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Miguel Amorós
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June 4, 2014

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(Written as part of an attempt to dissuade a comrade from participating in the poll supervisor position to which she was assigned.) *Translated in August 2014 from the Spanish text provided by the author.*

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Electoral Insubordination

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“What we maintain is that universal suffrage, considered in itself and applied in a society based on economic and social inequality, will be nothing but a swindle and snare for the people; nothing but an odious lie of the bourgeois-democrats, the surest way to consolidate under the mantle of liberalism and justice the permanent domination of the people by the owning classes, to the detriment of popular liberty.”

Mikhail Bakunin

Although these words were written in 1870, that is, a century and a half ago, they have never been more true than they are today. What was known to be true at the dawn of bourgeois society, is only more certainly true in its last stage. We shall avail ourselves of this opportunity to bury an error based on certain interests and to make it clear that when you hear the word “democracy”, what they are really talking about is parliamentarism, the political form best adapted to the dominance of oligarchic interests. The multiplication of elections to the various parliaments has only served to perfect the instruments by means of which the masses are led

to cooperate in the construction of their own prison. The parliaments, far from representing the popular will, actually represent the legitimization of political corruption and economic and financial despotism. The popular will is a pure entelechy, a phantom that is incapable of materializing in any form other than a political caste associated with private group interests.

Political fantasy, however, is a food that never fills you up. You could call parliamentarism either democracy or dictatorship because it possesses attributes of both; what is certain is that it by no means corresponds to the popular will. The latter can only emerge from freedom, from spaces of free discussion, not from media monopolies, from indifference, from conformism or submission. How else can a parliament be recognized if not as the legislative leash of oppression? The best parliament is the one that does not exist. Therefore, if a real popular will were to be capable of expressing itself, it would not do so in parliaments. We have never had less need of parliaments than today—not to speak of politics—and never before have parliaments tyrannized over us as much as they do today.

Parliaments are not the solution; they are the problem. They only represent the ruling minority. The pseudo-democratic rituals that legitimate them, elections, are a farce. No one who has not been resigned to *faits accomplis* by force, by capitalist violence, can recognize himself in them: dignity, reason and justice prevent such a person from doing so. Such a person cannot abandon his conscience and his integrity in favor of the law, because such conduct is not befitting of objective and unbiased persons; moreover, were such a person nonetheless do so, he would be collaborating with injustice and oppression. The real interest of oppressed society morally compels disobedience.

Our rejection of parliamentarism must not be understood as a rejection of democracy. What we abominate is the state and its main tentacles, not the anti-state, horizontal, assembly-based democracy, the one that really protects us. The parliamentary state, far from protecting us, simply threatens us, terrorizes us,

and imposes submissive ways of life on us. It permits us to exist under conditions that are entirely of its own making.

“Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once?”

Henry David Thoreau

Thoreau, the father of civil disobedience, opted for the latter choice. It is obvious that a law that reaffirms the rule of the ruling class is a spurious law, drafted by spurious committees and promulgated by spurious parliaments. And it is also obvious that, due to that law’s profoundly arbitrary nature and its debatable and dubious character, it constitutes an assault on the conscience of those who seek to rule their lives in accordance with ethical considerations, appealing to liberty and the common good. The illegitimate law must first clash with the right to the defense of one’s own convictions, and therefore with the duty to disobey it. But the constitutions spawned by the parliaments do not recognize, for obvious reasons, either conscientious objection or disobedience. It is precisely their illegitimate character that causes the legislators to defend the legal farce with exemplary punishments. Otherwise it would offer easy opportunities to unmask it.

The electoral law does not prohibit abstention, since the latter would not affect the results; it does, however, mandate that those who are unilaterally appointed to act as polling supervisors must comply with their responsibilities, or else face fines and imprisonment. It does not take into consideration the possible conflict between the electoral norms and the moral principles of individuals. We thus have a right that is violated by the juridical norms, the right to resist the mandates of authority—which are always usurpatory—that violate one’s moral convictions; in short, the natural right to resist political tyranny.

The majority is not everyone. Despite the fact that a large part of the population, due to a lack of consciousness, due to habit, maybe because they derive some benefit from it, or for some other reason, irresponsibly accepts the state authority that emanates from the parliaments—an authority that consolidates the social inequality and the rule of a class that has a firm grip on politics and finance—there is nonetheless a minority that is nauseated by the idea of collaborating with injustice, and which refuses for reasons of conscience to comply with the dominant order with regard to elections. It feels that at the very least its right to disagree has been violated and that its opinion has not been taken into consideration, which is why it has resort to insubordination, confronting the laws that regulate servitude.

Electoral insubordination, even more than abstention, is a peaceful form of dissidence that follows logically upon the personal non-recognition of the parties, parliamentarism and the state, entities in which the dissident does not feel that he is represented. It is the concrete rejection of an odious and iniquitous norm that violates the free convictions of the one who chooses. The insubordinate person, by way of his refusal to participate in anything that politically legalizes domination, opposes his conscience to the disastrous legislative order, and decides to face the consequences of his insubordination rather than take a single step towards infamy and inequality. Insubordination is the obverse of the voluntary servitude typical of the sheep-like majority.

Oppressive tyranny would not last a single second if no one would consent to endure its yoke. By ceasing to accept tyranny, without even needing to struggle, everyone would recover freedom. But individuals wallow in the mud of submission, they are satisfied with living as they were when they were born, without demanding any other right than the ones that have been granted to them. Nonetheless, despite the efforts made by the leaders to corrupt everyone, there are always those who do not enthusiastically comply with laws that others in the past only complied with

because they were forced to do so, and who try to recover at least a little of the freedom that has been stolen from them. To these insubordinate persons, the words of Etienne de La Boétie, uttered when the armies of Henry II were sowing terror throughout France, must sound familiar: *“Resolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed. I do not ask that you place hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer; then you will behold him, like a great Colossus whose pedestal has been pulled away, fall of his own weight and break in pieces.”*