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Interview with Individualist anarchist prisoners

Aversión

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1 – Aversión: In recent years, for reasons we won't analyse here, which mainly concern the direction the system is taking, but which affect our ways of relating with one another, blogs and websites have been taking on the task that our publications used to fulfil in the past. In your opinion, how does this affect the struggle and its perception?

– **Culmine:** We are convinced that we are going through a new era in anarchism. Blogs and websites allow the quick spreading of communiqués, texts and writings all over the planet, and make possible the exchange of ideas and proposals between comrades who will probably never get the chance to meet in person. This is a proper revolution in the relations between anarchists. We are well aware of the limits of this new way of relating considering both the fact that the instrument we use is not neutral, but is run and controlled by the enemy, and the fact that the risks are high, as *Culmine* demonstrates, even if the latter didn't choose to stay anonymous. The anarchist blog *Culmine* was locked up on June 12 2012 also due to its work of counter-information.

The question of the struggle and its perception is rather complex. To begin with, as a matter of fact today – in 2013 – all movements use the internet: politicians, ecologists, culture movements and even anti-technology movements (this paradox deserves some going into but not here). Within anarchism too, practically all groups of all tendencies are connected to the web. But social networks such as twitter and facebook have recently broken in producing deleterious effects. Anyway we've never thought that counter-information blogs are to substitute paper publications.

2 – Aversión: It seems that today internet includes many aspects of our existence and profoundly affects human relations, thus contributing to isolation, atomization and alienation. Don't you think that there is a lack of critique on this instrument in the anarchist environment?

– **Culmine:** Yes, it's true, internet is very much present in our lives and we all, including the anarchists, use this instrument every day, also to travel or read a daily. There is no strong critique or taking distances from this instrument of technology. And we don't think we can be content with the few critical analysis and taking distances from the web made with a snobbish and elitist attitude by the few who know everything.

We agree about the urgency of the problem, i.e. we run the risk of becoming increasingly isolated and making all aspects of the struggle virtual, including human contact. At the same time, however, we can't stop thinking of the potentialities inherent to the spreading of our iconoclastic ideas and practices in all the corners of the planet.

More than anything else we lack a necessary reflection on how we can set our existences totally outside the virtual world. In the end this is the anti-civilization dilemma, which still remains too much anchored to the current model of our society. In this respect, on more than one occasion, *Culmine* has shown interest in this issue but it has postponed the drafting of a text on the matter to a

We also believe it necessary to give adequate space to self-critique: numerous mistakes are being made and we must be able to recognize it. For example, on more than one occasion we came across fake communiqués issued by myth-maniacs or cops. This is high risk for those who handle blogs.

In this case too the experience gained in years of struggle helps understand the authenticity of the texts one comes across. We always took care to signal the source of our posts along with the translators who from time to time helped us out. But to us this is part of a correct modus operandi not at all superficial, which is also necessary with regard to paper publications.

In spite of repression, in spite of long months spent in pre-trial detention in high security units we don't disown the work undertaken by *Culmine* in these years and we hope other blogs can carry on counter-information. At the same time we are very much interested in a critical and constructive debate within the international anarchist movement.

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– **Culmine:** That ‘formation’ occurs today mainly through the internet cannot be denied but certainly this is also a question of generations (each historical-social period uses the instruments of its time).

We of *Culmine* came to run a blog after we had made a road within the Italian anarchist movement well before the advent of the web. What we would like to say today is that those who belong to a movement that defines itself revolutionary must always have the ability to interact, even with violence, with the social situation surrounding them. To renounce internet and all technological instruments all of a sudden is unthinkable (even if it’s the ideal from an anti-civilization point of view). It is up to those who are engaged in counter-information to put their best energies so that blogs and sites have and propose articles, books, in-depth and accurate research. There’s no other way for the moment.

The question concerning non immediate perspectives is different. We can ask ourselves why and how we came to this situation, but this analysis – duly self-critical – embraces the last decades of world anarchism. And we think that at this level the reflection should be widened to other topics besides that of technological dependency: what kind of anarchism? Insurrectionism or individualism? Nihilism or pseudo-nihilism? Formality or informality? Signs, acronyms or anonymity? Anarchist anti-juridism? And up to which point can one be anti-juridical? Social or anti-social?

7 – **Aversión:** This interview is meant to be like a stone thrown in the air with the aim of creating a debate. Would you like to add anything else?

– **Culmine:** We would like to say that what happened to *Culmine* was not due to our incautious handling of web anonymity measures. Ours was a public blog, meaning that we never hid our identity and also took part in talks and public anarchist initiatives. We are of the opinion that the individualities that run anarchist blogs, especially if they deal with communiqués claiming actions and letters of prisoners, must be known within the movement.

future time. Considering our current extremely difficult situation in drafting a text together in a short time, we don’t rule out doing so sooner or later.

