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Spread Anarchy, Live Communism
April 13th, 2015

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There is a confrontation underlying this world. There is no need to be in Misrata today to perceive it. The streets of New York, for instance, reveal the extent to which this confrontation has been refined, for here we find all the sophisticated apparatuses needed to contain what is always threatening. Here is the mute violence that crushes down what still lives under the blocks of concrete and fake smiles. When we talk of 'apparatuses', we don't only invoke the New York Police Department (NYPD) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), surveillance cameras and body scanners, guns and denunciation, anti- theft locks and cell phones. Rather, in the layout of a town like New York – the pinnacle of the global petit-organic-hipster-bourgeoisie – we mean whatever captures intensities and vitalities in order to chew them up, digest them, and shit out value. But if capitalism triumphs every day, it is not merely because it crushes, exploits and represses, but also because it is desirable. This must be kept in mind when building a revolutionary movement.

There is a war going on—a permanent, global civil war. Two things prevent us from understanding it or even from perceiving it. First, the denial of the very fact of confrontation is still a part of this confrontation. And second, despite all the new prose of the various geopolitical specialists, the meaning of this war is not understood. Everything said about the asymmetrical shape of the so-called 'new wars' only adds to the confusion. The ongoing war we speak of does not have the Napoleonic magnificence of regular wars between two great armies of men, or between two antagonistic classes. Because if there is an asymmetry in the confrontation it is less between the forces present than over the very definition of the war itself. That is why we cannot talk about a social war: for if social war is a war that is led against us, it cannot symmetrically describe the war that we wage from our side and vice versa. We have to rethink the words themselves in order to forge new concepts as weapons.

We call hostility that which governs almost completely the relationships between beings, relationships of pure estrangement, pure incompatibility between bodies. It may take the shape of benevolence or malevolence, but it is always a distance:

> *I beat you down because I am a cop and you are a shit. I invite you to the restaurant because I want to fuck you. I leave you the bill because I don't know how to tell you how much I hate you. I never stop smiling.*

This is hostility. We need to act toward this sphere of hostility with the same non-relationships that it imposes within itself: to reduce it, to take aim at it and annihilate it. In other words, Empire is not a subject that is in front of me but a milieu that is hostile to me. It cannot be a question of being victorious over it, only of annihilating it. All that we learn to know singularly escapes from the sphere of the non-relationship. All that gives rise to a circulation of affects escapes the sphere of hostility. It is what friendship

'*no situation*'. It does not exist. From where we are we must run into the first world we encounter, to follow the first line of power that we get to. Everything follows from this.

is about. It is what enmity is about. That is why we don't try to crush any enemies; rather, we try to confront them. 'My enemy is my own question taking shape', said a horrible jurist. In this confrontation, it is less existence that is at stake than potentiality. All means are not equally useful in the confrontation between these two political positions. To say it differently, a political enemy is not to be crushed, it must be overcome. Distinguishing the sphere of hostility from that of friendship and enmity leads to a certain ethic of war.

For the anarchists, the paradox of the current historical situation can be formulated thus: everything proves them right, and nowhere do they manage to intervene in a decisive way, which means the obstacle does not come from the situation or from the repression but from the very inside of the anarchist position. For more than a century, the figure of the anarchist indicates the most extreme point of Western civilization. The anarchist is the point where the most hard-lined affirmation of all the Western fictions – the individual, freedom, free will, justice, the death of God – coincides with the most declamatory negation. The anarchist is the Western negation of the West.

Schürmann 1 rightly characterized our time as a deeply anarchic one, a time where all the principles of the unification of phenomena collapsed. Anarchy describes our epochal situation. From there, calling oneself an anarchist is to say nothing. It means either, when directed against a dominant order (as is the case in Greece), a way to expose to everyone the inner split and malaise of civilization, or a posture.

All the tired chatter of the particular anarchist literature today is held to this: how is it possible to violently affirm our existence without ever affirming any singular ethical content? Those who said, 'There are no nihilists, only impotence', were not mistaken. To claim to be a nihilist is only claiming one's own impotence. Isolation is a cause for impotence more dreadful than that caused by repression. Those who don't let themselves be isolated do not let

themselves be reduced to impotence. Malatesta understood this well in his time.

