The Local Kids

A compilation of texts, a contribution to a correspondence between those who desire anarchy and subversion

Population management is now supposedly the responsibility of everyone. Obedience to the state has been dressed up as solidarity. More surveillance is called freedom. All in the name of a return to normal life that appears as a mirage in the desert. Should we rehash for the umpteenth time a comparison to *1984*? Its author might have thought that it takes a continuous and considerate effort to see what's right in front of your nose; can we truly say that? Is it difficult to see what's going on? Or is it that we speak different languages and will find no common understanding of life?

We could jump into the fray, unveil their lies, battle for the real meaning of words, uphold a correct perception of reality. But then we would be entering the realm of politics where we can only fight with words without radically changing the narrative. A stubbornness that can have its value to demonstrate the absurdism of society. But only by refusing to do politics can we challenge the power of this system over our lives. That also means that we cannot pretend to have solutions at hand for the crises we're passing through. The existence of capitalism is based in the progressive destruction of the living conditions of all living beings.

The blackmail has always been the same; we should do as they say or our own survival is at stake. We're held hostages in the name of the economy, the nation, and now public health. Our health is instrumentalised in their disgusting game of politics – the legitimisation for an expansive surveillance; tracing whom we met, where we have been, where we will go to. Expanding control to a level where it becomes normal that going to the movies necessitates carrying the right certificates and surrendering our data. Triggering the most basic of fears – the fear of death, of loss – they mobilize obedience to fulfil their dirty dreams of authority: lockdowns, curfews, border closures.

Seeing this summer which is marked by extreme weather, wildfires and floods – products of the exploitation of the planet – this will be more and more the reality of this society. There are no pragmatic proposals to be made. The wager stays the same, to refuse their game (false choices between quick and superficial fixes to real crises), to be lucid and sabotage the vicious cycle of domination.

Summer 2021

Issue 7

A Tsunami of Metaphors

Language and imagination in a technical world

Previously published as Un tsunami de métaphores *in anarchie! (journal mensuel), Issue 8, November 2020*

"Your bedroom is a place to recharge yourself". That was the slogan of a new advertising campaign of a furniture manufacturer. "Because good sleep is important". Nobody will be surprised anymore that this manufacturer compares human beings with batteries that have to be recharged and of which the energy can be measured in percentages (in the commercial the battery goes from 1% in the red to a green 100% after a night in a room furnished by them). Human beings are nowadays "connected", "batteries", "computers". The metaphors borrowed from a technical jargon and reflecting only a technical world are legion.

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On average we use one metaphor every 20 words. Thus metaphors have left their mark on our language, our way of expressing ourselves. If language creates worlds then there are also those who have created languages to instil worlds in us. Actually, linguists all agree that metaphors play a dominant role in the conception of our thoughts and behaviour.

We – batteries – decide to not put energy any more in a relationship with a certain friend after having made an analysis of gains and losses of the respective friendship. As if we are perfect accountants that submit everything to a monetary analysis. Because time is money (you waste time and you gain time), and money, in turn, is health. When businesses take many losses then the economy is ill. When a human being is ill then something is not right in the machinery. There is a bolt that's not fitted very well or organs that don't do their job anymore.

Even though they might seem sometimes complicated, metaphors are used to make things more understandable. It's the only way to talk about certain things because literal language falls short when it's about abstract, relational, emotional things. We lack the physical experience of abstract concepts and so we use words that invoke a tangible suggestion. Thus we can "see" these concepts and almost have a physical experience of them. One example is our way of talking about time. We talk about it as if it is a space: the future is in front of us, the past behind us.

Literally speaking, most metaphors are insane. They confuse our senses. Arthur Rimbaud considered poetry to be an elementary hallucination that shakes our way of perceiving (our perception). That is exactly what metaphors do. They make us taste vengeance (sweet) and feel loneliness (chilling cold). Aristotle defined metaphors as the process of giving something a name that actually belongs to something else. We transfer the meaning of one word to another word. The old Greek already knew that it is a formidable weapon, especially in political discourse - "because a metaphor isn't blindingly obvious". Aristotle went so far as to say that they who masters the use of metaphors, are masters of their surroundings. The thinker of the modern state, Thomas Hobbes, discarded metaphors as an abuse of speech. In his Leviathan he accused those who use metaphors of deceiving others. Numerous thinkers have considered metaphors as belonging to children, as an almost ridiculous trick for feeble minds. It was the terrain of the poets with their absurd inventions.

Today the use of metaphors is certainly not anymore the privileged terrain of poets. In all domains of society language abounds with metaphors. For example, the more technology advances – of which the real functioning generally evades our understanding, the more we use metaphors to try to grasp at least something. Even if we generally grasp the results of a certain technological process rather than its sequence. So we visualize "data" evidently

as huge libraries, with the unfortunate consequence that bits and bytes of information take in our imagination the characteristics of intelligence and wisdom which are generally linked to the "culture" contained in the books of a library. An object becomes "intelligent" because it "interacts" while it is only preprogrammed sequences of algorithms. Intelligence will soon become "artificial" which points towards it supposedly surpassing "natural" intelligence, which belongs to human beings. The more our direct experience (not only physical but also mental and emotional) passes through a mediation (being nowadays mainly technological or religious or political), the more our language integrates metaphors that in turn, confirm the inescapability of the mediation. Metaphors become the prism through which we experience the world and that inevitability determine the experience that we make from this world.

So nobody will be surprised to learn that for a long time intelligence services have entire departments dedicated to the study of metaphors. For example, to understand and map certain conceptions in a given population. But also to create metaphors, yes, to guide feelings and thoughts. Orwell isn't far off. The methods can be very simple, as when in this text I ask you not to think about a pink elephant and subsequently you cannot stop "seeing" this pink elephant in front of your nose. A consultant who works for a privately owned business that "designs" metaphors for the campaigns of NGOs and charity foundations, has a metaphor for metaphors: "It's a room. The windows and doors allow for a certain view, a frame to see the exterior through. Put the windows higher in the room and people will see only trees. Put them lower and they'll only see grass. Put the windows only on the south side and they'll always see sun. The inventor of the metaphor makes their architectural choices unavoidable." Unavoidability and coercion merge fast. Coercion in thoughts and in imagination; imprinting moral imperatives in brains and behaviours. When we think about it there are thousands of metaphoric expressions that participate in the reproduction of domination by the sensations they evoke. In the military domain there are "surgical strikes" or "peacekeeping missions", in the economical domain we have "the stock market that crashes" (there's nothing anyone can do about it) or "the economy recovers" (thanks to the political measures). And to what extent has this awful metaphor dating back to Antiquity become established that society is like a human body with each organ its place and function and where the head commands and the arms get tired? How rapidly did we absorb the concepts of cybernetics and computing that say people are "connected" even when they never saw each other, "networks" are "social" while they atomise, technology is "green" while it's colourless, flavourless or else rather white and grey?

And the jargon of anarchists? Certainly, the new world we hold in our hearts also has to find an expression through a language capable of creating worlds, a subversive language, an imagination that peers into the untold horizons. But all that is very different from illusions bordering on frauds. We call to make "war on society", but how many really leave the comfort zone of differences of opinion? We say we want to liberate our passions... by affirming it on the internet. The anarchist language creates worlds, should create worlds, but cannot be open to fraud, to self-deceit, to a kind of collective hypnosis that will only strengthen patterns of followers or the consumption of any subversive tension. Did you already notice how comfortable expressions like "the seed of subversion lies beneath the snow" can be for those seeking to justify waiting? Besides, the "fire" that burns in our hearts can extinguish very fast when things turn complicated and the "solid rocks of our ideas" erode rather surprisingly fast when the trumpet of the next "social movement" sounds.

