

LETTERS  
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ANTI-POLITICAL  
COMMUNIST  
JOURNAL



LETTERS



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# LETTERS

*an anti-political communist journal*  
*issue number three*







## DEAREST READER,

In the right context and conditions every person is capable of expressing the most radical critique and sentiment, but some have taken it upon themselves to adopt and proclaim these critiques regardless of the context or condition they find themselves in. It is this role that I find myself in and to these “some” that I write. The cold cannot keep me from the windmills. If you will indulge me, I would like to discuss a few current events, or to be more precise: responses to current events by our beleaguered heroes, the pro-revolutionaries

Elections are always granted more importance than they deserve, even by those who claim to eschew or detest them. Pro-revolutionaries can get caught up in the moment like anyone, pulled along in all the excitement hundreds of millions of dollars can buy. Barack Obama, the most funded candidate in American history, was not elected on the back of a “massive popular movement”. The story of such a movement is a leftist fabrication, passively encouraged by the Democratic Party and national media despite the open disregard and disdain of the Obama camp towards leftist supporters (“critical support”, of course!). Some point to a few examples of anti-police violence and street actions by Obama supporters as evidence for a radical underbelly to the alleged “Obama movement”, but rioting and violence by supporters of political parties of all types is common in most places in the world and is in no way anti-systemic.



But this misses the point. What if Obama was elected on the back of a “massive popular movement”, like Bolivian head-of-state Evo Morales or the Islamist armed parties Hamas and Hezbollah? Or, if we look back just a bit further, the African National Congress in South Africa? These regimes demonstrate what we’ve always known: the State cannot be anti-capitalist or act in the immediate interests of the proletariat, regardless of which gang is in charge. The myth that “massive popular movements” are inherently liberatory has no legs to stand on. If some pro-revolutionaries are so quick to support figures like Obama or Morales, how will they respond if their organizations and leaders are asked to join the government and politicians stand up calling for socialism and revolution? Who are the future policemen with red flags?

There has been talk amongst some anarchists that statements and actions against the state, and the Obama presidency in particular, ought to be avoided as they could be misconstrued as racist. As it is obvious that the state, media, unions, and NGOs will attack and obscure pro-revolutionaries as they have always done, one assumes that this argument against outward opposition to the state implies that it will be misunderstood by black supporters of the new president. This racist and paternalistic line, spoken from a position of assumed whiteness, presupposes that black people are unable to formulate or understand a critique of capitalism and will defend the state due solely to the skin color of the new president.

The Left wing of capital, bolstered by the economic crisis and a potential for a small slice of power in the upcoming administration, is acting to integrate would-be pro-revolutionaries into the state, either through outright recruitment or by bringing pro-revolutionaries into discussions about how society ought to be managed. The push to mobilize bodies for protests against the Republican and Democratic Party conventions last summer was a project of drawing anarchists and others into the election year political dialogue, a role that reduced anarchists to engaging in outraged moral posturing or taking “positions” on current events like the worst Trotskyist and Maoist sects. Some anarchists in Denver went so far as to hold



a press conference to assure the media that they would cancel their protest plans if the city diverted funding from police to state health-care and schooling.

Against all this, we must maintain our principles and analysis, refuse dialogue with rulers and would-be rulers, and reject the half-way revolts of racism and anti-semitism. Our task is always negative: to attack the political channeling of class struggle and articulate a ruthless criticism of all that exists. It is always time to bring “maximum disorder to habitual perspectives”, especially our own, lest we develop a line to which anyone could subscribe.

With this issue I’ve opened the door to contradiction and cast aside certain moral objections I’d fallen victim to. It remains to be seen, however, how far we will go to transgress against our ‘fathers’ (Marx, Camatte, Moss, Dupont, etc). Could we emerge as the *fil du vent* we once said we were not? Who have we forgotten to talk to and share with?

As the economic crisis unfolds and develops – what a marvelous moment to carry on with our project of developing a more rigorous and light-hearted negativity! It is worth repeating: always reject imposed conditions and proposed solutions from within the established array; take courage from your principles under all circumstances; there must be no compromises and no negotiations with religions, political groups, state agencies or structural panaceas; the struggle is always for humanity as its own end and against the commodity.

Most sincerely,  
*the editor*



So there it is: revolution cannot be left to 'conscious' human actions and our only hope lies in the structural conflict of social forces created by the economy — again, the blind mole tunneling in the dark.



# DEFINITIONS FOR THE CRISIS

**NEO-LIBERALISM** - According to various political camps, neo-liberalism was a “massive historical structural transformations of the global order [beginning in the 1970’s]... which has entailed the undermining of the state-centric order of the mid – twentieth century.” It is often used as a synonym for “globalization”, a process described eloquently by Marx in the nineteenth century but called new by some academics and political activists. In the analysis of neo-liberalism, the Far Right and Far Left are virtually indistinguishable.

There has been, in fact, no structural transformation of capitalism. Neo-liberalism was only a mystifying term that implicitly gave support to state intervention into the economy, nationalization, and market regulation, all of which supposedly ran counter to neo-liberal restructuring but are now being employed by the very states that supposedly engineered neo-liberalism. The set of forces within capitalism is constant: capital, state, class, commodity, value. Only the proportions change within events (the complexities of their mutual reinforcements and determinations are played out in the relation between these elements).

**GAMBLING / INVESTMENT** - Pro-revolutionary activity ought to be undertaken with a clear perception of a likely positive outcome. The assessment of possible outcomes takes the place of vague and fervent hope (which otherwise dominates activism) because finally what determines what will happen is not down to an individual or group’s ‘willing’ it to happen but the standing of the relation of different forces in a particular locality. The group aims to impact this relation and bend things to their (and the proletariat’s) interest. This is no easy task, something akin to trying to win at a fairground game.



Where there are numerous conflicts, and a general sense of ‘something in the air’, a specific undertaking has a much higher chance of success if pursued in a disciplined goal-orientated manner – but where these reinforcing factors are absent, the group’s action will simply disappear amongst the general indifference.

**THE PARTY** - Organizations are firstly mechanisms for accumulation; they are secondly structures of decision-making. Decisions made tend to express the mechanism for accumulation. Or as an old fling once said – I no more denounce the Left for being pathetic than I denounce the sun for rising.

**CONSPIRACY** - Critique that “ends” at finance capital has a strong tendency towards a conspiratorial understanding of the world. This is promoted by both the far right and left who present a view on finance capital that is largely the same, with variations amongst the various sects and ideologies. Since the late nineteenth century the mass expression of this conspiratorial “half-way critique” has been anti-semitism, with Jews as the ethnic personification of finance capital, the abstract force ‘behind all things’. Even if the intent of a conspiratorial understanding of capitalism is not anti-semitic, this latent global anti-semitism is there, above other things, as an answer for *who controls the world?* Our answer is, of course, that this is not the right question. To merely reply – “not the Jews!” – misses the point entirely.

**SELF-VALORIZATION** - In the early hours of November 28th, 2008, shoppers break down doors at a Wal-Mart in Long Island, New York and trample a worker, killing him.

**ANCESTRY** - Death appears as the harsh victory of the law of our ancestors over the dimension of our becoming. It is a fact that as productivity increases each succeeding generation becomes smaller. The defeat of our fathers is revisited upon us as the limits of our



world. Yes, structure is human; it is the monumentalisation of congealed sweat, sweat squeezed from old exploitation and represented as nature – the world we inhabit, the objective ground. We do not, in our insect-like comings and goings, make the immediate world in which we live. We do not make a contribution. On the contrary, we are set in motion by it; a generation will pass before what we have done as an exploited class will seep through as an effect of objectivity. (Our wealth is laid down in heaven.) The structure of the world was built by the dead. They were paid in wages, and when the wages were spent and they were in the ground what they had made continued to exist. These cities, roads and factories are their calcified bones. They had nothing but their wages to show for what they had done. Who they were and what they did has been cancelled out. But what they made has continued into our present; their burial and decay is our present. This is the definition of class hatred.

We are no closer now to rest, to freedom, to communism than they were. Their sacrifice has bought us nothing; what they did counted for nothing; we have inherited nothing. But they did produce value. They did make the world in which we now live. The world that now oppresses us is constructed from the wealth they made, wealth that was taken from them as soon as they were paid a wage. Taken and owned by someone else, owned and used to define the nature of class domination. We too must work, and the value we produce leaks away from us, from each only a trickle but in all a sea of it. And that, for the next generation, will thicken into wealth for others to own. As a congealed structure it will be used to frame new enterprises in different directions. The violence of what they produced becomes the structure that dominates our existence. Our lives begin amidst the desecration of our ancestors, millions of people who went to their graves as failures, forever denied experience of a full human existence, their being simply cancelled out. As our parents die, we can say truly that their lives were for nothing, that the black earth that is thrown down onto them blacks out our sky.



**SOLIDARITY** - The macabre altar used by capable comedians of all sorts to display their priestly talent for reciting masses. The beneficiaries pay nothing less than 100% humiliation.

**LIQUIDITY** - In response the announcement of its closure, workers at the Cellatex chemical plant in Northern France occupied the plant and threatened to blow it up if they were not given guarantee of either the plant's reopening or far better severance packages. To demonstrate their willingness to carry out this threat, which would have released large amounts of toxic chemicals into the region, workers released 5,000 liters of sulfuric acid into a creek leading to a nearby river and tossed chemicals into large fires in front of the factory gates. In the end, workers received a large increase in severance pay and did not blow up the plant.

**POETRY** - A charming past-time for amateur editors and theoreticians who, due to various ailments, feel they must force their creative efforts on uninterested reading audiences.







MEDITATIONS  
ON PROTEST







# RIOT

*It is not a coincidence that activists rarely make economic demands, and when they do, they do not make economic demands that directly relate to them. This means taking struggle out of the workplace and into the streets, where the politics of poverty and the poverty of politics reign.*



A response by DA to *Wrecking You Again for the Very First Time* and the black bloc at the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota

## WHAT IS DESIRE?

*Selections from that text are indented to differentiate from the responding voice*

Our desires, like the rest of us, are created by the conditions that we find ourselves in. Some have said that desire is not an expression of lack; that it produces. Another replied: desire is the space between repression and freedom through which capital first entered its colonized subjects. Maybe so. What is clear is that desire cannot constitute itself as a force against capital. In ‘Wrecking You Again’, the word desire is used again and again. It is used as the motive, cause, and description of all action, but it is never defined.

Exclamations of desire replace critical analysis. Significance and scale are forgotten. Any understanding of capitalism is left behind in favor of a pure subjectivism. The cult of militancy flourishes in this self-referential subjectivity. It affirms itself again and again. Now it attaches itself to the anarchist myth of “social war”. Now it calls itself anti-political. Now it awkwardly quotes pop music (even for extremists the urge towards populism is too strong to avoid). In words it lashes out against the activist, the protest, the blockade – all the things that allow it to exist. It demands sacrifice – not only of the direct participants, but also of onlookers, who are now mere human shields in a game of simulated gang violence.

It seems the anarchists are so self-enamored that they have deliberately achieved such a level of intellectual and practical decomposition that they are now unable to function beyond the ordinary parameters and worldview of a street gang (and that is an insult to street gangs who at least define themselves in terms of a real territory).

*The rioting on Monday, despite its limitations, materialized our*



*inclinations as exploited and alienated individuals to gouge at the eyes of both capital and politics. We make these attacks because we wish to improve our conditions immediately and to do so in way that violates the peace treaty signed by the managers of politics.*

Capital and politics do not have eyes. Nothing was gouged. You only asked for a new treaty that allows some rioting to be part of political discourse, like it is elsewhere in the world.

How did traveling across the country to break windows for an hour improve your conditions “immediately”? By conditions I mean your income, your home, the food you eat, your neighborhood, the place you work or do not work, the city or town where you live, the spaces you relax in, your means of transportation.

A new friendship with a grocery worker who gives you free food, slowing the pace down at work, taking money from the register and putting it into the tip jar. These are immediate improvements on conditions, if only temporary improvements. To go off rioting far away is like a stressful weekend vacation to the beach, with a much higher chance of being roughed up by police. That simile is probably too kind.

*The black mask is not something to play dress up in. To take back the mask means to actualize our desires, blood and glass and a street filled with us.*

This is the cult of militancy; the cult of desire. Let us not forget that “desire armed” has been pogroms far more than it has been revolutions. Whose blood and what glass? Who is “us”? There is no revolution, yet some already call for the guillotine.

Communism is not a flower watered with blood.

*Our joy and malice intertwine as another crowd fuses with us and becomes-rioting. Desire moves our appendages, and objects are released through the imaginary field constructed between law and order.*



There was no riot in St. Paul during the Republican National Convention. What you achieved was, at best, a few hours of property destruction amid other protests.

*From here on, beauty, decadence, and orgy can only connote immediate destruction.*

I think that beauty lies elsewhere, and I do not want to destroy the people I love and find beautiful. What is a life reduced to immediate destruction?

*Our momentum necessarily severs from any objectives outlined in any spokes council. Aspiring bureaucrats shed tears for their failure to regulate, and the politics of impotency reveals an impotency of politics. With unabashed sincerity and intensity, the dead weight is cast aside, holding only its precarious career and a falsified notion of failure within its palms. The corpse of activism begs for rejuvenation, but to no avail.*

The contemporary ‘insurrectionist’ milieu in the United States emerged from activism. It is populated by activists. Its projects rely on the accumulated capital of the activist scene. Its writings are directed at activist websites and conferences. A fringe even within so-called radical milieus just years ago, its publications are now at every activist event.

In powerlessness, the black bloc is reduced to bringing the organizers of small anti-war dance parties to tears.

Insurrectionist anarchism rejuvenates activism by reframing the same tired practices in a new, exciting rhetoric. Now even the rhetoric is getting stale. You can only hide behind the veil of “realizing our desires” for so long.

*When any comrade in struggle is arrested, their capture must be seen as a strategy of state repression to inhibit the wide scope of social revolution.*



What social revolution is so weak that the arrest of a few dozen, even a few hundred, can inhibit it?

*We don't give a fuck about a summit, but we can use it as a spring-board, parasitically sucking life and leaving behind anemic remains*

The cult of militancy shows its grotesque face. These desires of destruction require human sacrifice! The bodies extremist rhetoric helped mobilize to these demonstrations turn out to be merely cover for window breaking. Those unfortunate enough to deal with the aftermath are, in the end, just collateral damage in the “social war”.

*One of our goals is to take all of the force directed against false epicenters of power and redirect it into social conflicts that have the actual potential to disrupt the flows of this system. We are abandoning the vapid discourse of protest towards a concrete offensive in the social war.*

What are recent examples of social conflicts capable of disrupting the flows of capital? The attempted truckers strikes come to mind as one possible example, but it is unclear how the small amount of force directed against the RNC could be directed towards the truckers' conflict. Just at the level of tactics and militancy truckers went far beyond the small displays of aggression in St. Paul, as have almost all spontaneous street conflicts with police over the last decade.