All the doctrines of government are anarchist doctrines. They do not trouble themselves with any principle. They do not presuppose order; they produce order. This world is not unified *a priori* by some fantasy of truth, by some universal norm or principle that would be posed or imposed. This world is unified *a posteriori*, pragmatically, locally. Everywhere is organized the material, symbolic, logistical and repressive condition of an *'as if'*. Everywhere, in every locality, everything goes *'as if'* life obeyed this principle, this norm compatible with other localities. It is how empire covers globally the anarchy of our time. We manage, we manage phenomenality.

This is what testifies to the insurrectional movements of the last years in the Maghreb, in Europe or in Asia. And that is precisely why they are meant to always disappoint anarchists.

The contemporary figure of a man without qualities that we call the Bloom 2 is struck by what we must call an ethical impotence. It cannot live one particular thing without worrying about missing everything else. It never is here without its own being-here being doubled by the anxiety of not being everywhere else too. That is why it is so dependent on ubiquitous technological apparatuses: the cell phones, internet and global transportation. Without this prosthesis, he would collapse on the spot. New York, as the absolute metropolis, condenses this experience where the price of not missing anything is to not live anything. Anarchism is the spontaneous political consciousness of the Bloom. The ambition to deny everything is what legitimates people to never fully deny something and thus to start to affirm something singular.

The desperate conservatism that presently spreads in the political sphere only expresses our inability to seize the ethical underpinnings implicit in Western civilization. We need to settle up with the muted, unnoticed totality of what underlies all our actions, words, feelings and representations. But the scale of the task

Whether it is the Marxist theologian or the anarchist anti-intellectual, the identitarian moralist or the playfully transgressive hipster, all of this is an apparatus. We have said enough about what we want to do to with apparatuses. Each of these figures – the hipster, the academic and the political activist – expresses as much a singular attachment to a power as a common amputation. And here we see the fundamental divisions on which Western civilization has been built: that is, the separation between gesture, thought and life. If one wondered what the idea of the *tiqqun* means, it might mean, for instance, not letting ourselves be comfortable in those very splits, those very amputations, but rather starting from those very attachments—thinking, acting and living—asking how could this, instead of being maintained separated in figures (the hipster, the academic, the activist), how could all of this be the plane of consistency that would actually enable us to draw lines more interesting than the lines between those figures?

If the life of militant radicals in Western societies shows the dissatisfaction proper to a revolutionary existence without a revolution, the recent uprisings in the Maghreb attest to an insufficiency of revolutions without revolutionaries: that is, the necessity of building the party. When we speak of building the party, we do not mean as organization, but as a plane of circulation, of common intelligence, of strategic thinking, just as much as local consistencies. There is a threat that weighs on all attacks starting from singular worlds, and it is that they remain incomprehensible by lack of translation. The party must be that agent of faithful translation of local phenomena, a force of mutual knowledge, of experiences underway. And it must be global.

What is at stake is how we are able to flee and keep our weapons. What is at stake is how we can extract ourselves from the milieus in which we are stuck, whether it is a university or the anarchist scene itself. Many have wondered about the very situation we face now, claiming 'There is no situation here'. We respond: there is no

ing to pose these questions today would oblige us to return to the normal situation tomorrow, if only to survive.

We can predict that such an investigation, having reached a certain degree of reality, would not fail to produce a scandal as big as the threat that it poses to the good functioning of everything. Contrarily to the amusing fraud of Wikileaks, it is the sharing and diffusion of accessible information to everyone, which would allow them to feed off or consequently paralyze a region or a country. In a world of lies, the lie can never be defeated by its contrary, it can only be defeated by a world of truth.

We don't want a programme. We must constitute a science of apparatuses that reveals the structures and weaknesses of the organization of a world, and at the same time indicates practicable paths outside of the current hell. We need fictions, a horizon of the world, which will allow us to hang on, which will give us breath. When the moment comes, we must be ready.