Should we then abandon the imagined language, the metaphors to talk about what we cannot talk about, declare the death of poetry (in passing; isn't it already numbed and then killed by the progress of technology and its world of images?), in order to purge language from manipulations, from biased strategies, from camouflaged hypocrisies, from moral imperatives imprinted in the expressions themselves? A fact in and of itself is nothing. The statement of a fact, stating something "objectively", is impossible. Language relates our being with our experience. It will always be lacking, a bit false, approximative. For that reason it would be a declaration of defeat to oppose the metaphors that shape dominant thought with a factual language. The battle of metaphors is being waged on the terrain of imagination. The language of subversives cannot be "detached" from reality like the technological language "detaches" us evermore from our direct experience. But it cannot want to coincide with reality, because it would block the horizon of imagination with its massacres, its oppression, its dullness, its exploitation. No, subversive language has to build bridges, always anew and different, between a fact and its expression, between a fact and its interpretation, between a fact and its surpassing. To end with a metaphor, breaking through the vicious circle of the production and reproduction of the existent also goes through the expression and language *other* than the one of modern domination that is technical and riddled with nonsensical metaphors.

Artis

Beyond the Moment

Anarchist aspirations in the face of the ongoing disaster(s)

Previously published as Au-delà de l'immédiat *in Sans Détour (journal anarchiste apériodique), Issue 4, March 2021*

While reading now outdated anarchist texts, I often have the impression that the comrades of a century ago had clearer ideas than us on the world for which they were fighting and which path to take to one day attain that freedom so craved for. Today we live in a gloomy and sickening period that offers us very few hopes for the future. Any speculation on a revolutionary upheaval will be confronted with a "realism" that leaves little space for ideals and utopia. Nevertheless, if we decide to dedicate our lives (or a big part of them) to the struggle, why not try to go further than acting in the moment, if only with imagination? Why not try to reflect on what we mean – and not only on a theoretical level – when we talk about "revolution" and to question through which "stages" such a process would necessarily pass? Or should we declare death once and for all even the possibility of a radical change of the course of things, to renounce this aspiration and acknowledge that our struggles and actions *only* serve to give meaning and joy to our existence and to not fall into depression, resignation, apathy or despair?

I wouldn't want to deny this *existential* dimension of the struggle. It's essential and I'm totally convinced that radical change isn't possible without it. Nevertheless, in certain instances of optimism – for example, on the occasion of an unexpected encounter or of a story that warms the heart, of a street movement of a certain scale or of a multiplication of the different attacks – I say to myself that *we're not alone* in wanting this upheaval. Because of our daily observation of the horrors that make the world turn, we have the tendency to forget that the tension towards freedom is kept alive beyond those who know and cherish anarchist ideas. So why not think about what a revolutionary upheaval would imply, like they did in the past? Why not talk about it? Why not have this outlook to the future, without fake hopes or shiny illusions but also without cynicism or disillusionments?

A century ago, revolutionary ideas were still widely spread in the middle of a period that was maybe even gloomier than this one (the world came out of the first worldwide slaughter). Errico Malatesta wrote: *"Once the monarchical authorities are overthrown, the police corps destroyed, the army dissolved, we will not recognise any new government, especially if it is a central government with the pretence of directing and regulating the movement. We will urge the workers to take total possession of the land, the factories, the railways, the ships, in short, of all means of production, to organise the new production at once, to abandon forever useless and harmful occupations and temporarily those of luxury, and to concentrate the maximum of their forces on the production of foodstuffs and other essentials. We will encourage the collection and economy of all existing products and the organisation of local consumption and exchange between neighbouring and distant localities, in accordance with the requirements of justice and the needs and possibilities of the moment. We will encourage the occupation of empty and under-occupied houses so that no one will be without a roof over their heads and each person would have accommodation corresponding to the space available in relation to the population. We will hasten the destruction of banks, property titles and everything that represents and guarantees the power of the state and capitalist privilege; and we will try to reorganise things in such a way that it will be impossible for bourgeois society to be reconstituted."*

That's very schematised what revolution would consist of and which role anarchists would play according to the unwavering Neapolitan subversive. A rath-

er clear conception in spite of the huge obstacles such a process would imply, and widely shared by a sizeable chunk of the comrades during that period. Certainly, like today, the anarchist movement was criss-crossed by a multitude of discussions, debates and conflicts. For example, there were those who, like Malatesta, were in favour of setting up a federative and unitary anarchist organisation with a formal structure, a shared program, commissions, etc. and those who favoured individual initiative, dispersed propaganda and free association based on affinity, outside of any permanent structure and without any type of centralisation. There were anarchist favourable to an alliance with political parties (socialist, communist, republican) to overthrow monarchy and others who vehemently opposed these "common fronts" with authoritarians and reformists. There were those who favoured the armed strike and the occupation of factories, while others engaged in "libertarian education" and still others hurried to attack the representatives and structures of domination without waiting for the masses. Nevertheless and in spite of these huge differences of visions and methods, I think that I'm not mistaken when I say that most of them would share a conception of the revolutionary process that is similar to the one quoted previously. Armed insurrection of the population, destruction of the church and state, expropriation of the bourgeoisie and collectivisation of the land, means of production and fruit of labour, and abolition of property would be the stages through which the proletariat would achieve to appropriate their lives, freeing themselves of the rule of the exploiters. These weren't just nice words and the comrades at the time were certainly not naive or deluded people. They were aware of the huge price such a process would demand and many have fallen in the effort for an upheaval.

What can we retain from such an anarchist conception of revolution one century after the article of Malatesta? I do have the impression that a certain amount of comrades continue to have implicitly in mind the several stages (among others) as mentioned by Malatesta, even if today we rarely hear anarchists discuss "how to make a revolution". Many radicals imagine a series of proletarian uprisings leading up to a decisive confrontation with the forces of domination and to the *appropriation* of the means of production. But things have changed since the period of Malatesta and they continue to change at such a speed that our understanding of the world seems to be always falling short faced with reality.

Anarchy can only be anti-industrial

A century ago industrial society with its mines, oil wells, factories and railroads, already began to spread its tentacles in a part of the world. But today we reached such a level of dispossession and disaster that we are obliged to look back and even question some of the founding ideas of anarchism. We are far removed from the big hopes that progress provoked, also within the enemies of domination. Malatesta wrote that "the production done by everyone for the benefit of everyone else with the aid of mechanics and chemistry can indefinitely grow". A significant part of revolutionaries were convinced that a techno-scientific development under the control of workers and for the benefit of them, would be a kind of cure-all that would be able to end the exhausting tasks of humanity. According to this vision, the powerful technologies of capitalist society (trains, planes, cars, industrial machines, etc.) could be still manufactured in a society without class or hierarchy. The control of the means of production would "only" need to pass from the boss to the "proletarians". The two most important revolutionary attempts in Europe – in Russia and in Spain, despite the differences concerning circumstances and relation between authoritarians and anti- authoritarians – show how this handover established in fact a new hierarchy and kept the division of labour, specialisation and alienation. Even under the banners of the CNT in Spain the exploitation of workers continued to exist and the refusal, strikes and conflicts in the workplace multiplied. Already at that time and even if industrialisation was still recent (the twenties or thirties of the 20th century), there was no possibility for a libertarian appropriation of the industrial world at least on a big scale. To keep the factories meant to keep exploitation alive, but few revolutionaries seemed to fully understand it.

Now, think for a moment about the lives of a big part of our contemporaries. When we look into everything that's behind every gesture, every action of the "modern human" we see a scenario of death and destruction on a huge scale. Where do

our clothes and food come from? From extensive land masses controlled by the agro-industry, flooded with pesticides and artificial fertilizers, worked by machines dependant on oil and, more and more, by robots. How do we move around? By machines manufactured by slaves in the four corners of the planet, functioning on oil or nuclear energy. And what to say about computers, smartphones and all of the internet infrastructure? About the technologies and drugs which we treat ourselves with? No matter which point we start from, we arrive at expropriated, devastated, poisoned lands on the five continents. At huge mines of copper, gold, lithium, rare minerals and so on, with their ponds of cyanide and mercury. At millions of tons of hydrocarbons extracted from the inside of the earth and released into the atmosphere as CO2. At nuclear power plants. At forests razed to the ground. At enormous quantities of chemical, electrical and radio-active waste piling up everywhere. Living species disappear at a dizzying rate, water sources diminish drastically, the climate warms up.

To separate the "environmental question" from the "social question" makes no sense and can only favour the interests of capitalists and politicians. It's clear that the human being like all other species, suffers the consequences of industrial exploitation. Everywhere the destruction of the planet goes together with disasters, famines and wars without end for the control of raw materials. The rhythm of the devastations provoked by industrial domination accelerates every second, every minute that passes. It's the logic inherent to accumulation and profit that demands to cut costs, to speed up, to produce more of the same and produce new stuff. The tentacles of the machines reach every corner of the planet and beyond; from the tops of the Andes to the bottoms of the oceans, from the Amazon forests to the Sahel, from the underground to space where we send dozens of thousands of satellites and where we now also seek to exploit raw materials.