How can so few, in such a peripheral position in the economy claim to be moving towards an “offensive in the social war”? This rousing encore implicitly takes the cult of militancy to its logical conclusion: reproducing the callings for ‘armed struggle’, the ultimate expression of pro-revolutionary sacrifice, voluntarism, and delusion.



# IF WE MUST DESTROY VIRTUES, LET

Admittedly, the current attempts to renew forms of popular struggle are difficult to wrest from the grip of boredom and revolutionary boy-scouts who, to say the least, are not too concerned with a systematic liberation of desire! "Desire! That's all you ever talk about!" This ruffles the feathers of the serious responsible types, the responsible militants. We are certainly not going to suggest desire be taken seriously. We would much rather undermine the spirit of seriousness, beginning with the domain of theoretical inquiry.

FELIX GUATTARI



# US AT LEAST LEAVE PATIENCE

## SPRINGTIME FOR PERVERSITY

by *Liam Sionnach*

What strange and dilute paths are found on the fringes of politico-ethical structures and imagined communities of conflict. I'm not alone in my distaste for the prescriptive models of how society is changed, but I'm not held by any soft, sound proof walls either. What a shame, and it is *this* shame that is brought to the surface by DA's critique of *Wrecking You* (...Again For the Very First Time).

What is Desire? The question is posed as a sudden turn of the head, interrupting its habitual consumption – food, water, theory, sex, whatever – and excreting something. It is not poised, gestured, contracted as to receive as well. So if I were in the same café, I am not the pretty boy who looks up from my reading, feeling the interruption; I am not the body coaxed open by our mutual recognition. Instead, I am closed and ashamed of my mouth- breathing, of my appetite. Desire is the endless and *productive* flow that links itself through bodies and life. Desire is not “a desire” – that is a reification of desire, its proper name or whatever. If desire is the space between repression and freedom, where capitalism first enters its colonized subjects, then it is a gap, a lack; and those who would seek a different form-of-life are duped into the production of pious structures that would enforce their will only as a freedom from desire or repression of it. This is not an expansive lived-communism, nor even the touching restrictions of set by power relations; rather this desire can only produce an alienated communism of image. Baudrillard, we are not interested.



Desire is both within and without capitalism. Currently one might notice desire's production in its proper named forms, "I desire a soda," however there is always so much more at work than a desire, properly named. In German the translation of "have" is "become," and when I say "Would you like to have a soda?" I would have said "Would you like to become a soda?" or rather becoming-soda, so this becoming-soda is no longer my fulfillment of capitalist lack: I lack a soda, but rather a force produced through capitalism but ultimately beyond it as well – which is to say, capitalism must link its self to the roots and rhizomes of all things, making it a relationship of constant conflicting desire.

Although capitalism is the premier mode of organization to determine all human relations, it is not alone in its propulsive effects and affects. It is a human-made structure as relationships that hold us, link us, produce our activity as humans, and prescribe the form-of-life of humans. And we would be lost in space if it weren't for desire. Desire is a force that produces revolt. Power is also a force that produces revolt. There is always *potentially more* because human life, is at first and foremost a *potenza* – a potency.<sup>1</sup>

A more interesting question: What is becoming-powerful and how does this relate to the oh so petite becoming-rioting that occurs in "the convergence" like the one *Wrecking You* narrates?

DA, locates a few ciphers to decode in order for him to best understand the limited rioting at the RNC. What conditions (locality and materiality) are improved? He measures a pretty telos from lack to fulfillment and like others can only observe and reason with things. But the trick is to use *all* senses, to locate oneself as a body and to meet the gaze of one's inclinations.

What is called the Cult of Militancy is in actuality a diffuse so-

- 1 "Each behavior and each form of human living is never prescribed by a specific biological vocation, nor is it assigned by whatever necessity; instead, no matter how compulsory, it always retains the character of possibility; that is, it always puts at stake living itself."

Agamben, Gorgio Form of Life, Means Without End, Minnesota 2000



ciality, currently broken from continuity and molded into a community only in the moments it shares circumstance, frequency and intent with others. How the convergence rioting improves that community's conditions are not how it relates itself to ones neighborhood, workplace, or other vacuous spaces of social control and presently limited potency, but rather how it relates itself to more local conditions: the body. This does not mean bodies are absent from those places but it is to suggest a strategic ambivalence to where bodies are becoming-powerful. Without this strategic ambivalence, bodies may be searching out fictions rather than becoming conscious of their capacity to produce fiction (and fact).

To attack with ambivalence to wherever and with consciousness of whatever – as in all the matters – bodies locate their potency. We become powerful in those shared moments, where the desire that produces us, is expressed in this deterritorialization. A financial district existed before and will again exist as a financial district, but through our force is produced as a different space; it is linked to all of the rioters and shared as a mutual recollection of that force. In becoming-rioting, bodies produce a force of violence and a force of care and oscillate as a unitary gesture; becoming not a collective but another body and another body and another body, intersecting and sharing profanities. Because bodies cannot be severed from the worlds which they are attached, the recognition of this force, expands bodies, produces new textures, skills, and elasticity. Some will recognize that they can throw objects at police, break windows and move across a cityscape as a mob. Others will know their thresholds. Some will push further.

Upon pushing further, I meet a more desiring-body that I am. I notice the desire and shame coursing through me and I notice the velocity of power's imagination. Suddenly, I am at home breathing heavily, ashamed of the terrible things that I want to be tempted to do. It's not the human sacrifice that makes it difficult for me to look the others in their eyes. Everyone talks of human sacrifice, of breaking eggs, of crowd cover, of getting the job done. Sacrifice is unfortunately banal. It is the excess and expenditure that causes me



to be guarded. Furthermore it is desire that throws away the key to my pretty prison of revolt. I like the mob action because I can locate my self as the pretty little whore that I am, opened to all the cock and spittle and violence of the gangbang. I can oscillate between the pretty jesuve of me as the opened receptacle animal desiring technologies, and the marksman in the crowd, the giant that becomes transparent that inhabits the petty masked face, the fragile turned furious of touch and go.

Communism is a flower watered in urine. It needs insipid insults hurled from window sills and passing cars to know its own terrestrial locality. It needs technologies of bodies becoming-all that matters, dreaming and shitting to take pleasure in its tea times and war times. I cannot dream past this terrestrial space that I inhabit<sup>2</sup>. There is no *sur*-real that entices me, only the horror of everyday wage-labor and alienation; and the charm of sharing insurrection and all of its assemblages with others.

I want to be torn out of my subjectivity by a consensual-ravishing, spat on until I smile, and I want to recognize my comrades as those who show me the spit on their faces and abrasions on their backs. I want to be forced through care to discover this terrestrial locality and forced to move my appendages in a cruel and pleasurable violence. I want to meet the gaze of a wealthy man in order for us to share a beautiful indifference. We could communicate: “Yes, *this is how it is, isn’t it?*” and I could proceed with my indifference and he with his and I with his wealth. This would be the experience embodied through a proletarian multiplied as wolves. No boring, disingenuous niceties would have to be exchanged; I could merely do as a predator should.

- 2 “... revolution hollows out chambers in a decomposed soil repugnant to the delicate nose of [enlightenment] utopians “Old Mole,” Marx’s resounding expression for the complete satisfaction of the revolutionary outburst of the masses, must be understood in relation to the notion of a geological uprising as expressed in the Communist Manifesto. Marx’s point of departure has nothing to do with the heavens, preferred station of the imperialist eagle as of Christian or revolutionary-utopias. He begins in the bowels of earth, as in the materialist bowels of proletarians.” *Bataille, Georges, The “Old Mole” and the Prefix Sur, Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*, Minnesota, 1985



DA speaks of cults, of desire, of Sade perhaps? Shall we only pretend we know virtue?

I gaze through the crowd and I take pleasure in the internal conflict. The gesture that reveals and/or amplifies social conflict is not an end but a pure means. I watch a young body marked with glasses; who looks like a form of me eight-hundred cigarettes earlier, with blonde or coral hair or something. I watch him unfold. A sense of betrayal, sense of indignance and a mark of humiliation wash over him. His vulnerability is captured, but quickly becomes the other form. Someone grabs a comrade of mine and my comrade tells them, "If you touch me again, I will tear your face off," such vulgar words are disruptive, unclear and terrorizing to this someone. It is not the shock that I glean meaning from but the interruption and the seam of the event. My comrade moves on and puts steel through plate glass. Another feels the subtle debasement of failure when their lead pipe refuses the embrace of the Audi's driver's side window. I feel my self as these multiple bodies, their memories, fantasies and modest prattle during this event. Whatever feeling of enclosure I recalled from earlier, when we washed our bodies in camouflage and submerged ourselves in false idiosyncrasies, was shattered by a consolidation of our bodies at the front of the march. A new enclosure cossets me and produces a seductive gesture. The temptation is too much and a young body, presumably an organizer, maybe even one that my comrades had negotiated with, is disgusted with the capacity of the crowd to become-whatever. She wants everyone to be convinced that she really believes one of my comrades is a cop, she is not very convincing. I take pleasure in the multiple forms in which teeth get cut, reciprocal knowledge that is produced and the growing pains; all of these things have their ciphers, but we can decode them and encode them with our own meaning.

If I could be only so vulnerable and empowered to go to the meeting where we will negotiate with others who want to do politics and express to them this desire: I want to use you, to sodomize you; not for body-pleasure as an analogy for reproductive sex, nor out of some love we cannot know we share just yet (as most anar-



chists do with new potential comrades), but for a playful experience of our shared power, to test our mutual elastic boundaries. I believe in the spontaneous capacity of human bodies to be swept away with an immediate recognition of our conditions and direction – to be expanded towards utopia – and I believe this happens precisely in these moments of social conflict. I'd like to ask consent for this... and say I did, how would this process play out when some want this and some do not? Is the politician in waiting more than a lil Stalin? Should I excavate their potentiality and expose this political desire that moves through them? And with the same force I aim at other craftsmen of the political? Already, I am guarded. I can't bear to imagine the wagging fingers and boring critiques of those that refuse to seduce me or share anything with me. I want to apply this grotesque experience of power and pleasure that I've become sensible of to what it might mean to "act (anti-) political," but I have too much fear of indifference to my vulnerability – to the gift of my little submission.

This is the potential of shame that the guileless partisans of identity politics miss. Yet on the other hand there is only an excess of desire and power.

I want to bathe in the tears of those who have lost the dreams of dystopia. I want to extinguish the memory of capital through gorging my self on all it excretes. To cut the flesh of the he or she or ze who would approvingly quote Descartes and Hegel and Smith and Friedman. I dream of vile things that I want others to encourage me to do. I want to find my self capable of such cruelty – to torture the knowing quotationist with signifiers of his or her or heir stupidity and weakness.

It is here that I am pulled, that I need to locate and that terrifies me to admit. I want to scream, "This is necessary!" but as I've learned, the desire that moves me is not a universality, an "all desire in common!" but rather a difference that can only be multiplied in incommensurability.

I am reminded with the caring words of Roland Barthes, that is not the two pages of text, held together as mirror images that



the reader takes pleasure in, but rather the contrast and most specifically, the seam, the tear – the interruptions of continuity. Desire cannot produce identities with coherent unitary realities but it can seduce into being the space where there is a possibility of communication and through shared “liberation” of desire, it can produce a multiplicity of exit strategies to new spaces.

Editor's note – I decided to print this entirely without edit, just as I received it, with the exception of the title, which was originally *A Spring of Perversity*



*a spectator's irrelevant  
comments from the sidelines*



# PARIS MATCH

by *Frere Dupont*, March 16, 2006

First, let's take a moment to remember Haussman. The French state planned the layout of its capital city assuming the inevitability of street fighting. The landscape is tilted in the state's favor and so the street is not denied to revolutionaries. On the contrary, the "people" are almost invited to stage their "manifestations". Whereas in the UK rioting is seen as an unforeseen event and policed as an aberration, the French tend to view 'the street' as an irreducible cost borne by its national process.

Here are a number of preliminary comments on the nature and function of French street politics so as to better investigate what we might call popular insurgent forms.

## ALL THAT IS INCLUDED

1. The dominant culture in France likes to portray itself as a domain of ideas. The advantage of this is that all positions tend towards expressing themselves as ideas because there is a vast and grandiose arena for them to do so. Radical ideas are much more prevalent on French national TV and radio than on their equivalents in the UK and the US. The anarchist federation for example takes advantage of the state guarantee for the distribution of ideas; *Le Monde Libetaire* is found in every newsagents across the country because of this guarantee. It is also officially sanctioned for the AF to participate in debates on political ideas before students in schools and universities.



2. There is still a predominant 'popular front' mentality within radical positions, and all left positions tend towards agreement on issues and are prepared to mobilize together... this gradation extends into the state and official bodies.

3. Demonstrating, occupations, even rioting, is generally viewed as an element of political and cultural reproduction. There is an established model, it is "68", and because the French state easily survived those evenements it is now able to strategically gauge all subsequent occurrences, the national media also compares and then dismisses events as being 'not 68'. The state apparatus therefore, and unlike in the UK, has a very wide margin of comfort and with studied savoir-faire is able to merely raise its eyebrows at even extreme conflagrations.

4. This modeling on 68 has become a curse; the not-68 element of protests is reproduced at every bar and dining table across the land. Every other year there are major street events: it has become a culture. 68 has replaced 'I was in the resistance' as a measure of *le coq gaulois*. And if nothing lives up to the big one at least everyone is able to casually drop into their conversation over aperitifs how they participated in 78, 88, 98. They too, all of them, because they were there, are authentically of the French left. Now, it is 2006, and in the photographs here is the girl on her boyfriend's shoulders, she is punching the air. Here is the girl with non scrawled on her face. Here are the serious young men in the lecture room passing resolutions in Palestinian scarves. In short, here is the manifestation.

5. If idea driven events have their place, the Haussmanised streets, then they also have their temporality. The state knows exactly how long demonstrations and rioting last... it has its stopclock running on your marks, get set, go: first there is the cause, then there is the outbreak, followed by the wildfire, then there is the street fighting, then there is the consolidation and the mass mobilization, then there is the defiance and movement for continuation, then there is



the full-stop mass demonstration, then the melting away to other matters. In all, the fever takes about two weeks to pass.

6. Certain sections of the state, ie the unions, will be weakened by employment deregulation... on the other hand if these measures are passed there will be advantages for workers (which is the reason so many Europeans come to the UK to work). Casualisation cuts both ways, it undoes the state power of unions, and removes the 'left' interest from social management but it also increases unpredictability in the economy. When there are no brakes a social crisis can rapidly escalate.