To conclude, if we have come here to talk, it is only because we have been persuaded of this: we must be done with radicalism and its meager comforts – now. The intellectual, the academic, both remain mesmerized by the contradictions that banish thought to the clouds. By never beginning from the situation, from their own situation, intellectuals distance themselves from the world so much that, finally, it is their intelligence itself that abandons them. If hipsters succeed in perceiving the world with precision and subtlety, it is only to aestheticize the sensible ever further, that is to say, to keep it at a distance, to contemplate their lives and their beautiful souls and thereby to promote their own impotence – their particular autism, which expresses itself in a valorization of the tiniest aspects of life. Meanwhile, the activist, in refusing to think, in adopting the ethic of middle managers, runs grinning into every single wall before him before finally collapsing into cynicism. If taking part is the only option in war, the lines that are offered to us visibly are not the ones that we should follow. We have to displace them and we have to move ourselves in between them.

is such that, for an isolated individual, any stupid affirmation of any neo-conservatism is always more reassuring in the end. The current fallback toward the most dogmatic ideological forms of anarchism or communism, towards the fetishism of a radical political identity, comes from the same fear of throwing yourself into the unknown of such an adventure.

It is necessary to do away with the reigning confusion. One of the main flaws of the revolutionary movement is that it remains imprisoned in false oppositions; or worse, that it forces us to think in the shackles of these very false alternatives. Activism or wait and see? The great evening or the process? Vanguard or mass movement? They are called false not because they will not express actual differences. Quite the contrary, it is because they transform all the decisive questions into binary and unsatisfying polarized alternatives. This said, the debate around the necessity to create our own little oasis or to wait for the insurrection to come before creating troubles within the radical milieu, was firstly a theological question. We could wait for the coming of the Messiah, staying at the very position God gave him, or we could pretend to fasten the second coming. There is another way, of a different nature. There is a Messianic time that is the abolition of the time that passes: the rupture of the continuum of history, the end of waiting. That also means there are sparks mixed with the blackness of reality. It means there exists something Messianic: the kingdom is not merely to come but already, by fragments, here among us.

What we say is that it is not more urgent to act than it is urgent to wait. Because we want to get organized, we have time. We don't think there is any outside to capital, but we don't think that reality is capitalist. Communism is a practice that starts from those sparks, from those forms-of-life.

We said 'all power to the communes', but a commune is never something given. It is not what is here, but what takes place. A commune is not two people who meet or ten people buying a farm. A commune is two people who meet to become three, to become

four, to become a thousand. The only question for the commune is its own potentiality, its constant becoming. It is a practical question. To become a war machine or collapse into a milieu? To end up alone or begin to love each other? The commune does not describe what we organize but how we organize ourselves, which is always at the same time a material question. A commune is only as it becomes. There is no preliminary to communism. Those who believe otherwise, by dint of pursuing their goal, manage only to lose themselves in the accumulation of means.

Communism is not a different way to distribute wealth, to organize production or to manage society. Communism is an ethical disposition, a disposition that lets itself be affected, at the contact of being, through what is common to us. Communism is as much the beyond and the below of capitalist misery. What we put behind this vocable 'communism' is radically opposed to all those who use and used it to lead it to dislocation. War also passes through words. How many times in activist circles have we had this dead-end discussion? What are we fighting against? You just have to raise the issue and everyone will go for their own petty fantasy that, in the last resort, subsumed all the others. 'What we need to confront is patriarchy.' 'No, it's racism.' 'No, it's capitalism.' 'No, it's exploitation, and alienation is only a moment of it.' 'No, it's alienation, and exploitation is only a moment of it.' The finest theologians even managed to build a small activist trinity that articulates a triple oppression. At the same time one and three: sexism, racism and capitalism. All the good will of the world failed to produce the decisive answer to this question. That failure sums up the impotence to which our false conception condemns us.