In this world where everything becomes artificial, where every human individual becomes a cog in a machine that nobody can entirely control. In this world where loss of sense and despair become stupor, cynicism and blind violence... We come back to the initial question; *which revolution* is possible and desirable? To me it seems inescapable that we'll see evermore frequent scenarios of violent confrontations between exploited and exploiters, between military forces protecting a privileged population and a multitude of starving, poisoned, enslaved people (isn't that already the case for that so-called "third world" forced to migrate?) and as well, wars for survival between the poor. Which possibilities of a radical transformation can open and in which direction do we have to push as anarchists?

A first observation seems unavoidable today. The problem isn't only who owns the means of production and the fruit of labour. The problem is actually *the existence and the nature itself* of the means of production and its products. The expropriation and the self-management of the existent, of the industrial machinery in which we are all submerged, are certainly not desirable objectives. And they're also impossible. Take oil for example. This resource is concentrated in a rather limited amount of regions and without it the contemporary world will stop working. How would the extraction and worldwide distribution be managed by the workers themselves? How could they do without a hierarchical and militarised organisation?

Liberation is impossible without the end of the death machine. I'm deeply convinced that this is the only possible exit and that our efforts should go in that direction even if such a conclusion can seem absurd and crazy in the eyes of a big part of the population. This necessary path – for those who strive for freedom or who simply are determined to halt the definitive extermination of the living by the industrial world – entails a long and tortuous road. I think we can no longer avoid the hugeness of the obstacles and the challenges that are on this road.

A painful split

It's not an exaggeration to compare a big part of humanity to being terminally ill and of which the survival depends on its connection to a power supply. In a feature of the Revue Militaire Suisse, dedicated to the black-out hypothesis, this is clearly shown from the point of an evaluation of the degree of interdependence upon infrastructure that's considered to be "critical". The concept of "criticality" defines the capacity of the components of a system to spread potential disruptions. *"An external disruption only produces local and small damages in a "low-criticality" system, because the components of the system are sparsely linked between each other or not at all. On the contrary, in a so-called "high-criticality" system, a disruption (even a small one) spreads to a big part of the system causing important damages, or destroying certain components. If the criticality is higher, the probability increases of a snowball effect that spreads from one system to another or from one critical infrastructure to another. Thus a society with limited interdependence between its different critical sectors will be less impacted in case of a black-out than a society that's highly interdependent like the so-called developed countries. The damages will be far more considerable for an ultra-connected society."* Among the mentioned "critical infrastructures", those responsible for the power supply play a vital role. A prolonged interruption of the power supply of a country will provoke the halt of the information

and telecommunication systems, of the banks and financial services, of the transport of commodities, but also of the drinkable water supply, of the treatment of sewage water and of hospital services. According to this study, an interruption of the power supply during eight days causes a cascading effect capable of provoking *a definitive collapse of society*. Certainly, the mega-machine will collapse, but with it probably a high number of human lives because of their lack of autonomy (including water, food and healthcare).

According to the same experts at the service of domination, this scenario isn't science-fiction. The electrical infrastructure is ageing, fragile and the "risk factors" multiply. Natural catastrophes (floods, snow, heat waves, ice, wind or solar storms, pandemics, etc.), overload of the grid, industrial explosions or accidents (possibly nuclear), technical and digital problems, sabotage, attacks, cyberattacks or human errors are all potential triggers. Concerning the link between a possible pandemic and a black-out, this text from 2018 states: *"a pandemic can reduce the amount of employees greatly. They can be absent because they're sick, or because they have to take care of others, or because they fear for their own health. In these conditions, the electrical grid could be understaffed; a factor that could lead to a black-out."*

Two years later, in the middle of the Covid19 crisis, this image of a *collapse* is very present. States multiply the calls to "resilience", to adapt to always more precarious conditions but certainly not to try changing course. In a desperate move to continue the march of progress, domination takes measures that are paradoxically making its functioning more fragile. Telework, 5G and everything digital increase the degree of criticality of every component of the system. As the Revue Militaire Suisse stressed; *"the risk of a black-out increases proportionally with the increase in hyper-connectivity"*.

The suicidal march of the techno-industrial society will sweep with it a part of humanity, it's already doing so. Should we act *in favour of* the collapse before the technological control becomes omnipresent, before the forests are razed to the ground, before the wild fauna has disappeared, before the air becomes unbreathable? The subversives of the 21st century are cruelly confronted to this question. Given the level of interdependence between our sick species and its lethal creations, we are stuck between the "safety" of a fatal destiny and the insecurity of a path of freedom and revolt. Today more than yesterday, actions of rupture can have heavy consequences. These last years we heard on several occasions the state propaganda against sabotage of infrastructure and telecommunication; they would be "irresponsible" actions that put people's lives in danger, specifically those of older people who wouldn't be able to reach the emergency services. It's a blackmail that the powerful use and will always use to isolate and repress the rebels. It wants to put the weight on them of the generalised dispossession and misery, the loss of autonomy, the social and ecological disaster provoked by this lethal system. By the way, the same discourse today used against saboteurs, was used yesterday against the yellow vests who blocked roads with heavy consequences for society. And it could be used in case of a massive strike that would fast provoke shortages. Every radical action against the course of this society, if it's the expression of a handful of rebels or of an insurgent mass, will bring chaotic situations and sometimes big difficulties for the population. That was true one century ago and it's even more so today in a time where a big part of the population seems incapable of living without technological prostheses.

On the other hand, if we cannot take on the responsibility of the dispossession and loss of autonomy of humanity and it shouldn't put a brake on our actions, we should totally take responsibility for our choices and actions as anarchists and revolutionaries. We didn't choose to live in this world, nevertheless we take every day decisions that can go in one direction or another and it's up to every individual and every group to measure and evaluate the impact of their actions. Personally, I think that even if we can be disgusted by the widespread passivity or worse, the support of the masses for the values of domination, there's no desirable change possible starting from a hate against such generic and unreal categories as "the people" or "humanity".

That's why I think discourses advocating "disasters" and waiting with a kind of mystical faith in the "collapse", are rather dangerous. We cannot – as the defenders of the order do – put on a same level insurrections and deadly events (accidents, shortages, climatic events, etc.) that can disrupt normality. Even if in both cases we'll probably witness big changes and dramatic consequences, the first is a social phenomenon motivated by a refusal and – eventually – a will to change, that can carry the seeds of something radically different, the start of a transformation; while the second are new conditions, maybe even harder, that – even if they can cause a "collapse" of the techno-industrial system – will not bring about mechanically a change in the social relations at the base of this system. Said in a schematic and without a doubt simplistic way; a "collapse" created by a series of revolts and insurrections can open the door for new forms of solidarity and more free and decentralised social organisations, while a "collapse" imposed by "exterior" conditions would rather have the effect of creating

panic, a need of security and a competition for survival. Of course, in the two cases there will be both; egoism *and* solidarity, as well as the emergence of more free forms of organising and more authoritarian ones. But to think that eventually, all that matters is that the world of today collapses, never mind the reason, would amount to considering every effort for a revolutionary upheaval redundant. In such a case all we would do would be accelerate or trigger the process of collapse, that would supposedly bring almost mechanically also a transformation of the social relations. Finally, this vision doesn't give space to ideas, individuals and subjectivities.

Minority action

I don't think that an apocalyptic collapse like imagined in the cinema and literature is desirable. My actions don't aim to provoke the death of millions, my struggle – our struggle – doesn't aim for human extinction but for the death of a system that is provoking the extinction of thousands of species and that if it will not be stopped before, will maybe one day erase us from the face of the earth. I don't see other alternatives; either we continue at full speed towards a series of inevitable disasters (that have already begun by the way) or we become aware, pull the emergency brake and get off the train. Certain events seem to suggest that a refusal of the technological colonisation of our lives has already begun to manifest itself and to spread. Between March 2020 and March 2021, in the middle of a period of a techno-police overhaul of society with the pretext of the health emergency, in France alone we've heard of 174 acts of sabotage – one every other day – targeting the telecommunication infrastructure. Unfortunately due to the repression, we discovered that persons with rather different ideas, perspectives and journeys have carried out these attacks. Nevertheless a similar concern and a certain saturation towards the hi-tech and ultra-connected world were expressed through these actions.

