not enough. Certainly, the one who talks about "social revolution" while denying individual revolt that is its base, has a corpse in his mouth. And will probably be between the first to cry foul when an individual – or a fistful of individuals – combine ideas and action. But, on the other hand also, thinking that the perspective of a social revolution amounts to nourishing a blind faith in a final solution, only reintroduces the notions of victory and defeat, while deleting all *tension* or adopting the dreadful Marxist determinism (that made the communist proletarians of the past century accept the worst in the name of "inevitable historical necessity").

If an uprising, an insurrection allows the tension towards freedom to accentuate, deepen or possibly generalize, why would we not strive to hasten, to trigger it? Faced with historical amnesia, with technological stupor, with the flattening of the minds and hearts, can we not defend that insurrection is maybe even more necessary, more desirable than ever to be

with a projectuality, a reflection in the middle- and long-term to give a more sufficient, greater„ more daring breath to our passage on the surface of this planet.

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At the turn of a past century, an anarchist with some accomplices developed a formidable plan. After some more or less successful thefts, Alexandre Marius Jacob looked to a farther horizon. A crazy idea came to his mind: rather than being content with a nice bit of thievery here and there (not bad already), why not work out a massive project of expropriation through the whole country (even better)? In the end these *workers of the night* were hundreds and burgled hundreds of houses of bourgeois. They planned meticulously their hits, logistics, means (even setting up a silver and gold foundry, an antiques shop and a hardware store to order legally the latest of safes to study them in peace). Alexandre Jacob could have been content with some occasional thefts, and that would have maybe spared him a deportation to Guyana. But he wanted to fly higher, to shine brighter and longer. Nothing has been easy on this journey, no effort was spared, certain hopes were frustrated and the generalized expropriation has not happened as he had wished for so fervently. So what?

Let's not step back in front of what is difficult, let's confront them guided by our perspectives. Let's dare to embark on the most limitless projects, let's live anarchy.

able to put things in perspective? The same refrains on the material and social conditions that are not similar to those of the beginning of the previous century or on the fact that the state is now over-equipped, rather sometimes tire the discussion instead of bringing it forward. Melancholic indeed would the anarchists be until a point of only seeing the many obstacles on the path, even ending up forgetting that the question is how to confront them ourselves, right here and now in an anarchic perspective. If not, it would not be called struggle or revolt or nothing at all, but – borrowing Marxist jargon – only the observation of the mole that digs; and is dying [Marx used the metaphor of the "old mole" to symbolize the necessary maturation of social forces beneath the surface of society that will eventually erupt in revolution].

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Lets return to the initial problem: are the anarchists, with their idea of freedom and destruction of authority, doomed to lose? Meaning to see all their efforts, sacrifices, initiatives being wiped out, during relative peaceful times as well as during massive revolutions? "It has always been like that in history", the pragmatics say. "Shouldn't believe in the revolution and the masses", the cynics say. Nevertheless, an other possibility may be closer to anarchists. Contrary to cats, we indeed only have one life, and we dare to say that it is during this life – the only one we have – what matters is to fight, to live that tension towards the destruction of authority. It's by moving, moving on the path we have chosen, that we realize ourselves, *that we become what we are*. It is the quality that bursts into our life, the quality of the action and the idea that go together. Victory or defeat have nothing to do where there is only persisting or abandoning, perseverance or resignation, passionate love and hate or political obliteration. Irredeemable dreamers, yes, a lot of anarchists are. *"To act is to not only think with the brain, it is to make the whole being think. To act is to close in the dream, in order to open up in the reality, the most profound*

sources of thinking." , said Maeterlinck. Effectively, anarchists are dreaming with their eyes wide open. Which means to arm their desires, convictions, choices to realize them. It may be that other exploited, once their thirst for destructive rage is quenched, turn back to admiring a leader, to bow down for a god, strengthening a new power. It is possible, and the reaction will do everything to make it happen. But that doesn't render null and void the initial attempt, that doesn't invalidate the efforts of anarchists to deepen the rupture, to destroy authority at its root. Even if it would only be some days, weeks or months. But such an opportunity to taste, feel the thrill, live to the full the quality, cannot but passionately attract all the lovers of freedom.

On the contrary, when anarchists give up this quality, this tension towards freedom against all authority, to replace it with a logic of victory and defeat borrowed from politics, then the fatal descent has begun. That all the foundations of the anarchist idea erode, collapse and dissipate. That the first to come, dressed in more or less libertarian clothes (and who doesn't give himself that adjective today?), takes it all by flaunting a strong organization, a massive work of the masses, an alleged formidable military efficacy, the end of "isolation". That the anarchist weary of going to prison "for nothing" or so little, tired of an unfulfilled love that burns his heart, exhausted by the hate that nourishes him and that encounters so little complicity, disappointed the lack of understanding of his fellows in misery, takes the poisoned hand extended to him. Thinking that – finally! - the old rigidity and ideological blockage have been overcome. *There resides the only fatalism that is*: the anarchist who renounces anarchy while trying to make it rhyme with the concept of victory and defeat. The love for the idea is thus seen and rejected as youthful folly, beautiful and passionate, but far from practical.

On the other hand, the life of anarchists also doesn't have to necessarily look like the passing of a comet that is consumed

upon few seconds in the atmosphere. Certainly, each to his or her own. It is without doubt better to go up in flames than waste away waiting for the Revolution. But let's not erect absolute oppositions where none have to be there necessarily. If in the past certain anarchists have gone in head first, we doubt if their plan was that it would be for as short a time as possible. Why hope for a rapid end to hostilities when we can try to prolong them without disavowing oneself? If the time has closed in rather fast for certain anarchists in the past, it was because what have surrounded them – notably the repressive forces – have struck fast, too fast. Not because they had the desire to finish the fastest possible or because they seek a tragic ending on principle.

The passion for life can collide, including too fast, with forces that want to annihilate it: the hate for oppression can lead us to come close to a death that prowls. It is the consequence of putting your life at stake, of living instead of surviving. Rebels par excellence, anarchists shouldn't however develop a cult of blindfolds. We have a brain to think, a heart to feel, arms to act. Why to go without one of those faculties? Between living in the moment and longing for a brighter future, there is a sea of possibilities. When we throw ourselves into battle, ferociously if needed, it is not blindfolded but with the world we want to destroy in our sights. Ferocity is not to be measured by blindness, but by the perspectives that drive our lives, that we insert in our efforts. If we have to be comets, very well, but let's not precipitate their end. Our passage on this earth is short; let's satisfy it by exhausting all possibilities, all potentials. What is fatal, is not to bump into rocks, but to realize that you don't have a compass in your pocket when the storm breaks. Against the logic of victory and defeat, against the fatalism of an alleged efficacy that cancels all anarchist tension, it is still possible to think about our steps, to orientate our explorations, to project our efforts. The love for the idea and the hate for authority go perfectly together