



Anarchy and Community Self-Liberation

excerpt from “the coming insurrection” by the invisible committee
edited by chicano on the bloc





GET
GOING!

We can no longer even see how an insurrection might begin. Sixty years of pacification and containment of historical upheavals, sixty years of democratic anesthesia and the management of events, have dulled our perception of the real, our sense of the war in progress. We need to start by recovering this perception.

It's useless to get *indignant* about openly unconstitutional laws or government scandal. It's futile to legally protest the complete implosion of the legal framework. We have to get organized.

It's useless to *get involved* in this or that citizens' group, in this or that dead-end of the far left, or in the latest "community effort." Every organization that claims to contest the present order mimics the form, mores and language of miniature states. Thus far, every impulse to "do politics differently" has only contributed to the indefinite spread of the state's tentacles.

It's useless to *react* to the news of the day; instead we should understand each report as a maneuver in a hostile field of strategies to be decoded, operations designed to provoke a specific reaction. It's these operations themselves that should be taken as the real information contained in these pieces of news.

It's useless *to wait* — for a breakthrough, for the revolution, the nuclear apocalypse or a social movement. To go on waiting is madness. The catastrophe is not coming, it is here. We are already situated *within* the collapse of a civilization. It is within this reality that we must choose sides.

To no longer wait is, in one way or another, to enter into the logic of insurrection.

It is to once again hear the slight but always present trembling of terror in the voices of our leaders. Because governing has never been anything other than postponing by a thousand subterfuges the moment when the crowd will string you up, and every act of government is nothing but a way of not losing control of the population.

We're setting out from a point of extreme isolation, of extreme weakness. An insurrectional process must be built from the ground up. Nothing appears less likely than an insurrection, but nothing is more necessary.

Find
each other

Attach yourself to what you feel to be true.

Begin there.

An encounter, a discovery, a vast wave of strikes, an earthquake: every event produces truth by changing our way of being in the world. Conversely, any observation that leaves us indifferent, doesn't affect us, doesn't commit us to anything, no longer deserves the name truth. There's a truth beneath every gesture, every practice, every relationship, and every situation. We usually just avoid it, *manage* it, which produces the madness of so many in our era. In reality, everything involves everything else. The feeling that one is living a lie is still a truth. It is a matter of not letting it go, of starting from there. A truth isn't a view on the world but what binds us to it in an irreducible way. A truth isn't something we hold but something that carries us. It makes and unmakes me, constitutes and undoes me as an individual; it distances me from many and brings me closer to those who also experience it. An isolated being who holds fast to a truth will inevitably meet others like her. In fact, every insurrectional process starts from a truth that we refuse to give up. During the 1980s in Hamburg, a few inhabitants of a squatted house decided that from then on they would only be evicted over their dead bodies. A neighborhood was besieged by tanks and helicopters, with days of street battles, huge demonstrations — and a mayor who, finally, capitulated. In 1940, Georges Guingouin, the “first French resistance fighter,” started with nothing other than the certainty of his refusal of the Nazi occupation. At that time, to the Communist Party, he was nothing but a “madman living in the woods,” until there were 20,000 madmen living in the woods, and Limoges was liberated.

Don't back away from what is political in friendship

We've been given a neutral idea of friendship, understood as a pure affection with no consequences. But all affinity is affinity *within* a common truth. Every encounter is an encounter *within* a common affirmation, even the affirmation of destruction. No bonds are innocent in an age when holding onto something and refusing to let go usually leads to unemployment, where you have to lie to work, and you have to keep on working in order to continue lying. People who swear by quantum physics and pursue its consequences in all domains are no less bound politically than comrades fighting against a multinational agribusiness. They will all be led, sooner or later, to defection and to combat.

