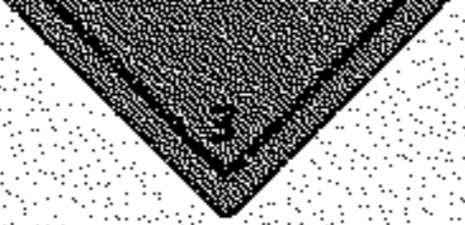


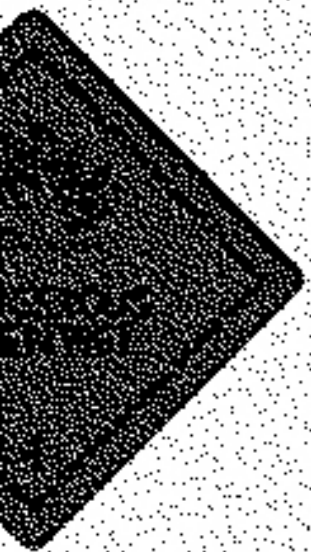
2-Non-toxic and flammable gases



2.3-Toxic gases



3-Flammable liquids



2.2-Non-toxic and non-flammable gases



5.1-Oxidizers



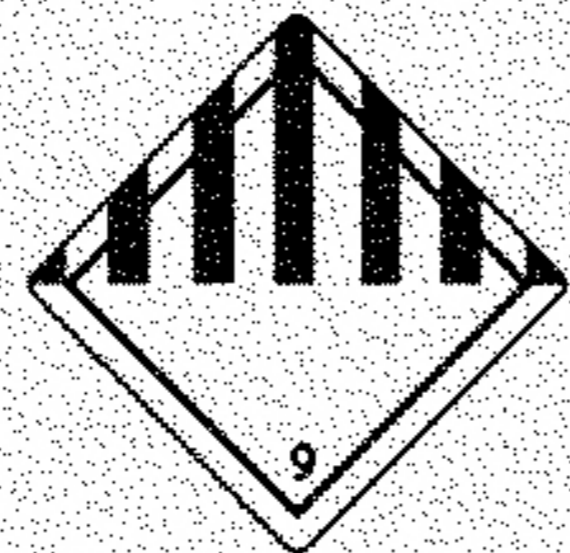
5.2-Organic peroxides



7-Radioactive



8-Corrosive



9-Miscellaneous dangerous substances

# DYSORGANISM

LONDON 11TH SEPTEMBER 2021

FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EXISTENT  
FOR THE SELF-ORGANISATION OF THE STRUGGLE

## A DAY AT THE BARRACKS

Grey skies contaminate the morning with damp... the polluted sea curls itself over and around huddled masses limping along the fortress moat... greasy hands toss supermarket meal-deal packaging out of the reinforced windows of Serco vans... dew drops off razor wire fences... closed circuit surveillance splutters the blurry scene back to the switchboard... and ambient social media buzzes with a 'solidarity call out'... but wait — is that the smell of smoke in the air?

The pale cliffs of Dover welcome to us to Britain: aka Prison Island UK.

Over the past six months or so, a certain place has come to the attention of an ongoing activist process, replicating in form the 'No Borders' camps which were once a pole of the anti-globalisation era (along with squats and road protests). The place is the Napier Barracks concentration camp. We should remind ourselves of what precisely is going on there: the most deprived, consciously implemented brutality (a real speciality of our era of social control), suffocation by deliberately constructed conditions of deprivation, ruthless murder

of the kinds that ghettoisation and austerity have perfected in recent history. On behalf of the state, the slum landlords 'ClearSprings' — with a wretched history of providing Victorian conditions for asylum seekers — administer this concentration camp, which Covid was allowed to rip through unhindered, and in which massive overcrowding and unsanitary conditions were enforced, and a sick regime of harassment and intimidation by (private) security has been constant.

We should make no mistake: this is the functioning of another of the British state's 'blacksites' — other examples include prisons, particularly the high security CSCs, and detention centres which blot the territory with razor wire and the untold horrors they contain. In situations where populations are produced who are deemed expendable, there is this shadowy world of outsourcing companies and modern penal colonies — which 'deal' with this thing that the class of exploiters have constructed as a 'problem'. And all of this is in keeping with the further techniques of managing 'expendable' populations, even those whose existence is



nullified merely by the grotesque march of technological progress and the globalisation of capital. The same infrastructures, the same companies even, can be found everywhere that contracts are passed out, from the close supervision centres to the ghettos of the big cities. And in Europe we have this same pattern developing itself, up to the migrant slums on the French coast, Greek islands, Eastern Europe — all the way to the extreme limit of Europe, Libya, where a lucrative modern slave trade abounds in a country of



# DYSCONTENTS

*A Day at the Barracks* ...1

*Allez Allez Allez!* ...7

*Abolitionist Futures or  
Insurrection Now?* ...9

*Children of Grey Squirrels* ...18

*Poetry Corner* ...18

*United States of Emergency* ...19

wherever there are gaps (and there are always, necessarily gaps) in the gentrified Disneyland world which is being crafted all the time by this wretched system.

But there are yet further reasons to be concerned. As Alfredo M Bonanno has recently pointed out, the so-called 'migrant crisis' is still being played out completely within capital's control. It can still very easily be integrated to the vapid 'charitable' sector, as those making the perilous journey are only requesting citizenship. As he asks: what happens when they're not coming to 'integrate' but to take back some of the colonial wealth which the European imperial powers have hoarded over the last several centuries? We must consider here and now what our role will be in such a situation, when questions of the alleviation of ill-treatment have been

replaced by an existential question: do we want to reform this disgusting system of sprawling slums and obscene luxury — or do we want to step into the unknown, to find comradeship in a projectuality which wagers on its destruction?

But back to the barracks. On the 22nd of May a 'solidarity festival' took place. This was the culmination of several 'actions', including people splattering themselves and the road outside the camp with red paint. All of this had taken place successively after events in January whereby the migrants being held hostage there fought back: they started a small insurrection which culminated in one of the blocks being burned down. Of course, the repressive consequences were enormous, but this is the nature of how ghettoisation of the excluded

minds.

We should remember the wisdom of the proud words of our French comrades when they faced down the cops before the COP21 summit in Paris, days after the Bataclan attacks, which produced 'state of emergency' laws banning demonstrations:

*'State of emergency? We don't care! We don't want a state at all!'*

These rebellious cries were punctuated with rocks and Molotovs, of course. It is this trajectory which really seeks to call their bluff and which constitutes our only reliable weapon against any repressive onslaught. We are not one risk among others to be managed by the state, we seek to overturn the world of risks, of security, of 'civil liberty'. As such anarchy is defined by a refusal of the terms of the social question posed by the enemy. We do not want more 'freedom', to keep our consumer choices 'private', nor do we have any desire for the 'freedom' to go clubs now in the UK Covid restrictions have been 'relaxed' (at the time of writing). The 'liberty' that we're after is profoundly uncivil: it requires an explosion of these categories — of more-or-less free, more-or-less secure, more-or-less state charity, more-or-less 'sustainable development' and so on. This is not to suggest that we are partisans only of a dreamlike utopia of 'total liberation'. It rather means bringing a total refusal of negotiation, an attack against the terms of any possible compromise, to bear on every dimension of social reality in its immediacy and specificity.

This is why the assigning of the word 'terrorist' to anarchists is the most reprehensible slander. Not only because, of course, by the metrics of harm and violence and so on, any magistrate who could pass such a judgement has blood dripping from the hands which would clutch that gavel, or sign the legal documentation. The lie is also given to these attempts, because they try to place conscious subversion of the existent as simply one 'danger' or 'risk' to be managed among many. To see anarchic ideas and actions in that context of 'public safety' requires a full subjective immersion in the hysterical, passive position of hostages on the plane. But we say that this plane, this sense of being many miles above the surface of the earth, kept adrift only by the grace of miraculous technological and state maneuvering, is an illusion. This is the way we are organised by this miserable reality, but it is synonymous with our alienation from the possibility of organising ourselves. What anarchist projectualities give rise to is

dangerous not for the passengers, nor for the flight, but to the idea that this where we are. The people who are subject to the crises, to the risks arrayed all around us like menacing shadows, are nothing but the very anxious spectators these conditions are designed to produce. It is a self-fulfilling process, against which we propose an absolute confrontation.

We are not a public hazard, a troubling 'tendency', an extremist minority: we are the light by which all these wailing ghosts can be dispatched with. The anarchic idea is nothing if it is not dissipation of fear, the casting aside of both hope and despair, the conquest of the present moment, without anxious prevarication before the thought of the ground: for that is where we are, where we always really were. The vertigo of techno-industrial death is nothing but a fever dream: wherever we wake ourselves up and begin to find our feet, we'll find ourselves, again, at ground zero.

\*\*\*\*\*



This seems to be the same hopeless, almost Sisyphean, task of frantically passing the buck from one authority to another, all under the weight of the absence of the highest authority, whose non-appearance unbinds the activity from the purposefulness in which it is superficially adorned. Calls for the sake of calls, process for the sake of process — what it is all in aid of scarcely matters. Of course, in the era of financialised and globalised capital, in a very real sense the President is ‘absent’. Control, exploitation, accumulation are moved away from fortified centres and dispersed throughout the territory, in relations maintained by superfast technological communication, which alone is capable of organising such a state of disintegration and perpetual crisis. But, as the existential question always was, how to turn this charade into something meaningful? For this is what happens in the boardrooms and open-plan offices of the film. Heroes arise who take it upon themselves to organise the response, to scramble the jets, to get through to the Vice President, to set up a direct line of communication with the military. They do these ultimately futile tasks with a new zeal, and even a perverse enjoyment. The Great Danger invests all the empty bureaucracy with the passion of a life-and-death struggle — and it is this transformation which thematically sets the stage of the passengers’ revolt.