In this context a dialogue is starting between those who from an anti-authoritarian base share the perspective of direct action against the veins of domination. It seems interesting to me to pick up the threads again of this debate that doesn't only deal with questions of "strategy" but also of the meaning and objectives of subversive actions.

In a text titled *"Quelques réflexions sur les attaques d'antennes relais"* first published on Indymedia Nantes and republished by the anarchist bulletin *Avis de tempêtes*, the question is raised about *"looking further"* than these *"holes in the net that can be repaired in a matter of hours or days in the best of cases"*. The author(s), while stressing the relevance of cell towers as accessible and spread-

out targets, propose to go further, to coordinate, to *"concentrate on the critical pieces of this system if we want to deliver really harmful blows"*. Two attacks during the Big Lockdown of March until May 2020 are mentioned as examples; the cutting of several optic fibre cables in the region of Paris on the 5th of May, causing a significant breakdown of telecommunications (links cut between local and European data-centres, more than 100 000 people without telephone or internet connection, including big companies and police stations) and the coordinated arson on the 17th of May of three cell towers around Grenoble (hundreds of thousands of persons without internet, television and radio during several days). The authors of the text also mention the importance of the electrical infrastructure in the functioning of the techno-industrial system and the possibilities of an electrical black-out for subversives. In this perspective, the necessity of taking the step *"from what can be lumped together as practices of a low-intensity conflict to what can become a more open conflict"* is determined by an urgency due to the destruction by this society, that wrecks nature and imposes its total control, but is also a matter of a certain pessimism towards the possibilities of a generalised upheaval; *"no time any more for hoping that an umpteenth social movement will become uncontrollable if we break enough windows, or for hoping that because of the small examples of spread-out sabotage an evermore obedient mass becomes a furious mass"*.

At least two texts followed up on these *"several thoughts"*. The first, *"A l'assaut de l'existant"*, sent to *Avis de tempêtes* in July and published in the issue of 15th August in that bulletin and the second, *"Ethique et stratégie"* is part of the pamphlet *"Des singes, pas de savants. Récits et réflections en temps de confinement"*, *"written by several hands in the summer of 2020"*.

The first one, even if it's not a direct answer to the text published on Indymedia, analyses the proliferation of attacks on infrastructure of the domination from a different angle. While starting from the same – *individual* – urgency to act without waiting against *"this world of organised submission, resignation and passivity"*, the author thinks that the *"simple multiplication of action groups"* will unfortunately not satisfy the necessity of demolishing the structures of domination and the social relations that are its pillars. Actions with small numbers *"doesn't necessarily mean acting in isolation, and if power doesn't lie in numbers but in its spread-out and uncontrollable character, the question than becomes [...] how, starting from oneself, to contribute while favouring, extending, hastening or escalating the social war"*. While analysing the numerous acts of sabotage against the telecommunication infrastructure, the author criticises a vision of attack centred on the idea of effectiveness and shows that they can be evaluated by criteria that are not purely quantitative (reaching a maximum number of persons, creating a disruption that takes as long as possible to repair), taking into account for example the characteristics of the place and the moment of the action, or the specific projects or companies that the sabotage impacts. Finally, according to this text, a quantitative vision doesn't have to take the upper hand over the qualitative dimension of actions; *"can we not simply say that a sabotage succeeded (or was "effective") when we accomplished what we wanted to do with the means we used? That it is first of all a question of singularity, that it's a moment when we can reach for the action, for that fleeting moment of quality when we finally have a grip on our lives and on the stars?"*

The critique in the text *"Ethique et stratégie"* joins in certain aspects, the one of *"A l'assaut de l'existant"*. The text compares the underlying vision of the *"Quelques réflexions"* text to the environmentalism of the Deep Green Resistance group. What is criticised here is a *"systemic, cybernetic and catastrophist"* vision of ecology, *"a prisoner to defensive attitudes and the sacralisation of the living"*. The author of *"Ethique et stratégie"* states; *"it's not for saving an ecosystem that I fight, and neither for social equality. I fight to experience that this bloody world isn't immoveable, that the mega-machine isn't indestructible, that the Leviathan isn't an almighty god."* Starting from there, any consideration based on criteria of objective effectiveness and any kind of planned strategy is brushed aside; *"the only strategy that has sense to me is the one which consists of an analysis of every situation, every upheaval, by persons that act themselves."* Telecommunications and energy are seen by the author as *"strategic targets"* because *"they allow to experiment perspectives of black-out, and behind them, to attempt to break with the myth of a society in an indestructible network [...] But there's not a common sense "thing to do" [...] Attack is an inquiry, a means of knowing the world at the same time as its critique in action"*.

I share a part of the critiques brought up by the two last texts I summarised here. To think that an action group or different action groups can once and for all stop the exploitation, control and alienation machine by increasing the power or effectiveness of their actions brings back at best (as stressed in the *"Ethique et stratégie"* text) the old myth of Revolution and at worst, a delusion of omnipotence that can easily tip us in the world of authority and in military logic. That's why I refuse any conception that opposes on one side a handful of enlightened revolutionaries and on the other a bad power as if between these two camps there's only a desert of passivity and resignation. Domination in its different forms arises first of all from a complex set of social relations and these relations are criss-crossed by conflicts. Like a comrade wrote some years ago; *"to stay prisoners of the ideology of victory means to not understand that an active minority, whatever it might be, can never really win, because this victory would be the defeat of any possibility of limitless freedom. If we want to talk about victory, it has to be first of all the masses in revolt, freely associated in new social creations, capable of giving birth to different, incredible, vital formations, of a kind that no imagination, even the most unrestrained, can conceive of starting from the repressive mud that oppresses and surrounds us today [...] The struggle has many nuances and one objective; to act in a way that it can become the most far-reaching as possible."*

According to me that has nothing to do with waiting for the masses to move and then to attack, neither with that annoying idea that comes back every so often that "we shouldn't do what the masses will not understand", which implies if we follow through on the logic, to lower our level of conflict until we fall in the mud of demands and reformism. By the way, the "masses in revolt" to take the words used beforehand only have an existence of its own from an abstract and ideological viewpoint. I prefer to see a multitude of individuals who find each other in a journey of struggle and, better, of self-emancipation, and thus who in a certain way rebel against their "being a mass".

But, again, I don't think there's anything mechanical about insurrections and revolutions. I think it is first of all due to the initiatives of minorities and the spreading of revolutionary ideas that the conflict can deepen and reach a real breaking point. Even if certain conditions of social exclusion, oppression and exploitation can wear down the spirits until pushing a part of individuals to not accept chains,

suffering and humiliations any more. The refusal of a specific oppression – for example, the imposition of the patriarchal order, the police, wage exploitation, or an industrial pollution – are starting points. But this refusal will not be enough to push the revolt over certain limits from where recuperation is no longer possible. I'm convinced that the propagation of horizons of freedom, of radically different worlds, first being shaped inside ourselves, can open this possibility. "We" – that much-touted "active minority" – have to cultivate these images of freedom. And not only through theories and writings, but also and most of all through actions that target the causes of our dispossession and our exploitation. That's what anarchists called one century ago "propaganda by the deed".

Minority action is first of all the individual experience of a qualitative dimension radically opposed to the reproduction of daily life, to the mind-numbing '*doing*' of work, of obedience and of passivity. But the purpose of actions doesn't stay enclosed in this individual dimension. Every hit against the dominant order is part of a larger context where it can have different meanings and perspectives, showing the fragility of domination and broadening the scope of possibilities. Even if an action or a series of actions carried out by a small minority of the population isn't enough to radically change the course of things. It's true that every act of revolt, every direct action is important and has a meaning of its own. But certain attacks – targeting important hubs – have a stronger impact on the flow of goods and data and allow the critique in action of this deadly normality to reach a greater amount of people. Certain targets need more research, more effort, more imagination and more organisation than others, but that doesn't mean that those actions are not "reproducible". Setting up a hierarchy between actions is an error that we have to avoid at any cost. But the proposal of creating a coordination between action groups to create more severe disruptions, as well as the proposal to look towards the nerve centres of the system, doesn't imply to sacrifice an anti-authoritarian ethic in the name of effectiveness. The question is rather; what do we expect of an action? According to me, it would be illusory and dangerous to think of minority action as a magic key capable of halting domination. Small groups can slowdown the advance of the juggernaut, but I don't think they can stop it once and for all. We cannot reduce domination to its technological tool set, just as we shouldn't reduce the impact of actions to the damages they cause and underestimate the meaning they carry in a situation that's not quite pacified.

