Anonymous
Touching the heart
About the blackmail concerning the immigrants
6 May 2010

turbellaria.blogspot.com/2010/05/touching-heart-about-blackmail>. Retrieved on 03/07/2024 from lib.anarhija.net.

theanarchistlibrary.org

Touching the heart

About the blackmail concerning the immigrants

Anonymous

6 May 2010

Contents

So, instead of holding on to more and more slogans such as "solidarity with the immigrants / in struggle" (but which struggle?), we could develop a projectuality against the detention centres using methods and ideas that are ours and are subversive in the sense that they question the foundations of this world (exploitation and domination). This projectuality would be autonomous and strengthened by deeds of revolt contrasting the overall resignation, and strengthening these deeds in return. Again, recipes do not exist but today it is important to go beyond the impasses of a more or less humanist activism that hinders any radical autonomy in favour of an agitation that conceives the cadence of power or follows the logic of the only actors of the struggle that are conceived to be legitimate, while it is actually the freedom of all that is at stake, as for example in the case of raids. As it is important to put forward perspectives which, beyond the partial goals developed in these intermediary struggles, are able to widen up the matter to a horizon that finally questions the whole of this world and its horror; i.e. perspectives that are always able to put forward the question of domination and exploitation. Diffuse attacks could be the heart of this projectuality. Not only do they offer the advantage of going beyond the powerlessness felt while standing in front of the wall or the barbed wire of a camp, or while being confronted with a raid by a police deployment that can adjust itself and count on the passivity and fear of the passers-by, but also and especially they offer us on the one hand the possibility to develop our own temporality and on the other hand to show everyone that the structures of the deportation machine that are to be found on every street corner are vulnerable and at last they offer real possibilities of action to everyone, regardless of how many they are.

Enthusiastic internationalists.

Over the past 10 years many comrades in various countries have been involved in struggles around the question of migration, be it people without documents wanting to get regularized, struggles for housing in poor neighbourhoods, against raids in the streets and on public transport or against detention centres. They have often ended up in dead ends or powerlessness concerning concerning possible interventions.

We have no recipe, but we feel it is necessary to break with certain militant mechanisms that have seen us struggle on an activist basis with no perspective, or agitate under the guidelines of authoritarian groups. These reflections simply want to evaluate experiences of struggle and work out some possible tracks for the development of a subversive projectuality around migration and its management that we can call our own.

Beyond the illusion of the 'immigrant'

A classical approach in the attempt to understand social conflicts in order to intervene is to take a closer look at the protagonists of the conflict and submit them to more or less militant sociological analyses. As well as focusing on finding the answer to the mysterious question "who are they?" instead of examining what we want ourselves, it is also based upon some doctrines that affect our critical reflection. Alongside the usual leftist racketeers desperately in search of no matter what political subject to can put them at the head of resistance, there are also many sincere people to be found alongside illegal immigrants. But since they consider the specific situation of those without papers as something external to themselves, they tend to be driven more by outrage than a desire to struggle alongside those that share a common (although not exactly the same) condition: exploitation, police control on the streets or on public transport, housing in the outskirts or in neighbourhoods that are being upgraded, illegal activities that are part

of the art of survival. Both often reproduce all the divisions that play into the hands of power. To create a new general image of the immigrant-victim-in-struggle is tantamount to introducing a sociological mystification that not only hinders every struggle in common but also strengthens the State's grip on all of us.

Libertarian or radical activists (who nonetheless have a certain intuition about what could be possible common ground) are often not adverse to swallowing this pill in their need for collectivity or in the name of autonomy of the struggle, as though the struggle was started by some sort of homogeneous block instead of by individuals, potential accomplices at least against a specific form of oppression. As far as the people without documents are concerned, all of a sudden the methods of struggle (self-organisation, refusal of institutional mediation, direct action) became way more relative. Some good Samaritan will always appear to explain, using a few classical arguments pulled out of the militant tirade, that breaking the windows of an airline company that deports people during a demonstration will expose the paperless 'to danger' (they who nonetheless face up to the police day by day); that the struggle against fascists (e.g. the members of the Turkish Grey Wolves), nationalists (e.g. certain refugees who came here after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia) or priests (e.g. the priest who 'gives refuge' to the paperless in 'his' church to later kick them out, the Christian associations that take up the vile task of the State such as Cimade, Caritas International or the Red Cross) ends at the doorstep of the 'undocumented' collectives; that you can spit in the face of a French or Belgian ambassador but not in the face of a Malian one that comes to mediate a struggle that is threatening to radicalise (idem the leftist politicians who are generally considered unacceptable but are tolerated in the name of a false unity demanded by some chief of a collective of people without papers).

