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Insurgent Ferocity:

The Playful Violence of Rebellion

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passions includes full and expansive expressions of hatred and rage — and these are violent emotions. Though this violence can be used tactically it will not be systematic. Though it can be intelligent, it will not be rationalized. And under no circumstances is it self-perpetuating, because it is individual and temporary, spending itself fully in its free, passionate expression. Neither moralistic non-violence nor the systematic violence of military struggle can break down authority since both require some form of authority. Only the expansive and passionate violence of insurgent individuals playing alone or with each other has any chance of destroying this society...

*Forward everyone!
And with arms and hearts,
Speech and pen, Dagger and rifle,
Irony and blasphemy,
Theft, poisoning and fire,
Let us make...war on society.*

Dejaque

“We don’t just talk about violence; it is our element, our everyday fate...the conditions we are forced to live in...”

Os Cangacieros

Social control is impossible without violence. Society produces systems of rationalized violence to socialize individuals — to make them into useful resources for society, while some of these systems, such as the military, the police and the penal system can still be viewed separately due to the blatant harshness of their violence, for the most part these systems have become so interconnected and so pervasive that they act as a single totality — the totality which is the society in which we live.

This systemic violence exists mostly as a constant underlying threat — a subtle, even boring, everyday terrorism which incites a fear of stepping out of line. The signs and orders from “superiors” which threaten us with punishment or poverty, the armed, uniformed thugs who are there to “protect and serve” (huh!?!), the barrage of headlines about wars, torture, serial killers and street gangs, all immerse us in an atmosphere of subtle, underlying, rationalized social violence which causes us to fear and repress our own violent passions.

In light of the systematic social violence that surrounds us, it’s no surprise that people are fooled into viewing all violence as a single, monolithic entity rather than as specific acts or ways of relating. The system of violence produced by society does become a monolith which acts to perpetuate itself.

In reaction to this monolithic system of violence, the “pathology of pacifism” develops. Unable to see beyond social categories, the pacifist creates a false dichotomy, limiting the question of violence to the ethical/intellectual choice between acceptance of violence as a monolithic system or the total rejection of violence. But this choice exists only in the realm of worthless abstractions, because in the world in which we actually live, pacifism and systematic violence depend upon each other. Pacifism is an ideology which demands total social peace as its ultimate goal. But total social peace would require the complete suppression of the individual passions that create individual incidences of violence — and that would require total social control. Total social control is only possible through the use of the constant threat of the police, prison, therapy, social censure, scarcity or war. So the pacifist ideal requires a monolithic system of violence and reflects the social contradiction inherent in the necessity that authority strive to maintain peace in order to maintain a smoothly running social system, but can only do so by maintaining a rationalized system of violence.

The rational system of violence not only perpetuates itself, but also evokes responses, often in the form of blind lashings out by enraged individuals, which the system then manipulates into justifications for its own continual

existence, and occasionally in the form of consciously rebellious violence. The passionate violence that is suppressed turns in on the one feeling it, becoming the the slow-killing, underlying violence of stress and anxiety. It is evident in the millions of little pinpricks of humiliation that pass between people on the streets and in the public places of every city — looks of disgust and hostility between strangers, and the verbal battle of wits exchanging guilt and blame between supposed friends. This is the subtlest and most total form of rationalised violence; everyone conforms out of fear of each others' disgust. This is the subtle form of violence practiced by pacifists.

“I do not dream of a gentle revolution. My passion runs to the violence of supersession, the ferocity of a life that renounces nothing.” —Raoul Vaneigem

Those of us who are fighting for the freedom to create our lives for ourselves need to reject both sides of the choice society offers between pacifism and systematic violence, because this choice is an attempt to socialize our rebellion. Instead we can create our own options, developing a playful and passionate chaos of action and relating which may express itself at times with intense and ferocious violence, at times with the gentlest tenderness, or whatever way our passions and whims move us in the particular moment. Both the rejection of violence and the systemization of violence are an attack on our passions and uniqueness.

Violence is an aspect of animal interaction and observation of violence among animals belies several generalizations. Violence among animals does not fit into the formula of social darwinism; there is no perpetual war of all against all. Rather at specific moments under particular circumstances, individual acts of violence flare up and then fade when the moments pass. There is no systematic violence in the wild, but, instead, momentary expressions of specific passions. This exposes one of the major fallacies of pacifist ideology. Violence, in itself, does not perpetuate violence. The social system of rationalized violence, of which pacifism is an integral part, perpetuates itself as a system.

Against the system of violence, a non-systematized, passionate, playful violence is the appropriate response. Violent play is very common among animals and children. Chasing, wrestling and pouncing upon a playmate, breaking, smashing and tearing apart things are all aspects of play that is free of rules. The conscious insurgent plays this way as well, but with real targets and with the intention of causing real damage. The targets of this ferocious play in the present society would mainly be institutions, commodities, social roles and cultural icons, but the human representatives of these institutions can also be targets — especially where they present an immediate threat to anyone's freedom to create their life as they desire.

Rebellion has never been merely a matter of self-defense. In itself, self-defense is probably best achieved by accepting the status quo of its reform. Rebellion is the aggressive, dangerous, playful attack by free-spirited individuals against society. Refusing a system of violence, refusing an organized, militarized form of armed struggle, allows the violence of insurgents to retain a high level of invisibility. It cannot be readily understood by the authorities and brought under their control. Its insurgent nature may even go undetected by the authorities as it eats away at the foundations of social control. From the rationalized perspective of authority, this playful violence will often appear utterly random, but actually is in harmony with the desires of the insurgent. This playful violence of rebellion kills “inadvertently as (one) strides out happily without looking back.”

The playful violence of insurgence has no room for regret. Regret weakens the force of blows and makes us cautious and timid. But regret only comes in when violence is dealt with as a moral question, and for insurgents who are fighting for the freedom to live their desires; morality is just another form of social control. Wherever rebel violence has manifested playfully, regret seems absurd. In riots (other than police riots) and spontaneous uprisings — as well as in small-scale vandalism — a festive attitude seems to be evident. There is an intense joy, even euphoria, in the release of violent passions that have been pent up for so long. Bashing in the skull of society as we experience it on a daily basis is an intense pleasure, and one to be savored, not repudiated in shame, guilt or regret. Some may object that such an attitude could cause our violence to get out of hand, but an excess of insurgent violence is not something that we need to fear. As we break down our repression and begin to free our passions, certainly our gestures, our actions and our entire way of being are bound to become increasingly expansive and all we do we will seem to do to excess. our generosity will seem excessive and our violence will seem excessive. Unrepressed, expansive individuals squander in all things. Riots and insurrections have failed to get beyond temporary release, not because of excess, but because people hold themselves back. People have not trusted their passions. They have feared the expansiveness, the squandering excess of their own dreams and desires. So they have given up or turned their fight over to new authorities, new systemizers of violence. But how can insurgent violence ever be truly excessive when there is no institution of social control, no aspect of authority, no icon of culture that should not be smashed to powder — and that geefully?

If what we want is a world in which each of us can create our own lives free of constraints, relating with each other as we desire rather than in accordance with socially defined roles, we have to recognize that, at times, violence will flare and that there is nothing wrong with that. Fullness of the