Here and now, but with an eye on the future

In the coming years, most probably, struggles against industrial nuisances will continue to escalate with the piling up of social tensions, ecological and health disasters, energy shortages, increased plunder and ravaging of territories. An anarchist critique of techno-industrial society can reach many ears. The horrors caused by the exploitation of the living is more and more obvious in the eyes of a big number of people. If we think that there's only "a mass complicit in the system" around us, we chose to ignore all the diverse refusals that begin to explode here and there. In that case we can fall for a faith in a cathartic catastrophe and for a narcissist glorification of our own actions. On the contrary, if we look to the prison-world that surrounds us with a more clear-headed view, we can spot the cracks in the walls that imprison us. Cracks that we can widen into ruptures in a struggle that doesn't want to conquer the existent but wants to destroy it and lay the bases for a new life.

The issue isn't to wait for the masses, to convince them of the legitimacy of our ideas, to act step-by-step without scaring the honest workers. But it's also not to declare a private war on power, to despise "the people" and to fetishise action. We are anarchists and we act as anarchists, starting from our ethical position, our analyses and our perspective. All things considered, our words, our actions and maybe even our lives are a *proposal*, which is very different of an authoritarian project of revolution and society like the Marxists with their programs. *To formulate a proposal in actions* doesn't mean to be a guide in the struggle and even less to impose it, but to create a discourse and practices that have a potential of rupture and transformation. In the worst case scenario, this proposal will be ignored, ridiculed, misunderstood; but we will have lived our lives in the beauty of our ideas, we will have burned but from our own light, we will not have lived in the shadow of a church. At best... who will tell what will happen in the future? When I look back ten or

fifteen years ago, I wouldn't have predicted a lot of the explosions of rage that happened and I don't think they will stop happening, on the contrary.

This text is an invitation to not refuse a view towards the future, to not fear to go beyond the moment, to think in terms of a revolutionary proposal. To stop believing in the myth of the Revolution, to stop believing in the myth of Progress… that's certainly freeing oneself of heavy shackles. But that doesn't mean to renounce a project of radical transformation of the world. This upheaval can only be thought of in the long-term and I imagine it as a slow process of *disintegration*. What would happen if always more numerous acts of sabotage against vital infrastructures of domination would start to seriously disrupt the interconnection on which the economy and state depend? If the resistance against nuisances (mining, energy or transport infrastructure, etc.) would become hotbeds of autonomy and insurrection and if states would start to lose control over certain parts of their territories? If a part of humanity would start to destroy the metropolises and to transform space by taking it away from the grip of the economy and power, creating unseen forms of activity, of relations and exchange? This could seem totally unreal today but it's in this direction that our efforts have to go, according to me. It's not about drawing up programs, tracing predetermined paths, but to dare to state our desires also if we're a very small minority who wants to go in this direction. Isn't it maybe aspirations (precisely, utopian ones) that we need – to struggle, to regain the strength to fight faced with a gloomy reality that killed all hope in the possibility of change? A view towards *what we want* seems necessary today to develop analyses that are capable of directing our work of agitation and our actions. Without drowning in wishful thinking, without lying to oneself and others, but persevering in our will of upheaval and transformation.

Bismuto

For a Few Spits More

Previously published as Pour quelques mollards de plus *in Soleil noir (Bulletin apériodique anarchiste), Issue 2, May 2021*

"This period that we entered created the need to rethink any revolutionary intervention, to understand the important changes that are at stake now, to grasp how new authoritarian mechanisms go together with older mechanisms to shape a world where the configuration of domination and exploitation becomes even more dense, conquers even more terrain."

Un rétif, *J'irai cracher sur vos masques*,
Soleil noir, Issue 1, July 2020

"What does this new life actually consist of, inspired by the catastrophist discourse in which some see the opportunity to create "a new humanism with Fukushima", probably meaning a humanism that's finally at the level of the human who's totally submitted to their condition of survivor?"

Thierry Ribault, *Contre la résilience à Fukushima et ailleurs*, 2021

There we have it. It continues. New lockdown, new health emergency measures. It has been months that it lasts and it keeps going. The authorities confine and de-confine us according to their own interests, they order us or don't to wear a mask, to fill in forms, they multiply the paradoxical orders. Most of the time when we go out on the street we don't even know what we're allowed to do or not.

These measures leave us lost, dazed, in shock, isolated, atomised, broken by the monotonous and stifling repetition of our *lives under sanitary constraint*; metro, work, confinement!

We have to make do, it's now in the name of health and life that we're disciplined and blamed. It's in the name of health or environmental safety that the few freedoms that this society is still capable of promising us are cut down even more drastically.

It's the very nature of the *catastrophist discourse*. The last decades there has been a persistent attempt to impose this logic on us by some elites that have timely been won over by the environmental transition theories to extend more sustainably and effectively their domination.

The catastrophe isn't anymore – like it was for many years – denied, but on the contrary it has become inherent to our existence. It's not anymore about

avoiding disasters – that our societies mass-produce, but to live in the middle of the rubble, of the radio-active waste left by the nuclearists of the whole world and of the consequences of climate change that only a couple of fanatics still dispute.

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It's hard to estimate what will last of this mass subjection when the epidemic recedes. A slowly absorbed and sustainable obedience or a reinforced distrust towards authority? Without a doubt a bit of both.

What's clear is that the experience is so total that it extends the shock wave to every fold of our lives. In the countryside, the real estate prices already shoot up, which will change lifestyles and landscapes. Everywhere everyone is called to withdraw into their personal sphere and the troika of work, family and economy (so dear to all authoritarian regimes) is making its big comeback. Every gesture is subject to increasingly invasive rules of behaviour. The traceability of beings is imposed in the name of life. The dematerialization of our relations and of work produces an increasingly distant world.

Of course this disciplining of bodies and ideas isn't applied everywhere and to everyone with the same strictness. Weekends at the countryside and holiday homes for the bourgeoisie, the hell of cramped apartments and bans on gatherings for the poorest...

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Does a society have to be paralysed with fear to treat its youth and the poorest as a criminal class? Parties and the smallest sparks of social life have been transformed in the span of some months into *"endangering the life of others"*. Does an era have to be out of promises when gathering and breaking the greyness of confinement becomes an offence?

These are the essential crimes of a century that however doesn't lack in real mass criminals: industries destroying lives, forests, lakes to plunder some rare minerals for the roll-out of the infrastructure for their global trade, predatory states bombing populations in the name of peace, bosses pushing their employees to suicide and misery, racists methodically preparing a civil war, religious fanatics seeding their holy wars with explosives and kalashnikovs, males beating to death those who they consider "their women", judges mass-incarcerating to uphold the order of the world...

Cherishing ad nauseam an eternal promise of safety – that this era totally submitted to the only freedom of goods seems to be incapable of fulfilling, our dear rulers profit from it to sacrifice the most basic of our freedoms on the altar of this illusion. Ours more than theirs, that goes without saying.

For the occasion the eternal scapegoats appear again, those which anthropology has systematically and methodically recognized in every period of epidemics. In the obscure times of the big plagues, it was the non-believers, the godless and the blasphemers who are hunted or made responsible of the spread of the epidemic. Today, it is those who didn't give up on making good use of their freedom in these disastrous times who are continually tracked or subjugated to the mob trials of the small screen.

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This subjugation of time to a normality under sanitary constraints still tempts to spit on the masks that cover faces, on the social distancing that they practice.