The pioneers of the workers' movement were able to find each other in the workshop, then in the factory. They had the strike to show their numbers and unmask the scabs. They had the wage relation, pitting the party of capital against the party of labor, on which they could draw the lines of solidarity and of battle on a global scale. We have the whole of social space in which to find each other. We have everyday insubordination for

showing our numbers and unmasking cowards. We have our hostility to this civilization for drawing lines of solidarity and of battle on a global scale.

Expect nothing from organizations.

Beware of all existing social milieus,

and above all, don't become one.

It's not uncommon, in the course of a significant breaking of the social bond, to cross paths with organizations — political, labor, humanitarian, community associations, etc. Among their members, one may even find individuals who are sincere — if a little desperate — who are enthusiastic — if a little conniving. Organizations are attractive due to their apparent consistency — they have a history, a head office, a name, resources, a leader, a strategy and a discourse. They are nonetheless empty structures, which, in spite of their grand origins, can never be filled. In all their affairs, at every level, these organizations are concerned above all with their own survival as organizations, and little else. Their repeated betrayals have often alienated the commitment of their own rank and file. And this is why you can, on occasion, run into worthy beings within them. But the promise of the encounter can only be realized outside the organization and, unavoidably, at odds with it.

Far more dreadful are *social milieus*, with their supple texture, their gossip, and their informal hierarchies. Flee all milieus. Each and every milieu is orientated towards the neutralization of some truth. Literary circles exist to smother the clarity of writing. Anarchist milieus to blunt the directness of direct action. Scientific milieus to withhold the implications of their research from the majority of people today. Sport milieus to contain in their gyms the various forms of life they should create. Particularly to be avoided are the cultural and activist circles. They are the old people's homes where all revolutionary desires traditionally go to die. The task of cultural circles is to spot nascent intensities and to explain away the sense of whatever it is you're doing, while the task of activist circles is to sap your energy for doing it. Activist milieus spread their diffuse web throughout the French territory, and are encountered on the path of every revolutionary development. They offer nothing but the story of their many defeats and the bitterness these have produced. Their exhaustion has made them incapable of seizing the possibilities of the present. Besides, to nurture their wretched passivity they talk far too much and this makes them unreliable when it comes to the police. Just as it's useless to expect anything from them, it's stupid to be disappointed by their sclerosis. It's best to just abandon this dead weight.

All milieus are counter-revolutionary because they are only concerned with the preservation of their sad comfort.

Form communes

Communes come into being when people find each other, get on with each other, and decide on a common path. The commune is perhaps what gets decided at the very moment when we would normally part ways. It's the joy of an encounter that survives its expected end. It's what makes us say "we," and makes that an event. What's strange isn't that people who are attuned to each other form communes, but that they remain separated. Why shouldn't communes proliferate everywhere? In every factory, every street, every village, every school. At long last, the reign of the base committees! Communes that accept being what they are, where they are. And if possible, a multiplicity of communes that will displace the institutions of society: family, school, union, sports club, etc. Communes that aren't afraid, beyond their specifically political activities, to organize themselves for the material and moral survival of each of their members and of all those around them who remain adrift. Communes that would not define themselves — as collectives tend to do — by what's inside and what's outside them, but by the density of the ties at their core. Not by their membership, but by the spirit that animates them.

A commune forms every time a few people, freed of their individual straitjackets, decide to rely only on themselves and measure their strength against reality. Every wildcat strike is a commune; every building occupied collectively and on a clear basis is a commune, the action committees of 1968 were communes, as were the slave maroons in the United States, or Radio Alice in Bologna in 1977. Every commune seeks to be its own base. It seeks to dissolve the question of needs. It seeks to break all economic dependency and all political subjugation; it degenerates into a milieu the moment it loses contact with the truths on which it is founded. There are all kinds of communes that wait neither for the numbers nor the means to get organized, and even less for the "right moment" — which never arrives.