When we are looking for an enemy, we often start by projecting ourselves on an abstract scene, within which the world has disappeared. Let us ask ourselves the same question, but starting from the neighbourhood where we live, from the company where we work, from the professional sector we are familiar with. Then the answer is clear; then the front lines can be distinctly seen, and

It is from this horizon, for example, that we can understand the failure of the recent movement of pensioners in France. By blocking the infrastructure that regulates the country – rather than begging the government for demands, for reforms, or for anything – the movement implicitly recognized that it is the physical organization of society that constitutes its real power. By blocking the circulation of commodities rather than occupying the factories, the movement took leave of the classical workers' perspective, which understood the strike as a prelude to the occupation of sites of production, and understood the occupation of sites of production as the prelude to their takeover by the working class. The people who made the blockade were not only those who worked in the places that were blocked, but also a motley crew of teachers, students and trade unionists; of workers from other sectors; of troublemakers of every kind. The blockade was not the prelude to an economic reappropriation but to a political act: in each flow, the sabotage takes aim at the social machine as a whole.

Nevertheless, this movement was defeated. Whether this was because of the intervention by unions or because of the architectural flows of networks that allow their rapid reorganization in the case of interruption, the gas supply in France – which the movement spontaneously chose to target – could not be blocked permanently.

We could go on and on about the weaknesses of the movement. What is certain is that it did not have sufficient knowledge of what it tried to block.

This example suffices to illustrate how we must henceforth understand the materiality of domination. We must investigate, we must research: we must search out, and above all share and propagate, all of the necessary information about the functioning of the capitalist machine. How is it fed by energy, information, arms and food? What we need to understand is: in a situation where everything is suspended, in a state of exception, what do we turn off, what do we transform and what do we want to maintain? Refus-

them – or within society, a space sufficiently devoid of content – in order to wonder how we will arrange those disparate, disconnected elements of the self as much as of the society. If we have a politics to advance, it is one that begins from an opposite hypothesis. There is no void. Everything is already inhabited. We are, each of us, points of intersection: of quantities of affect, of families, of histories, of realities that fundamentally exceed us. The point is not to constitute a void in which we finally begin to recover everything that eludes us, but rather that we already have the means to organize, to play, to form links and bonds. There is an open battle between, on the one hand, this fear, at once senile and childish, that we can only live on the condition of being governed, and on the other hand, an inhabited politics that dismisses the question of government altogether.

Whether from the Tunisian situation, from attempts to block economic flows in France, or from the coming insurrection latent in Greece, we learn that we cannot separate the tearing down of power from the material establishment of other forms of organization. Everywhere, when power falters, the same chasm opens beneath our feet. How is it to be done? We have to figure it out materially, but also technically: how can we effect a shocking exit from the existing order, a complete reversal of social relations, a new way of being in the world? We say that this paradox is not a paradox at all.

All power to the communes! This means: tear down power, globally, locally – wherever it captures, manages and controls us. It means: organize by and for ourselves, first of all in the neighbourhood, the city and the region. Food, transportation, healthcare, energy – in each case we need to find the level at which we can act without recreating the power that we only just deposed. The commune is not a form, but rather a way of posing problems that dissolves them. And so the revolutionary imperative reduces itself to this simple formula: to become ungovernable and to remain that way.

who is on what side can easily be determined. This is because the question of the confrontation, the properly political question, only makes sense in a given world, in a substantial world. For those who are nowhere, cybernetic philosophers or metropolitan hipsters, the political question never makes sense. It refuses itself to them and leaves them walking backward into abstraction. And that is the price to pay for so much superficiality. As compensation, they will prefer to juggle with some great folkloric significance, to give themselves some post-Maoist or post-situationist thrills. Or, perhaps they will accommodate their nothingness with the last glosses of the ultra-left logorrhoea.