## **ESCALATION AND WHAT EXCEEDS THE BOUNDARY**

1. There is something unreal about issue based protest, an element that refuses escalation. However, it is hardly the students fault that their impeccable behavior, their honed gestures, have been anticipated and contained, perhaps even condoned, by the old foxes of the establishment. In truth, there are few other options open to them as a social sector, they have no special leverage on the economic mechanism. Accessible radical forms and their effects are set by conditions and that's it; there is nothing to be done to overcome these limitations of form, and after all it is not for participants to decide the impact of the measures they have taken. Students, even whilst rioting and occupying, do not cause major upset to the running of the state. Perhaps their impact would be much greater in the UK than in France (see my co-authored leaflet "Some Notes Concerning the Future Proletarian Insurgency" about the UK fuel blockades); on the other hand, the UK state does not facilitate popular manifestations so spontaneous mass eruptions are inevitably less frequent anyway.

2. Nevertheless, it is important to explore the question of what might prove excessive, and what measures might cause escalation. Evidently, the spread of protest to industrial production is the most



certain means of causing genuine crisis within the relation of production. It is interesting to note why this spread into other sectors does not often occur... perhaps precisely because protest is manifested in those sections of society whose protesting has the least impact on society and contrariwise, protest rarely occurs within those sectors that would have most impact. The Swedish communist group Riff-Raff talk of the 'cynical subject', that is of the capital-ised/ anthropologised human beings who already have consciousness of their situation but see no way past it. The cynical subject in fact, is in advance of the consciousness that the left wants to bestow upon it, unlike the left it can see the process, and that there is nothing to be won. The cynical subject will not participate because its participation is decisive, it will not participate until forced by its own circumstances. That is how it should be.

3. Related to this, Riff-Raff also use the apocalypse fanatic Oswald Spengler's divergent concept of spiritual communities and cosmic entities. For riff-raff, a spiritual community is a protest movement which aims to participate in the present as fully as possible, they spread and grow within existing conditions by drawing as many people to themselves as they can but never grow out of the conditions which created them. The cosmic entities by contrast mark genuine events and shifts in the productive relation, they have that aura which speaks of new possibility, they are caused when humanity is presented with the opportunity for a new relation to the world (cosmos). If 68 was a cosmic entity (and who knows now whether it was or wasn't) then the facsimiles of 68 are decidedly mere spiritual communities.

4. Thus a radical transformation of the protest dynamic would depend upon (i) the participation of other sectors of society (most importantly industrial workers); (ii) the distribution of protest from out of its Haussmanised geography; (iii) the extension of protest's temporality beyond the two week/month fever. Most importantly however the uprising must cross the cultural boundary and leave



behind it the terrain of political campaign issues and enter instead the intimate and troubling matter of being able to directly articulate alienation and thus formulate demands to address this. In short, protest will be escalated when it engages the participation of capitalist society's 'cynical subject'.



# CRITIQUE *CRITIQUE*

*What prevents communication?*

CONFLICT, ALWAYS CONFLICT.



*THE PARTICULAR WEARS ITSELF OUT FIGHTING*

*DIALOGUE*  
**DIALOGUE**



A historical project can hardly  
expect to preserve an eternal youth,  
sheltered from every blow.



# REFLEXIONS AROUND CALL

by Denis, *Meeting* November 2, 2005

The need for communism traverses the entirety of the society of capital. The merit of *Call* lies in taking note of this, and of trying to design strategies that live up to this realization. Its weakness comes from the continually resurgent temptation to think that the desire to establish different relations suffices to start producing them.

## PRIMO

*Call*, as its name indicates, is not a text of analysis or debate. Its purpose is not to convince or denounce, it is to affirm, to expose, and on this basis to announce a strategy for revolution. Must we therefore conclude, with Gilles Dauvé, that “a call cannot be refuted, either we hear it or we pay it no heed”?<sup>1</sup>

*Call* itself, in its refusal to discuss the “sensibly [self-]evident” encourages this reaction from the first lines of the first *scholium*: “This is a call. That is to say it aims at those who hear it. The question is not to demonstrate, to argue, to convince. We will go straight to the *evident*.” But, at the same time, *Call* is the typical product

1 “Communization: a ‘A Call and an Invite’ in *Troploi*,” September 2004. Dauvé concludes his text by writing: “If the situation corresponds to that described by those preparing *Meeting* and those who’ve published *Call*, the simple concomitance of the two projects should inspire at the very least a reciprocal interest among their respective participants. To our knowledge this is not the case.” He also adds, in relation to *Call*: “Whatever reservations we can hold, this text manifests an existence, an experience, in particular in the anti-globalization actions of recent years.” It is necessary to point out here that the “concomitance” of these projects has nothing fortuitous about it, and that the “experience” which *Call* represents can also be found in *Meeting*. Certain articles of *Meeting* I and *Call* concern strictly the same topics.



of a debate inherent to the very existence of the “area that poses the question of communization”: and pursuing this debate to its conclusion is a preliminary to any emergence of a self-conscious “communizing movement” with this area.<sup>2</sup>

It is to be understood that the objective of these reflexions is not to make a textual commentary on *Call*, to be exhaustive or to interpret the thought or intentions of the authors in an academic manner. Even if it is one of its expressions, *call* is far from posing unanimity in the struggles that, in one form or another, pose the question

Of communization: it was on the contrary the occasion for numerous discussions. As *Call* illustrates quite well a certain proclivity into which the whole “area which poses the question of communization”, on the basis of its very problematic, is capable of falling, to put in writing these critiques is an occasion to nourish the debate.

## SECUNDO

That which characterizes the communizing current is not so much a common interpretation of communism as an attention paid to the process of its production, that is, what we term communization. *Call* explicitly situates itself in this perspective: “As we apprehend

- 2 The expressions “area which poses the question of communization”, “communizing movement” and communizing current’ are used in the sense that I respectively gave them in Meeting 1 (“Three Theses on Communization”). The “communizing current” designates the theoretical groups that explicitly employ the concept of communization as an important pole of their reflection (this current being admittedly relatively restricted for the moment). “The area which poses the question of communization” incorporates a much larger part of the present and past proletarian movement. It characterizes those moments of the class struggle where the central problematic was something close to what one could at present understand by communization: in short, how to realize the immediacy of social relations. That which signals the existence of this area is the crystallization around the communizing question at a given moment in a given struggle, without thinking that this portion of the proletariat could exist separately or perpetuate itself beyond the class struggle in general. Finally the communizing movement is something to be created. Debates must be provoked in the midst of this area – in the struggles and the moments where the communizing problematic seems to appear – to form a movement which will make this demand explicit in the heart of these struggles.



it, the process of instituting communism can only take the form of a collection of acts of communization ... Insurrection itself is just an accelerator, a decisive moment in this process”(p.66). But contrary to *Meeting*, whose problematic is to interrogate the concept of communization, *Call* gives communization a determinate content...

In *Call* the term communization is systematically understood as “making common”. In the previous quotation for instance the “acts of communization” are described as “making common such-and-such space, such-and-such machine, such-and-such knowledge”. That which is put in common is *use*, as when it is said that to communize a space is to liberate its use. This sense is even more visible in other parts of the text. For example: “In Europe, the integration of workers’ organizations into the state management apparatus – the foundation of social democracy – was paid for with the renunciation of all ability to be a nuisance. Here too the emergence of the labour movement was a matter of material solidarities, of an urgent need for communism. The *Maisons du Peuple* were the last shelters for this indistinction between the need for immediate communization and the strategic requirements of a practical implementation of the revolutionary process”(p.54). Even if communization is conceived as communization of relations it is first of all on the basis of a common usage: “Communizing a place means: setting its use free, and on the basis of this liberation experimenting with refined, intensified, and complicated relations”(p. 68).

In the same logic, if communization is “making common”, then communism is systematically assimilated with “sharing”. The theme of sharing is omnipresent in *Call*.

One finds is particularly developed in Proposition V in the following terms: “That in us which is most singular calls to be shared. But we note this: not only is that which we have to share obviously incompatible with the prevailing order, but this order strives to track down any form of sharing of which it does not lay down the rules.” Sharing is the basis of collective action as envisaged by *Call*: “We say that squatting will only make sense again for us provided that we clarify the basis of the sharing we enter into”(p.52).



### TERTIO

The point is not that “sharing” and communism have nothing to do with another, but we have trouble understanding how they can be synonymous. Sharing already exists in capitalism: social institutions as important as the family function on the basis of sharing, and even in the countries where capitalism is the oldest and where the familial relation reduces itself to its simplest expression (the parent/child relation), capital, even economically, would not survive without this form of social sharing.

*Call* recognizes, in a negative sense, that sharing is also constitutive of the capitalist order in affirming that “the dominant order ... strives to track down any form of sharing of which it does not lay down the rules.” But then are we to understand that any sharing not controlled by the “dominant order” is a communist sharing? We can imagine so given that communism is purely and simply assimilated to sharing minus control: “the question of communism is, on one hand, to do away with the police, and on the other, to elaborate modes of sharing, uses, between those who live together.” (p.64).

It is true that the point is still to “elaborate modes of sharing”. We also find further along: “It belongs to the communist way that we explain to ourselves and formulate the basis of our sharing.” Thus communist sharing is not given, it is to be elaborated. But how? Here the text eats its tail. A certain mode of sharing leads to communism, OK, but which? Response, in substance: the one that leads to communism... Nothing more is said on what can differentiate it from the sharing admitted in the world of capital other than the fact that this particular sharing must lead to a redefinition of relations. “Now communism starts from the experience of sharing. And first, from the sharing of our needs. Needs are not what capitalist rule has accustomed us to. *To need is never about needing things without at the same time needing worlds.*” (pp. 64-65). From then on the definitions of communism multiply: “By communism we mean a certain discipline of the attention.” Or again: “The communist question is about the elaboration of our relationship to the world, to beings, to ourselves.” (p.63)



Among all these definitions there is one that shines out by its absence: communism as the suppression of class society. Certainly *Call* affirms that “Communism does not consist in the elaboration of *new relations of production*, but indeed in the abolition of those relations.” (p.68) However it is never a question of the “abolition of class relations” – nonetheless a classical corollary of “abolition of relations of production”. The term of class struggle and proletariat are never employed. As for the adjective “worker”, it serves only to qualify the old “movement”, something which at one time incarnated the communist aspiration but no longer... *Call*, that is, doesn’t affirm that the division of society into antagonistic social classes doesn’t exist, or existed once but is now as surpassed as the usage of steam on the railway. It simply doesn’t speak of it.

Capitalism is certainly present in the text, but far from being seen as the system that encloses the totality of social reality, it is described essentially through its mechanisms of control, to the point where we could as well call it “capitalism” as “empire” or “civilization”. “There is a general context – capitalism, civilization, empire, call it what you wish – that not only intends to control each situation but, even worse, tries to make sure that there is, as often as possible, no situation. The streets and the houses, the language and the affects, and the worldwide tempo that sets the pace of it all, have been adjusted for that purpose only” (p.9).

It is precisely because capitalism is considered as an assemblage and not as a system that *Call* supposes that there exists a possible “beyond” to the world of capital.

#### QUARTO

Let us return for a moment to the quotation from Proposition VI: “communism does not consist in the elaboration of new relations of production, but indeed in the abolition of those relations.” The text which follows contains a surprising affirmation: these “relations of production” can be abolished immediately “between ourselves”. “Not having relations of production with our world or between ourselves means never letting the search for results become more



important than the attention to the process; casting from ourselves all forms of valorization; making sure we do not disconnect affection and co-operation. (p.68) The problem is that a “relation of production” is not a particular relation between two people, or even a hundred, or a thousand. It is a generalized social relation which cannot be abolished locally because even where people would not “live” relations of production between themselves, they would no less be incorporated in relations of production which structure capitalist society as a whole.

The “relation of production” is not a relation between individuals, or at least it cannot be only that: two people do not maintain between themselves some kind of private relation of production which it would be possible to negate by their sole common volition. It could be objected that *Call* also would not see relations of production as an inter-individual relations, simply because its philosophy banishes the concept of the individual. And indeed, in the text of *Call*, the “forms of life” and other “relations to the world” traverse bodies. But “relations of production” are no more relations between forms of life or worlds than they are relations between persons. The entities that are linked by “relations of production” are just those that the same relations define: it is the position in the relation of production that determines the entities, and not the contrary. Relations of production are relations between classes.

It is certain that the division of society into classes would be infinitely more visible if inter-individual relations were the brute and unreserved translations of relations of production. The proletarian would doff his cap in passing the capitalist with his top hat and cigar, and there would be nothing more to say. But unfortunately things are a little more complicated, and “existential liberalism” is not the unique translation of the effect of relations of production in everyday life...

*Call* is not mistaken to write: “capitalism has revealed itself to be not merely a mode of production, but a reduction of all relations, in the last instance, to relations of production.” But this “reduction



in the last instance” is not a collapsing. There is obviously a link, tenuous and complex but nonetheless palpable, between on the one hand the sociability at the office, the posture of bodies in the large metropolises, or indeed what *Call* designates as “existential liberalism”, and on the other hand the “relations of production”: but its a link, not an identity.

“Marxism” would say that “the relations of production *determine* the relations that we can maintain among ourselves”: but “determine” implies a necessity of the very form of the link just where we can observe an extreme diversity. We could also say that “the relations of production *contain* the relations that we can maintain among ourselves”. They model and restrain them without exhausting them. We have both a certain margin of maneuver (its on this that *Call* counts) and an equally certain limit (it this which *Call* doesn’t see).

#### QUITO

Any workers’ cooperative can abolish between its members “relations of production” in the sense understood by *Call*. Would it thereby free itself from capitalist valorization?

Financial circuits, commercialization, productivity standards, everything is there so that the workers of the cooperative self-exploit as surely as if the boss was still physically looming over them. Similarly, would a community whose members do not employ between themselves monetary relations and work in common thereby escape “relations of production”? On the condition of transforming communism into a series of principles to be respected we might perhaps be able to maintain the illusion for a while. But that is to forget that every point of contact between the community and its exterior would be the occasion to see the “relations of production” reassert their rights and reintroduce the whole community into class relations: juridical statutes of occupied buildings and land, the supply of provisions, energy, the sale of the surplus...



## SEXTO

*Call* is an alternative<sup>3</sup> text because the existence of communism is considered as possible at a moment when capitalism still reigns.

Sure, it's not seen as communism in its final state because the latter must first constitute itself as a force and "deepen" as a preliminary to revolution: and its only after the insurrection, the moment of acceleration of the process, that communism establishes itself as the universal social relation.

Nonetheless the sense of the text is clear: even in the form of fragments, of instants to explore and reproduce, of "grace" to research, moments of communism are already to be had. The point is only to recognize them, and on that basis, to organize.

## SEPTIMO

I don't agree with Dauvé for whom *Call* is exempt from all trace of the alternative because "communization is defined as antagonistic to this world. in irreconcilable and violent conflict with it (to the point of illegality). It differs therefore from the alternative which searches (and often succeeds) in making itself accepted at the margin, an in durably coexisting with the state and wage labor."<sup>4</sup>

Pacifism plays no part in the necessary definition of the alternative: those who one could call the "confrontational alternatives" are far from being marginal in this type of movement. To take an example which has nothing to do with *Call*, but which will be significant because it is caricatural, one could recall that in the *No Border* camp of Strasbourg 2002 this tendency was present to a very large degree. This camp organized against the Shengen information system (SIS), drew together between one and two thousand people and was the occasion for *at the same time* an ephemeral "self-organized" village lived by certain as a veritable Temporary Autonomous Zone

3 translators note: in French radical circles the terms "l'alternatif" and "alternativisme" designate the activity of those who believe it possible to fulfill their desire for change within capitalist society, alongside the mainstream in an alternative or countercultural world — a kind of third, "drop out", option between reform and revolution. The terms are translated throughout by "alternative".