The problem is that, for us, there is no possibility of ‘taking over the plane’. We can see the constant recurrence of this theme— why don’t we

subjectively involve ourselves with the disaster? How can it be that our reality takes the form of an uninterrupted succession of catastrophes, and yet everything grinds on, and nothing really happens? This is Extinction Rebellion’s pathology. They want people to come to the same revelation as the passengers in United 93. They want them to see that the ‘fake bomb’ of a lack of economic growth, maybe some consumer-hardship and so on, is a lie — that if we do not call the bluff, we will certainly perish.

But we want to suggest something else. That not only are all the ‘bombs’ which keep us in awe of the great powers are fake (ecological, economic, political, security) insofar as they are deliberately constructed as problems to which only the current social order can posit solutions. The insistence that nothing other than techno-capitalism can become ‘green’... nothing other than forever-austerity can put off another financial collapse... nothing other than Patriot-Act-style emergency powers can combat ‘terrorism’... Of course all of this is a nonsense, but it is so because the terms of the discussion are false. Green capitalism is meaningless; austerity-stability is a contradiction; security and terrorism are the same thing. So in this sense we want to call the bluff on every ‘fake bomb’. But in a wider sense, we cannot be held hostage to the state of extreme agitation which is the underside of the continuance of normality. Because, as the plethora of crises which assail us at the same time, show: any particular disaster doesn’t matter. It’s the broader, all

pervasive sense that disaster is always around the corner, which is instructive.

Power feeds off this. It’s the same agitation that sends endless fingers drumming on screens issuing ‘takes’, be they hot or cold, from a bottomless menu of options, reactions... It’s the same creeping fear which fuels the explosion in anti-anxiety medication... which stocks NGO bank accounts.. which softens and flattens the spirit... which forces us into the position of spectators, watching them watch us, tracking every movement, every fluctuation, reading the patterns... for signs of the dark chaotic world which is just around the corner... A little bit of apocalypse keeps the game interesting, after all.

We must get to the stage of fighting against this way of thinking. Not only are the ‘bombs’ fake, and their world doomed, but more to the point — we are not even on a plane. We can read the whole situation with a Plato’s cave type of analogy. The whole paradigm of great hysteria and turmoil is itself a lie. This is not to suggest that there are not terrible things in wait for us. But rather that these are a consequence of being held hostage by a reduced horizon of possibility, in which everything takes the form of ‘events’ which just happen to us. It is only from within this aluminium silo that everything appears as crises. Wherever our reality is being confronted, where our lives are taken into our hands, and life triumphs over death — here there is no such thing as a ‘crisis’. There are only obstacles in our way — those material, and those in our own

works. The daily humiliation of being forced to live under such an insane system of cruelty and deliberate deprivation, at the complete mercy of scumbags and cowards employed by the Police and security sector, always has this explosive quality, which no one can predict, but the potential for which is always there. It is there when someone says, “Enough!” — and perchance — “I don’t care for the consequences, whether it makes me worse off, whether it puts me in ‘danger’ or not, I will claim my dignity here and now, and give my captors something to be really afraid of... a discarded ‘population’ which is no longer content to live like rats in their repressive laboratory.”

But let’s look at this ‘solidarity festival’, let’s see what us, the ‘movement’, such that it is, had to say to such a rebellion — to those who put themselves in danger to strike the conditions of their captivity directly. Well, have no fear —the circus is in town! Here come the picnic tables, mutual aid hairdressers, herbal medicine, martial arts! Line-dancing and football in the shadow of the death machine. So what is going on here? Why is this the response — what on earth does it have to do with revolt, with the struggle for freedom?

Let’s start with some tired and predictable responses: that it, in some sense, alleviates the ‘suffering’, it shows they are ‘not alone’, that the oppressed ‘the migrants’ enjoyed / requested / didn’t find the experience demeaning. All of this completely misses the point. The question is not whether

such an activity is morally reprehensible, the question is why we are at an impasse where this is just ‘what we do’? Let me explain myself. The spirit, vision, message offered and the means, the words, the actions performed— we do not only find these on that day at the Barracks. These are the trappings of every single ‘radical space’ that ever happens. Whenever we get together we have this open market of activist types, those who know herbal medicine, those who know dancing, those who know muay thai and so on. It is our constant cultural undercurrent, the disciplines of the un-/under-employed intellectual bourgeoisie. It really tells us nothing about the barracks, or those incarcerated there. It tells us something about ourselves, and it is this: that behind all the frenetic activity of activists, of the left, the DIY culture, there is a huge void, a lack of real belief in what we are doing. We do not go to somewhere like the Barracks with anything to say at all. This is even revealed in the language in which it is talked about: we go to ‘have a presence’ to counterpose the ‘violence of the state’, to break their isolation... but all of these things are ways of justifying the inherent goodness of just physically being there (wherever it happens to be, it could be Yarl’s Wood, it could be the Barracks, it could be anything). The clear correlate of this is the tendency in the anti-globalisation movements to have ‘alternative summits’ — where again, simply going to the city and existing was thought to constitute some kind of proto-revolutionary

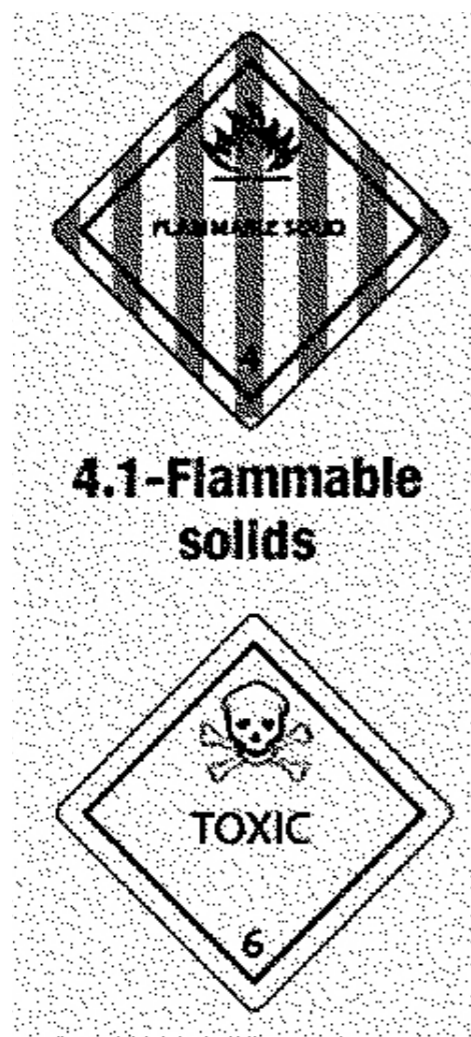
‘gathering of strength’.

This is, of course, no accident. It comes from a methodological and strategic ideology which is very dominant, this ideology says that what we do, what we are as a movement, is nothing for ourselves. We exist only to listen to, and alleviate the suffering of, and hopefully one day be led into battle by, these amorphous ‘communities of struggle’, of which migrants are one end of things. The sense in which this is a partially reheated version of the lonely Trotskyite wandering after the proletariat is very clear: in both cases it should be seen as little more than a dog chasing its tail. The sense that there is an authenticity to the real suffering of ‘the migrants’ can be seen to be directly compensating for the lack of conviction in the movement, which can then be reinterpreted as a kind of strategy in itself... It is not up to us to have a critique of the existent, to develop a projectuality to attack it directly, it is up to ‘the oppressed’... and in lieu of their ‘leadership’ we simply have to follow them around like weird disciples of an absent cult-leader... Crucial to this mythos is that the idea that we should have something to say to the exploited, rather than wait for them to say something to us is akin to a kind of hubris — what on earth would we, more or less privileged, more or less guilty; those who have entered struggle as a decision, have to say to those for whom it is there lived experience, what on earth could we ever have to say to them?

Hence we get to this

stagnation. Every new development in the projects of capital are greeted in the crisis-form in which they have been deliberately created; for it is only crises which demand 'emergency powers'. So, always 'in response' to these crises, we go to the sites of the trauma, witness to the 'human cost' of the machine's grinding gears, and we just stand around waiting for something to have happened, doing the very same things which we do otherwise to 'entertain ourselves'. It is as if, having nothing whatsoever for ourselves, mere 'contact' with a 'genuine subject' (of oppression) is like some kind of spiritual indulgence which can absolve you a little of your lack of identity. It also betrays a great lack of conviction when it comes to the struggle itself. Part of this psychological reflex is surely to say, "I cannot convince myself completely of the need for revolutionary struggle, but these guys over here (whose lives are really bad!)" — they are like the point of subjective certainty as regards the validity of the struggle, which must always be outsourced to someone else, somewhere else.

What sustains this impasse is the idea that the problems which it circulates are insurmountable: that no clarification (of who we are) is possible, that (whoever we are) we're not capable of anything more audacious than the perpetual restaging and restocking of the activist supermarket; that there is nothing at all to wager ourselves on; that real, conscious action is impossible; that all we can hope for is an accumulation of automatic



reflexes, and perhaps, in some distant future, a great disaster or collapse to take it out of our hands for good.

But these problems are not real. We will be insistent on this point. Again let's return to the barracks. Even if we are still in the mode of 'listening' or 'centering' of the excluded, let's look at what they actually have to say. In Napier Barracks, just a few months before this 'festival' a number of inmates rose up and attacked the infrastructure of their captivity directly. They did so completely 'irrationally'; obviously the last thing on their mind was their own 'safety' (many then were left to sleep outside, in the biting cold, with Covid surging all around and so on — not to mention the repression

subsequently, singling people out for deportation etc.). And so, why can this not be our point of connection? The difficult and messy, but nonetheless real and significant, tension which is produced in the exploited, to rise up and smash the conditions of their capture, no matter the consequences. If we are not charity workers, nor an inane subculture, but really trying to give life to a struggle for the destruction of the world which proliferates these concentration camps, then we must discover how to engage with the exploited on the terrain of struggle, not in terms of their suffering — not in terms of our quantitative growth — not in terms of raising consciousness of someone else's plight — but in terms of a common enemy who we must identify and whose operations we must have analysed clearly and immanently.