Everybody knows that a struggle always starts from the existent and that initial particularities often differ a lot (e.g. the rela-

taking part in these conflicts we can 'radicalize' the people because their social condition would necessarily lead them towards sharing our ideas. As long as this concept of 'radicalisation' is understood as a task of missionaries wanting others to swallow their ideas it will continue to be stuck in the impasse that we notice growing everywhere around. This 'radicalisation' however can also be understood as openness of our dynamic towards others, enabling us to guarantee the autonomy of our own projectuality. In this way, 'being together' in a struggle and going forward on the level of perspectives as well as methods demands an existing basic affinity, a first rupture, a first desire that goes beyond the usual demands. In this way our demand for mutuality can become meaningful. There are many more tracks to explore than the continuation of the connection whose only reason for existing is the maintenance of the fiction of the political subject that, in the name of its status as being the main victim, monopolizes the reason for the struggle and in this way the struggle itself. To put it clearly we could say that solidarity is in need of mutual recognition in deed as well as in words. It is difficult to be in solidarity with an undocumented person "in struggle" who demands his regularisation and that of his family with no interest whatsoever in the perspective of the destruction of detention centres. Maybe we would still meet somewhere but this will be on a purely practical base: we don't need to analyse the reasons or perspectives that bring somebody to revolt in order to recognize ourselves, at least partly, in these deeds of attack which automatically turn against those responsible for this misery. As counts for most intermediary struggles: there is only a very limited sense in participating in a factory conflict that starts off from wage demands and does not overcome the trade unionist framework or develop any sign of direct action. It is limited because there simply is no common base. New perspectives open up at the moment when these workers start sabotaging (even if they regard it as a means to pressure the bosses) or kick out their deputes (even if only because they feel betrayed).

ther politician nor religious or trade union leaders; direct actions that permit the development of a real power balance and the identification of the class enemy in every aspect. These observations lead us to feel the need and desire to develop a subversive projectuality starting from our own bases, instead of running behind a widening out (which seems to be further and further away) based on the demand for regularisation. This projectuality could find her first anchors in the revolt which is factually shared amongst those who struggle for the destruction of the centres and those who (e.g. the rebels of Vincennes or Steenokkerzeel) turn the critique of detention into deeds by setting their prison on fire.

Against the deportation machine

While facing these difficulties a debate that is still going on nowadays arises: the debate about solidarity. A lot of comrades continue to defend the necessity – at whatever cost — of our presence inside the groups of those without papers, until they retreat from any such struggle, disgusted after so many blows. The justifications are diverse and most of the time they are a reflection of activism or of comfortable recipes devoid of imagination, lacking any real desire for subversion. And here as well: although the collective character of an action is no criterion for us, we do understand the need "to break the isolation" felt by some comrades. Nevertheless we doubt whether we can manage this by participating in endless meetings, being locked up with 30 people in a squat or in an apartment block of undocumented and leftists. We tend more towards the development of our own project and so to starting from our own bases. As long as solidarity is understood as support to certain social categories, it will continue to be an illusion. Even if it were to entail some more radical methods, it would continuously be dragged along in a conflict with bases, methods and perspectives that are not ours at all. The only justification left is claiming that by

tion to the trade unions in most of the struggles concerned with exploitation), but in our opinion it's all about going beyond the latter in a subversive dynamic. We will certainly not succeed in this by accepting the variety of authoritarian straitjackets – the goal is already there in the means you acquire. Moreover, because this relativism doesn't lead to confrontation in the struggle but to some sort of reverse colonialism that turns the immigrant yet again into an object with a supposedly different-being ("they" would be like this). In that case misery is not intended to scare off but to excuse all renunciation.

The "innocent immigrant", the eternal passive victim that is being exploited, arrested, locked up and deported is one of the most prominent characters of this ideological stricture. As a reaction to the usual racist propaganda aimed at giving the immigrant the role of the social enemy, source of all evil (from unemployment to a safety threat and terrorism), a lot of people de facto deny the immigrant any criminal capacity at all. They aim at presenting immigrants as servile, begging for integration with all hopes set on a less detestable place in the society of capital. In this way thousands of refugees are being transformed into sympathetic and therefore integratable victims: victims of war, of 'natural' catastrophes and misery, of human traffickers and rack-renters. But what is forgotten are the changes these tracks make to individuals: they create solidarity, resistance and struggle that allow some of them to rupture the passivity that is attributed to them.

