Comité Liquidant Ou Détournant Les Ordinateurs (C.L.O.D.O.)
The CLODO Speaks
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Sporadic acts of sabotage against companies involved in nuclear plant construction began to take place in the region of Toulouse, France in mid-1979. This occurred at the height of vigorous, broad-based regional opposition to the construction of the GOLFECH nuclear power plant on the Garonne River. But the local anti-nuke movement reached an impasse in early 1981, when it became clear that GOLFECH would continue unabated. Despite, or because of this impasse, sabotage became more frequent and the targets more diverse.

In June, 1983, a stolen bust of Jean Jaures, famous socialist of the 1900s, appeared hanging by the neck from a tree in front of city hall. A "suicide note," signed by Jaures and "edited" by the "Association of Mischief Makers," denounced the current socialist government [of Francois Mitterand] for repressive, authoritarian policies. According to the note, Jaures regretted a life wasted on the futile path of advancing the social-democratic cause, which had come to such an ignominious end.

In the following months, several attacks on Catholic bookstores and religious statues (including the bust of Pontius Pilate near the

famous religious shrine at Lourdes), signed by a "Stop the Priests" campaign, protested the visit of the Pope and the "Vatican Multinational Corporation." That same summer a number of companies and governmental offices that were directly or indirectly involved in the GOLFECH construction suffered serious damage by explosion or fire.

While different groups, often with humorous names ("A Heretofore Unknown Group") and punning acronyms, have claimed responsibility for these actions, the tone and content of their communiques reflect a common perspective. The "Committee for the Liquidation and Subversion of Computers," known by its French acronym CLODO (an untranslatable slang term which means something like "bum") has claimed responsibility for six actions over the past three years, most of them involving torching or otherwise destroying computer centers. The most recent action occurred in October 1983 when the offices of SPERRY–a U.S.-owned computer manufacturer–went up in flames. Nearby, graffiti read "Reagan attacks Grenada, SPERRY multinational is an accomplice."

Though CLODO's emphasis on computer technology reflects a specific area of expertise and interest, they are ideologically close to the other saboteurs of the region: they claim to work as an ad hoc grouping, associating around particular actions and interests, and eschew the notion of themselves as a formal organization. They have no rigid rules and principles and tolerate considerable diversity among individual participants; they distinguish themselves from traditional left groups by their rejection of a "vanguard" role, their explicitly anti- authoritarian playfulness and a sense of humor that they wield as an ideological weapon.

One French newspaper described the saboteurs as part of an "anarcho-libertarian" movement that is based in Toulouse. In another "interview" with a group that conducted simultaneous "fireworks" at two sites of nuclear-related production in August 1983, "Groucho" explains:

Computerization is world-wide. In the Third World, it helps to reinforce the ideological and economic domination of the West, especially the U.S., and to a lesser extent, of local power. We therefore consider that our struggle is global, even if that sounds exaggerated given the pin pricks we actually accomplish.

What are your projects for the future?

Little by little the theory of computerization that we have been developing for several years is getting fleshed out. On the whole, though, it remains unchanged since computers are still basically being used by the same people for the same things. So there is no reason not to continue in the same direction. With more imagination, and at our own pace, even if the result is less spectacular than our previous actions. The rapid pace of automation and the forthcoming explosion of telecommunications opens a wider field of action and revolt. We will try to fight in these areas, knowing that our efforts are partial. There's room for all rebels!

What are your chances of success? Aren't you afraid of getting caught?

Our chances are fine, thank you. We've got the motives and the ideas, and among the blind, the one-eyed are kings. For more than three years a security court of the State (may it rest in peace) and several dozen mercenaries have been looking for us: their material resources are sophisticated but pretty insufficient and our last action against the information center of the Haute Garonne municipality must have shown them we know more about them than they know about us! We are nonetheless conscious of the risks we run and the scope of the arsenal we are running up against. May our next interview not be with a police magistrate!

-Toulouse, August 1983

"People talk a lot about the silent majority and it gets a lot of press. But there is also a muzzled minority that can only express itself through political and social rejection, because it rejects the sham of democracy. It doesn't demand the right to free speech, the right to justice, the rights of man–it *takes* these rights, or at least it tries to. This minority exists, be it organized or disorganized, atomized in the social fabric, revolutionary or deviant. In our practice, we affirm its specific character. We have no illusions about the propaganda of ideas, but we support everyone who can no longer stand injustices and contributes their little recipes to subvert a capitalized daily life."