4 Dauvé, *op.cit.*



(with the all the folklore one can imagine) and on the other a week of disruptive actions in the city of Strasbourg. Certainly the actions and demonstrations weren't characterized by an extreme violence<sup>5</sup> but they were in any case all explicitly anti-legalist and sought to defy the state on its terrain. There were no doubt tensions between a more "activist" tendency and those who wanted above all to defend the marvelous experience of this self-managed camp, but many people pursued these two objectives whilst seeing them as perfectly complementary.

The alternative consists in the belief that we can with limited numbers of people establish relations in the heart of the world of capital that would be already a prefiguring of communism (even if one doesn't use this term). The inverse position holds that, as long capital as a social relation is not abolished, nothing that resembles communism can be lived.

Those who often designate themselves as alternative imagine therefore that, in places like the No Border camp at Strasbourg, or that in the Vaag which followed it, in squats or wherever else, moments which approach a society liberated from capital, from money, and "domination" can be lived. And that all this can come from an effort of individuals to free themselves from bad "ideas" that society has inculcated in them. For example, ceasing to be sexist or patriarchal, through a series of measures that concern the comportment, language, etc.

Certain of these alternatives are pacifist. Others think that their desires are not compatible with the maintenance of the society of capital and are perfectly ready for illegal or violent struggle.

One finds also those who think that *only the struggle* offers today the possibility of living moments of communism: the alternative is for them indissociable from anti-capitalist activism. The latter will

5 They included some exchanges of blows with the police, some breaking of windows and cameras, some trashed hotel foyers, and a lot of chaos in the town centre – also many arrests, some trials (of which a demonstrator given condemned four months) and an order of the prefecture of Rhine which forbade any demonstrations in the town centre.



often shirk off the appellation “alternative” precisely because they fear being assimilated to pacifism. Its in the last category that one could range those who write: “No experience of communism at the present time can survive without getting organized, tying itself to others, putting itself in crisis, waging war”(p.65).

At the other extreme a rigorously anti-alternative position can be found for example in *Theorie Communiste* (TC), whose concept of the “self-transformation of proletarians” draws attention to the hiatus which can exist between what can be lived in the society of capital and what will be lived after the moment that communism will have been produced. This leads the members of TC and those who adhere to their theses to see in every practical tentative to pose the communist question a demonstration of the inevitably alternative character of every maneuver of this type.

There is also the position that I have developed in “Three Theses on Communization” (*Meeting 1*). The point is to take account of the essential critique addressed to the alternative (no possibility of developing communism within the world of capital); but to recognize that there is also necessarily a relation between that which proletarians are today and that which will one day allow them to produce communism, in other words, that it is possible to practically address problematics related to communism even if its impossible today to live something which “tends towards” communism or prefigures it. I’ve thus argued that the comm-unizing movement is characterized by the fact that it poses already in struggles questions which have the same nature as those that will lead to the production of communism at the moment of the revolution: but that the responses that it brings, cobbled together with what capital renders possible today, are not themselves communist.

OCTAVO

We do find in the *Call* an explicit critique of the alternative: “By dint of seeing the enemy as a subject that faces us – instead of feeling it as a relationship that holds us – we confine ourselves to the struggle against confinement. We reproduce under the pretext of an “alter-



native” the worst kind of dominant relationships. We start selling as a commodity the very struggle against the commodity. Hence we get the authorities of the anti-authoritarian struggle, chauvinist feminism, and anti-fascist lynchings.” (pp. 8-9) Or again: “And then there is this mystification: that caught in the course of a world that displeases us, there would be proposals to make, alternatives to find. That we could, in other words, lift ourselves out of the situation that we are in, to discuss it in a calm way, between reasonable people. But no, there is nothing beyond the situation. There is no outside to the world civil war. We are irremediably *there*.” (p.74)

It must be said that the second critique is more addressed to the pacifist alternative than to the alternative *tout court*. Yet the question is still to understand why *Call*, all the while posing a critique of the alternative, nonetheless leans irresistibly towards it?

The response can be perhaps found in Proposition VI: “In a general way, we do not see how anything else but a force, a reality able to survive the total dislocation of capitalism, could truly attack it, could pursue the offensive until the very moment of dislocation” (p. 70). All the difficulty of revolutionary theory can be found hidden beneath this phrase: the point is to understand the overthrowing of capitalism as a process that is not itself capitalist, since in the end it has the capacity to destroy capitalism, and yet is nonetheless born within the capitalist social relation.

It’s in this sense that *Call* is representative of a debate that traverses the area that poses the question of communization. As its practice is manifestly not communist, and cannot be, this area has the temptation to see the unique reason for the nonexistence of responses to the communizing questions that it puts on the table in the weakness of its force or activity.

## NONO

We can easily understand that the Party that *Call* speaks of has nothing to do with an avant-garde. In effect, whilst the Leninist party prepares the revolution, or more precisely the coup d’etat, the party in question in *Call* directly produces communism, at least the



communism of the pre-revolutionary period. Even more: it is this communism.

“The practice of communism, as we live it, we call “the Party.” When we overcome an obstacle together or when we reach a higher level of sharing, we say that “we are building the Party.”” (p. 65) The Party is not the avant-garde; it is the whole camp. It

encloses even those who have not yet had any association: “Certainly others, who we do not know yet, are building the Party elsewhere. This call is addressed to them.” (p. 65)

The ticks of language the most revealing of the alternative temptation which progressively bares itself out in *Call* are systematically associated with the evocation of the party: “Looking closer at it, the Party could be nothing but this: the formation of sensibility as a force. The deployment of an archipelago of worlds. What would a political force, under empire, be that didn’t have its farms, its schools, its arms, its medicines, its collective houses, its editing desks, its printers, its covered trucks and its bridgeheads in the metropole? It seems more and more absurd that some of us still have to work for capital – aside from the necessary tasks of infiltration.” (pp. 66-67) But can one really believe that if we are no longer employed by this or that firm or government we cease to “work for capital”? And that one has thereby effected a “secession ... with the process of capitalist valorization” (p. 10)? That which distinguishes real subsumption, that is, this period in which capital has in a certain manner absorbed the totality of social reality rather than remaining restricted to the productive process, is that *any activity* is capable of becoming a part of the process of valorization.

#### DECIMO

*Call* ends, in strategic terms, at an impasse: the last paragraph recognizes it, which concludes the work with a “bet”, that is to say something not susceptible to argument: “We will be told: you are caught in an alternative which will condemn you in one way or another: either you manage to constitute a threat to empire, in which case you will be quickly eliminated; or you will not manage to con-



stitute such a threat, and you will have once again destroyed yourselves. There remains only the wager on the existence of another term, a thin ridge, just enough for us to walk on. Just enough for *all those who can hear* to walk and live.” (p. 88)

How is the material force in formation, the party, to concretely escape repression? Where are “its farms, its schools, its arms, its medicines, its collective houses, its editing desks, its printers, its covered trucks and its bridgeheads in the metropole” going to hide? Such activities have no need to be subversive in order to be repressed. In the end, everything is illegal: without even speaking of arms, it is forbidden to practice medicine, to work, to drive, without the corresponding diplomas, contracts or licenses. Even the LETS, the local exchange systems, were once in the firing line of the financial regulators.

All the alternative communities that have existed for a certain time resolved the question in the same way, and in fact there are only two. An experience such as that can only subsist as long as it respects the legality of capital. Nothing stops those who have the means to create hospitals, schools, or private collective farms. But on what possible basis can we say they are “communizing”?

The condition of the confrontation with the legality of capital is to not become attached to a place, a structure, or a durable movement, which would signify defeat. *Call* accords, with reason, lots of importance to spaces: “For this, we need places. Places to get organized, to share and develop the required techniques. To learn to handle all that may prove necessary. To co-operate.” (p. 57). The space as a point of assembly in the struggle is a mode of organization that has proven itself. But inherent to such spaces is the need to ceaselessly efface themselves before the repression that they attract: when they eternalize themselves it is simply the sign that they have ceased to be active.

#### UNODÉCIMO

One of the regrettable consequences of the manner in which *Call* envisages, under capitalism, the growth of a communist camp which



reinforces and deepens itself through self-organization is that the way thus traced becomes exclusive of all others.

Communism, rather than being produced collectively and universally by the proletariat destroying capital in forms that we cannot determine in advance, is predefined by the configurations that one can give it today, in the very heart of the world of capital.

Yet, the conception that we can have today of communism is itself to be historicized, it is implicated in a stage of development of capitalism. It is this kind of thing that *Call* misses completely. As messianic as the conceptions of communism in *Call* might be, they will always remain the product of present times: and they invariably lack the possible richness of definitions of communism as a universal social relation.

Yet this communism as universal social relation, if it exists one day, will be produced in circumstances (the general crisis of social relations, insurrection, the total destruction of capitalism) of which the real playing out is for the most part unknown to us. What will be the communizing measures, those that will permit of the concrete production of communism? One can certainly have an opinion on this question: but how can we say whether this opinion can grasp at present what communization will or will not be. Even the reflection on the most interesting historical examples on this subject – Spain in the 30s, Italy in the 70s – will never permit us to predict the future to that degree. In calling for the constitution of a communist camp on the basis of what it defines in the present as being communism, *Call* freezes its vision of communism.

According to its logic, only those communizing forces capable of self-organizing under capital will be capable of carrying out an insurrection tomorrow; and those forms that are capable of self-organization in the Party are alone communist. How is the Party, supposing that it is formed along the lines delineated in *Call*, to judge the chaotic evolutions of future class struggles? It will only judge them communist to the extent that they join it, since it will itself be communism.



The Party will miss everything that will develop in the forms, moments, and circumstances that it will not have been able to foresee; and it will act as their censor.

Already the tone of *Call*, often very severe, gives us an indication of a separation between “good” communists, those who’ve known how perform “secession”, and “bad” proletarians who’ve done nothing other than submit to capital. As if all those who haven’t already seceded will never be able to intervene in communization. Moreover, *Call* affirms that all those who want communism must cease to work for capital. How can we imagine that we can create communism while proposing a revolutionary strategy of which the first measure is rupture with all those who “work for capital”? Especially seeing as a good reason to one day produce communism would perhaps be precisely to have, until then, “worked for capital”.

#### DUODECIMO

*Call* falls into a common trap for those who try to pose the question of communization in an at least somewhat practical manner: the responses that we try to bring forward today seem to define a space which only veritable insurgents could populate, whilst the others, those who remain apart from this insurgency, consist of nothing but the proletariat integrated to capital.

A journal published in Toulouse is quite representative of this manner of thinking. Entitled *WE [NOUS]*, this zine presents on the cover of its 7th issue a drawing of a person walking on a tightrope over a canyon which separates *US* from the world of capital, represented by factories, nuclear power plants, houses, bosses, cops, but also powerless workers and anesthetized television viewers.

In this regard the manner in which *Call* employs the first person plural is not totally innocent.<sup>6</sup> Certainly *Call* takes care to not op-

<sup>6</sup> translators note: *Call* capitalizes the two French version of “we”, *nous* and *on*, in order to highlight the distinction between the “we” of the party (*NOUS*) from the more abstract and impersonal “we” of society / the citizen (*ON*).



pose *US* and *THEM*, but paraphrasing Heidegger, *NOUS* and *ON*.<sup>7</sup> The *WE* [*NOUS*] of *Call* (like that of Toulouse) is open: “The° *We* [*NOUS*] that speaks here is not a de-limitable, isolated we, the we of a group. It is the we of a position” (p.10). But this position is the one that affirms on the back-cover that *WE HAVE BEGUN*. Those who have begun have already advanced on the road to revolution. It is made explicit in the following formula: “The overthrowing of capitalism will come from those who are able to create the conditions for other types of relations” (p.67). *Call* imagines, as a road to communism, only those that its authors have chosen to follow: here is the sense of *WE* that is finally less a position than a trajectory. In effect certain of those who find themselves in “the area that poses the question of communization” have been able to live a form of “secession”: but such a rupture inscribes itself in a logic of an époque where communization is a marginal question. One can happily think that a generalized crisis of social relations will introduce many other modes of adhesion to the communist idea. The revolution will not simply be the act of squatters of ex-squatters! To think the contrary is to believe that revolution will only come about on the condition that revolutionary subjectivity has won over the masses, yet the revolution will be at the same time the moment of disobjectification of the capitalist social relation and that of the desubjectification of the question of communization.

#### TERCO DECIMO

We avoid the foregoing trap if we recognize that, in our époque, all the responses that can be found to the question of communization are the responses of our époque: that is to say destined to become obsolete from the moment that the situation will be sufficiently modified so that the until then minority question is in everyone's mouths.

7 translators note: Heidegger's term for inauthentic being, ‘*Das Man*’, is generally translated into English as ‘the They’, although it is more literally rendered by its French translation ‘*le On*’ (the one). The common usage of ‘*on*’ to mean ‘we’ (a little like the ‘royal we’, but for commoners) thus allows for an Heideggerian distinction which is neither translatable into German or English.



The communizing problematic, just like the conception that we can have of communism, is itself historic. If the point of continuity between current struggles and the revolution is indeed the question of communization, this question, already diverse at present, can only enrich itself from new significations and unforeseen developments with the evolution of a dynamic situation that will see the fall of the capitalist social relation. It is thus not only the responses to the communizing problematic, i.e. practices, which will be modified with the arrival of a revolutionary period, but also the questions posed. Every contemporary practice that would like to be communizing must therefore recognize that it *responds inadequately to a badly posed question* : which at the same time subtracts nothing from its value. For the question and its answer are inadequate to serve as the measure of that which the future of communism as a universal social relation could be; but they are completely adequate to give to contemporary struggles a meaning that they wouldn't possess without them, and which can reveal itself as subsequently determinant for the possibility of producing communism.

To want to wage a struggle whilst freeing oneself from all mediations put in place by capital (unions, politics, media, law etc.) is an obvious example of a manner of posing questions which treat of communization.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, why not?, searching for a collective life and “different” relations, on the condition that they are in the context of as struggle, can also be an example.

Clearly all experimental practices are not for that reason in any way communist, and they can even be taken up in a sense that has no communizing sense, as forms simply rehabilitated in a purely capitalist framework. This is exactly the case with squats which were at a certain moment a response in terms of organization and everyday life to a number of similar questions, but which can just as easily be one place of artistic promotion among others. The same for general assemblies, workers' councils, factory occupations etc.