3 – **Aversión:** As a matter of fact, *Culmine* is the first known case of repression against an anarchist blog of counter-information. What do you think is the reason for this? Why *Culmine* and not some other blogs or sites?

– **Culmine:** First of all the repression against *Culmine* is related to the Italian antiterrorism law, the legacy of the special laws used during so-called ‘years of lead’.

We have to point out that we of *Culmine* are not only accused of violating the law on information and apology, but of having planned, financed and realized explosive attacks. Why *Culmine* and not some other blogs? Because, in our opinion, in the years of its existence *Culmine* never failed to publish claims of direct actions from all over the world, and it also gave voice to the many anarchist prisoners. We are not the only ones to do so, we’ve seen the creation of many other blogs and websites with which we shared considerations and experiences.

The imprisonment of *Culmine* is a bad sign as far as repression is concerned because it represents a scenario that could repeat with similar experiences of counter-information. For example, it is to be noted that according to the prosecution, evidence of our non-repentance after the raid of 29th March 2012 (which anticipated more repression) was the immediate spreading of a communiqué where we alerted other blogs about the raid against *Culmine*.

4 – **Aversión:** A lurking question on this subject concerns time. Internet forces you to constant updating and everything is done at a speed well beyond human capabilities. What’s the point in knowing what happens all over the planet in real time? Our ability of intervention within our nearest reality is very limited in itself. Up to which point does this produce the same anxiety deriving from the speed with which, for example, technology and fashion change, thus losing their previous value and meaning?

– **Culmine:** The problem of continuous updating exists, and as a matter of fact a blog that doesn't frequently give updates ceases to be visited. It is important for those who run a blog to carefully select the material they receive, giving more or less space and prominence to certain posts. Of course we can certainly survive (and continue to struggle and counter-inform) without knowing what happens on the other side of the world in real time.

But the idea is always that the exchange of information and experiences can be an incitement for other realities, as happened in the last years. However there is a limit that cannot be overstepped otherwise we fall into the virtuality of the struggle and of human relations. In this regard we think that mobilizations via twitter, for example, don't allow any kind of thinking owing to their extreme speed, in spite of the fact that they are the most used during demonstrations, even more than text messaging.

5 – **Aversión:** A new concept of anarchism of action strongly influenced by the web is coming to the fore. There are ways of doing and saying which materialize dynamics resembling poorly assimilated reproductions or mere 'web games', even if not all of them can be regarded as 'harmful'.

– **Culmine:** In the last years a new way to understand and live anarchism has been born. It is a new phenomenon, so new that we can't really define it because all definitions can be misleading at this stage.

However, one of the most used definitions is 'anarchism of action': in our opinion one cannot say that the web has influenced this new concept; we'd rather say that the web has quickly spread its contents, various differentiations and common denominators. It is nothing new in itself. Already in the past there was a time when anarchism of action made itself heard through attacks, executions, acts of sabotage and even kidnappings. Compared to the past, the novelty is all in the spreading of communiqués of claims in real time all over the planet, which may get other individualities and groups involved in actions against the same target.

In this case too, it is something we've already seen: the most outstanding example, but there are many of them, is that of the international campaign for Sacco and Vanzetti. In many areas of the planet individualities and groups were waiting for news from the North American death row: then the instrument of communication was the telegraph, now it is the internet. Of course there are many problems to be sorted out regarding the new approach. It is true that analyses are quite often superficial and that characters totally extraneous to the anarchist path spring out from anywhere (and they must be treated with due suspicion).

Moreover, we shouldn't underestimate language problems due to both bad and hasty translations (increasingly done using automatic translators, which we think should be used only in case of extreme necessity) and misunderstandings of concepts. An example could help us: within anarchism of action, urban guerrilla and armed struggle are very much talked about. At the moment we don't have the instruments to analyze what is happening, for example, in Greece. And certainly neither in Italy nor in several other countries is there sufficient ground to talk about urban guerrilla or armed struggle.

There is great confusion around the concept of nihilism too (to such a point that some pseudo-nihilists have come to deny any ethics thus paving the way to infamy itself) and similar misunderstandings are also coming out with regard to the concept of anarchist anti-juridism! These kinds of misunderstanding can actually give vent to nasty 'web games', which by the way *Culmine* has never animated.

6 – **Aversión:** Many of us became anarchist by participating in talks, writing letters to prisoners, reading pamphlets, visiting anarchist libraries, subscribing to periodicals from the other side of the planet, discussing with old saboteurs and fighters, etc... But at the moment formation occurs mainly through blogs and social networks. What's your opinion on this point?