Get
Organized

Get organized in order to no longer have to work

We know that individuals are possessed of so little life that they have to *earn a living*, to sell their time in exchange for a modicum of social existence. Personal time for social existence: such is work, such is the market. From the outset, the time of the commune eludes work, it doesn't function according to that scheme — it prefers others. Groups of Argentine *piqueteros* collectively extort a sort of local welfare conditioned by a few hours of work; they don't clock their hours, they put their benefits in common and acquire clothing workshops, a bakery, putting in place the gardens that they need.

The commune needs money, but not because we need to earn a living. All communes have their black markets. There are plenty of hustles. Aside from welfare, there are various benefits, disability money, accumulated student aid, subsidies drawn off fictitious childbirths, all kinds of trafficking, and so many other means that arise with every mutation of control. It's not for us to defend them, or to install ourselves in these temporary shelters or to preserve them as a privilege for those in the know. The important thing is to cultivate and spread this necessary disposition towards fraud, and to share its innovations. For communes, the question of work is only posed in relation to other already existing incomes. And we shouldn't forget all the useful knowledge that can be acquired through certain trades, professions and well-positioned jobs.

The exigency of the commune is to free up the most time for the most people. And we're not just talking about the *number of hours* free of any wage-labor exploitation. Liberated time doesn't mean a vacation. Vacant time, dead time, the time of emptiness and the fear of emptiness — this is the time of work. There will be no more time to *fill*, but a liberation of energy that no "time" contains; lines that take shape, that accentuate each other, that we can follow at our leisure, to their ends, until we see them cross with others.

Plunder, cultivate, fabricate

Some former MetalEurop employees become bank robbers rather prison guards. Some EDF employees show friends and family how to rig the electricity meters. Commodities that "fell off the back of a truck" are sold left and right. A world that so openly proclaims its cynicism can't expect much loyalty from proletarians.

On the one hand, a commune can't bank on the "welfare state" being around forever, and on the other, it can't count on living for long off shoplifting, nighttime dumpster diving at supermarkets or in the warehouses of the industrial zones, misdirecting government subsidies, ripping off insurance companies and other frauds, in a word: plunder. So it has to consider how to continually increase the level and scope of its self-organization. Nothing would be more logical than using the lathes, milling machines, and photocopiers sold at a discount after a factory closure to support a conspiracy against commodity society.

The feeling of imminent collapse is everywhere so strong these days that it would be hard to enumerate all of the current experiments in matters of construction, energy, materials, illegality or agriculture. There's a whole set of skills and techniques just waiting to be plundered and ripped from their humanistic, street-culture, or eco-friendly trappings. Yet this group of experiments is but one part of all of the intuitions, the know-how, and the ingenuity found in slums that will have to be deployed if we intend to repopulate the metropolitan desert and ensure the viability of an insurrection beyond its first stages.

How will we communicate and move about during a total interruption of the flows? How will we restore food production in rural areas to the point where they can once again support the population density that they had sixty years ago? How will we transform concrete spaces into urban vegetable gardens, as Cuba has done in order to withstand both the American embargo and the liquidation of the USSR?

Training and learning

What are we left with, having used up most of the leisure authorized by market democracy? What was it that made us go jogging on a Sunday morning? What keeps all these karate fanatics, these DIY, fishing, or mycology freaks going? What, if not the need to fill up some totally idle time, to reconstitute their labor power or "health capital"? Most recreational activities could easily be stripped of their absurdity and become something else. Boxing has not always been limited to the staging of spectacular matches. At the beginning of the 20th century, as China was carved up by hordes of colonists and starved by long droughts, hundreds of thousands of its poor peasants organized themselves into countless open-air boxing clubs, in order to take back what the colonists and the rich had taken from them. This was the Boxer Rebellion. It's never too early to learn and practice what less pacified, less predictable times might require of us. Our dependence on the metropolis — on its medicine, its agriculture, its police — is so great at present that we can't attack it without putting ourselves in danger. An unspoken awareness of this vulnerability accounts for the spontaneous self-limitation of today's social movements, and explains our fear of crises and our desire for "security." It's for this reason that strikes have usually traded the prospect of revolution for a return to normalcy. Escaping this fate calls for a long and consistent process of apprenticeship, and for multiple, massive experiments. It's a question of knowing how to fight, to pick locks, to set broken bones and treat sicknesses; how to build a pirate radio transmitter; how to set up street kitchens; how to aim straight; how to gather together scattered knowledge and set up wartime agronomics; understand plankton biology; soil composition; study the way plants interact; get to know possible uses for and connections with our immediate environment as well as the limits we can't go beyond without exhausting it. We must start today, in preparation for the days when we'll need more than just a symbolic portion of our nourishment and care.