To all the metaphysical principles overhanging reality, Schürmann opposed a 'faithfulness to the phenomena'. That is also what we need to oppose to the political impotence. For, besides a few heroic moments, it is over the ordinary and the daily that the anarchist discourse breaks itself. There we experience the same disjunction between the political and the sensible that is the disastrous background of classical politics. The powerful things that we live leave us mute. And what we experience in terms of silent but manifest failures, these we have no words for. Only the anarchist gesture sometimes comes to save its profound inconsistency, and yet during this gesture we only obey an order corresponding to our anarchist identity. That we have from time to time to obey our identity in order to realize our discursive existence – this reveals our poverty in worlds, a poverty that one is not even distracted from by belonging to a milieu. Identity politics captures us in the negation of all the implicit, all the invisible, all the unheard, which composes the frame of the world.

We have called this the ethical element. It is the same underlying principle behind Wittgenstein's forms of life. It is on the basis of everyday life, of the ordinary, that this war against the world must be conceived. From Oaxaca to Keratea, from the Val di Susa to Sidi Bouzid, from Exarchia to Kabylie, the great battles of our time emanate from a local consistency. A street vendor who will self-

immolate in front of the local administration after being slapped in public by a policewoman expresses the implicit and adiscursive affirmation of a form-of-life. This gesture of negation contains a clear affirmation that this life does not deserve to be lived. At root it was the power of this affirmation that took over Tunisia. Genoa would never have become the summit of the counter-summits without the rebellious Genovese proletarians.

To say that the war against Empire arises from everyday life, from the ordinary, that it emanates from the ethical element, is to propose a new concept of war stripped of all its military content. In any case, it is comical to see that for the last ten years the strategy of all the Western armies, as well as the Chinese army, is to approximate a concept which, because of their forms-of-life, escapes them. It is enough to see a special forces soldier speak of battles of hearts and minds to understand that they have already lost. It is an asymmetrical war not because of the forces present but because the insurgents and counter-insurrectionists are not waging the same war. This is why the notion of social war is inadequate. It gives rise to the fatal illusion of symmetry in the conflict with society, that the battle takes place over the same representation of reality. If there actually is an asymmetric war between people and governments, it is because what sets us apart is an asymmetry in the very definition of war. We welcome, in passing, the nomination of General Petraeus to the head of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). It no doubt ushers in an exciting decade in the United States.

It has been four years since the publication of *The Coming Insurrection* in 2007. It was, at that time, crazy but also rational to pose insurrection as the world's horizon. We could say that the present period has confirmed this analysis. A social movement, like that of the pensioners in France, adopted as its slogan 'Blockade everything'. An entire country, like Greece, saw the insurrection coming (though it was ultimately aborted), over the course of a month. Not to mention Tunisia, Egypt or Libya – where the determination, often unspoken, to destroy structures of power remains exemplary.

To be sure, there are still too few heads of state sunning themselves in Saudi Arabia – away from the countries they once presumed to lead – but something is definitely accelerating.

We have only to look around in order to see that the content of this book is realizing itself. Yet, at the same time, it withers. Its limits are becoming apparent. The real movement provides the only admissible critique of a text's historical impact. The field of tactics is always the domain of the counter-revolution. And so we understand: when we are forced onto the field of tactics, when we are only a little step ahead, when we chase after events as they happen, then we can no longer act in a revolutionary way. At the present moment, in order to escape being forced onto the field of tactics, we must overcome the question of the insurrection. That is to say, we must take this horizon as given and begin to think and act on that basis. We must take the insurrectionary situation as our starting point – even now, even here, when it is the counter-insurrection that dominates reality.

In this regard, we locate two crucial questions that pose themselves to the revolutionary movement.

The first is the exit from the framework of government. Since its origin in Greece, politics has carried within itself a metaphysics of order. It begins from the premise that people must be governed, either democratically by themselves or hierarchically by others. The same anthropology underlies the notion of the individualist anarchist – who wants to express their own passions fully, or to govern themself- and that of the pessimist – for whom people are hungry beasts, who will devour their neighbours if only they can free themselves from the binding power of government. Various political positions thus organize themselves, ultimately, according to the answers they propose to this question: the question of the government of human beings and their passions. All are rooted in a readily discernible notion of human nature.

But in fact, the question of government only poses itself in a void. We must produce enough of a void around individuals, or even in