Not to spit on the objects that allow to legitimately protect against sickness, but on the social and human relation of which they are the omnipresent symbols, from the street to the workplace. To spit to rebel against our effective dispossession faced with the sicknesses that this world possibly doesn't create, but at least spreads. To spit on the masks that the state obliged us to wear under threat of sanctions in certain places or refused to supply in other places. To spit on the traceability that the submission to the medical order tries to justify, on the temperature takings imposed in certain spaces, on the sanitary brigades, on the digital applications and their tracking of the sick. In short, on this life under sanitary constraints that is legitimised by the epidemic.

Let's not be misunderstood, it's neither about denying the real effects of the epidemic, nor to give

some kind of moralistic lesson and to give rise to a counter-blaming of those who wish to meticulously follow the health recommendations of the scientific authorities, and even less about imposing counter-norms like the refusal of wearing masks or transforming such counter-norms into essential acts of rebellion.

On the contrary, it's about refusing that a lifestyle under sanitary constraints would be imposed on us and that a world under a glass dome becomes our daily scenery, reducing our existence to biological survival and the reproduction of our work force.

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The coronavirus crisis that has hit the planet head-on, has hastened the appearance of this society under sanitary constraints. Far from protecting our lives, the measures the state rapidly took were aimed at preserving the economy and their own interests.

From that moment on, the authorities have only statistically and predictively managed – based on a costs benefits calculation – the resources and work force that we are. They have taken away from us every possibility to take our own decisions right into the most intimate aspects of our lives. We have since become, even more than usually, spectators to a world that evades us.

It's once more a *generalised active separation* that dominates our era. We are prompted to give up again a part of our autonomy and the state is offered the occasion to interfere even more in our lives through its social and repressive function.

As we are separated from what we produce at work and what we consume during time off, we are now dispossessed of our conditions for survival. That's why everything that surrounds us appears to us even more *foreign* than yesterday. Cities and the countryside transform in huge sleeping quarters under supervision, with certificates for movement, with curfews. Our lives are still a bit more distorted from their essential meaning.

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In the name of health and life and backed by the medical and scientific authorities, the conditions of a new and sustainable subjugation have taken shape; traceability of the human livestock, expansion of management techniques based on the individual responsibility ethic, development of the digital enclosure, implementation of surveillance of movements and protective measures, improvement of new management techniques of work, hardening of working conditions, dramatic reduction of the most basic of freedoms...

After several months that looked like a "release on parole", a second confinement resumed. It was clear again that the survival of the economy is more important to our rulers than human life. To metro, work, confinement/de-confinement followed metro, work, curfew and then again metro, work, confinement so that again metro, work, de-confinement can follow. But the priority of our pandemic managers is to save the economy from a pandemic shock. Plainly, that we give up on life in order to avoid sickness and absenteeism, and to guarantee the reproduction of our work force.

In the name of the protection of biological life, confinement and curfew demand our total submission to the security of their economical interests.

Once more, it is the most precarious, the poorest, as well as the most recalcitrant, who receive the blows; crammed in prisons, psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, factories, public transport, apartment blocks or schools. And outside, it's repression at work.

Of course, domination seizes the opportunity to hasten its blows and to prepare the repressive arsenal capable of answering to a social and economical crisis: comprehensive security law, new plan for the building of prisons, reform of the unemployment insurance, etc.

The announced economical changes are also there. The 5G antennas – part of the technological infrastructure of this terrifying *new world* – spring from the ground at a stunning speed. They announce the acceleration and the generalisation of new forms of work and management captivated by algorithms. But they are also the expansion of that same management ideology of the preservation of our collective health. We are transformed in little epidemic managers, pushed to measure the costs-benefits ratio of every gesture, to accept to take distance from our loved ones and our feelings, to "self-manage" that which the authorities authorize us to self-manage: our smooth running and our integration in the production and consumption line.

Just as the new management logic which fakes horizontal organization and is evermore present in companies, it has nothing to do with deciding for yourself but it's to reach goals set elsewhere and to keep up the profit margins.

In this society of *permanent crises*, there also emerges the deepening and generalisation of a liberal insurance system of health and social credit. Our insurance coverage will without a doubt be increasingly submitted to the traceability of our behaviour and to the calculation of our potential risks...

On this occasion, the state as well as capital expose how capitalism and the bourgeoisie perceive the inferior human species to which we belong. Working plebs or reserve army, we are reduced to the most basic of needs for the survival of the economy. We are confined to our essential usefulness: to consume and produce.

For the rest, it's over and out with culture, social life, desires and the free lifestyles that supposedly had to be saved from terrorism in 2015. The psychological and human damages are already significant and the anger is brewing more than in March and April 2020. However, the situation stays mainly under control. It is often lines of flight that prevail; mutual aid, solidarity, coping instead of conflict and revolt.

Even so – as was already said in the text *"J'irai cracher sur vos masques"* published in the previous bulletin – the situation is far from being decided: *"Because of its excess of administration of lives and domination, its greed for surveillance, but also because of its increase of exploitation and precariousness, this crisis sparks the escalation of tensions that are sometimes old, sometimes new, and it's still hard to measure the explosiveness."*

These tensions that seem to stay under the radar of the ideological software of the ruling or radical left, could shape new revolts and stimulate a regained taste for freedom.

A poster – seen on some walls and signed by some enemies of the best of sanitary worlds – incited to: *"Become again the lovers and masters of freedom that we should never have stopped to be, and let's feed the fire that maybe smoulders under the ashes."*

Un rétif

(I'm grateful to the zine Quetton l'Arttotal for inspiring the title of this text.)

To Set Up Dikes Against the Dystopia of State and Bosses

Against the organisation of exclusion and discrimination, against compulsory vaccination

Previously published as Ενάντια στην οργάνωση των αποκλεισμών και των διακρίσεων, ενάντια στον υποχρεωτικό εμβολιασμό *by Συνέλευση ενάντια στην κρατική καταστολή και για την αλληλεγγύη στις καταλήψεις, July 2021*

The health crisis has become intertwined with a sequence of mutually reinforcing crises, as part of a wider systemic crisis, with the declaration of a permanent state of emergency defining the new forms of governance and with the state attempting to proclaim itself the absolute guarantor not only of social security and cohesion, but of life and freedom itself. What an irony!

The imposition of quarantine became the perfect measure of social disciplining, indicating that social control not only wears the uniforms of the police and the army but equally those of science and technology, intervening in new terms and ways in space, time, bodies and our relations, forming new mediations and enclosures. The state management of the so-called pandemic is ultimately nothing more than a laboratory of social control, surveillance, subjugation and counterinsurgency aimed at deepening social divisions and class exploitation. In a so-called health crisis, the question for the states is not to rescue their populations but to avoid being accused of abandoning them, of being unable to guarantee the management of social problems and order, the smooth functioning of the production and circulation of commodities as well as of the most basic commodity: human labour. That is why the objective is to open up the tourism and hospitality industry at all costs, while gatherings in public spaces and squares continue to be targeted.

So what kind of normality are we waiting for?

If today's statesmen are trumpeting "Operation Freedom" as a hope and victory for a "return to normality", let us recall what the walls on the streets of Chile during the 2019 uprising said: the question is not a return to normality, because normality is the problem. For decades now, the imposition of any "new normality" has been incorporating and normalising all the changes brought about by the "state of emergency",

attempting to normalise the constant expansion and deepening of social desertification by the state and capital. And this realisation is not just a theory.

A series of reforms announced before the "COVID-19 crisis" were accelerated during the months-long lockdown. The (anti-)environmental development bill, the bankruptcy code and the law restricting or prohibiting demonstrations are clearly here to stay. As well as the restructuring of education towards more market integration and through deploying battalions of cops in schools while they were closed. The passing of the labour law brought the institutional abolition of the 8-hour working day, the institutionalisation of unpaid overtime, the complete abolition of Sunday holidays, the digital control of space and time through the introduction of teleworking and the criminalisation of strikes while legitimising strike-breaking and impeding union action. The transfer of workers' insurance contributions to private financial investment companies is the next snapshot of this restructuring process. At the same time, migrants have disappeared from the public debate and are rendered invisible through their perpetual confinement in detention centres. The Greek-Turkish rivalry over the EEZs continues on live television. The increase in incidents of gender and domestic violence comes to confirm the deep patriarchal structuring of society, which was institutionally reflected through the passing of the law on co-parenting that expands male patriarchal authority. Patriarchy, nationalism and racism are expressed in increasingly aggressive terms. New technologies of data digitisation and social control are being rapidly mobilised and institutionalised.