Create territories. Multiply zones of opacity

More and more reformists today agree that with “the approach of peak oil,” and in order to “reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” we will need to “relocalize the economy,” encourage regional supply lines, small distribution circuits, renounce easy access to imports from faraway, etc. What they forget is that what characterizes everything that’s done in a local economy is that it’s done *under the table*, in an “informal” way; that this simple ecological measure of relocalizing the economy implies nothing less than total freedom from state control. Or else total submission to it.

Today’s territory is the product of many centuries of police operations. People have been pushed out of their fields, then their streets, then their neighborhoods, and finally from the hallways of their buildings, in the demented hope of containing all life between the four sweating walls of privacy. The territorial question isn’t the same for us as it is for the state. For us it’s not about *possessing* territory. Rather, it’s a matter of increasing the density of the communes, of circulation, and of solidarities to the point that the territory becomes unreadable, opaque to all authority. We don’t want to occupy the territory, we want to *be* the territory.

Every practice brings a territory into existence — a dealing territory, or a hunting territory; a territory of child’s play, of lovers, of a riot; a territory of farmers, ornithologists, or *flaneurs*. The rule is simple: the more territories there are superimposed on a given zone, the more circulation there is between them, the harder it will be for power to get a handle on them. Bistros, print shops, sports facilities, wastelands, second-hand book stalls, building rooftops, improvised street markets, kebab shops and garages can all easily be used for purposes other than their official ones if enough complicities come together in them. Local self-organization superimposes its own geography over the state cartography, scrambling and blurring it: it produces its own secession.

Travel. Open our own lines of communication.

The principle of communes is not to counter the metropolis and its mobility with local slowness and rootedness. The expansive movement of commune formation should surreptitiously overtake the movement of the metropolis. We don’t have to reject the possibilities of travel and communication that the commercial infrastructure offers; we just have to know their limits. We just have to be prudent, innocuous. Visits in person are more secure, leave no trace, and forge much more consistent connections than any list of contacts on the internet. The privilege many of us enjoy of being able to “circulate freely” from one end of the continent to the other, and even across the world without too much trouble, is not a negligible asset when it comes to communication between pockets of conspiracy. One of the charms of the metropolis is that it allows Americans, Greeks, Mexicans, and Germans to meet furtively in Paris for the time it takes to discuss strategy.

Constant movement between friendly communes is one of the things that keeps them from drying up and from the inevitability of abandonment. Welcoming comrades, keeping abreast of their initiatives, reflecting on their experiences and making use of new techniques they've developed does more good for a commune than sterile self-examinations behind closed doors. It would be a mistake to underestimate how much can be decisively worked out over the course of evenings spent comparing views on the war in progress.

Remove all obstacles, one by one

It's well known that the streets teem with incivilities. Between what they are and what they should be stands the centripetal force of the police, doing their best to restore order to them; and on the other side there's us, the opposite centrifugal movement. We can't help but delight in the fits of anger and disorder wherever they erupt. It's not surprising that these national festivals that aren't really celebrating anything anymore are now systematically going bad. Whether sparkling or dilapidated, the urban fixtures — but where do they begin? where do they end? — embody our common dispossession. Persevering in their nothingness, they ask for nothing more than to return to that state for good. Take a look at what surrounds us: all this will have its final hour. The metropolis suddenly takes on an air of nostalgia, like a field of ruins.