<sup>8</sup> I talk of “questions” because every practice, in this type of struggle, is an attempt to respond to a particular problem.



All these forms of struggle can be, at a given moment, a response to a communizing problematic, as they can be the contrary. The hypostasis of one of these forms can only become an ideology.

#### QUARTODECIMO

To the formula of *Call, which* says: “the overthrowing of capitalism will come from those who are able to create the conditions for other types of relations,” we must respond: “the conditions for other types of relations will be created by those who are able to overthrow capitalism.”







Note from the Author: The editor considers that the interchangeability in use of the names of the author, Michael Heinrich, and translator, Angelus Novus, might be confusing to readers; in fact, the creation of a single author-unit made from an amalgam of the names was a deliberate whim of the reviewer.

Italicized text comes from Michael Heinrich's *Invaders from Marx*, which is available online in both English and German.



# LETTER ABOUT INVADERS

Dear Y,

You have said you like Michael Heinrich's essay *Invaders from Marx*, translated by Angelus Novus, but what is it in this piece that you like? As far as I can tell it operates within a fairly typical set of parameters for Marxist theory, with a ratio of 4 to 5 decent sentences/insights to 13 pages of indifferent primping and preening. The displaced essence of the work is located in the assertions that capitalism is a set of social relations mediated by an endlessly reproducing commodity fetishism but the text overall is constipated with the conventional marxist predilection for reiterating, 'why others are wrong and I am right', and as such it is quite an undisciplined work of hopscotched sayings. It seems there is always a 'new reading of Marx'. However, the question must be raised, beyond recycling these ever the same but different repackagings, this endless begin-again-Finnegan-ism which is so characteristic of a hermetically sealed milieu, as to the purpose of the existence of these Marx re-readers. What does their activity lead to? What does it express?

You suggest that you are more inclined to read capital now after reading the essay... I am surprised that such teacherly injunctions such as, 'one must take all three volumes of Capital into account if one wishes to make any use of it' work for you. And I wonder what your purpose is in reading Capital anyway?

Is it something we have to do, because, like a Mount Everest of theory, it is there? Certainly, no revolutionary events have ever been intensified by the intervention of a re-reading of Capital... a critical analysis of capitalism is no more than that and no one specific historical revolutionary praxis may be extracted from it. This is not an argument against reading Capital of course but the conclusion cannot be avoided that the same problems exist after reading it as



existed before... A small number of people possess a highly specialized knowledge that makes no difference to the lives of many millions who do not have that knowledge. And if these millions did adopt critical analysis, this would not particularly contribute anything decisive. Anyway, there are other books to be read, from the same era. If we take only novelists: Balzac, Tolstoy, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Flaubert, and Melville. It is true that the reader does not obtain a systematic understanding of capitalism from these, but it is possible for him/her to develop a grasp of fetishism from them and grasp the effects of capitalist transformation on mass individual existence – the question then arises whether systematic or intuitive narratives are the more appropriate form for understanding human social relations.

The paragraph you quote is one of two that are worth consideration from an anti-political communist perspective, this is not to say that either are original but only that they are striking. The following paragraph is remarkable I think because, as with much of the essay, it is strangely parochial in its frame of reference and seems not willing to concede that parallel conclusions to these are easily derivable from other unrelated political trajectories. And so, with almost breathtaking insularity, we are enjoined to accept, without any proof, the index of significance used by Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich: ‘one falls short if one attempts to understand accumulation at the level of determination in the first volume... if one does not wish to remain at the level of mere observation’ etc.

*Personal and deliberate relations of domination are typical for pre-capitalist societies. But the specifically capitalist form of domination is mediated by things. In that people relate to the products of their labor as commodities and to the means of production as capital, they constitute a particular objective logic of things through their own practice (commodities must be sold, capital must be valorized) which then confronts them as an apparently objective rationality. Capitalist class domination is the unconscious and unintended result of this objective logic – which doesn't necessarily exclude that*



*this class domination can be consciously and intentionally strived for, just that this isn't the decisive point.*

The second sentence is a remarkable statement, I don't know whether it is serious or not. Perhaps Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich have not heard of religion but god was the first (or was it second?) thing that mediated the domination of social relations. And, their formulation of fetishism is somewhat inadequate anyway if one favorably considers either Klein's notion of 'part-objects' or Sartre's 'gaze', or even takes into consideration the general theory of semiotics. Things have always mediated relations, compressing past experiences into presently circulating signals – fetishism is a vital if over-coded life-sign for perceptual cognitive systems. The issue here is the specific form of fetishism that has become established within commodity production, i.e. the specific manner in which this means of relating has colonized and come to dominate a natural tendency for conditioned responses to develop in accordance with signs/fetishes – Balzac writes, 'One of those cups found in that sort of place' ... there is an underlying assumption of familiarity and conditioning by mass produced objects and standardized living spaces – within capitalism, (branded) objects no longer require a description for us to know what they are.

The limits of their analysis concerning fetishism mean that Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich have a tendency to externalize their formulations and end up with a somewhat idealistic notion of human beings... people are, first and last, 'things' anyway. Furthermore, they seem unaware of the fetishism that exists at the heart of their analysis, the totemic text 'Capital' becomes the means, for their tribe, of registering/gauging legitimate thoughts... those who have not read must not speak, those who have read wrongly must be subjected to critique and classification, i.e. the errors of those belonging to this school or that sect must be demonstrated with further readings, true readings.

Such an approach is an exemplary example of fetishism because it is indistinguishable in form from any other exegetic schismatic



regime, it singularly fails to locate within itself its own distribution within its milieu by the dominant social relation or to locate any set of practices or relations which are not fetishistic. This theoretical heavy-footedness I think is due to a sort of hypoxia brought on by an ever-decreasing set of reference points and source materials which their version of the critique of political economy induces. First, one cannot speak unless one has read properly but then, alas, one finds that one has nothing to say because one has read properly.

I have nothing at all against the monkish activity of a sealed milieu, on the contrary, that is all there is for us. It is ironic that when confronted with the literal incommunicability of their thesis, Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich sarcastically rejoin, 'real workers don't read theory' but in fact that is the truth of it, most workers do not, and will never, read theory. In a similar vein, the Situationists, after Ducasse, stated that everyone must become dialecticians, but that won't happen either – raising consciousness does not recognize that a life of the mind, where we are at, is neither a universal aspiration nor a proper destination. The question of relating our analysis, our ideas, to an external populace not interested in any of what we have to say is the only political question worth asking. If the question is not set, if a proper scale is not imposed within the milieu, then an invisible planet of mass disinterest will continue to exert its pull on our endeavors and distort our activities without our understanding or even registering it. Thus we flee, like Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich, into theological categories, such as the 'Ideal average', which then function as an alibi for, an abstraction from, an aversion to, our actual experience of the terrible grinding inertia of the ever-accumulating forces of production – capital is really too big for us to talk about changing it. The crisis that this realization induces within our consciousness takes the form of a retreat into compensatory 'analysis', and the consequence of this is an ever-increasing dependency on a decreasing territory of 'correct' theory that in turn reinforces what we might call second order (or acquired) naiveté:



*'If and when capitalism reaches its end, then it will hardly do so as the result of automatically operating tendencies, but rather because people grow tired of its demands and consciously decide to end it.'*

What is this 'people'? How is its subjectivity expressed? What are the organizations of its decision-making? How is it that this subject, 'people', has escaped the mediation of social relations by 'things' and come to know its 'tiredness'? What is the process at work, what is it exactly, which leads from fetishism to conscious decision-making? We don't know, we can't know because Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich have inscribed a highly restricted set of parameters on their research/analysis. In order to defend their thesis they have opted for a minimality of specialization but this, in its turn, has had an hypoxical effect on their politics. Precise categorization within their analysis of political economy produces absurd distortions and oxygen starved simplifications in their politics – a sort of not drowning but waving at unanalyzed popular social tropes and fetishes. The tentative abandonment of (or mere ambivalence towards) class struggle also becomes a borderline of their theory, 'all social classes defer to this fetishism emerging out of social practice' ... and...

*'Thus there is no privileged location which offers one a penetrating view into the functioning of capitalism, neither that of the capitalists, who concern themselves with the valorization of capital, nor that of the workers who are directly exploited by capital. Nothing is gained by taking the "standpoint of the workers". Class struggles are initially played out within the capitalist framework. The first priority for the exploited is (necessarily) that of securing their material and legal situation within the context of exploitation.'*

In fact, Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich are only arguing here against a concept of class struggle that is determined by class consciousness:



*'That there exist struggles against capital does not automatically mean that these struggles are inherently anti-capitalist. The struggle against capitalism is always a historical exception.'*

This argument does not exhaust the analysis of real possibilities within the class struggle but only functions as an argument against the position of the 'Operaismo' (or 'workerism') tendency that emphasized the ability of the working class to consciously force progressive changes onto the organization of the capitalist system. In contrast, within the frame of anti-politics we have been able to realistically maintain a class struggle perspective whilst also arguing that the escape from capitalism is always a historical exception. The class war is imposed by capitalism as it reproduces its social relation, and the struggle against the interest of capital undertaken by the proletariat in pursuit of its own externally contradictory interest has always been largely unconscious because it is reactive/defensive. The struggle does not have to contain a consciousness component for it to function as a struggle and have an 'anti-capitalist' impact. The class struggle that exists within the system, and beyond the ideological misrepresentation of it by workerist politics, is based on the structural assignment of roles and functions within society, and these in themselves are structurally contradictory.

As the proletariat has endeavored to realize its self-interest, via 'securing their material and legal situation within the context of exploitation' it has encountered a continued dissatisfaction with itself, and with its endeavors – there is no peace in its objectification. Restlessness and disgust are an outcome of a precarious and contradictory position within a social relation that is structurally/environmentally hostile; the real interest of the proletariat is defined in its dispersal, in its coming to rest as a subjectivity other than proletariat (and not in its achieving an anti-capitalist subjectivity). By contrast, the interest of capital is defined by the continued reproduction of the proletariat as proletariat; the contradiction between the two, of entropic pressures and negentropic pressures, is class on class war. That this relation, this process of contradictory pressures,



cannot produce revolution is probably the case, as it would involve the action of a consciously unified proletarian agent of which we see no sign. However, a war of attrition of this type could conceivably produce a crisis in the totality of the capitalist relation, a crisis of weariness and exhaustion, and this outcome, of breakdown, it seems to us is the most likely favorable possibility for beginning a movement towards social change. It is reasonable to assume isn't it, that there can be no revolutionary event until the capitalist social relation firstly becomes structurally inoperable?

The naiveté of the politics of 'invaders from Marx' probably stems from an admitted start-off point from within the debates generated by that nebulous set of occurrences generally called the 'New Left'. Whilst Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich are critical of both identified tendencies within the New Left, what can broadly termed Operaismo on the one side with the other being the theoretical 'reconstruction' of Marx's categories of critique of political economy. Nonetheless, their own categorical derivations from the Left's post-56 positions are readily apparent. An example of this is found in the sentiment that capitalism will be overthrown because people grow tired of its demands and consciously decide to end it.

The New Left was little more than the repositioning of the far left wing of capital in relation to post-war/cold war social and economic partnership. It had no particular critique of capitalism, and its leaders are best understood as a fall-out residue of ex-Stalinists and unreconstructed Trotskyists. The New Left was primarily located in the professional sector, but oriented itself towards street politics as an expression, as it thought, of the real movement of the historically self-constituting revolutionary subject. The New Left recomposed class struggle as an aggregate politics of identity and issue. We should also remember that it began the mediaisation of ultra-left politics via stuntism and the substituted symbolic force of televised protest events for the industrial presence of organized workers. Its adherents were the first to sell revolutionary ideas as a commodity within 'serious' journals and broadcast media, This phenomena is now termed soixante-huitism. It continually and perpetually raised



itself up only to lapse back into academicism and/or out and out reformism in the style of the 'Eurocommunist' trajectory.

Whilst Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich are very much to be appreciated for their attempt at an acute and meticulous attention to the appropriate function of categories, their New Left orientation results in a repetitious categorical messiness within their political influences. Their arguments against the primary determinations of the social relation by class struggle is sometimes categorically coherent but always politically untenable.

*'But a categorical presentation cannot begin with such a conception of class domination. The latter must emerge as a result of the former. For that reason, the chapter about classes intended by Marx is not situated at the beginning, but rather at the end of "Capital".'*

But the social relation, in reality, does not operate in this strict procession of determinations. The hostility that is fixed within the social relation determines the nature of society. The world is produced through this basic antagonism; it is not merely its result. Even so, it is quite appropriate, and we must agree with them, to argue that the smaller sets contained within the larger set are moved by, are defined by, are limited by, this very containment. This curtailment of the smaller forces by the larger force is the source of all fetishism in society (i.e. it is the 'upstream' flow of those part value systems, like religions or political ideologies, which do not in the slightest wish to celebrate capitalist value but which nonetheless remain tied to it via their totemising and accumulation of special ideological objects).

Whilst Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich describe a categorical sequence by which the greater (and more abstract) force precedes its lesser and more immediate outcomes and claim that this is not a reversible sequence. They also argue that 'the struggle against capitalism is the historical exception. It should be noted here that the apparently determined smaller and random sets contained within the greater relations of force may also belong to, and move within, other overlapping patterns of determination which are not yet identified as categories. But even within their categories this strict im-



sition of theoretical sequences becomes disturbed (along New Left lines) because they prioritize the role of consciousness as an index of (the absence of real) resistance when consciousness, if they are to be consistent, must always function at the lower end of their strict categorical sequence.

*'In all probability, the majority of these 6.4 billion people doesn't pose any questions concerning capitalism as such, but is instead attempting, plain and simply, to survive. Those, however, who don't simply accept their situation, but who raise questions concerning its origins, come to widely varying conclusions, which range from the unjust nature of humanity altogether to the incompetence of particular governments, the greed of particular capitalists and banks, or the Jews (or in some Asian countries: Chinese merchants). Capitalism itself is only seldom held responsible; in that case, in some countries of the Trikont and in Eastern Europe, one can even find wishes for a "proper" capitalism, one that functions without greed, violence, or corruption.'*

Their conclusion, concerning consciousness, is based upon a category type error. It is certainly true that all opposition to capital, being determined at the level of ideas by the capitalist social relation, should without fail express ideas that are in accordance with the limits imposed by the capitalist social relation (although the manner of this expression varies, the contours of the relation being expressed in each particularity) – this they have observed acutely. However, it is not the ideas that are fetishistically reproduced within the capitalist frame that are decisive in a revolutionary situation but those which are generated when ordinary process is suspended and human interaction floats free from what has held it in place.

There are good arguments made in the piece against historicism and the alleged privileged position of history's interpreters. However, the worth of this text remains obscure to me, the terrible theoretical constraints that it has placed upon itself function fetishistically and to the detriment of the analysis contained within it. In general terms the project of the critique of political economy is use-



ful to the extent that it enables the pro-revolutionary to establish:  
1. The commodity nature of social relations (or the social relations contained within the commodity); 2. Whether the relations proposed as an alternative to commodity production are viable (that is whether they resist or are able to exist beyond capital); 3. And if they do not escape, then the reasons for their containment by the social relation.