At this point let's pull back from the brink. You think you know what is coming next: that if we are anarchists no longer alienated from our power of acting, we would have gone to the barracks to tear it down, not to have a picnic! This is not true at all. And it is this kind of spectre which in fact sustains the picnic. If you only have two options — either you go the barracks and you riot, or you go the barracks and you picnic — there will be innumerable pragmatic reasons for choosing the latter.

This is because it is true — that it is not our terrain of struggle. It is much the same with the anarchists who used to go to the combative miners' pickets in the '80s, or today when a ghettoised section of

they resolve to fight to take back control. A particularly resonant moment occurs when they wrestle the man holding the fake bomb to the floor and in so doing pull out the wires, revealing the threat to be a fake. All you hear is the ecstatic surge forwards; the cries 'It's a fake! It's a fake!' ring out. What's going on there? Again, a wider metaphor seems to enter in. Is this not our fantasy, a fantasy born of our subjective situation today? As the absolute certainty of immanent death and destruction gradually settles itself as common sense regarding where this way of life is going — economically, socially, ecologically — do we not wish that



the dangers of radical transformation would be seen in a similar light? Wouldn't we like to call the bluff of the state, to wrestle power away from the death drive of techno-civilisation? To feel the spine-tingling power of the realisation that there is truly nothing to lose?

Again, I want to suggest a different approach. It is clear that our society, the great death-bound plane we are all trapped in, has not, in fact, been usurped by fanatics. Any immanent danger which might be discerned on a rapidly approaching horizon is not only part of the normal course of things, but as I have been suggesting, in fact directly integral to the maintenance of social peace.

In the film, the communicative bureaucracy, of state and capital, military and civilian aviation authorities, is in many ways shown to be farcical. The light political criticism of the film mostly circles around the fruitless calls to the presidential powers to try to ascertain 'rules of engagement' — i.e. the

circumstances under which it is permitted to shoot the plane down before it reaches its intended target. Of course, whether by deliberate aversion of simple inefficiency, the call never gets through. (The President himself is on a plane when the time comes. And where the fuck is Dick Cheney?). I am reminded, somewhat, of Kafka's castle, where the telephone exchange seems to operate in a similar manner to the ill-fated calls placed from department to department in the film:

*"At the Castle the telephone seems to work extremely well; I've been told the telephones up there are in constant use, which of course greatly speeds up the work. Here*

*on our local telephones we hear that constant telephoning as a murmuring and singing, you must have heard it too. Well, this murmuring and singing is the only true and reliable thing that the local telephones convey to us, everything else is deceptive. There is no separate telephone connection to the Castle and no switchboard to forward our calls; when anyone here calls the Castle, all the telephones in the lowest-level departments ring, or all would ring if the ringing mechanism on nearly all of them were not, and I know this for certain, disconnected. Now and then, though, an overtired official needs some diversion — especially late in the evening or at night — and turns on the ringing mechanism, then*

*we get an answer, though an answer that's no more than a joke. That's certainly quite understandable. For who can claim to have the right, simply because of some petty personal concerns, to ring during the most important work, conducted, as always, at a furious pace? Nor can I understand how even a stranger can believe that if he calls Sordini, for instance, it really is Sordini who answers. Quite the contrary, it's probably a lowly filing clerk from an entirely different department. But it can happen, if only at the most auspicious moment, that someone telephones the lowly filing clerk and Sordini himself answers. Then of course it's best to run from the telephone before hearing a sound."*

**Franz Kafka, The Castle**

of individuated market forces. Altogether they make a vast, almost unthinkably complicated network, which can only be attentively tracked.

The thought arrives to you, almost involuntarily, that this situation has all the trappings of a disaster about it already. For an analogous and even stronger evocation of this disaster we might consider a landfill site — the eerie presence of once-treasure personal affects forming a mountain of steaming waste in the overflowing pits that our society digs for itself across the land. Isn't it the case that picking through the wreckage of a natural disaster, or a plane crash, would turn up



the same disordered tokens of individuality which also constitute it in ordinary times — in its full, seamless functionality? In short: peace and pandemonium, consumables and shit, luxury and terror, appear not different in kind, but rather as mirrored expressions of the contemporary 'crisis-ordinary' state of techno-capital.

So then, what happens when things start to go 'wrong'? On the face of it, very little! This is true even to the point where, when news of the hijacking comes to the military command, they are already playing a 'simulation' of an undisclosed incident of terror. One of the commanders has to say the

immortal lines, "We have a real-world situation on our hands! This is a real-world situation!". Of course, this 'real situation' plays out on precisely the same terrain, across various commercial and state bureaucracies, where the 'simulated' one takes place. What then happens is a kind of intensification of their technocratic 'comms'-speak.

Breathless phone calls take place, but all are situated in precisely the same techniques: everything must be monitored, accounted for, mapped, relayed. As the first planes smash into the Twin Towers, we get a brief moment of relief from the screen, where the traffic control operators at JFK watch it from their tower directly, some of the only 'unmediated' footage in the film. (For this moment, historical found footage is used.) One interpretation could be that 9/11 represented a violent return of the real to the early 2000s post-historical dreamland, and what we see in the moment of our look away from the screen-world of

representation, to the window-screen world of irrational horror, is this very passage. However I think there's something more interesting in it. What is really being presented can just as easily be thought as the equivalence between grand spectacle and bureaucratic modeling... That mass-media hysteria is only the underside of the curated

stability of focus groups... That in a world dominated by managerial techniques, new things must always be produced to be managed... What appears as cracks in the artifice of manufactured consent — is revealed in fact as the very thing which sustains it. There must always be

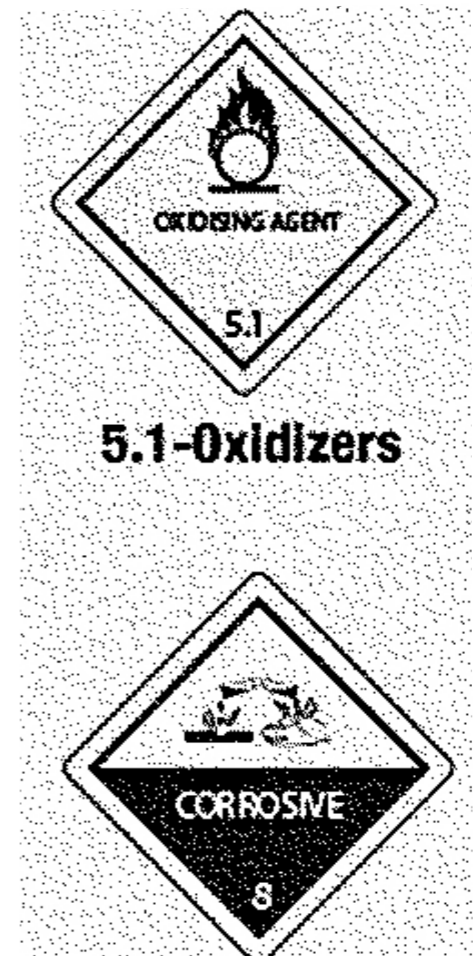
glitches, risks, breakdowns, viruses etc., in order for the world to continue to be governed by the management and aversion of these very things.

Prior to the seizing of the plane, the terrorists produce a fake bomb in the toilet, using plasticine, a battery (case?), gaffer tape and wiring, and proceed to wave it around in order to keep control — should any of the passengers try anything they'll detonate it. The terrified passengers manage to use in-flight telephones to communicate with the ground, where they eventually learn of the fate of the other hijacked planes. Realising that their fate is sealed should they do nothing,

the city is engulfed in flame after a police murder (and we go to contribute our own stone to the conflagration). We step into the fight from nowhere, from an imaginative void, and find ourselves out of place, wasting time, not dreaming to ask what else we might be doing, right then simultaneously, somewhere else!

In truth, it is only by carving out our own way, that it is possible to have any relations of solidarity or affinity — with one another, just the same as with migrants. We must ask: how is it possible to have solidarity without struggle? What kind of debased 'solidarity' could possibly exist between subjects united only by their suffering and those united only by their 'concern' for the suffering of the other? We must give expression to our own struggle, our own tension, and on this basis find points of connection with one another. Because we are not, in fact, completely vacuous. Some at least, I believe, deep in their hearts carry a vision of social revolution: of a war against the exploiters and managers of our misery, fought in the first person, in the present tense... Of breaking open a new world of dignity out of the utter humiliation of this contemporary poor excuse for a 'life'... Of becoming the types of people who would never in an eternity voluntarily submit to the rule of the cowards and creeps who laud it over us today! In this sense we really do not believe in reform, mediation, micromanagement. We simply lack an active proximity to the possibility that this is not all there is.

So what else is there? If we are not criticising our moment because it is too passive, then what are we doing? What are we saying? Well certainly we are critiquing passivity, but passivity is the opposite of the active, of the act, not the opposite of 'violence'. If we have it seared into our brains that the only option, other than to do fucking line-dancing, is to set fire without warning to these places, then we have already lost the plot: it creates this catch-22 where the reason we don't talk about anything seriously is that, apparently, if we were serious we wouldn't be talking but just 'doing'. So we end up just following our routines, winding out our time between boredom and 'burnout', and never even having the language with which to describe this situation and its



all-too-obvious idiocies. And it's true! We should not be talking about the banal quantitative 'escalation' of our activity (the transformation of 'fluffy' into 'spiky'!) we need to be thinking about, qualitatively, what kind of projectuality we are embarking on. Acts should flow quite naturally from the adequate naming of the enemy, and the adoption of an active way of organisation. Once we are configured in these ways, obstacles, and objectives, as an interim, should be relatively easy to map out. It is only if we know what we are talking about that we can listen to and suggest proposals for action, or that those acts which take place anyway, without discussion, can enter into a context of struggle where they can inspire or resonate in a real way.

