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Miguel Amorós
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Living in a perpetual present means precisely to exclude the experience of time and to be spared the reasoned and implacable critique of reality. The main beneficiaries of this situation are leaders, ideologues and bureaucrats, since their responsibility in the defeat and disappearance of the workers movement is thus exonerated. New sorcerers' apprentices, manipulators and deluded elements can come to fill the vacant spaces on the stage, fully confident that all memory of their careerism, cowardice, irrationality and betrayals will be erased with the passage of time. Meanwhile, except for a handful of exceptions, even today's rebels are looking neither backward nor forward. They have instead installed themselves in a timeless and therefore static limbo, whence they contemplate events with a mixture of astonishment and fatalism, reacting to them in an emotional and voluntarist way. In the absence of any rational reflection pursued right out in the open, it seems that mysteries have come to an end without being revealed, that situations conclude without being clarified and contradictions cease to exist without being superseded. Hyper-negative logorrhea and the repetition of doctrinaire recipes or the jargon of fashionable confusionism have replaced critical thought. Their feet are

no longer on the ground; revolt revolves around itself and consumes itself from within, incapable of understanding the moment and affecting it.

Even the most obtuse of our contemporaries should not find it too hard to try to recall what things were like forty or fifty years ago and to take note of the great social changes that took place then, which were the cause of this mudslide that has buried even the most non-conformist minds of our time. For it was the technological innovations introduced in the process of production and the massive development of the tertiary sector, that displaced the industrial proletariat from the center of a working class in which white collar employees and civil servants were then on the verge of comprising the majority of the class. The consequence for the class struggle was fundamental, since the imposition of work rules typical of those applied to industrial workers on the employees of the state institutions and the service sector proved to be of no use: even if all external authority were to be removed from administrative and commercial labor (more precisely, even if such jobs were to be self-managed), these sectors could not be transformed into the cornerstone of a society of free producers. Social conflicts no longer contained the seed of a confrontation based on principles, nor could strikes seriously entertain the proposal of expropriation and autonomous management. The civil service and white collar employees trade unions, hegemonic in the wage earning class, were not capable of functioning as parts of a stateless socialist regime, nor could any meaningful collectivization project be undertaken from the basis of their logistical platforms, lecture halls, bureaus or offices.

At the same time, the masses of wage earners, who had ceased to be the main productive force thanks to technology, went on to become the main consuming force, to the detriment of the bourgeoisie. The modalities of alienation and oppression that accompanied this economic reshuffling were necessarily unlike those of the past, and were more connected to con-

The prevailing institutional order, born from a reform that was agreed to by the Franco Dictatorship, is authoritarian and intolerant, like its predecessor, however much it calls itself democratic, and tends to become more so as it encounters difficulties. The state feels insecure, it fears that civil society will reorganize outside of its framework and defy it. This is why it must perceive any demonstration of non-conformity or any public exposure of its arbitrary conduct—any “unauthorized” recording or undesired dissemination of information, for example—and ultimately any informal outdoor gatherings, sit-ins, demonstrations, occupations, or even vocal expressions of disapproval, as a lack of respect for its representatives and an unendurable transgression of the legal order that is worthy of the most onerous fines (if other means are lacking); an extremely clear case of “public disorder” against which demonstrations of indiscriminate force are in order. When the state of the ruling class finds itself in an unfavorable situation, whether because of the unpopularity of its personnel, or due to the harmful effects of the economy, it must drastically reduce the scope of civil rights and expand its capacity for taking action against the disobedient, thus entering into conflict with the constitutional norms that legitimate its order. Power can never be defied, nor can its measures be challenged. As a result, the “reason of order” of the particratic state is becoming more and more like the violent “reason of state” of the fascist states, so that the exercise of nominal liberties has become practically illegal, such as was the case, not to go too far back in time, in the Dictatorship of our past. This is how domination operates when the lower orders are not intimidated, and as a result those who would contest its rule must either dodge its blows, or else outflank it.