And through yet which other "unique solution"?

The advertised vaccination campaign with the not at all random name "Operation Freedom" comes behind the campaign about individual "responsibility" but also about "social distancing", understood as a practice of social solidarity! Beyond any doubts about vaccines against the coronavirus (side-effects, efficacy, reproducibility, introduction of artificial mRNA into the human body – a solution that bypasses even their own stages and protocols of testing) and beyond the billion-dollar feast for the pharmaceutical companies, the compulsory nature of a medical act – indirectly or directly – introduces new forms of social discrimination, organises new enclosures for our bodies and for our very participation in the social body. Health certificates, like compulsory self-tests and their declaration on digital platforms, visible to bosses and the ministry of labour, constitute new passports of movement (control and exclusion) and means of pressure and punishment.

The blackmails and enclosures of "opening society" are again presented by state employees, expert committees and media as the only truth, as was the case during the lockdown period. Even if individual choices on the current dilemmas do not start from a conscious alignment with state orders, even if they start from different positions or conditions, domination will attempt to homogenise and ideologise them in order to secure the necessary guarantees of social consensus and to continue the march of exploitation of humans and nature by first tightening the grip of state supervision and repression. Modern totalitarianism is rising, while compulsory vaccination is clearly interfering with the self-determination of the body, at the same time as discrimination and exclusion are being institutionalised and organised for those who do not choose to be vaccinated.

Resistance to the new totalitarianism

At the same time as gloom and dystopia spreads through our lives as if on a predetermined trajectory, all of the above is triggering conflict. From the individual refusals because "we're fed up" to the collective resistances of social/class struggles, student mobilisations, solidarity demonstrations for hunger striker D. Koufontinas, and the insurrectionary events of the demonstration of rage in Nea Smyrni (March 9). Moments of struggle that forced the state to retreat to prevent a generalised social conflict that could erupt as an outgrowth of social dynamics after a year of stifling bans.

The war we are living through is not only a matter of the rulers. And it is not a war against invisible enemies. It is our war, class and social. So let us consciously become the error in the domination rationale of discipline and subjugation. Let us undermine in every way the imposition of the new normal. For it is the intelligence and imagination of the exploited and oppressed, the anti-hierarchical logic, the removal of superficial divisions, reciprocity and mutual aid, unconstrained struggles and radical choices that introduce the possibility of "storming the heavens". As a creative destruction of the power matrix, as a process of emancipation, as the invention of a new type of social relations and collective forms of life – free and equal.

To resist the imposition of compulsory vaccination and generalised control.
To confront the regime of discrimination, enclosures and exclusions.
To undermine in every way the imposition of the new state of capitalist, patriarchal, nationalist, racist, techno-governmental normality.
To attempt the self-determination of space, time, our bodies, our entire lives.

Assembly against state repression and in solidarity with the squats

From One Vulnerability, Another

Previously published as D'une vulnérabilité l'autre *in Avis de tempêtes (Bulletin anarchiste pour la guerre sociale), Issue 39, March 2021*

On the microscopic scale, the destruction of autonomy (the reduction of spaces to determine your life) through the introduction of evermore technological prostheses can only give way to a biting despair. A sensation that correlates with the degree of depreciation and abrasion that you're subjected to. The wheel of progress turns ever faster. Before, broad transformations in society could span several generations. Today, inside the space of one generation it sometimes seems that you're not born in the same world. This explosion of speed requires an extraordinary capacity of human beings to adapt. In response there's a whole range of functional "defects" towards the world's conduct. For example this can be manifested in neurotic or bodily illnesses. Human beings don't live isolated in outer space but indeed inhabit this planet. Every adjustment to their "habitat" influences their possibilities and capacities to reflect, but also to feel and act. This is of course not a privilege of the hyper-technological society that we know today. We could say that every civilization works in this way. Thus the question acquires more depth; from which point on does a sharp adjustment in the habitat leads to a loss of autonomy, a suppression of freedom? If every adjustment is not in itself contrary to freedom? But these are questions that by far surpass the modest reflection of this article.

Let's take a bit of distance from daily life and let's try to think on a macroscopic level. The expansion of the techno-industrial Moloch – which we could call the "*megamachine*", following Lewis Mumford – seems also to go together with an increase in its vulnerability. If the systems are more complex and the techniques become complicated, they are also more vulnerable to a simple breakdown, an incident, an unforeseen event. Because it doesn't effect only an isolated component but the whole system. Or as Günther Anders summarized it; *"The bigger the machine, the more seriously endangered are its parts, which had operated individually before their merger into the larger machine."* And he logically concluded that *"the larger the machine complex, the greater is the catastrophe if the complex breaks down."* Of course this is a theory – or rather, an observation – that has been taken to heart by the system engineers since a long time. The fragility of data networks, the dependence on a centralized electrical grid, the just-in-time production which aims to limit stocks, the interconnection of systems (even the most "vital" ones as the drinking water distribution which depends on the proper functioning of electric pumps); all this keeps on inspiring thousands of studies, projects and strategies to raise the "resilience" of systems. But not without bitterly noting that faced with technological progress, it's like fixing a leak by opening the tap.

This fragility of the megamachine is now part of a discourse surrounding "collapse". The hypothesis is that the technological system is going towards a total failure because of several reasons ranging from a shortage of energy resources to climate changes. We don't want to support a "catastrophic" version which, barring some exceptions, shows itself to be a useful defence of the actual system. Because it only promotes preparations for survival while waiting for the floods to come, instead of focusing on attacks or insurrection (including in its most anti-authoritarian forms). Nevertheless, all the elements have to be taken into account. It is by considering the world in its entirety that our perspectives can become relevant and not by only building castles in the air or by being content with our daydreams of eternal rebels. To say the least it would seem ridiculous to consider insurrection without taking into account the question of the metropolis, of climate change, of cultural flattening, of sectarian hate or of social cannibalism that is brewing, etc. The reflection of anarchist critiques of power – whatever they might be – can take an unexpected depth on the question of autonomy or liberty when faced with the acceleration of devastating climatic events and the frenetic race of a ravaging industrialism. On the condition that it gets rid of the skeletons that still clutter anarchy; programmatism, fear of the unknown, victimism borrowed from the left, determinism borrowed from Marxist materialism, etc. There's still a long way in front of us.

"We need not be surprised, then, that in more than one area the Power Complex has been undergoing severe strain. Though immune to any frontal assault except by another power system of equal size, these giants are particularly vulnerable to localized guerrilla assaults and raids, against which their mass formations are as helpless as was heavily armored Goliath against a nimble David who did not choose to use the same weapons or attack the same part of the anatomy."

Lewis Mumford, *The Pentagon of Power*
(2nd volume of "*The Myth of the Machine*"), 1970

So what about this vulnerability of the megamachine? Is it real or is it one of the many ghosts that have been the travel companions of revolutionaries? There have been the tales of the historical mission of the proletariat, the inherent contradictions of capitalism, the coming awakening of the still dormant masses, the revolution conceived as a Grand Soir, the progressive disappearance of massacres and hatred in humanity, the catharsis caused by wars and catastrophes. Enough reasons to be cautious. A far-flung revolt as the one in Chile in 2019 didn't lead up to an open insurrection. The uprisings in the Arab world have been drowned in blood and gave way to other horrible monsters. The multiplication of the sabotage of cell towers or fibre optics didn't cause an institutional or economical breakdown. This is not to deny that blows have been dealt. Certainly, they weren't deadly but they demonstrated their potential at the same time as their shortcomings. So let's evaluate that fragility, which is here not synonymous with "social revolution" but rather with possibilities of liberty or an extension of chaos from where the unknown can emerge, "good" or "bad". And to that end, let's look closer at one of the backbones of the megamachine: the electrical grid.