First of all we want to give life to a critique and practice which has as its aim the transformation of reality as a whole. It is only within these auspices that we are capable of identifying and participating in (read — acting within, not following along with) 'intermediate' struggles. Of course, not everything we do has as its objective the social revolution unfolding itself all at once. But we must examine our reality for the tensions and vulnerabilities which can be grasped and penetrated, with simple, reproducible means, towards the excitation of social revolt, always orientated towards total liberation. It is of course, possible, and indeed absolutely necessary, to organise with those who do not have, or even comprehend, this shining star

# THE UNITED STATES OF EMERGENCY

## United 93 and the Vertiginous Bureaucracy of 'Terror'

which is guiding us. But nonetheless if it is never brought to bear, as a flame which illuminates, on this dark laboratory of social control — then what is left is not pragmatism, authenticity, the proletarian, but being immersed in someone else's managerial techniques.

Having no organisational proposal whatsoever, is itself an organisational proposal, but one which concedes all its ground to the enemy. To locate the places where tensions exist which can be propelled into an insurrectionary struggle, we need to constantly clarify to ourselves, with precision and force, how social peace is currently being manufactured, and how something currently ensnared in its machinations can become uncontrollable. For this we need the sensibility of the prodding, analysing, poking, critiquing, provoking, exciting, questioning, denouncing, identifying (the enemy), (re)situating ourselves in a our surroundings, always towards the general revolt of the exploited... always towards the transformation of the conditions of possibility we are falsely led to believe is a gloomy figure of the inevitable.

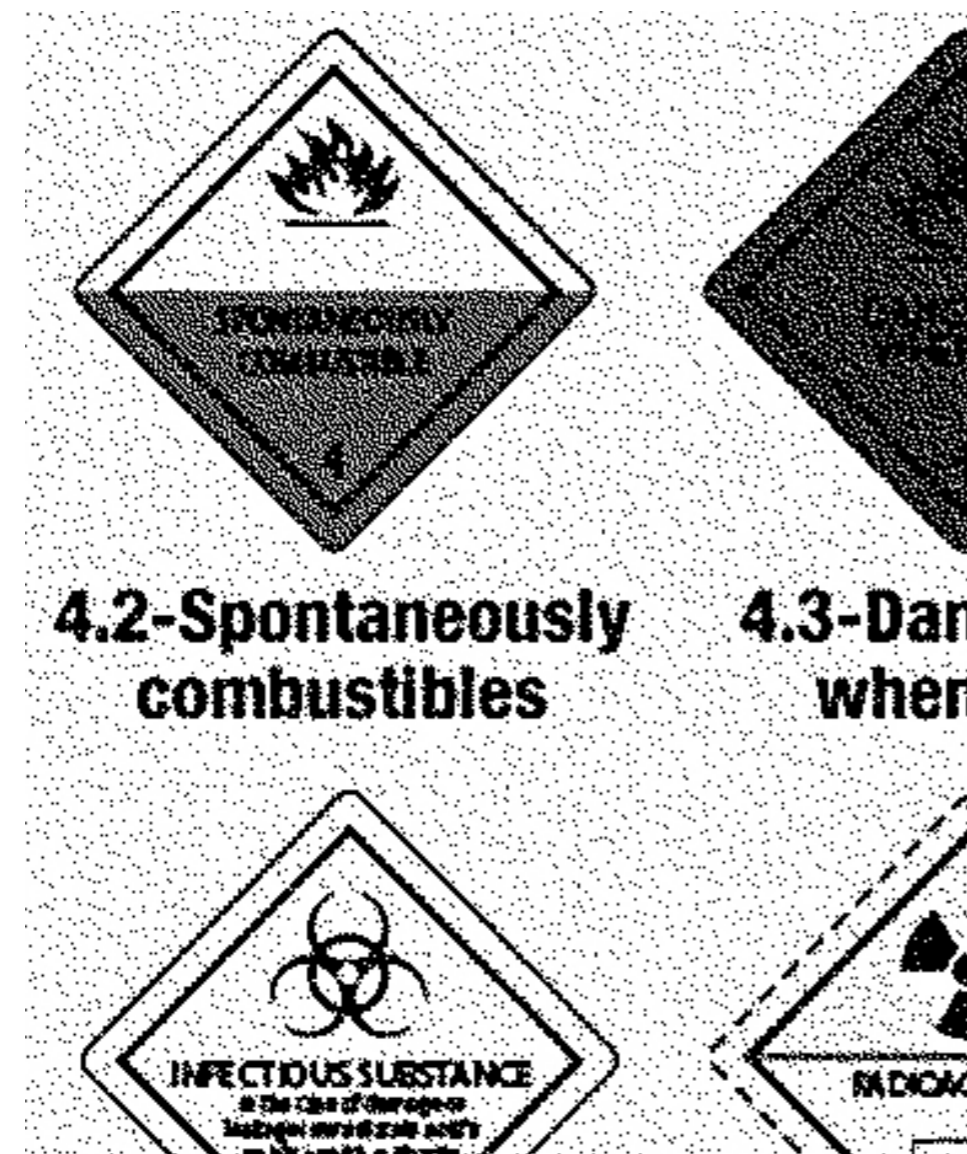
So then we can refuse to be held hostage by what are perceived to be very reduced conditions of possibility for struggle — giving up on everything active and organised, languishing in the passive and routinised — clutching that pearl of abject suffering which acts as a kind of supra-justification for what is otherwise naked in its vacuity. We can instead treat those reduced conditions as a point of departure... What

makes these structures seem so impenetrable? What is stopping me from perceiving their vulnerabilities? ...And then organising, informally, along these lines, finding those tensions, analysing the functioning of the machine to pinpoint them exactly, gathering around a specific objective chosen from this analysis, moving against it directly in an experimentation which will propel us qualitatively further: in the precise terms of bringing on the dangers and joys of social revolution, of the most profound upheaval of ourselves and our relations, to life.

The border system of Fortress Europe is murderous:

make no mistake, it is preparing for genocide. It is a monument to the neo-colonial globalised economy of manicured luxury and seething poverty. Its ruse is to place us in these petty roles — of benevolent activist, or squalid victimhood — composing a state-mediated drama of manufactured crises and democratic 'debate'. Its weakness is that every one of its techniques is played out on this stage, it does not know how to deal with a projectuality which abandons these roles: a conscious, determined, subversive, attack on this carefully curated theatre of social peace.

\*\*\*\*\*



*“Civilization is like a jetliner, noisy, burning up enormous amounts of fuel. Every imaginable and unimaginable crime and pollution had to be committed in order to make it go. Whole species were rendered extinct, whole populations dispersed. Its shadow on the waters resembles an oil slick. Birds are sucked into its jets and vaporized. Every part, as Gus Grissom once nervously remarked about space capsules before he was burned up in one, has been made by the lowest bidder.”*

David Watson, *The Economy is Suffering / LET IT DIE* (Treason Press, 2004)

*[Ed. The following essay is being published on the twentieth anniversary of 9/11, that event that marked the beginning-of-the-end of the 'End of History'. It's been a long time ending, such that most of us have lived most if not all of our lives in it. This is and has been a truly global-civilisational era, perhaps the first and last to achieve that kind of reach. Stitching itself over the surface of the whole earth with so many (literally uncountable) jet-propelled flightpaths, it is fitly described in the quotation above, found under the title 'Civilisation is Like a Jetliner'.*

*“And we are here as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight / Where ignorant armies clash by night.”*

Matthew Arnold, epigraph to *Fredy Perlman, Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*

*The darkling plain is here.' Says Perlman, 'This is the waste land.' Or should that be darkling plane? This global-civilisational condition perhaps also helps make it clear why certain tendencies within anarchist thought came to the fore in this period, setting their sights on 'civilisation' itself. When power is so fast, so agile, so omnipresent, and so everyday in its violence — is that what forces the attention of those who would challenge it, onto not just what it means to oppress, dominate, and capture, but more holistically, what it is doing when it civilises? But in a startling and useful departure, the Essay below says civilisation is not like a jetliner: ideology is like a jetliner. Taking its cue from the film United 93 (dir. Paul Greengrass), it invites us to ask: What if we were never on a plane!?’*

The 2006 film *United 93* concerns the events (in large part embellished if not imaginary) which are supposed to have led to the downing of the fourth plane hijacked on 9/11, which it is assumed was bound for the White House. This plane crashed into uninhabited farmland around Shanksville, Pennsylvania, while en route to its target. The dominant theory attributes this to an uprising of the passengers on the plane, who tried to take control of the aircraft back from the hijackers. The film itself is clearly propaganda, not because of any kind of overly heavy-handed or

simplistic didacticism, but because it sets out for us, in an exemplary fashion, the boundaries to our imagination that some call 'ideology'.

This is achieved in several ways. In the first place, the film has a kind of anti-narrative, with no central character or 'personal story'. In this sense it feels ultra-realistic, perhaps even more realistic than actual reality. We are a fly on the wall to snatches of conversation: a flight attendant wants to go home to her kids, a business man is nervously looking forward to making a proposal in San Francisco, while two pensioners plan a retirement getaway. Here we have the full democratic multiplicity, the tangled intersecting ends of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', the overwhelming array of consumer 'life choices', each much like the others in their very difference. This concept is further reflected in our first look at the air traffic control centres which comes early in the film — room after room full of computer screens with tiny green dots all inching their way across the continent, seemingly missing one another only be a millimetre of black screen. What we are seeing there is clearly economic in nature: we are looking at the management of, and speculation on, commercial flows. Each aircraft is a section of consumer-capital composed

# Children of Grey Squirrels

In the late nineteenth century Grey squirrels were brought to these shores from North America as embellishments for woodland and parks, threatening the tranquility of the Red squirrels, natives of the UK. These migrants were healthy carriers of a virus, the squirrel parapox virus, often responsible for the death of red squirrels, they say. Not only that, they have voracious appetites and gobble up unripe acorns leaving the more refined red squirrels who only eat fully-matured acorns hungry, matched with their sexual appetites, resulting in a current population of 2 million greys as opposed to an estimated 15,000 reds. The Roslin Institute of Edinburgh University, partially funded by the European Squirrel Initiative, a charity dedicated to red squirrel conservation, are investigating strategies to control the grey squirrel population by spreading female infertility – and as a bonus it could be applied to other ‘pests’ such as minks, parakeets and muntjac deer... These proven experts are also toying with the idea of changing the squirrels’ genes so that they are more likely to give birth to male babies, not female, for numbers to dwindle and phase out.. They want to edit squirrel DNA to create a ‘gene drive’ in male greys so that they can pass it on to females, make them infertile and stop them reproducing. A spokesman for the charity said: *The aim would be to create a few thousand gene-edited greys and then release them so the gene spreads, slowly wiping*

*the species out in the UK.’ “This would eradicate Britain’s grey squirrel population completely in the most humane way possible.” Bloodless genocide.*  
The Roslin Institute began as the Institute of Animal Genetics in 1917, to mutate at various stages into the present Roslin Institute now at the University of Edinburgh’s Easter Bush campus. It shot to world fame while in Cambridge in 1996 when a couple of their star researchers created the first cloned mammal, a sheep, and two others a year later, each of which contained a human gene, aka Dolly, followed by Polly and Molly.  
Today their research is divided into four scientific divisions: Functional genetics and development, Genetics and genomics, Infection and immunity and Clinical sciences. In its own words “The Roslin Institute aims to enhance the lives of animals and humans through world-class research in animal biology.”