Surprise and and embarrassed silence rule the leftist camp and its democratic antiracism when these 'innocents' defend themselves by all means against the faith imposed on them (e.g. in revolts in detention centres, confrontations during raids, wildcat strikes…). Collectively expressed revolts might still be seen by some as "acts of desperation", but a prisoner setting fire to his cell all alone, a deed that most certainly does not constitute part of the "struggle", is called a "maniac". Hunger strikers in a church are wanted, not arsonists or escaped prisoners from detention centres;

people who have been thrown out of the window of a police station or drowned are understood, not those who resist the cops during a raid; parents of schoolchildren get helped with pleasure, in contrast to bachelor thieves. Revolt and individuals who rebel do not fit into the sociological framework of the immigrant-victim that has been constructed by the good conscience of the militant aided by the academic parasites of the State.

This mystification hinders a clearer understanding of migration and migration streams. Clearly, in the first place migrations are a consequence of the daily economic terror of capital and the political terror of local regimes and their bourgeoisie, all of which make profit for the rich countries. Nevertheless it would be incorrect to state that only poor proletarians migrate to the rich countries as is sworn by third-worldists in their construction of the immigrant-victim subject. The migrants who succeed in entering the gates of Europe clandestinely are not necessarily the poorest (since the latter are forced into internal migration to the cities or to neighbouring countries according to the fluctuation of the market and its disasters) – be it even only because of the cost (financial and human) of such a journey or the social and cultural selection within the family of those who can afford taking such a step.

If we try to understand everything that forms and traverses each individual rather than setting down the difference and otherness in order to justify an exterior position of 'support', we can view a whole complexity including class differences. At that point we can determine that the collectives of paperless also exist of overqualified graduates, failed politicians, local exploiters who manage their travelling money at the expense of others… who migrate to this side of the world because they want to take their enjoyable place inside capitalist democracy. Thus many groups of people without documents are dominated by those who were already powerful (be it on a social, political or symbolic level) or were striving for it. These class differences are seldom taken into account by comrades engaged in a struggle together with paperless people, a

quite visible: the humanitarian refugee camps, the camps at the borders, the slums and the favelas. The struggles for regularisation seem to pose rather few questions concerning this new fact. The situation in Belgium is a good example of the current impasse of the struggle for regularisation. The State acted like a lion and a fox simultaneously when the tension around the closed centres began to rise in 1998. As a lion she repressed the most rebellious parts of the movement (murder of Semira Adamu (3) who was resisting unflinchingly in the centres; house searches and arrest of comrades active in this struggle). As a fox she started negotiating about regularisations with the other part of the movement. Clearly, the demand for regularisation (besides the fact that it amounts to a demand for integration) requires certain credibility, a recognized mediator. The movement got hit in this way. Regularisation, which once used to be the State's answer to the tension and agitation that challenged the whole of migration politics (using slogans against all camps or for free circulation), became the goal for most of the groups of undocumented people. Instead of forcing the State to give a bonus by struggling, the collectives started a dialogue which was followed by negotiations which attracted a whole army of professional negotiators and juridical charlatans who would solve all problems. On the one hand the dynamic was broken by the repression and on the other by the start of a bureaucratic dialogue. Neither the successive self-mutilations (such as the hunger-strikes outside the camps), or the most servile self-abasements were enough to win what in a certain way used to be the State's response to agitation. The first answer of the state was combined with a rationalisation of the detention centres and a stricter adjustment of the permits to stay in accordance with the needs of the economy (the State itself changed the cards).

During recent years the current situation with its cycle of occupations/hunger strikes/deportations suffocated us in a struggle experience which offered only a few possibilities to go beyond and share a perspective: experiences of self organisation that accept nei-

the human traffickers and other mobs. However nobody cherishes any real illusions: the number of migrants without papers will increase as long as the economic causes continue to exist no matter what deployment (as can be seen at the border between Mexico and the States where a wall of 1200 kilometres is under construction), which will have no consequences apart from the increase in the cost of passage and the number of dead. Only the multiplication of her deportations would enable the state to apply her laws concerning forced expulsion from the territory. But that is not the question, because these deployments do not primarily aim at deporting all paperless, but serve to terrorize the whole of the migrant workers (the regularized as well as those chosen to have a stay permit) so that their condition of exploitation, which resembles the one they escaped, can remain unaltered (internal delocalisation in a certain way) while pressure is put on the whole of the conditions of exploitation. The racist excuse moreover serves to deploy the arsenal of social control which touches everybody.

But let us not forget about the changing character of migration itself. Industrial capitalism used workers as pawns on a chess board following an easy logic: here we have too many workers and there we need them. And whenever the need was rather small, other aspects of this population politics were put into action. However, this specific form of migration control has changed as a result of the restructuring of the economic aspect and because of the consequences of industrial growth. It becomes more difficult to speak of a point of departure and a point of arrival. The points of departure have been devastated by hunger, war and disasters while the destinations are changing all the time. In this way migration becomes an endless track consisting of different stages; it's no longer a movement from points A to B. These new forms of migration are not only being defined by the needs of a constantly flexible and adjustable capital. Millions of people, uprooted by the devastation of the places where they were born are swarming all over the world – ready to be put to work. And the deployment of this control is

struggle in which language becomes an unavoidable and invisible barrier assigning the immigrants coming from the richer classes of their country automatically to the role of spokesman and translator. Sharpening class differences as we do everywhere is not simply a contribution that can be made by comrades but is a necessary condition for real solidarity.