The restricted base of the analysis deployed by Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich results in the to be expected category errors of their position. These follow lines of least resistance within the traditional political ideologies of the New Left. Their continued flight towards abstraction, the unbending application of categories, means they are impelled to externalize attributable errors in the promotion of their own 'critique' of such errors, whilst simultaneously becoming blinded to the fetishism of their own position. Their critique has led them to a decontextualized left politics which results on the one hand in an inability to engage with ideas from sources other than their own whilst on the other they become subsumed by a ready-made 'politics' (according to Angelus Novus elsewhere) of unions, antifascism and community organizing.

Generally speaking, critical analysis must spark the unprecedented out of itself. It is not enough to theorize up to the point of orthodoxy and then suspend all further critique. Analytic investigations must increase reference points and not, if it is to avoid drifting into left-wing cliché, merely map itself onto precedence and convention.. In *Invaders From Marx*, Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich fail to excite one way or the other, this in itself would suggest a prosaicism at the heart of their project.

*To cross a threshold in a relationship in pursuit of change, the existing components of that relation must themselves become transformed (that is, they must no longer function as they have hitherto functioned)... in this sense, those who cross thresholds must also give up, or relax their grip on components within their internal sets of relations. The mere externalization of goals and ideals to be*



achieved is not sufficient. To move beyond their ultra-specialization and connect their ideas with other pro-human projects Angelus Novus/Michael Heinrich must first give up something, namely the fetishised obsessive-compulsive aspect, of what it is that they are doing. Elsewhere, Angelus Novus records, somewhat hysterically: "I hereby motion to abolish the use of this phrase (Autonomist Marxism) in all political discussion. There is Operaismo, there is Post-Operaismo, there is Autonomia, there were Autonomi, there were the ex-CP historians around E.P. Thompson and Christopher Hill, there was the Johnson-Forest Tendency, there was Socialisme ou Barbarie, there was council communism, and there are the Open Marxism/Common Sense folks who seem to blend Critical Theory, Operaismo, and value-form analysis. But there is no such thing as autonomist Marxism."

It is as if there is some crawling horror hidden within modes of classification other than those that Angelus Novus deploys. The idea of relinquishment is not at all compatible with invariance of principles but nevertheless change at any level of existence depends upon the exchange of what has been held on to up to that point, as an element of present conditions, for the prospect of what might be. And where there is a critical consciousness component, it is unavoidable that the ideas and principles that express current relations, even negatively, must have to become mutable if they are to adequately relate to new conditions. Pro-revolutionary ideas will, and must, be oriented towards a much wider set of experiences and theories than those that have previously passed as revolutionary specialization. The idea of change must also be subject to change.

Well. But. Then. Upon review it seems to me that perhaps I have argued too much against what up to that point I had been indifferent to.

we live and learn,  
*Frère Dupont*



Two old geezers babble incomprehensibly about obscure occurrences in a manner that will be of interest to a microscopically small number of people. Consequently, many readers will conclude that their dialogue, and the relationships which it refers to, has no relevance to anybody or anything beyond the confines of the milieu under discussion. However, this conclusion is catastrophically mistaken – the matters under discussion here are of global importance.

\*AF\* refers to the Anarchist Federation in the UK



## WHY DID YOU JOIN THE AF FOR THE SECOND TIME?

**ANDY:** I have sometimes wondered why you didn't ask me to join the AF or Subversion with you?

**PETE:** Why didn't I ask you to join with me? – I am pretty sure that this would have been because I would have felt that you would have hated being actively involved in such a simplistic organization, that you would have extremely quickly run up against intolerable situations for you.

**ANDY:** Yes, I have always appreciated your appreciation of my intolerances, and that you effectively shielded me from a lot of the shit. I think the connection we established is very rare between individuals in such circumstances. The milieu, inevitably perhaps, is typified by short-lived mutually exploitative relations when it is not dominated by boredom and futility. It is a mode of relating which seems to get things done – although I think this confuses effort with effectiveness.

I have never understood the reproduction of what I call 'surplus' behaviours in groups, and why the essentially religious nature of that subjectivity which is created from 'belonging' is not reflected upon more than it is. Whilst it is proposed within group ideology that there exists, at some level, a seamless continuity between belonging to a pro-revolutionary, pro-communist group and communist existence itself (as if communism should be life lived according to pre-established principles), in fact there is no connection at all.



**PETE:** I would not have asked you to join something like the AF at that time. Don't know why I didn't say you should join Subversion (are you sure I didn't?) – maybe I also felt that you could not have coped with them either. I am sure that your whole approach during that time would have given me the notion that you would not want to sign up (and you have to sign up) to any of these outfits.

**ANDY:** Thinking about it, I had forgotten that I was actually going through my 'localist' phase at the time and was involved with those syndicalist people, so I was already 'joined' to something. I guess that having worked the treadmill of the printing and distributing of newsletters, of strike support groups, of campaigns, of fly-posting, of public meetings, of benefit gigs, of advice centres and all the rest of it we did gain enough experience to say that it is not hard work or good intentions that make the difference so much as external circumstances.

The main problem for me at the time was that I was trying to recruit people or change people's consciousness in one way or another at a level that I was not satisfied with myself – this is the essence of the contempt felt for the public by all brands of would-be populism. I was pushing a message in which the extraordinary was entirely absent, and it is that holding the door open to the extraordinary that must be the deciding factor.

Our correspondence was not always easily negotiated because of my commitments. If I had admitted to myself back then that a lot of 'organising' (which I had bought into) is just a mirror of work type activities and suited to jobsworths and train spotters, then maybe I would have gained an insight into these things much sooner. I would have seen that most organised activity is simply directed at raising capital to secure the perpetuation of the organization.

Because we are conditioned by work-type activities we also have a tendency to defend personal relationships within left-organisations that only replicate the same style of alienated work mateyness. On the other hand, I have always wanted to belong to a group that engaged me in a manner that I do feel comfortable with, and by



‘comfortable with’ I mean that which is not obviously ridiculous and deluded.

But enough of all these *what-might-have-beens*, my reason for raking it all up is that I want to update the Monsieur Dupont Wiki page and exclude errors such as both of us being in the AF and the idea that we don’t discuss the origin of the name MD (I thought I would connect it to all that Luther Blissett stuff of the time). So, to that end, I wondered if you could tell me why you joined the AF for the second time (ie. what your plan was, I’m a bit hazy about it now).

**PETE:** I cannot trust that my recollection is not a bit hazy on some things, and I feel that sometimes my intellectual chronology may not be entirely right – however, it is certainly ‘good enough’, I reckon. Anyway, I don’t mind what you write on the MD page, since I am retired and all, and you are brilliant and sensible. However (!!!), what do you mean about relating the name to the Luther Blissett thing? I can’t recall any sense of using the LB idea when Claire came up with the name that rainy day out at Virginia Water – but I am probably wrong. I may just be bristling at any thought that we could be described as sub-LB/sub-LPA etc. For a little while now I have come to think of the whole of the anarcho/commie/whatever group of individuals of the past thirty or so years as being intellectually shallow. There have been a couple of gems of insight in these years but always from one time interveners, such as those who wrote the LIP pamphlet, or those who wrote the one good, and very early, article on the events in Chiapas. And these articles have been centered around historical comment rather than a concluding and overarching analysis.

**ANDY:** I had mentioned the context for our collective pseudonym (based originally I suppose on ‘I’m Spartacus’) which was so popular in the ‘90’s within that Stuart Home subset, and before user-name anonymity became banal, because 1. you have previously said



that the LPA had had an important influence on your ideas by introducing different elements than those typically in play, a certain anti-anarchist, anti-political, anti-conventional way of expressing communism (he published the Barrot texts in the early '90's) and 2. you were writing that collective novel at the time with that bunch of Stewart-Home-Alikes and Luther Blissett-ists. It seemed to me that the idea of a person's name for our group took the Luther Blissett motif to a higher level in that we became personally interchangeable and committed to backing each others words even though we were combining two quite different temperaments, and yet we were also tying that name to a convergent political message which has very few precedents.

Whilst on the topic of the title I should also say that Monsieur Dupont contradicted and mocked the tendency of other lone/isolated individuals who call themselves 'the international workers' resistance' or some such. Finally, I think, there is an association of the name with *Monsieur Hulot*, which I enjoyed, as it registers on a completely different level than much of what occurs within the milieu – the clown tries hard to make his failings appear natural. This different register allows him to express what others dare not – i.e. the objectively set limit on possible success. I think this commitment that we had to expressing the real limits to communist political activity separated us from the 'militant' identity based on simple belief in agency developed by *our competitors*. I would also say it has helped a few individuals impose something of a 'reality check' on their ideas.

**PETE:** God! I had forgotten about that collective novel thing! And it is weird that I keep forgetting about my involvement in Subversion. So, yes, I think that you are right, about how the name came about, I certainly don't think I would have wanted MD to mean "international workers resistance; current membership: 2"! That is a good point! The project of MD, as I saw it was to do the same thing that I had tried to do in the AF to the rest of the political milieu we associated with – and that is why, in the end no one liked us, because, even though they still cannot see it, they reveal no practical



or theoretical difference from the recruiting (“Let’s build a movement!”) ideology that the AF uses. The only difference I can see between the AF and those who think they are better than the AF is that those who think they are better are more academic, have read more texts, and are a little more cautious in what they say.

**ANDY:** Yes, we were hated at the time but not just hated. We were also thought to be mad and I have never quite known how to cope with this continued perception – sometimes I have gone along with it as it allows freedom to open up space between me and typical left assumptions and thereby hopefully indicate to a wider readership that the real madness lies in the left but at other times I have tried to be reasonable and polite (within their definition) and engage. Sometimes I have wanted to come in from the cold. But whatever I have tried it has not worked. It seems I cannot be part of the Real movement

**PETE:** I don’t think that I got the impression that people thought I was mad, just that they thought I was extremely annoying. Most of the central strand of anarcho types think that lone individuals who work at a tangent (like the LPA) are mad, however, and because you write so cleverly I can see why you would be tarred with the same brush. It is pathetic, isn’t it? It is because of macho stuff and dogma and such. Because I did know a lot of the people and came from the heart of straight anarcho stuff (I was never a punk though, like so many were) then people couldn’t think I was actually mad, but just misled and annoying. Perhaps. Or maybe I just didn’t recognise people looking at me funny! Yes, like you, I see the madness lying at the heart of far left politics.

**ANDY:** Okay then back to the main question. Why’d you do it?

**PETE:** Yes, back to the AF. I saw the latest issue of the AF paper – it is amazing that the name ‘Organise’ and probably 30% of the words in their aims and principles are mine. I have so much to answer for... though I always argued against putting in the overtly



dodgy/weak stuff. My plan when I rejoined the AF was to intervene in an organization that I thought contained good people (some of whom I deeply cared about) but was hopelessly trapped in contradictions and a fatal lack of self-awareness.

My plan was to utterly transform the AF. However, this could be perceived in another way. As one of the real and constant shapers of the AF (also a person very little removed from the politics of the SWP, if at all) said to me at one conference/meeting up in the north somewhere: “Why have you rejoined the AF just to destroy it? This is what you tried to do last time. You should leave.” (This is not an exact quote, of course, but it is pretty close, and has the exact sentiment/meaning). It was soon after this that I gave up my knightly quest to make the Court of King Arthur look at itself and see what it had become, or, rather, what it had always been. Too much for one weedy fellow.

So, my reasons for rejoining sound a bit odd – but only if we think of the AF as a train spotters club that I had joined in order to destroy – i.e., what would be the point of spoiling everyone’s fun? What I did was what people I had associated with for years should have done years ago. Maybe they did try: sometimes they had joint meetings with the AF, but these never went very far, or indeed anywhere (apart from affecting the way I thought about things! To explain: When I was in the ACF -the first time- we had occasional ‘official’ meetings with people like Wildcat). But the reason they could never make a true and pertinent criticism of, or intervention with, the AF was because their underlying ideology was/is the same, they are all about consciousness-raising and creating a movement.

There have only been a couple of people, as far as I know, who have properly shared, or pre-empted, the ideas of MD, these people are Paul Mattick and Sam Moss (there are others who may also have, such as Cajo Brendel, but it is very few. Marx was brilliant, and a great thinker and nice bloke I believe, but he was confused on the matter of ‘consciousness-raising’).

The great icons of the far left political milieu which thinks it is better than the AF, such as Bordiga (maybe also these days, Gilles



Dauve), are priests in their area of expertise: they talk in religious ways, saying things such as: “Communism is not an ideal to be realised: it already exists, not as a society, but as an effort, a task to prepare for,” or: “Communism is inevitable, it is as though it has already happened,” Amadeo Bordiga. These kind of statements are religious in character and deliberately opaque.

People like these, and all those who follow them, have set themselves up as the midwives of communism, they seek to build the correct kind of movement (The Real Movement) which will lead to communism – they do have a sense of what the actual importance of material events is, but they refuse to let go of their mission to recruit followers because that would negate their sense of self-importance and their perceived position now and in a possible future. A closer understanding of how material events shape general consciousness leads to an opposition to all attempts to create ‘a movement’, or to ‘raise consciousness’ in a class (e.g., the working class) of people.

Only the people in MD, of all the people in the world, as far as I know, have the theoretical tools and certainty to attempt any proper and clear intervention in the far left, and such an intervention is necessary at the point when times become interesting – i.e., when we have no choice (i.e., when it is a matter of survival or when we see a chance, that we feel we cannot refuse, to better our positions). However, it would have been good (for the sake of history and humanity!!) to have been able to continue in our work with great vigour until we achieved some real successes but, alas, we had our lives to live.

**ANDY:** Why did you abandon this ‘joining and leaving’ tactic’?

**PETE:** It was because there was nothing else for me to join. I am very critical of ‘the milieu who think they are better than the AF’ (i.e., the ‘ultra left’ and left communists) because they are so lazy – they should have had some sort of structure in place so that I could invade and spoil their fun (fart in their tent, as you put it in our book). As they all want to ‘create a movement’ it is strange that



they can't even create a basic group of four people. They are just so useless at everything!

Groups such as Aufheben and individuals in the 'left communist' milieu share the aim of the AF and suchlike in their desire to build, or be part of the building of, a movement (or a Real Movement – whatever they mean by that), where they differ is in that they don't try to recruit people to their particular group like the AF do.

They are constantly trying to recruit people to their way of thinking and acting however, and in this they are no different from the AF.

They (the 'left communist' individuals, and people like Aufheben) have a distaste for 'recruiting', but it is only that; they don't have an underlying or sound critique of the strategy of recruiting people, since it is what they are trying to informally all the time (in their pronouncements about 'movements' and 'real movements' etc).