On 8 January 2021 at 14:04 CET, the alarm systems turn red when the European electrical grid sees a sharp drop in frequency of the alternating current supply (50 Hertz) [in the North-West Area, the opposite occurred in the South-East]. The cause of this frequency deviation is still not certain but probably it was due to the tripping of a circuit breaker (incident, failure, sabotage... no clarifications on that matter) in a substation in Croatia. The European electrical grid is connected from Warsaw to Paris and from Istanbul to Copenhagen. And for this network to function it needs a stable frequency. The equilibrium between supply and demand of electrical energy has to be guaranteed at all times. The grid deals with fluctuations by [either temporarily reducing the production of electricity or] temporarily supplying additional electricity and reducing the consumption of electricity, specifically of major customers. To stabilise the grid in January 2021, several big industrial sites are disconnected as a matter of urgency (specifically in Italy, France, Austria, Romania, etc.). But also several high voltage lines are cut off (14 in total) because when they cannot maintain the right electric pressure, the electric current will fast find another way (to other lines) which then can result in overcurrent. Thus the totality of lines of the electrical grid is at risk of a snowball effect.

On the Austrian side, the spokesperson of the electricity network operator EVN speaks of an *"almost blackout"*. The incident achieves the third of four warning levels in the European ENTSO-E classification (*"Emergency – Deteriorated situation, including a network split at a large scale. Higher risk for neighbouring systems. Security principles are not fulfilled. Global security is endangered"*). From their side, the French network operator RTE boasts about their "defence barriers" consisting of disconnecting major industrial zones and supplying more electricity through gas power plants or hydroelectric dams. What is certain, is that the European grid – a giant that merits the "megamachine" qualification – is vulnerable, especially because of its size and centralisation.

Let's mention also that new electricity sources (wind and solar), by definition intermittent, cannot manage all these fluctuations in frequency and cannot respond to sudden demands. They cannot function without the support of a more "conventional" electricity production (like coal or gas power plants). Their multiplication on the territory constitutes another element of instability and fragility to the electrical grid. To amend this, mega-batteries are being built a bit everywhere. They would be capable of storing electricity to be supplied to the grid in case of need. But their efficiency is still questionable. In France, RTE started building these mega-batteries on sites in Vingeanne (Côte d'Or), Bellac (Haute-Vienne) and Ventavon (Hautes-Alpes) in the summer of 2020, in addition to their project for a hydroelec-

tric power station for producing and storing energy in Fos-sur-Mer (Bouches du Rhône).

This "incident" in a simple local transformation substation but with serious consequences, reminds us of another rather resounding fact on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. On 17 April 2013 around 1 o'clock in the morning, someone opens a technical vault next to the electrical substation of Coyote (California) and cuts fibre optic cables. It takes a moment before the operator notices. Ten minutes later, another set of cables is cut in a manhole close-by. Thirty minutes pass before the surveillance cameras of the substation register a faraway trail of lights. The investigators believe this to be a signal coming from a flash light. Shortly after, at 1:31 a.m., the cameras register flashes from a rifle and sparks coming off the fence when bullets touch it. At 1:41 a.m. the Sheriff's department receives a call from an operator at the energy centre who heard the shots. The police arrive 10 minutes later, but everything is already back to normal. They arrived one minute after another signal with a flash light marks the end of the attack.

On what were these mysterious attackers firing? On the big transformers of this substation. These are simple things, being nothing more than spirals of copper wire inside metal cages. They also have reservoirs with cooling liquid because of the heat they produce. It was exactly these reservoirs that the shots were aimed at. After being riddled with hundreds of holes, the precious liquid began leaking away. The cops didn't notice that 200 000 litres of oil were slowly being drained. After a short while, the transformers overheated and exploded. 17 out of 21 transformers at the substation were knocked out. One or two more would have immediately put California in the dark. At this occasion, the electricity company could quickly reroute power around the substation. Silicon Valley continued to receive electricity but was asked to limit its power consumption for that day. The damage took 27 days to be repaired. As the FBI itself admitted; *"It doesn't take a very high degree of training or access to technology to carry out this attack."* If several substations would be targeted during the same period, thus preventing a rerouting, it would have been a different story.

On the subject of a "black-out", engineers and officers warned against the fragility of the grid in a recent special report in the *Revue Militaire Suisse* (Issue 5, 2018). They developed several hypothetical scenarios; their conclusions? Setting aside the cause of the breakdown of the electrical grid, in broad strokes it goes like this: if the black-out doesn't last more than a day, restoration goes quickly. If it lasts more than 48 hours, restoring the grid becomes less likely or even impossible. All the instruments that control the networks are powered themselves by electricity and only have an autonomy of 2 to 5 days. Once they run out of battery, someone has to be dispatched to restart them at the same time as the rest of the network. Thus external support is necessary if the network is not restored after 5 days. In case the black-out is only regional, emergency and repair teams can be dispatched on site. If it is national or continental, the situation can last or even be fatal for the whole grid.

Another example, this time from the digital world. On 10 March 2021, a fire erupts in the data centre of OVH in Strasbourg. The private company OVH has the biggest web hosting service of France. The fire allegedly starts at the base of the building where the electrical supply facilities are. That's what the company points to as being the cause; an inverter (changing the electrical frequency) would have caught fire. This explanation sounds reasonable, except that according to reports of employees and firefighters the fire spread extremely rapid. This could indicate several points of origin. Everyone can speculate on the origins of this fire, the authorities can communicate what suits them (it's after all the most important host of France, spearheading the data centres) but a rather less "accidental" cause stays plausible. Moreover because there are worldwide very few examples of data centres that perish in flames due to a technical fault. That said, failure or something else, the result is very "tangible" (our apologies for using this obsolete term in this virtual world). Hundreds of thousands of websites went offline, huge sets of data were lost for companies and institutions. Like a mini-apocalypse in the cloud. It isn't even necessary to go into detail to be able to grasp the vulnerability of the digital megamachine. A significant part depends on a single, physical structure. This depends itself on an uninterrupted connection by fibre optic cables and a constant supply of electricity (because the emergency circuits cannot completely replace the grid).

Recent months have shown us many more examples of the vulnerability of the digital networks. We can think of the cell towers and the transmitters that cut off the communications of millions (as in the case of the fire at the Marseille transmitter in December 2020 or the Limoges one in January 2021), of the sabotage of fibre optic connections (as in the attack in Crest in February), of the manual cuts or burning of fibre optic cables (as in Pierrellat during the same month). Let's bet that the same vulnerability can be found in all networks, including the electrical that feeds everything that exploits, destroys and controls. For understanding to become incisive action, we certainly have to get rid of the ghosts that haunt our spirits and understand, with all it entails, that we're in hostile territory and we have to act accordingly. With joy in our bodies and liberty in our hearts.

5 Years of Travelling with You

Previously published as 5 Jahre mit Euch auf Reisen *on the wwweb, July 2021*

My dears,

Feel warmly embraced by my every written word! It took a while since I last whispered to you from a path nowhere. But as the saying goes; good things take a while.

In my thoughts I cheerfully fire a volley of questions at you – how are you doing, what goes on inside your head, what happens at home, and and and... I would ruthlessly put you against the wall with my questions and everyone of your answers would give rise to ten more questions from me, in the naive hope of somewhere reaching the bottom. And again and again would this mistaken hope be replaced by the most beautiful of realizations; there's no bottom that limits our relations and bonds. It's endlessly deep.

Daily life with its challenges – it doesn't matter how mundane or complex they are – attempts to make us forget this endlessness. It demonstrates that I'm away. Always and again and again. And we all have to learn to name these circumstances; living clandestine, going underground, being on the run... It's good and important to put these words on our physical separation caused by repression, only in this way can you imagine your own picture of it. Nevertheless, this naming, this mental labelling – in whatever area of life – also brings dangers. It limits the possibilities and potential of everything that surrounds us. The anarchist Luigi Lucheni recognized it at the time; a file is nothing more than an object labelled by social norms. Innumerable possibilities will open up if we free it from the socially conditioned associations.

Let us leave aside these labels and their connotations for a while and let us look into our hearts. We aren't physically together anymore, and still it's there; our endless bonds that are based in friendship, in complicity, in affinity and in the liberating urge to subvert – no matter how many time-zones separate us, no matter how different our living conditions might look. We haven't lost anything as long as we carry this feeling in us.

Let us look up to the sky and remind ourselves that we're marvelling at the same moon, that we fight for the freedom of all on the same soil. With everything that thus falls in our hands...

It feels good to know that you have been mentally next to me from the beginning of my five-year-long journey. Thank you for being there. So am I.

With love and 'til we meet again,
your friend and comrade from nowhere

10th of July 2021