*P.S. In the artificial intelligence revolution new ways to replicate humans are being unlocked, and researchers are racing to develop clones that serve a host of purposes, not least using digital clones of physical robots to put into software programmes to speed up simulated evolution. Physical robots are performance-tested in real-world environments, while their digital clones enter a software program, where they undergo rapid simulated evolution.*

\*\*\*\*\*



## POETRY CORNER

### Ode to an Action

So. Farewell then,  
Anarchist ‘Action’.  
Your star burned so bright.  
And you were taken from us  
Too soon.  
So soon nobody ever stopped  
to ask,  
‘Where did you come from?  
Where did you go?’  
And now we’ll never know.

‘Fuck Shit Up! Get Shit Done!’  
That was your catchphrase.

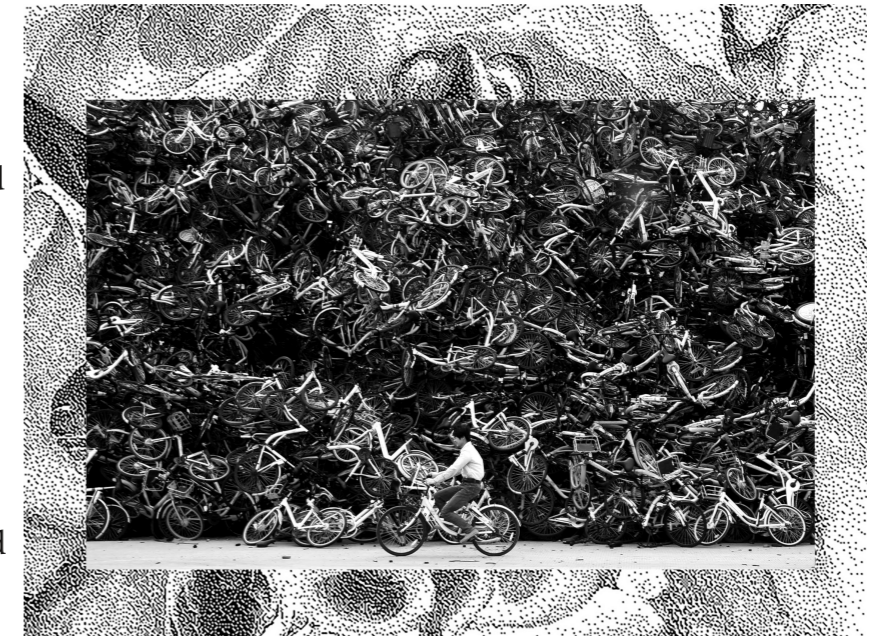
You’re fucking shit up  
in a better place now  
(a thousand enraged tweets  
light your way to heaven).

Oh! But we will always think  
of you,  
And say, ‘Truly,  
That was an Action!  
A direct Action!  
Here lies an Action.’

Direct from where?  
Direct to what?  
You’ll take your secrets  
To the grave.

# ALLEZ ALLEZ ALLEZ!

Anarchists like banners. How often have we stood outside prison gates, our painstakingly applied words and audacious encircled-A thundering out from a rectangle of black cloth such that, if words could smash concrete, they’d bring down the walls of that vile institution and free our comrades locked away from us for years, sometimes decades, right away. After the preparation, the rendezvous, and finally, the positioning, alas, often out of sight of the prisoner targeted to receive our attention. Mental dullness spiced with a frisson of pride for having, after a night’s discussion, found just the right words accompanied with a leaflet divulging a brief analysis of the prison society, demanding freedom for all prisoners – or selected categories according to the generosity of the group – followed by formulaic pronouncements inevitably ending with a ‘fire to the prisons’, and the encircled-A. The same applies to embassies, detention centres grim fixed bastions of power faced with equally grim holders of banners.  
Perhaps this banner baggage of ours has made us develop a certain sensibility that made us pick up on an event which might otherwise have remained in the mists of daily distraction. In the Finistere area of western



France the lycra-clad divas of the western world’s most prestigious bike race ended up in a crumpled heap upon crashing into a cardboard banner saying “Allez Opi Omi” (Go Grandma Grandpa) thrust

in front of the cameras of the global media by a ‘grinning woman’ taking this golden opportunity to send greetings from afar to her grandparents somewhere on that day of June 26 of the year 2021. As the pile-up is beamed around the planet, a mountain of superb fine-tuned steel and rare metals, bones cracking, moaning and other sounds of mortal agony and despair bringing screens to life, a moment of lucidity blasts its way into the subconscious: it’s not what you say it’s the way that you say it. The crash was ‘huge’, the ‘manhunt’ on, the culprit on the run. (All was redimensioned within a few days with the arrest and eventual release of the culprit.) What remains is a valuable contribution to the arsenal of attack of those who

are well aware that much of the world of horror and massacres that we inhabit hangs on a thread and that it is our own stiffness, our blind repetitiveness, that prevents us from dreaming, devising, attacking, and that in times of great upheaval such as the seventies in Italy, the much-repeated *Sara una risata che vi seppelira* – It will be a laugh that will bury you – is perhaps closer to the truth than we believe.

But here and now, in this intense moment of suppressed suffering and indignation ready to explode at any time, and holding dear the above innocent little gift of life somewhere among our dreams and intentions, let’s also use it as a compass to turn our gaze and dig a little deeper into what anarchists have expressed against this display of macho perseverance par excellence, the Tour de France.

16 July 1974. In Saint-Lary (Haute-Pyrenees) at around 4am, four explosions destroyed the vehicles of the Tour de France and an AFP van in various parts of the town, claimed by the GARI: Groupes d’action révolutionnaire internationalistes

*“By intervening in the Tour de France, as well as denouncing the complicity of the organizers and racers of the democratic countries*

who do not hesitate to invite us to rub shoulders with the representatives of Spanish fascism, we are also denouncing the highly spectacular and basely commercial event it represents.

We are told that sport is apolitical. And for good reason: during the duration of these games they divert the awareness of millions of individuals from the problems that our survival in the system, be it democratic or fascist, pose us. Sport depoliticizes individuals (in the sense of social problems)

thereby allowing governments to breathe. In the service of power it contributes to our own enslavement in the same way as all the other tranquilizers proposed by the system. As for sport, one wonders what it comes

to do with a competition where the majority of competitors are reduced to the role of slave, for the profit of a boss of robots a little more perfected than the others. By serving as an advertising medium for financial tycoons, the sportsmen of our time are simply pawns on the financial market... which can be disposed of as the mere objects they are and got rid of as soon as they are no longer profitable.

We advise the Spanish participants to abandon the race if they do not want to be treated as conscious representatives of Francoism, in which case we would be forced to act accordingly, and could turn out to be extremely unpleasant for them.

This evening's actions were just a warning.

We also advise the democratic racers to express their opposition in the face of the representatives of fascism. By acting as responsible conscious individuals for once, they would prevent us from taking measures that could also turn out to be unpleasant for them."

In July 15, 2015, at Port de Lers (Ariège) a large quantity of upholstery nails was methodically spread on the Tour route in the early

upholsterer's nails had been scattered on the road to the Col de Péguère, between the passage of the caravan and the arrival of the riders, triggering a series of punctures and sometimes serious falls.

On May 27 2018, On the night of Friday to Saturday, May 26, at Col de la Colombiere (Haute-Savoie) three construction machines were destroyed on the D4. One vandalized and two compactors set on fire. They

were being used to repair the asphalt of the Col de la Colombière road between Le Grand-Bornand and La Clusaz where the Tour de France was due to pass next July. It was the second project stopped in less than a month on the road to the Tour.

We apprehend the world as a seamless series of events, dreary carroussels spinning around impregnable bastions of power. What appears immovable is just as reliant on its participants who are in motion beyond those walls that they defend and which defend them. It's time to decide whether we want to continue in our team attending the ritual fixtures in this world of sport i.e. measurement or enter the world of play where we have a different way of paying attention to the same things.