Thus they are confused, and no wonder people like those in the AF get annoyed with them. The AF does not understand this distaste (since they all want to help build a movement to defeat capitalism [an impossibility according to MD]), and wonder why it is that the milieu doesn't seem to want to get 'its hands dirty' by getting down to the business of recruiting properly.

**ANDY:** Of course I knew most of this, but I wanted it in black and white. Maybe we should discuss why destroying organisations is a good idea? We should begin with our definition of what a group is – most people would agree that it involves the deliberate accumulation of experience and resources by individuals who share a similar purpose and ideas and who wish to achieve together a defined end. But our understanding of the process of formation of such groups pushes things further and we say that, inevitably, other factors are also instituted, unconsciously, within the group's structure and these are directly expressive of the contradictions of the wider social relation. We understand that the longer a group exists the more it is dictated to by these unconscious factors which tend to reproduce



‘typical’ characteristics such as an ‘us and them’ style loyalty, a leadership function, a will to maintain the group’s existence at all costs, an overestimation of the group’s role, and so on.

For this reason we think it is important to deliberately disband all groups so as to release the bound elements, in the hope that they will coalesce with other similar elements and form new, and better, groups. Well, that is the theory but what events occurred leading up to you leaving for the second time?

**PETE:** I can’t remember exactly how I left the second time, whether I wrote a resignation letter – and of course, I have thrown away all the evidence – it would be located in the AF Internal Bulletins. The AF should publish all the debates that I instigated in their Internal Bulletins – in order to show what a fool I was, and how right they were. I think my leaving soon followed the meeting up North where the individual mentioned earlier, an old friend at the time, saw through my motives. I am pretty sure I would have written a lengthy resignation letter, which would have been put into the Internal Bulletin, but I can’t remember what was in it. It would have highlighted the contradictions I had tried to expose etc., but I can’t remember. They definitely didn’t organise a leaving do for me....

**ANDY:** I guess not. I suppose for you there was a developing logic for the complete breaking away from everything at that time. Looking back now on how you walked away from it all has made me feel rather depressed. This is because you were able to effect such an important change in your life and I have not been able to do the same. You passed from what is basically a frivolous waste of time (i.e. being in anarchist groups) by first pushing it as far as it would go (in an attempt to be an artist and in making a final political statement) and then you changed direction completely, trained for a different job, moved continents, found a great place to live and a rewarding job to do. You were able to change the scale of importance in your life and you said, effectively, let the objective look after itself.



**PETE:** Yes, I have swung my life around, and I do have a certain pride in the fact that I think I took everything to its logical conclusion and (however briefly and feebly) acted on my ideas. However, it all still tugs at me: part of me always wants to completely reengage with it all, to make my point in a hundred other ways, etc. As I have said before, it is probably only meeting you that has enabled me to give it up. You give me the proof that I was/am right (within the parameters we set).

**ANDY:** However, I have not been able to effect similar changes, nor am I capable of them. I cannot extricate myself without something changing objectively, I cannot make decisions in my current circumstances because the options are not really apparent to me, I don't see what I could achieve, I can't project myself into the future. For example, I am only earning £6.30 an hour at the moment, it is humiliating and absurd, I am forty-one for god's sake! My problem is that as soon as I am given the smallest degree of freedom (as is possible in an academic setting) I go mad and cause a situation in which I am forced to leave – it is the low wage that ensures my discipline. I guess that family life has prolonged my existence. It has chained me to basic tasks in which I feel some sense of reality, but beyond that, for me, it is all a swirl of fear and loathing (mostly self-loathing).

**PETE:** But maybe this change I have effected in my life was forced on me – and forced by my family circumstances. Towards the end of my house-husbanding days I searched around for a new way of making money, so that I didn't have to go back to being a postman (despite my fond memories, and nostalgia for it!), I tried the art, but it doesn't pay. Certain circumstances pushed me into taking the steps I did and as soon as the wheels were in motion there was no real going back – I was destined to be a proper breadwinner in the house. So maybe changing things is just about setting something in motion that you have to go along with. When your circumstances change, you have no choice but to change. I think that we all feel



like there is a precipice very close that we could fall over, and we all know that the reason we would fall over it would be because of our own stupidity, which is why we keep a firm handle on the self-loathing part of our nature. I do self-loathing pretty well (like many men), but it really is the thing my wife hates the most, and even I know that it is unattractive and pointless in the extreme.

**ANDY:** That's true. However, I think there are two insights I would like to bore you with about the particulars of my self-pity and whining. Firstly, I think self-pity and a sense of futility is common to most people, it is how almost everyone (except the religiously deluded and politically ecstatic) feels when they consider themselves in relation to wider structures. I have always wanted to connect that innate sense of waste and despair to a set of ideas that accommodated it and accepted it as the real bedrock of experience. It is on this level of subjective perception of objective force that I think MD's ideas are most appropriate politically. That is, we have addressed in ideas those who actively refused all ideas.

The second aspect of my/our pessimism I would like to identify now is that strange effect belonging to the milieu has on perception and affect. I feel there is a particular quality to my misery because I deliberately connect it to some wider (almost cosmic) play of forces. Our insight into the production of the world, and our insight into the production of the milieu means we are three times removed from replying to questions concerning our state of mind, 'Oh, I'm alright, it's all the others.' We live at a particular level of existential sensitivity, or 'freedom' if you like, which is derived from our understanding of social relations and this appears quite bizarre and convoluted to others who deny the relevance of this plane of existence. The effect of this 'freedom' on our lives causes strange distortions and driftings, for example, you mentioned Wildcat above and how they drifted, broke into primitivist chunks and a religious tilling of the soil.

After all, the freedom I have mentioned is the freedom of constancy, all that is open to us is to maintain and substantiate our



discipline, what is called *invariance*, and thereby express the same ideas over and over. I think invariance or programme is very difficult and *going primitive* is a relatively common tendency amongst ultra-leftists since Camatte. For me too, having inherited the responses of MD's readership (such as they were), I have found that it has mostly been primitivists of one sort or another who have responded most positively, whilst there has been almost no reaction (besides ridicule) from left-anarchists and communists. I have got round this by arguing to myself that the primitivists more accurately express antagonism (if not class antagonism) within capitalist society (which is why MD texts might appeal to them) than do the left whose 'total' rejection of present conditions backslides on so many specifics, all of which we pointed out.

**PETE:** Yes, of the two main members left in Wildcat in the end one went primitivist by all accounts and one went close but did not immerse himself fully. I don't know what has happened to either of them, I was good friends with one, and have fond memories of him. I would guess that they have all given up serious intervention on account of being mildly confused by everything. These people were probably heading along the track that would eventually lead them to a full and proper critique of far left politics – but they never took things quite far enough. They were often regarded in the same way as others in the milieu who took a tangential course to the mainstream anarcho route, i.e., as a bit eccentric. Also their success at securing good middle class jobs was always used against them – despite the fact that most of the milieu (central or tangential) either has a middle class job or lives a lumpen proletariat existence.

**ANDY:** The class make-up of revolutionary groups is not much investigated beyond the level of accusation, but it fills me with despair to hear gossip about individuals related to company directors and other elite connections who then achieve positions of power in the milieu. However, we should remember that there are always mechanisms of selection in operation and our recognition of this should



prepare us for why the outcome of these enterprises is always the same. These mechanisms often work unconsciously within people's interactions with each other, and tend to promote certain individuals and ideas within pro-revolutionary organisations that result in the self-selecting dominance by middle class individuals throughout the milieu. These are the programmers, the managers, the organisers. By contrast, it is extremely difficult to replicate ideas that counter the dominant forms precisely because they are rejected by such gatekeepers as inappropriate – one's ideas have to be extremely coherent and well argued to survive amongst the prevalence of lazy and ill-thought out slogans which mask organisational incoherence through a sustained constant hum of *doing something*.

**PETE:** Yes, it will always be the case that the most capable managerially will run these managerial-type organisations, naturally – and, perhaps unfortunately for them, these people will always also be at least fairly capable in their economic lives. This means, of course, that they appropriate many aspects of what they would normally identify as middle class culture, and if they baulk too much at this then they develop some sort of dreadful part-time vegetarian bohemianism, which most ordinary MP3 downloading proles find revolting.

**ANDY:** Absolutely, anybody who has the capacity for critique will have promotional opportunities thrust at them quite quickly – unless, like me, they are sensitised to a degree where critique-mania takes hold. Critique of conditions means having something to say, it is the definition of intelligence, and intelligence has exchange value when the rest of the workforce put nothing in the suggestion box but sweetwrappers. It is a strange position because we are forced into establishing a circuit of what we might call *contrary individuality* as the precise coordinates of *being who we are* is what preserves our vision, and yet it also traps and deludes us. This is certainly the situation in which I have found myself throughout my adult life. At the time we are talking about, I had just gone through a fairly



grinding experience working for Royal Mail, and felt my life to be in disarray. As always, in response to a constant rate of failure to move forwards I asserted a presumption of my self-activity, this I routinely set out in terms of outright rejection of my conditions – but at the same time I also understood that this assertion is always instantly undone and I am thrown backwards and re-proletarianised – that is, defined on terms of my lack of success.

Nobody wants to be proletarian, it is a condition we all wish to escape, the problem is that all channels for successful escape under present conditions are shaped by certain ideological pressures and priorities that must be accepted. This general tendency of those with consciousness to gravitate upwards is one of the reasons that we invented the concept of pro-revolutionary, i.e. to counter their leadership potential.

Let's just return to this issue of why members of Subversion should take the backward step of joining the AF. It seems incomprehensible to me. Also, since the dissolving of Subversion, Wildcat, and the brief history of MD, there has not since been the development of any similar group that I could engage with and add to (and gleefully attempt to destroy). Maybe such groups can no longer exist and MD did articulate a final chapter of a particular form. But this leaves me intellectually isolated. It seems I am fated to continue as an outsider. This is a prospect that gives me no pleasure as I am not happy with the cost of it. But when confronted with 'what next?' it seems nothing short of the fabulous will do for me, and so I vacillate at an eternal fork in the road. I cannot commit to the average and so I drift (materially, actually) as below average. Oh, to order decisively at the restaurant at the end of the world and then devour Ortolan.

**PETE:** What a great image! Anyway, I think only one member of Subversion joined the AF (if there was anyone else they were 'minor') – and me of course. I think when the announcement was made that people from Subversion would join the AF it was meant that these people wanted to keep doing stuff with others in a structured



way and they hoped to help develop the AF. This would have been my official approach. Yes, Andy, you need something like a useful and less dim-witted version of *Aufheben* to be around for you to engage with. I think the loneliness in this context would be enough for me to say good-bye to it all if I were in your shoes. There is, probably, actually nothing to do. So do something else. What happened to the fiction writing – why can't an immersion into this take the place of the 'politics'? [Remembering that it must not conflict or obstruct the financial and physical support you give to your family (until you are RICH!)!!!].

**ANDY:** Well, yes, I think *Species Being and Other Stories* is written in a fictional manner. I hope to find readers outside of the milieu and connect with them through a human level rather than a political one. I would like to communicate with those who, although not political specialists, would still be compatible with our worldview. But I'll be damned if I am prepared to draw these others into the milieu on those terms only for them to then fall prey to the recruiting organisations and party builders – after all, I am not capable of nurturing them in their anti-political consciousness nor can I defend them from ideological traps. Better that they remain immune to the matters of the milieu than fall into this rabid little world. It is a quandary.

**PETE:** Maybe there is nothing more profound or real, and nothing to be 'achieved'. Living in the forest, up here, away from all I ever knew (apart from the fact that everything and everyone in the world is the same! – I really did know my hometown like the back of my hand, and I feel that English fields are more homely – however, saying this, I already feel this notion slipping away) I have a sense of being a small dot on the timeline of things. I am happy. I have retired from thinking about big things.

**ANDY:** But now, it seems that what is most real for me is balanced between the contradictory urge to abandon everything, to let things



lie, and the continuing wish to have a negative impact on ideology. The predicament we all encounter is the wish to refuse yet further organisation, our lives are so dominated by routine, and in particular to refuse the type of organisational opportunities that are open to us (the structure of revolutionary groups is defined by an unpleasant intimacy that follows so exactly the structure of every small company any of us have ever worked for) which must somehow be set against an urge towards achievement and effectiveness.

Again, the question of giving up causes me a great deal of distress. I have the feeling that if I did give up now, then our efforts would simply disappear. Evolutionists define Natural Selection in the most simple of terms, certain randomly generated traits survive longer than other randomly generated traits because of non-random selective mechanisms decided by environmental factors (which are only non-random themselves in relation to that which they select, or connect with, or reproduce).

I can see that Monsieur Dupont's contribution to the richness of human being will not survive very long under present conditions. I have not found a body that will carry our material forward. I guess you would say, 'so what?' In the end, ideas are not determinate but exist only as effects, and if the human race survives long enough, the non-random aspect of the class struggle will eventually deselect leftist ideology on the grounds that it is in contradiction with proletarian interest (a stronger determining factor than the mere techniques of recuperation).

So, my reservations about the loss of our 'legacy' is down to vanity and over-investment in our achievement... but, even when I see this clearly it does not deflate the annoyance I feel when I encounter the representation of the proletariat's interest as a political movement expressed by groups such as the AF.



we are at the end of our understanding ; we are not, therefore,  
optimistic.



MEMORIES



WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH



# X FICTION

OUR IMAGINATIONS?



DRIVING SLOWLY, headlights dim, the road free of traffic or obstructions. The conversation stopped at him, his obsession with ritual and swearing off things, even those that were not yet habits. The drive was long.

"I don't renounce all pleasures, just specific things. It forces me to find pleasure elsewhere. Just yesterday I decided to stop eating chocolate. I don't know what to replace it with. Perhaps I'll give up theoretical pursuits."

"Giving up, giving up, giving up. Will you renounce nihilism, sell your car, retire from writing? What else is there?"

"You, for one..."

"But I'm still clinging to the ghosts of your abstentions. At best I am young and still moved by adventure."

"What adventure? Do you remember yesterday when I said that nothing is autonomous?"

"You meant to say – *nothing is attractive to us...*"

"No, I don't know what I meant."

The drive got longer. The headlights went out. Arousal hinders conversation, but words came easily. He drove faster.

"Don't hold your tongue. You could do better than edit small communist journals."

"You're right, but the night and I are good for only one thing."



I WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL WITH HIM, but we still saw each other. When school ended I just kept seeing him. At first I saw him at the square walking in circles, while I said the necessary hellos and found my part for the night. Now he dragged me to demonstrations. It was fun this time, really. Then it was boring. I never knew why we went.

“Beneath the pavement, a beach! But the water is toxic and the sand is littered in garbage!” he yelled again, thrusting his blank sign in the air.

We usually trudged through the demonstrations quietly, whispering jokes to each other about the protesters’ clothes. His sudden enthusiasm was embarrassing.

“Couldn’t you at least say something rhyming? Nobody knows what you’re talking about.”

Just ahead a policeman tried to redirect the small crowd. A small girl in front tripped. A siren covered up the chanting. I left without him.