sumption than to survival. Capital no longer pursued the mere reproduction of necessary labor power, but the extended reproduction of the capacity for consumption of labor power. The everyday life of the workers began to be moulded in this direction. Developmentalism, that is, the idea that economic growth will solve any social or political problem by way of consumption, became the credo of the rulers of the incipient society of the spectacle. At that time the social-liberal illusion of an irresistible march towards the enjoyment of all possible commodities was imposed, a process that was supposed to be precipitated and harmonized by full employment and a centralized and benevolent state power. The industrialization of life, however, then ran up against new and more profound contradictions, as was demonstrated by the crisis of the sixties and seventies of the past century. The critique of everyday life and the spectacle (of which the critiques of sexism and industrial food are a part) was the key theoretical factor, just as the critique of wage labor and the critique of the state were the key theoretical factors in the past, which is why the class struggle had to focus on the rejection of commodified consumption and its corresponding politics, rather than on jobs and wages. The refusal to consume was an invitation to self-segregation and self-constitution as a collectivity outside of capitalism. The classical forms of workers resistance, the trade unions and assemblies, were revealed to be inoperative because they had not successfully fulfilled their function by remaining on the terrain of labor, and therefore on that of capital. The social war would resume on other fields. If the mechanisms of workers struggle are inscribed in the labor market and not in everyday life, they will be incapable of becoming instruments of freedom and re-appropriation. The other forms of struggle that were advocated, the communes, erred in the opposite direction, that is, in that they embraced a voluntary ignorance of the revolutionary experience of the working class and indifference towards the practical

questions of social combat, which, combined with a precarious experimentation and a pseudo-mystical ideology expressed in the esoteric language of self-help and Zen, led to an even more resounding failure.

Capitalism had to try to overcome the crisis by globalizing it, thanks to a long period of general restructuring during which the exploitation of the territory ended up being the axis of a financialized economy. Extensive urbanization, with the subsequent accelerated circulation of credit, commodities and consumers, made the territory the depository of the new globalized misery. As a result, the defense of the territory and anti-developmentalism must engage in theoretical-practical work beginning with the critique of everyday life, and also by advocating direct democracy at all levels, the public dimension of unifying action, indissolubly associated with the collective experience of a life that aspires to set down roots, to liberate itself from constraints and to fill itself with content. The foreseeable prospect of future crises, which will be even more profound than the previous ones, merits much more assiduous analysis. In connection with this question, we shall merely point out that the forced flight forward of the capitalist system will make it more vulnerable despite all appearances, since each dysfunction with regard to energy supplies, consumption or indebtedness, for example, could have unexpected repercussions, and this causes the most trivial components of the circulation process to become critical factors. The support of civil society was never fully guaranteed; for by submerging every activity, including politics, within the private sphere, and thereby eliminating the domain of the public sphere, private interests can no longer be identified with sufficient conviction with institutional interests. The prevailing legality, not inspiring any respect, must instill fear and in order to do so it must endow itself with a greater capacity for repression.

Under the cover of laws against “terrorism”, drug trafficking and organized crime, the figures of the “suspect” and the

“enemy” were introduced, which in practice extended the suspicion of “criminality” to any expression of dissidence or sympathy with dissidence, thus causing the entire population to be subjected to surveillance and espionage. The old dictatorial concept of “public order” was camouflaged behind those of “public safety” and “State security”, which transformed any action or opinion that is opposed to the economy or the prevailing political power into the crime of terrorism, or inciting or apologizing for terrorism, and therefore into a crime subject to severe punishment, regardless of how peaceful such an action or opinion may be. The rights of the public degenerated into the private right of the state, giving way to major regressive changes in the juridical order, especially with regard to penal law. The legally sanctioned punitive power of the authorities shattered the barriers posed by the need for proof of guilt, uniform sentencing and the proportionality of the punishment that limited it, so that it can now be exercised simply in the form of “preventive measures” within an emergency situation that has become standard operating procedure. From now on, any reform of the Penal Code or any other proposed reform, like the one approved last September 26, will entail nothing but the legalization of the abuses which have in general defined the whole career of the Spanish particratic regime. This regressive penal legislation, however, did not apply to those behaviors, infractions or misdeeds “that are not construable as crimes” because they fall within the framework of formal democratic guarantees, so it must be complemented by administrative measures aimed at restricting the rights of assembly, expression and demonstrations. This is the function of the new reform of the law of Civil Security, the “kick in the teeth” initiative. The law not only grants full impunity to police violence for the purpose of controlling, inhibiting and disrupting all anti-governmental protests without any legal impediments, but also opens the door to the privatization of its enforcement, further extending the powers of private security agencies.