In order to understand these struggle dynamics, throwing some comfortable illusions into the garbage bin is necessary as well. Only stubborn determinism can claim that a given social condition necessarily implicates the revolt against it. This kind of reasoning used to offer the guarantee of a revolution, a guarantee that many cherished for a long time while simultaneously degrading the perspective of individual rebellion which generalizes in insurrection to the level of an adventure. The criticism made on a determinism that has shown its failure in the old workers' movement is suitable as well for the proletarians who migrate to this side of the world. Many amongst them look at the West as some kind of oasis where you can live nicely as long as you're prepared to make great efforts. Undergoing conditions of exploitation that resemble what they've been running away from, with bosses who moreover play on the paternalistic snare of belonging to a so-called common community; being chased; having no or very few perspectives of climbing higher on the social ladder and daily racism that tries to channel the dissatisfaction of the other exploited, all of this makes up a rude reality to confront. Contrasting the resignation that can sprout from this painful confrontation or the reflex of locking oneself into authoritarian communities based for example on religion or nationalism, we advance the perspective of not linking up with all paperless in a 'categorical' way but with those who refuse their role as exploited and by this also open the identification of the enemy. We don't want blaming between capitalist universality and particularities but a social war in which we can recognize each other beyond the question of papers and different degrees of exploitation, in a permanent struggle for a society free of masters and slaves. As in

any struggle in fact, would it not be that the struggle around migration mostly ends by the weight of the affective feeling of guilt, the urgency to prevent a deportation and its possible consequences, and all of this mostly via a relation based on exteriority instead of on a shared revolt.

The impasse of the struggle for regularisation

In several European countries, a lot of 'massive' regularisations took place at the last turn of the century. Although the State follows its own logic, the paperless in struggle were able to influence the criteria and rhythm of the regularisations. A comparison can be made with all "big social reforms", some of which have been achieved through bloodshed while others were buy-outs to maintain social peace or simply granted in function of capital's need to keep the working class grouped and to increase internal consumption. In those days debates about demands that suit the capital's movement in contrast to insurrectional attempts were going on in the working class as well. A lot of revolutionaries only accepted these demands as a possibility towards permanent agitation while at the same time it was put clearly that the social question could not be solved inside a capitalist framework.

During the time preceding these regularisation waves States were divided between two opposing logics: on the one hand the growing stream of clandestine migration fitted the economic need for flexible workers (as in construction, the catering industry, cleaning sector, agriculture) of countries with an ageing population, on the other hand this partly denied (as in countries knowing a more recent migration as Spain and Italy) but especially in nature less controllable population disturb the drastic will to manage the public order. While this issue was quickly resolved – more specifically by closer cooperation between the different authorities (through the exchange of services between the imams

and police offices as well as through the distribution of tasks amongst the different foreign and autochthonous mobs, despite some previous bloody games which had to do with unavoidable concurrence) -, the issue of the need for workers was resolved by a tighter interdependence between migration streams and the labour market. It seems to be one of the ruling tendencies on a European level to aim at a more worked out migration management that is tuned up in real time to the needs of exploitation. Next to the classic labour form of the migrants (work in black) stands the migration that links the stay permit to a working contract which will become the rule over time, fitting the reorganisation of the labour delicacy which extends to everybody.

The state has almost put an end to political asylum, has tightened up family reunion and the obtainment of citizenship by marriage, has abolished permission to stay for a longer period (like the one of 10 years in France), while on the other hand it is rejecting regularisation demands with an iron fist. The state directs itself towards what was called "selected migration" by a certain president. We're returning to the era in which recruiting sergeants went to the villages and loaded trucks with the amount of migrants needed by their bosses. The modern formula is simply asking for a rationalisation of this recruitment on the borders, co managed by the state and the employers (2). The workers are absolutely not supposed to stay and settle down. At the same time different camps at the external borders of Europe are under construction by the state, camps for those who have not been chosen by the grace of the slave tradesmen.

Because all the others are there. All those standing in front of a closed gate and all those continuing to arrive. That's what's at stake for the change in the degree of the police rationalisation of the deportation system which continues to multiply its camps and is organizing more and more massive deportations, national quotes and European charter flights for those who managed their way through the locks of the waiting zones and the racketeering of