\*\*\*\*\*

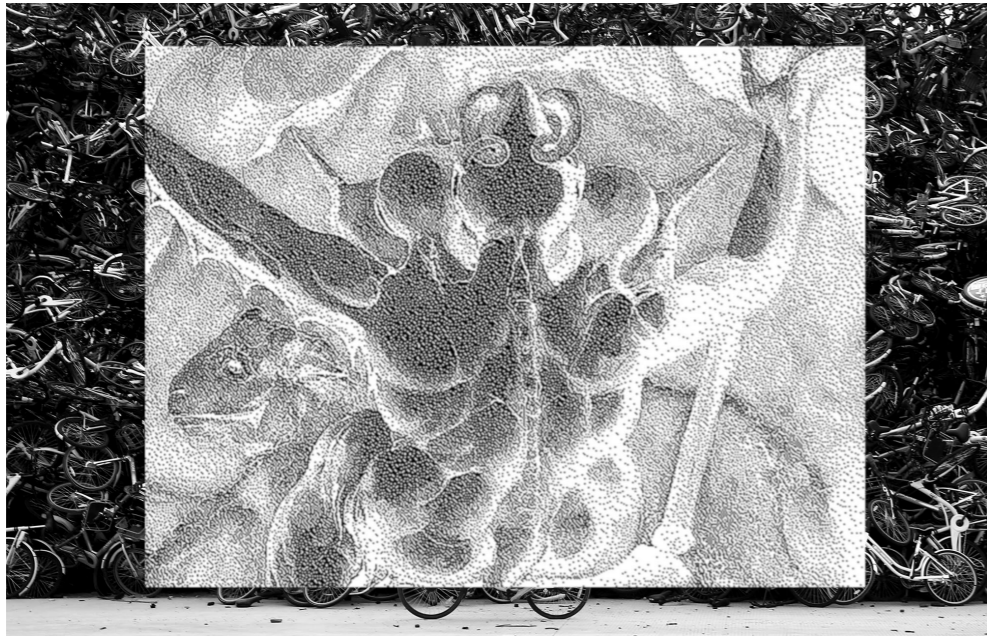
institutions' can possibly be inaugurated within the entrails of the death machine, the great mechanical worm? Will they not, at every level, either replicate the rhythms and reflexes of its grisly march of 'progress', or else ineffectually decorate its functioning, provide a background music, a happy mask? To really break with 'police reality' requires some concept and experimentation with what we call 'projectuality'. This is not the same as 'strategy' nor the same as 'activity'. It is not a 'doing' but a 'being'.

How is the prison really sustained? Surely we can say there are two elements. The first is the infrastructure (bars, vans, walls, cameras, guards, governors, etc.); the second is the social peace which corresponds to these things, as a mechanism without interruption, a seamless reality of the prison. All very well. But a little thought leads us inevitably to the following realisation: both the infrastructure, and its illusion of impenetrability, are not limited to the prisons but are

diffused and endemic across the whole social artifice. Any projectuality which takes its aim with a precise analysis of how the class enemy is perpetuating its gulag will find itself in conflict with the prison twice. In the most obvious sense because it will need to fight (its own) repression. But in the more interesting and important sense, because 'the world that needs prisons' is social peace itself. When signals of disorder are offered which spur the exploited to develop the intensity of the clash, prison is affronted by the material difficulties it may run into, of having the death machine of which it is a part stumble or begin to limp, its psychological power wain because its illusion of impartial objectivity is ruined, and, yes, its inevitability as a component of the world falter – because conquering those moments of time and space, blasted out of the death-march of History, are the only real situations where different forms of life can come into play.

Projectuality is a few comrades, a shared vision, an interim objective, a destructive experiment. It requires the mass consensus of organisations about as much as it requires their permission. It aims at the spreading and diffusion of attacks which undermine the foundations of social peace. It does not need to win converts (what would we do with them anyway?) nor quantitatively to grow at all. It means self-organisation, not of the logistics of our subcultural ghettos, nor of the laws of society, nor the miseria of the 'movement'. It is self-organisation of the struggle: the seizing of responsibility for its life back from an imaginary proletariat, 'communities', coalitions, organisations, accountability processes – back to ourselves at our most vital. Nothing and nobody will create openings for the subversion of the existent for us. No analysis which fails to identify and make the enemy material, and affirm the creative destruction that it calls for, will do.

\*\*\*\*\*





currency of radicalism, once the active experiment is declared finished with.

We are not satisfied with this. Struggle is not a 'cheap thrill' to us, nor is it a case of charitable empathy, knowing that our comrades are suffocating in cells just big enough to lie down in, for years, all over the world. We owe them, and ourselves more than this. The prison is not something to pin down all struggle to. It simply in our way.

Abolishing the Police is full of comments like, "... the project of abolition sees itself as part of a broader social transformation that is much more about changing the background conditions that necessitate oppressive institutions ..." and "Abolition is about abolishing the conditions under which prison became the solution to problems, rather than abolishing the buildings we call prisons." But in both cases the implications of these statements are torn apart by what they are immediately followed up by. We would naturally reach the conclusion that the conditions which necessitate prison are those of the universal rule of exploitation, corruption, passivity and brutality. But no! These statements are rounded off by the following: "abolitionists insist that the process of abolition is as much about inventing institutions as it is about abolishing the old ones" and, "we need to address the conditions in which people feel that police are the only or best option for responding to harm in their lives. We must build other means for preventing and addressing harm that will actually keep us safe."

It all rests on this difficulty: how are these two things

connected? The conditions which necessitate prison can under no circumstances whatsoever be described as the proliferation of harm, as a lack of 'new institutions'. 'Harm' can always be 'reduced': it is this very line of thought which has led to the establishment of the modern prison in the first place. Foucault, a favourite touchstone of the abolitionists demonstrates this very lucidly.

*"Prison 'reform' is virtually contemporary with the prison itself: it constitutes, as it were, its programme. From the outset, the prison was caught up in a series of accompanying mechanisms, whose purpose was apparently to correct it, but which seem to form part of its very functioning, so closely have they been bound up with its existence throughout its long history. There was, at once, a prolific technology of the prison. There were inquiries [...] There were societies for supervising the functioning of the prisons and for suggesting improvements[...] Innumerable measures – orders, complete and austere institutions instructions or laws: from the reform that the first Restoration had envisaged in September 1814, and which was never implemented, to the law of 1844, drawn up by Tocqueville, which ended for a time the long debate on the means of making imprisonment effective. There were programmes drawn up to improve the functioning of the machine-prison: programmes for the treatment of the prisoners, models for material improvement, some of these, like those of Danjou and Harou-Romain, remaining no more than projects, others becoming embodied in instructions (like the circular of 9 August 1841 on the building of maisons d'arret), others becoming*

*actual buildings, such as the Petite Raquette in which cellular imprisonment was organized for the first time in France."*

**Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish**

In truth, as well as it not being possible to create alternatives in cohabitation with prison society, it is not even practically helpful. If we find a 'world without prisons' hard to imagine, this is precisely in the same way that we find any way of life outside of the dead entrails of the prison society hard to imagine. But rapid expansions in our imaginative capacities favour the daring who hold 'pragmatism' in contempt. 'Abolitionist work' is the death of this possibility. It holds rebellion hostage in interminable positivist projects which try to create a situation where 'horizontalist', 'radical' structures (many of these couldn't even get consensus on what they'd like for tea), which could in time deal with hypothetical murders. It's absurd and depressing and its day has long past. We do not need to be beholden to these ways of thinking anymore. We do not need an excuse, or a place of safety, or a prefigured alternative, to start attacking all manifestations of social control as we find them: it is eminently justified by the gross indignity which is our ordinary lot in life – participation in our own capture.

### Projectuality

We must always ask ourselves under what conditions any kind of transformation can even be imagined. What 'new

# Abolitionist Futures or Insurrection Now?

## *Fragments of an Anti-Review of*

### *Abolishing the Police – ed. Koshka Duff*

*"I am not interested in eating at their table, or engaging with it in any way. I am not trying to sound super judgmental or arrogant. Many people I respect and call comrades are involved in projects broadly associated with 'prison abolition'. But, for me, this 'long term goal' will never materialise, and what I am more interested in, now, is a messy attempt to attack the prison system and all the institutions that feed it. To use Perlman's Leviathan analogy [...], I think abolition relies on the idea that the people inside the Leviathan will somehow slow down, and become more aware of what they are doing. I don't believe this will be the case, and I don't think it's possible to try and tinker within the worm while it is still flailing."*

**ASBO, 'To find cracks, to stare down, to provoke', interview with London ABC, May 2020**

*"Only by upsetting the imperatives of time and social space will it be possible to imagine new relations and surroundings. The old philosopher said one can only desire on the basis of what one knows. Desires can only change if one changes the life that produces them. Let's be clear about this: rebellion against the organisation of time and space by power is a material and psychological necessity."*

**Anonymous, 'At Daggers Drawn'**

### The Crisis in Policing

On the evening of 9th March 2021, a young marketing executive disappeared while walking home. While the police searched for the perpetrator, and dredged Clapham Common lake for the body, posters were put up over every council estate in the area, including inside lifts, basically on peoples' front doors. The impression in those early days was simple: the perpetrator was to be found amongst the local underclass and everyone should help the police along in their efforts to apprehend them quickly.

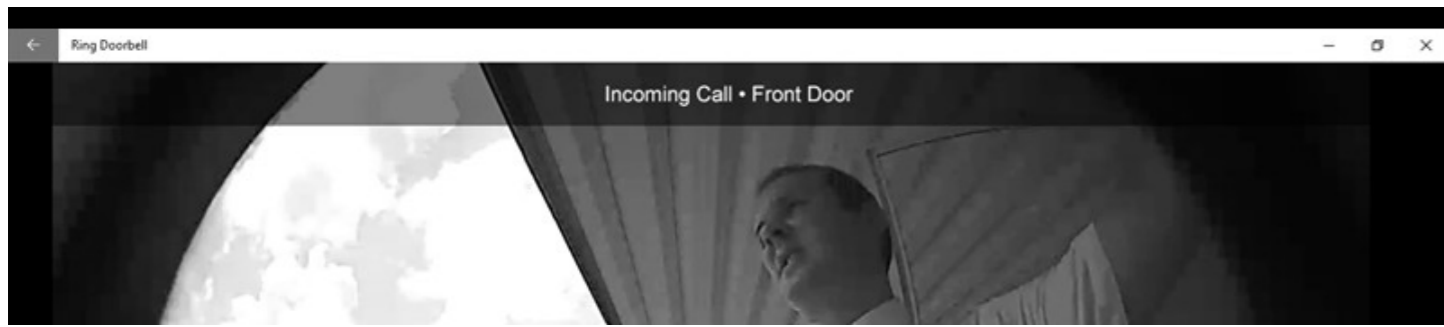
A regime of social apartheid undeniably exists in South London, where local schools have, essentially, not a single white face, and yet the bars on Saturday nights are precisely the reverse. Since the London riots the division has been very clear – that living on top of one another are two different worlds, inhabited by two separate social strata.