All the incivilities of the streets should become methodical and systematic, converging in a diffuse, effective guerrilla war that restores us to our ungovernability, our primordial unruliness. It's disconcerting to some that this same lack of discipline figures so prominently among the recognized military virtues of resistance fighters. In fact though, rage and politics should never have been separated. Without the first, the second is lost in discourse; without the second the first exhausts itself in howls. When words like “*enragés*” and “*exaltés*” resurface in politics they're always greeted with warning shots.

As for methods, let's adopt the following principle from sabotage: a minimum of risk in taking the action, a minimum of time, and maximum damage. As for strategy, we will remember that an obstacle that has been cleared away, leaving a liberated but uninhabited space, is easily replaced by another obstacle, one that offers more resistance and is harder to attack.

No need to dwell too long on the three types of workers' sabotage: reducing the speed of work, from “easy does it” pacing to the “work-to-rule” strike; breaking the machines, or hindering their function; and divulging company secrets. Broadened to the dimensions of the whole social factory, the principles of sabotage can be applied to both production and circulation. The technical infrastructure of the metropolis is vulnerable. Its flows amount to more than the transportation of people and commodities. Information and energy circulates via wire networks, fibers and channels, and these can be attacked. Nowadays

sabotaging the social machine with any real effect involves reappropriating and reinventing the ways of interrupting its networks. How can a TGV line or an electrical network be rendered useless? How does one find the weak points in computer networks, or scramble radio waves and fill screens with white noise?

As for serious obstacles, it's wrong to imagine them invulnerable to all destruction. The promethean element in all of this boils down to a certain use of fire, all blind voluntarism aside. In 356 BC, Erostratus burned down the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the world. In our time of utter decadence, the only thing imposing about temples is the dismal truth that *they are already ruins*.

Annihilating this nothingness is hardly a sad task. It gives action a fresh demeanor. Everything suddenly coalesces and makes sense — space, time, friendship. We must use all means at our disposal and rethink their uses — we ourselves being means. Perhaps, in the misery of the present, “fucking it all up” will serve — not without reason — as the last collective seduction.

Flee visibility. Turn anonymity into an offensive position

In a demonstration, a union member tears the mask off of an anonymous person who has just broken a window. “Take responsibility for what you’re doing instead of hiding yourself.” To be visible is to be exposed, that is to say above all, vulnerable. When leftists everywhere continually make their cause more “visible” — whether that of the homeless, of women, or of undocumented immigrants — in hopes that it will get dealt with, they’re doing exactly the contrary of what must be done. Not making ourselves visible, but instead turning the anonymity to which we’ve been relegated to our advantage, and through conspiracy, nocturnal or faceless actions, creating an invulnerable position of attack. The fires of November 2005 offer a model for this. No leader, no demands, no organization, but words, gestures, complicities. To be socially nothing is not a humiliating condition, the source of some tragic lack of recognition — from whom do we seek recognition? — but is on the contrary the condition for maximum freedom of action. Not claiming your illegal actions, only attaching to them some fictional acronym — we still remember the ephemeral BAFT (*Brigade Anti-Flic des Tarterêts*) — is a way to preserve that freedom. Quite obviously, one of the regime’s first defensive maneuvers was the creation of a “*banlieue*” subject to treat as the author of the “riots of November 2005.” Just looking at the faces on some of this society’s *somebodies* illustrates why there’s such joy in being nobody.

Visibility must be avoided. But a force that gathers in the shadows can’t avoid it forever. Our appearance as a force must be pushed back until the opportune moment. The longer we avoid visibility, the stronger we’ll be when it catches up with us. And once we

become visible our days will be numbered. Either we will be in a position to pulverize its reign in short order, or we'll be crushed in no time.