French authorities denounce the saboteurs as deranged and inhuman, always pretending that it's only by chance that no one gets injured. In fact, the obvious caution demonstrated by this particular brand of sabotage (there have been no human casualties in the acts described here) is clearly distinct from the bombs in trains and other public places worldwide that continue to claim innocent lives in the name of this or that "liberation organization."

The following "interview" was sent to the French magazine, *Terminal 19/84* and appeared in the October 1983 issue.

Why did you accept this interview?

We've always felt that acts speak for themselves, and we decided to write a communique only because a (presumed?) member of a so-called armed, and in any case ephemeral, organization tried to pass off our acts as something they aren't. In the face of the propaganda of Power, which is particularly stupefying when it is about computers, and to end some myths about us, we felt some explanations have become necessary.

Why do you do computer sabotage?

To challenge everyone, programmers and non-programmers, so that we can reflect a little more on this world we live in and which we create, and on the way computerization transforms this society.

The truth about computerization should be revealed from time to time. It should be said that a computer is just a bunch of metal

that severs only to do what one wants it to do, that in our world it's just one more tool, a particularly powerful one, that's at the service of the dominators.

We are essentially attacking what these tools lead to: files, surveillance by means of badges and cards, instrument of profit maximization for the bosses and of acclerated pauperization for those who are rejected…

The dominant ideology has clearly understood that, as a simple tool, the computer didn't serve its interests very well. So the computer became a parahuman entity (cf. the discussion on artificial intelligence), a demon or an angel–but capable of domestification (computer games and telecommunications were supposed to persuade us of this)–anything but a zealous servant of the system we live in. In this way, they hope to transform the values of the system into a system of values.

By our actions we have wanted to underline the material nature of the computer-tools on the one hand, and on the other, the destiny of domination which has been conferred on it. Finally, though what we do is primarily propaganda through action, we also know that the damage we cause leads to setbacks and and substantial delays.

Doesn't the spectacular, radical aspect of the destruction you cause seem a bit outrageous?

These actions are only the visible tip of the iceberg! We ourselves and others fight daily in a less ostensible way. With computers, like with the army, police or politics, in fact, like with all privileged instruments of power, errors are the rule, and working them out takes up the majority of programmers' time! We take advantage of this, which undoubtedly costs our employers more than the material damage we cause. We'll only say that the art consists of creating bugs that will only appear later on, little time-bombs.

To get back to your question–what could be more ordinary than throwing a match on a package of magnetic tapes? Anybody can do it! The act appears excessive only for those who don't know, or

who don't want to know, what most computer systems are used for.

Then how do you explain the fact that others haven't done similar things?

To tell the truth, it's hard to explain. We are in a good position to know that most computer workers really participate with their "work tools" and rarely use their gray matter to reflect on what they do (they generally would rather not know about it!). As for those who don't work with computers, they are unconcerned or they passively accept the dominant propaganda. But that doesn't explain everything, and even those who do resist the soporifics of power are still scared of police uniforms!

Aren't you really a bit retro, like the machine breakers of the 19th Century?

Faced with the tools of those in power, dominated people have always used sabotage or subversion. It's neither retrograde nor novel. Looking at the past, we see only slavery and dehumanization, unless we go back to certain so-called primitive societies. And though we may not all share the same "social project," we know that it's stupid to try and turn back the clock.

Computer tools are undoubtedly perverted at their very origin (the abuse of the quantitative and the reduction to the binary are proof of this) but they could be used for other ends than the ones they now serve. When we recognize that the most computerized sector is the army, and that 94% of civilian computer-time is used for management and accounting, we don't feel like the loom-breakers of the 19th century (even though they fought against dehumanization in their jobs). Nor are we defenders of the computer-created unemployed… if microprocessors create unemployment, instead of reducing everyone's working-time, it's because we live in a brutal society, and this is by no means a reason to destroy microprocessors.

How do you situate your actions in the context of France and the rest of the world?