One world is overwhelmingly 'civilised' and liberal, peopled by free and easy go-getters sipping gin on the weekends and visiting parents in the Home Counties during the holidays. The terrace houses are carved up into flats at eye-watering prices where the different gradations of glitterati insert

themselves: students in the single bedrooms, while professionals, managers, and young families take a couple of floors. Round the corner are the inevitable barracks-like social housing complexes gradually being sold off to new bourgeois occupants or else being completely demolished. The people who live in this world, generally, are the cleaners, transport staff, precarious gig economy workers, and masses of un-/informally- employed.

It was clear that Sarah Everard was a woman of the former world, and that a member of the latter had violated her. This was the unspoken but all-pervasive assumption. Going home at night is dangerous because of the prowling underclass who will compensate sexually for being so thoroughly humiliated socially. The police moved with determination and had growing confidence... Finally those ungrateful liberals (who still had the cardboard signs displaying 'black lives matter' in their living room windows) will remember what we're there for, to keep the invisible barrier of sanitised, democratic apartheid intact! This is what happens when they forget their place...

And then, when they chased the trail to its end they found that one of the lads, one of their own was responsible.



He joins the army in 2002. In that period, and thereafter, British Army forces dropped chemical and dirty-nuclear weapons on towns full of people unable to escape. They tortured, raped and slaughtered at random. Virtually no one will talk of this. Two years later he fails a physical and joins the police. First he guards nuclear power stations, the epitome of state terror. The penetration and pulling apart of smallest components of our universe to generate energy for this miserable civilisation. The apocalyptic sword of Damocles which suggests another Fukushima or Chernobyl is always on the horizon – so better to keep away and leave things to the experts.

Then he joins the 'Diplomatic Protection Unit'. Who knows what heinous representatives of the states of the world he diligently guarded like the dog that he is. And on those long nights, surveying the razor wire perimeter of a nuclear base, or keeping the silence on the marble porticos and hallways of power, we will never know

what thoughts passed through this man's head.

We do know that the illumination of this life, and its insertion into the widespread social anxiety and agitation in the wake of the murder had the opposite effect to what Authority had hoped. The same anger, the same indignation turned away from the untouchables in the ghetto and gazed up at the 'protectors of the realm'. The same who strangled Rashan Charles and suffocated Edson DaCosta five years ago. The same who slaughtered Charles De Menenzes in stockwell station. The same who assassinated Mark Duggan ten years ago. The same who had sat on George Floyd's throat until he died less than a year before.

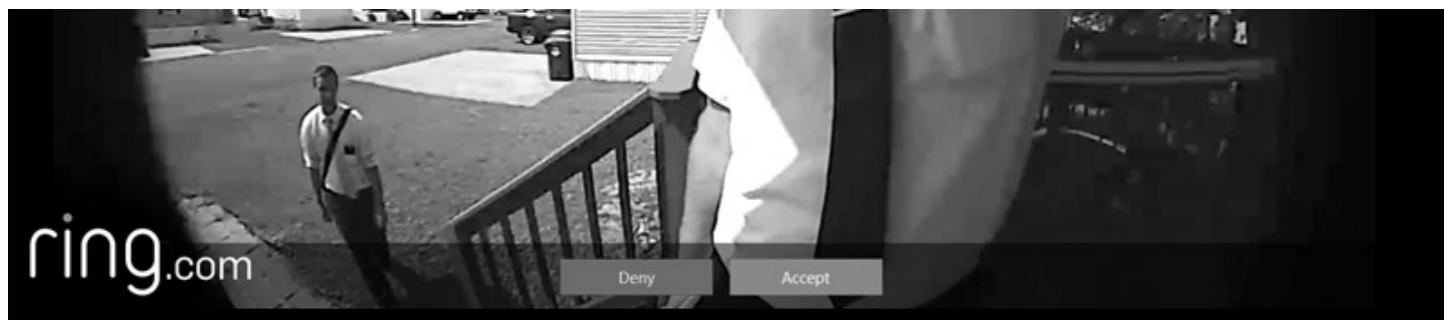
The 'vigil' that was to be held at Clapham Common was transformed, in the eyes of the gathered and those of the police. It was no longer a plea for defence of the innocent, but an implicit accusation, a moment of some clarity – that it is perhaps the state, its personnel as well as its murderous institutions, which was always the problem

in the first place.

So, the techniques which had previously been intended for use on the ghettoised women; the truncheon and handcuffs, to keep 'public sanitation' in the covid iteration of the immutable techniques of social control, were deployed with utmost force. The chief of the Met, who was promoted to that position off the back of her signing off on the assassination of Charles de Menenzes who was catching the train after his 'mongolian features' were flagged by the force, was forced to stand up in front of television cameras again and explain what it is they are, and what it is they're doing.

The problem is she, and they, have no answer. Are the police there to discipline the underclass, to use cracked skulls to demarcate the 'controlled areas' so people stay quiet in their assigned place? They are not good for much else. What her incoherent assemblage of lies tells us is that the police are in a crisis, and are living in a contradiction.

In a world of technological



(which is another way of saying they have no analysis of the current situation to push them to decisive action), and secondly that they are happy with their quasi-academic prestige within the left and have no interest in embracing clandestinity or even to experiment with illegality. The symptoms of this that we can discern in Abolishing The Police are the innumerable references to the free breakfast program for children of the Black Panther Party, without any mention whatsoever of the war that their underground fought against the prison society (in authoritarian structures certainly but nonetheless at arms). So again, they replicate the tedium and cowardice of the aboveground / underground model. In fact Jalil Muntaqim puts the case very vividly in his history of the Black Liberation Army. He describes a situation where a 'strategic retreat' was impossible because members has been led deep underground, into clandestinity. They were then amputated from aboveground political support and left to get rounded up by the state. He then details how their partial reconstitution and coordination became all about attaining 'amnesty' for the fighters. Although his pamphlet rarely mentions the word 'abolition', it tells the story of the circumstances of its birth.

Okay, but many abolitionists would nonetheless like to have the name of anarchy for themselves (rather than, for example, Maoism). But they

won't get away with that so easily! It is not as if anarchists have nothing to say on these precise topics. Consider the following hammer blow delivered by Alfredo Bonnano, on the germinating situation in Italy in the early '80s, exactly the same conditions that gave birth to the zeitgeist of 'abolition' in the US which we are currently enduring the crescendo of:

*"[W]e will not tolerate people coming to terms with power, drawing up an agreement and selling the imprisoned comrades' freedom outright."*

*We disagree, because a negotiation like this would not be an intermediate struggle but the beginning of the end; it would be a goal in its own right: the comrades' freedom paid for with other comrades' freedom. Everybody (or almost everybody)*



*out of prison, but stripped of everything, their revolutionary spirit first of all, their dignity and their human worth. It is not true*

*– as some have already said – that today's agreement would be the prelude to a continuation of tomorrow's struggles.*

*By accepting the agreement today, tomorrow at best we might perhaps struggle inside the ghetto where power will have parked us. The ghetto of people who have suffered failure, defeat and surrender. It is not true – as some have already said – that if we do not bargain this surrender right away, tomorrow's struggles will be condemned to a maniacal repetition of the model of armed struggle that we have already seen. Who could have such a bloody stupid thing in mind?*

*Future struggles will be quite different if we keep in mind the mistakes we have made and the positive things about them. In the event that we are forced to gamble everything on an unconditional surrender, our past would no longer exist except in oleographic reproductions for use and consumption by the bourgeoisie of the end of the next century, a cheap thrill in their parlours."*

**Alfredo Maria Bonnano, And We Will Always Be Ready to Storm the Gates of Heaven Another Time / Against Amnesty**

Is this not precisely what has already taken place, not at the end, but already, at the beginning of this, 'the next century'? The black panther Netflix miniseries, the recitals of Assatta Shakur's affirmations at Sisters Uncut meetings ('It is our duty to win' etc.), the ideation and tourism of 'Rojava', the whole abolitionist artifice. The trappings, the drama of armed struggle fully acceptable, in fact the entire

experimentation is a trap which must be interpreted as being actively laid in order to prevent a new generation of rebels from realising its existence, rolling them into the old, dead forms of 'movement building' and prevarication.

Part of unfolding the mysteries creased up in the little word 'anarchy' is being able to discern the spirit of revolt as something propulsive. It doesn't reside in any particular thought or word or deed; it is a trajectory, the element in those things, which pushes us to rebel. It is not quantifiable. This doesn't mean that it is ineffable. There is a world of difference between words which incite us to attack – which raise our hearts and minds to a sharper point, which dispel illusions and identify targets – and those which offer only 'talking points', debates, discourses. The difference is not purely the orientation towards action, there are plenty of actions which are utterly devoid of this spirit, those which harken back to ideas of 'duty' or representation.

The question is: what use is an analysis which can't differentiate the world in front us, which doesn't bring objectives into focus? Why write a book about 'abolishing the police' which doesn't have a drop of this spirit in it? At the end of the day the capacity to point concretely towards the widening of rebellion, whatever the odds, is the only reliable weapon in our arsenal. We are not scientists, we have no military, no media, no money. It is neither possible

nor desirable to try to outmatch the state in addressing the problems of its world. This is because the

## ABOLISHING THE POLICE

state controls absolutely the terms by which problems are created (recognised as problems). False problems can only yield false solutions. To break out of this trap we have to summon a refusal, to refuse to spend our lives diligently crafting answers to questions which are lies, labouring at the edifice of problems which aren't real. For this, we need to keep hold of and nurture our confidence in rebellion, and keep finding ways to make anarchy, in its ephemeral as much as its material dimensions, live in the only place it can: the here and now.

The idea of building a new abolitionist world within the old is neither fish nor fowl. Even if we accept that it is a continuation of the legacy of the movement to abolish slavery – we are left empty handed! I think I must have missed the speeches of Harriet

Tubman, or John Brown for that matter, where they discussed creating 'non-slave' ways of relating to each other as a precondition for abolition. The strength, such that it was, of Brown's band of fighters is particularly that they abandoned negotiated settlements of any sort and gave the southern aristocracy what they deserved: a broadsword to the neck. Their objective, whatever its limitations, was undoubtedly to push the exploited to rebel and fight their captors directly – not to build a non-slave way of 'dealing with harm' as a precondition for this rebellion. Where is the equivalent spirit in the writings of 'abolition' today? Can we get through a book like *Abolishing The Police* without just feeling

tired?