GYM CLASS, SOPHOMORE YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL, the locker room. I was not bullied or beat up in school. I did not disrobe in a bathroom stall like some kids, but in the locker room I still changed into my clothes quietly. I remember Ahmad and others talking about their parents. With smiles, they recounted stories of their parents hitting them again and again, how their parents would hit them even now if they talked back or came home late. Kyle readily gave his own story of family violence, but I was sure he was lying. I could not imagine his mom hitting him.

I sympathized with Kyle's dishonesty but stayed quiet, smiling when the others would smile.

Each story emphasized and valued the trauma of being hit by a parent. My parents never hit me. As I changed my clothes I felt immediately that my childhood was not real. *Authenticity, publicly witnessed authenticity, drives activism, it senses falseness and aims its critique more at mass conformity than capitalist exploitation.* Realness was being hit, experiencing pain, and growing stronger – learning the masculine dance of celebrating the traumas forced on us. Ahmad was real. Why hadn't my parents hit me too?

*So they say, where there is no pain, in that very place, there is no gain. But I say, learning at the school of hard knocks makes you stupid, look at boxers.*

A year passes. I find myself at the campfire of an anarchist gathering. There are many faces around the fire, but the conversation was between only a few loud, confident types. Each is telling a story of police abuse. This one was shot with pepper-spray at a blockade, this one beaten in jail, that one shot with a tazer at a protest against some right-wing speaker. Each story told with a smile. They rejoiced in these memories of pain. Their activism and "truth telling" always reproducing the values of what the Catholics call "bearing witness". Implicit in every story is a question to the others at the fire – are you willing to sacrifice yourselves? Will you be a heroic witness or martyr?

The activist narrative is always of victory through trauma, of "bearing witness", of "apathy never!", of holding the righteous course against all odds, of 'what if everyone did this like me?', of amnesia.



I 'VE FORBIDDEN MYSELF THE ACTS OF READING AND WRITING, devoting myself instead to the needs of the insane, as I see them in the mornings. I am not a psychologist, however. My labor is of a more menial type: the public service of collecting garbage from parks. I have, however, devoted myself to the needs of the insane. One cannot devote too much to garbage before also falling in with the insane men I've taken upon myself to nourish, however devoted one is to avoiding that fate. And I am devoted to avoiding that fate myself, however many hours I devote to collecting garbage; I've devoted one more to the needs of those insane men. That is why I've forbidden myself the acts of reading and writing.

I do not give Bibles to crazy people. My task is not one of pity or evangelism but of nourishing needs, both basic and fanatical, of the insane. I am still, however, required to collect the garbage from the parks where the insane men gather in the mornings. Trash accumulates with kindness and extends my work day so much that I've forbidden myself the acts of reading and writing, in order to devote one more hour to the needs of the insane than I do to the collection of garbage. I am, by all accounts, very kind, but I am, by my own account, growing weary in my hours of garbage collection. Trash accumulates with kindness, and I have little memory of being rested. My exhaustion does not mean, however, that I have not devoted myself to the needs of the insane. Rather, in pursuit of being rested, I've forbidden myself the acts of reading and writing.



I SAT ACROSS FROM SWEDISH MODELS

eating fruit

it was Wednesday, my weekly ritual

the girl in uniform stirred pasta

now she crosses her arms

and stares blankly, working

boys talk about cheesecake and running

(she stirs pasta again)

I stopped glancing at the models

the boys talked about med school

(she cleans the knife)

I'm drinking water

one of the models is wearing green

(now she leans but uncrosses her arms)

I didn't vote

I wasn't honest

(she crosses her arms)

the models don't notice me

but my fruit is almost gone

soon it will be my turn.



THE KIDS ARRIVED NEXT DOOR just in time to see me staring out the window into their yard. They don't notice me, too cold to look this way. Last night it snowed for the first time this season, but they don't notice that either, too dolled up in boots and hats and coats to do anything but imitate penguins, without the swimming. I stopped staring after the kids walked past and started writing about them, these children who once threw rocks at our house till we told their dad. They stopped that, at least when we're home, and our windows have survived their blows. Our fortress is impregnable.



## THE UNSEEN

*Continuing where we left off  
in Letters #2, here are continued  
selections from Nanci Ballestrini's  
tale of revolt and defeat*



## 5

It happened right after Christmas on Christmas Eve I'd had a telegram from China to tell me she was coming to see me on Monday for a visit this telegram had arrived in the middle of a discussion I was in the dormitory cell with four other comrades discussing how to share the tasks of cooking the Christmas dinner I was making the risotto I was making yellow risotto and I was making the stock with a stock cube on the camping gas stove a guard called me I turned and saw the little yellow square against the bars I thought it was the lawyer about the trial which was getting close now but then when I saw it was from China I thought I didn't think anything I think I was pleased because it had been a surprise and I thought China had given me this surprise of a Christmas visit and I was very pleased

it's funny I thought because all the Christmases we'd spent together I don't think we ever once celebrated one but now there I was preparing Christmas dinner I thought about China's hair her long hair that when she laughs she throws forward covering her whole face with her long long black hair that when we talked with the glass between use I couldn't even touch but luckily here there was no glass separating visitors now but then I remember how awful it was that we couldn't even hold hands for a moment and this depressed us a lot even though we were happy to see each other but



not in that inhuman humiliating depressing way and sometimes I'd get into a furious rage before the visit knowing I'd see her there behind the glass and that we'd have to talk through the glass without being able to touch not even a finger

again I was overcome by that feeling of hatred I'd had other times before the blood rose to my head a violent desire to kill the guards any of them right there and then with my bare hands if I dwell on it it's as if I can still feel it now even after all this time well I wasn't expecting that visit because china had come just the week before it had been a lovely visit we'd talked about so many things made plans because I believed I'd get out soon right after the trial and so I was touched now thinking about the unbelievable journey that she had to make for me everytime another thousand kilometers it was unbelievable but after all that visit wasn't to take place in the end because of all the havoc that was to come

Monday came no it was Sunday it was afternoon exercise time in the morning there'd been a search but oddly unlike the other routine searches this search have been a bit tougher than the rest and the guards had also done a strange thing they'd left because there the symbolic runs right through these things though the searches and such things it's a matter of giving reciprocal signs and so the sign they'd left this time strange to interpret strange for me that is without inkling of what was going on while the guards probably did have and no mistake because they had a nose for the mood of the moment there was this sign we found it there on the table when we got back up to the cells after the morning exercise

they'd left on all the tables in all the cells in all the dormitories they'd left all the objects everything in the form of a box a receptacle a tin a bottle in other words all the containers they'd put them there on the tables from boxes containing detergent to ones containing coffee or sugar to bottles of oil and shampoo all the boxes all the containers the bottles they'd left them there on the tables as if they were hinting at something or I realized what it was only later to begin with I didn't pay much attention the fact of finding all these things lined up there on the table surprised me and then later when I



went for the afternoon exercise it also surprised me to find out that the same thing had been done in all the other cells too

so I remember that the atmosphere of that afternoon exercise was particularly tense there was an atmosphere you could cut with a knife and what I thought in the light of earlier situations I'd been in and experiences I'd had I thought somebody was going to get done in because there was a lot of tension and you could see it in the air you could feel it in so many things in a strange silence that was different from usual and especially from the looks quick rapid looks that passed suddenly between some people as they were walking up and down and then the thing that I surmised and that must have been on their minds a stabbing or at any rate the settling of some score or other and I was expecting it to happen any minute something like what I'd seen other times before like once shortly after they arrested me and it really upset me at the time

that time it happened as we were exercising outside as usual when three or four non-politicals because we were exercising along with the non-political prisoners these non-politicals went up close behind another non-political they went up close to somebody exercising there like them and from behind they put a noose around his neck a knotted steel wire they put this noose around his neck from behind and two of them took his arms they held his arms tight to keep him from moving and they pulled the noose it's this system that's used to immobilize someone during a stabbing for it isn't as easy as it seems to stab someone so that the blade can get deep enough into a vital organ but it can happen that the person survive's even after twenty or thirty stab wounds

it's not easy to stab somebody it's not as easy as it might seem I mean it's easy to stab him but it isn't easy to kill him because besides he isn't just going to take the stabbing without putting up a struggle he struggles he wriggles he goes wild he thrashes all over the place it's very difficult to hold him still I mean and one of the techniques is precisely to put a noose around his neck first pull it until he half loses consciousness because he's nearly choking and in the meantime you stab him with the knife pushed up from below



because wounds angled down are less effective you have to push the knife up from lower down and most important you have to try to aim for a vital organ maybe just under the sternum here

and so they put this noose around his neck and the others held his arms and the one behind him started pulling the steel wire noose but the steel wire noose broke or it's more likely that the knot was badly tied anyway it snapped or it worked loose or I don't know anyway they didn't succeed in pulling it right around his neck of course he was terrified because he knew at once what they had in mind trying to get a steel wire round his neck but as for them after a moment's awkwardness they treated it all like a joke all the more because they hadn't brought out the knives yet the knives hadn't appeared yet

so they were making a joke of it they were slapping him on the back saying so we gave you a fright as if it was all a joke but he didn't believe it was a joke he didn't fall for it at all because besides you don't play jokes like this In a prison if someone plays a joke like that on you then you're the one that murders him because these are no jokes then the guy went over to the exercise yard gates and he started to yell to call the guards to let him out and that was when the ones who were after him realized that either they went for him right then or the guards would arrive and it would all become trickier and if he managed to get out in time they'd never get him because then he'd obviously be transferred or shoved into the isolation cells anyway he wouldn't be showing his face there again that's for sure

then just as the guards were running to see what he was yelling about four or five of them jumped on him with knives with blades skewers and they started stabbing him all in a muddle and obviously he put up a fight he didn't just stand there and let himself be stabbed he was kicking trying to shield himself to wriggle free and he took quite a few stab wounds before he fell to the ground and all the while screaming and the guards were rushing to the exercise corridor they could see what was happening but they didn't come into the yard there was a sergeant yelling from behind the gates cut



it out cut it out the whole scene lasted a few seconds the others were at the far end of the wall we were all there all at the far end watching without a move the whole scene lasted a few seconds

he was screaming and screaming like a lunatic then he was thrown down on the ground not just thrown he fell on his knees and just then he was stabbed two or three times with a skewer down on his head just like that with the skewer down on his head and just as he turned his head a skewer another stab with the skewer caught him right in the eye a skewer caught him right in the eye a skewer stabbing right into his eye and he was really screaming in an unbelievable way then he fell down on the ground then when he fell down on the ground they kept on stabbing him trying to get him in the heart because they kept on stabbing him in the chest but they were stabbing him in the neck too they were trying to tear his neck open

the blood he was on the ground with the blood gushing out of him from every one of the holes from all the wounds from all the cuts he had from his head than his eye with blood coming out of him all over the place it was a lake of blood it was a pool of blood that must have been ten feet wide really and he wasn't moving any more and that eye that was a red stain with one eye half out and the other gaping he seemed dead and he wasn't moving any more he seemed dead he wasn't moving even a finger then they stopped and went back to where everyone else was at the far end of the wall of the yard and the guards opened the gate a little because the guy also happened to be only a few feet away from the guy they took him by the feet and they dragged him out

*Editor's Note: We will continue with more chapters in the next issue*



Who will we tell our stories to?



## ANOTHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Despite the limited response to the last one, the reader questionnaire is continued here. Please send answers by email or post.

*Are you interested in joining us for public discussion?*

*What topics and ideas are you interested in discussing?*

*Would you share this journal with your coworkers or family?*

*With whom did you share or discuss previous issues?*

*Does this issue point towards any practical activity that could be undertaken collectively or by individuals?*

*Does the lack of face-to-face collective discussion and experimentation limit the potential of anti-politics?*

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## **POST-SCRIPT**



## ***NO ROOM FOR THE DEAD, NO SOLUTION IN GAZA***

Every qassam rocket and IDF shell brings neither safety nor community nor freedom. When the shells and rockets stop it will be time to go back to work or the bread line, to die a slower but less terrifying death, to live a less ghastly but no more meaningful life, leaving nothing behind but dead labor to surround those who come after. Or when the shells and rockets stop it will be because there will be no one left to shoot them. Or when the shells and rockets stop it will be because the flags and banners from the marches halted them. Or when the shells and rockets stop it will be because G-d, in his infinite wisdom, brings another great flood, leaving only cruise ships and Somali pirates to roam the sea in search of doves. Or when the shells and rockets stop it will be because humanity, in a magnificent accident, stumbles towards communism. In a world of such possibilities one does not know who to pray to.

Outside of politics, there is no need for a brief history of events or description of the carnage. Every war has the same story. The specificity of each makes broad narratives impossible. Nation demands value. Value demands nation. Value and nation do not follow the same logic, yet they are logically inseparable. They are separate categories but share the same altar. To what end do we count and compare the sacrifices?



Every question of origin for this war, like all others, bears the same reply: so it is wanted there where power lies. And where does power lie? Power is not the United States or Israel, the Zionist or the Islamist, the Jews or the Caliphate. Power does not have a face or a people. It is capital, commodity, exchange, value, state, gang – a global system of infinite complexity with no ruler but the unceasing creation and destruction of capital, the extraction of surplus value, the circulation of commodities and money, the nightmares of race, ideology, and nation. In this war, like all others, humanity loses regardless of the winner, if there is a winner this time.

It is human to seek a solution, some way out from the horrors that we witness, even if we only witness them on Al-Jazeera. What solution does a young protestor in London imagine when he calls for a Gaza ruled by Hamas? And the other protestor there, what sort of ‘peace’ does he imagine will be imposed by Israel? Such is the hell of a world driven by the law of value; we can dream of nothing else in its place. Ideas are as popular as the amount of capital behind them, so one cannot be surprised by the abundance of nationalism, anti-semitism, and Islamophobia amongst the forces lining up “for” and “against”. If we do not dream of driving the Jews into the sea or building a Greater Israel, there is nothing left to dream of besides more qassam rockets and IDF shells, more work and bread lines, more races and nations, stretching on forever. That is to say – there is no solution outside of miracles. There is no solution. Gravity does not pull the crowd towards internationalism any more than it pulls me towards heaven.

A familiar voice from the corner calls out – *don't the fires in Greece give you other dreams? Its heat has already torn holes in the shroud enveloping an era of diminished horizons and worsening social conditions; in place of resignation and fatalism, it offers other choices, putting the world in another light.* Perhaps. With a dream of Greek fire we might sleep a little easier. But this world in another light is still this world, and we will see many new lights in the coming years, both terrifying and enticing. Radicals are always ahead of themselves, proclaiming the end of the old world too soon.



Activists mobilize themselves against the latest catastrophe but only prolong it. Who can blame them?

A stranger's smile means so much when you are lonely. When you are lonely, the stranger does not matter as much as the smile. When the smile is erased by war, contorted by fear and anger, we are reminded, as always, that there is no Virgil to lead us from this inferno.



*Set fire to your wings; the ground awaits you.*