In fact, the idea behind much abolitionist 'work' (to use their own disgusting terminology), is to provide 'talking points', backed up by research – from reputable sources! Academics no less! But what is the point of this 'conversation'? It seems to be to adopt a posture of radicalism amongst the left, to differentiate the enlightened from the rest, to bolster, not revolt but the social (media) position which is veiled in the iconography of a war of liberation but derealised in the absolute.

In the end the abolitionists have no critique of the armed struggle organizations of the '60s and '70s. Their reason for not pursuing this path themselves are twofold. First, that they accept that 'conditions have changed'

control mediating every possible interaction, into our very thoughts and fantasies, power should be maintained by psychological nudging, manipulation, by background regulation. Populations should be ordered with seamless algorithmic efficiency. We are at the stage now where although the threats to this project are still physical, and 'law and order' is still being wheeled out to assure social peace, the hope is that this constitutes 'one last push' before all the old social tensions which police exist to hold in place evaporate, and the miasma of techno-passivity and automated self-policing can announce the



new age.

Whatever the case there is a feeling that they are on borrowed time. That their replacement by some combination of technologies is coming to be seen as preferable and perhaps inevitable.

So it is at this moment that the connection is increasingly being made across class boundaries that an immediate common adversary holds up progress – calls for 'abolition' of police and of prisons, are all the rage. The idea is that prisons are racist and sexist, and that they fulfill a function of social control which holds the possibilities of social change in check. The spontaneous alliance

exemplified by the popular response to the murder, which arguably culminated in the second Bristol Riots, attests to its power and predominance as an idea. But how are we to understand this idea? Where does it come from, and what are its limitations? Anarchists surely do not believe in any kind of 'defunding' or defanging of these institutions but their total destruction. Similarly they reject the grand and empty coalition for the illusion of numerical strength – made up of 'communities' where new prisons are being built, 'communities' of whom the state intends a proportion to be harvested for the prisons every year, 'communities' who

face oppression by social hierarchies that are reproduced and intensified in carceral institutions.

The conflict is a social conflict; prison is a component, an expression, of the prison society. To harness a great multitude, from many different class-positions under the umbrella of Abolition is a contradiction in terms. If we want to get rid of prison, smash it to bits so that not even one stone is left standing, then we are surely entering a dimension of conflictuality with the society, even the 'civil' society, which is part of the project of power of which prisons are only one concentrated expression. It comes as some surprise, to

many already enthralled by some idea of this insatiable tension we call anarchy, to hear again and again the words 'abolition' (of the police and of the prisons) emanate from the mouths of those who have made their home in quasi-academic officdom, in one irrelevant corner of the left or otherwise, or in the debased social clubs of the squats and 'protest' scenes.

As Luigi Galleani put it, the left and anarchy 'follow two parallel lines, and it has been geometrically proven that parallel lines never meet' – if they have, one or other has lost their essence. So we could be forgiven for thinking something of this sort has

### The 'Defeat' of the Armed Struggle Organisations – Abolition's Antecedents

This 'discussion' is a part of the pervasive 'anti-oppression' thought which characterises our epoch. With racism and sexism as the two axes, prison marks the centre, becoming a point of convergence and a symbol. Undoubtedly, one reason for its significance to people in this moment is that it touches on the ongoing transition in the administration of social control, from the thuggery of the police, to the subtle manipulation of the panoptic techno-world.

But in terms of how the abolitionist 'movement' sees itself, the 'centering' of 'carceral capitalism' as a key descriptor of oppression, as an identifier of the terms of engagement, appears not to be a product of this passing-over of control from one set of techniques to another, but instead as a revolutionary resurgence, particularly of part of the black-radical tradition. This is what affords abolition the drama and romanticism which draws, especially young people, into its ranks, and what keeps awareness of its paradoxically reformist character (because the state may, in the not-too-distant future, be the main proponent of the 'abolition' of prisons and police) to a minimum.

Nonetheless we must examine why this association seems to express a truth. Why does 'abolition' seem to confer an impression of the continuity of the struggle of (for example) the Black Liberation Army, and Red Army Faction onto a new

generation?

It comes from a misconception: the heightened level of the clash of the late '70s was declared 'defeated' by its leaders, who found themselves overwhelmingly incarcerated, and it is this which gave consistency to the idea of 'abolition' as the centre of the struggle – the defeat, not the revolutionary struggle itself.

The armed struggle groups of the seventies gave up on their revolution. They issued a cessation of hostilities: this was the context for the birth of 'prison abolitionist' discourse. Being, essentially, military formations whose goal was the administration of a state, the great maelstrom of drama and spectacular violence in fact only set the stage for an eventual compromise. Fighters (as in ones who fight, no more, no less) if they are fighting for liberation, know nothing of compromise – but the structures of frontal assaults, paramilitary cells, do. They constitute a force which the state is capable of bringing to the negotiating table – as opposed to the informally organised aspects of rebellion, whose components are precisely not components but subversive, outlandish elements who come to represent nobody but themselves and can therefore never be represented in brokered 'sit-downs' of any type.

Of course, this is, to some extent a naive picture. Because the black revolutionaries of the US were, in general, never 'talked down', they were simply massacred. Attica tells us everything we need to know about the basics of US

policy towards the prospect of black revolution. But nonetheless defeat was more or less admitted, as if it were a prelude to a negotiated climb-down which never in fact, took place.

This is what accounts for the contradiction: that the fighters are still jailed (Jalil Muntaqim, Abu Jamal, Mutulu Shakur and many more. The release of 'prisoners of war' as an objective legitimised by the 'peace' of our era persists as if there were any chance of this, structurally, which of course there is not. What is missing from all ideas of 'trade-offs' – of prisoner exchanges, of the creation of a parallel world of dignity and equality to cohabit with the prison society – is the knowledge that, in revolt, it is always a lack of certainties which is propulsive.

Everything which can be calculated, predicted, balanced and calibrated sacrifices this precious knowledge. To create a parallel structure in the absence of conflictuality always implies that the chance of destroy the present order right away is moribund. To demand the release of prisoners outside of the natural course of continuing the struggle which saw them imprisoned in the first place implies that the clash is over. What starts off as a certainty – 'this for that', 'replace those with these' – turns out to be a name for our alienation from the wellspring of creativity: the lack of guarantees.

*"Nothing is guaranteed to work, yet we attack regardless. We do so naked, having shed the rags of morality, ideology, and politics that had accumulated over time. We confront this world raw, in all its horrifying glory. We negate*

*every truth and rule and we proceed with a spirit of incendiary experimentation. We dream big, expect little, and celebrate every moment of rupture. We take every opportunity to ensure that those in power lose sleep and that their functionaries have miserable jobs."*

### **Blessed is the Flame**

In the wake of George Floyd and BLM, if people see any vitalism in 'abolition' – and should they attribute this to a rebirth, a resurgence of the black revolution – they are being swindled. It is only in the aftermath of their admission of defeat that their 'prisonism' was birthed; replacing the proletariat with the prison-proletariat was their conscious and strategic choice, as horizons closed and the alleviation of the most grotesque forms of suffering of their comrades became paramount.

But of course, neglected in all this is the fact that we are not just sacks of meat, bodies capable of being hurt, or interfered with or confined. The project of the state is precisely to reduce us to this. It is the idea, and the acts, of revolution which are instructive if we are to understand, let alone fight back against, repression. Repression is always repression of something. It doesn't have a positive existence of its own. If what is being 'repressed' does not exist, then it is not repression, but just an exchange of blows between competing authorities. What makes repression special is that it corresponds to something unidentifiable, which is why this 'something' is always falsely identified as the work of fictitious organisations,

conspiracies, outside agitators. What it is trying to break down, to smother, is not a specific 'thing' but an all-encompassing threat: that of generalised social rebellion against the existent. So to understand the state response in its situatedness, its locality, we have to see how an eruption can take place such that the state in that part of the world at that particular time (only after the fact, after it is too late) sets about fire-fighting and extinguishing.

### **The Abolitionist Movement Today**

Imagine the following: a sample of the population of London were given the choice between a) the current system, b) an even 'harsher' penal system, or c) an abolitionist system of accountability / community justice. It is a certainty that the first, but perhaps even the second, would win out. Why is this? It is surely because our whole existence is being played out in internal relation to problems posed by capital, to which only its automaton, the state, can propose solutions. We cannot offer meaningful 'alternative solutions' and 'non-reformist reforms' to problems whose terms have been resolutely dictated by the enemy. The only direction we can go in is to shake the very terms on which these 'problems' are construed. What vision of life must we have accepted in order to be the types of people who go to, send people to, and at every level require, prison? Rather than amending ourselves or our 'community', should we not engage combatively with the reality that in fact

necessitates prison (in some form or other)?

Where does the idea come from, that what affirms the prison, or even the prison society, could ever be described as 'harm in our communities'? What on earth does this even mean? We would like to abolish prison, but there is just too much harm? This is ridiculous. Are there any other points of total societal transformation and upheaval which could be quantified in this way? Is that – the overabundance of harm – what prevents us from smashing the spectacle, breaking our dependence on the death-technology? Is this what sustains the mortifying commodification of the living earth? All the harm which we now have to spend our lives reducing in order to have a hope of embarking on a different way of life, or of starting to live at all?

If this starts to sound suspicious let's think about what else could be going on with this language. Is the target not really unmediated struggle, direct and immediate attack against the state of things? Those who contributed to this text Abolishing The Police, and those who run the Abolitionist Futures at Birkbeck – these people are not stupid. They are academics, overwhelmingly. Many have cut their teeth in the riotous student protests a decade ago, as Duff states explicitly in the Introduction. So they know a little of the streets, and a lot of theory. They are not just unaware of the possibility of the self-organisation of the attack, in the first person in the present tense. The almost systematic omission of this ongoing