Organize Self-Defense

We live under an occupation, under *police* occupation. Undocumented immigrants are rounded up in the middle of the street, unmarked police cars patrol the boulevards, metropolitan districts are pacified with techniques forged in the colonies, the Minister of the Interior makes declarations of war on “gangs” that remind us of the Algerian war — we are reminded of it every day. These are reasons enough to no longer let ourselves be beaten down, reasons enough to organize our self-defense.

To the extent that it grows and radiates, a commune begins to see the operations of power target that which constitutes it. These counterattacks take the form of seduction, of recuperation, and as a last resort, brute force. For a commune, self-defense must be a collective fact, as much practical as theoretical. Preventing an arrest, gathering quickly and in large numbers against eviction attempts and sheltering one of our own, will not be superfluous reflexes in coming times. We cannot ceaselessly reconstruct our bases from scratch. Let's stop denouncing repression and instead prepare to meet it.

It's not a simple affair, for we expect a surge in police work being done by the population itself — everything from snitching to occasional participation in citizens' militias. The police forces blend in with the crowd. The ubiquitous model of police intervention, even in riot situations, is now the cop in civilian clothes. The effectiveness of the police during the last anti-CPE demonstrations was a result of plainclothes officers mixing among us and waiting for an incident before revealing who they are: gas, nightsticks, tazers, detainment; all in strict coordination with demonstration stewards. The mere possibility of their presence was enough to create suspicion amongst the demonstrators — who's who? — and to paralyze action. If we agree that a demonstration is not merely a way to stand and be counted but a means of action, we have to equip ourselves better with resources to unmask plainclothes officers, chase them off, and if need be snatch back those they're trying to arrest.

The police are not invincible in the streets, they simply have the means to organize, train, and continually test new weapons. Our weapons, on the other hand, are always rudimentary, cobbled-together, and often improvised on the spot. They certainly don't have a hope of rivaling theirs in firepower, but can be used to hold them at a distance, redirect attention, exercise psychological pressure or force passage and gain ground by surprise. None of the innovations in urban guerilla warfare currently deployed in the French police academies are sufficient to respond rapidly to a moving multiplicity that can strike a number of places at once and that tries to always keep the initiative.

Communes are obviously vulnerable to surveillance and police investigations, to policing technologies and intelligence gathering. The waves of arrests of anarchists in Italy and of eco-warriors in the US were made possible by wiretapping. Everyone detained by the police now has his or her DNA taken to be entered into an ever more complete profile. A squatter from Barcelona was caught because he left fingerprints on fliers he was distributing. Tracking methods are becoming better and better, mostly through biometric techniques. And if the distribution of electronic identity cards is instituted, our task will just be that much more difficult. The Paris Commune found a partial solution to the keeping of records: they burned down City Hall, destroying all the public records and vital statistics. We still need to find the means to permanently destroy computerized databases.

Insurrection

The commune is the basic unit of partisan reality. An insurrectional surge may be nothing more than a multiplication of communes, their coming into contact and forming of ties. As events unfold, communes will either merge into larger entities or fragment. The difference between a band of brothers and sisters bound “for life” and the gathering of many groups, committees and gangs for organizing the supply and self-defense of a neighborhood or even a region in revolt, is only a difference of scale, they are all communes.

A commune tends by its nature towards self-sufficiency and considers money, internally, as something foolish and ultimately out of place. The power of money is to connect those who are unconnected, to link strangers *as strangers* and thus, by making everything equivalent, to put everything into circulation.

The cost of money’s capacity to connect everything is the superficiality of the connection, where deception is the rule. Distrust is the basis of the credit relation. The reign of money is, therefore, always the reign of control. The practical abolition of money will happen only with the extension of communes. Communes must be extended while making sure they do not exceed a certain size, beyond which they lose touch with themselves and give rise, almost without fail, to a dominant caste. It would be preferable for the commune to split up and to spread in that way, avoiding such an unfortunate outcome.

The uprising of Algerian youth that erupted across all of Kabylia in the spring of 2001 managed to take over almost the entire territory, attacking police stations, courthouses and every representation of the state, generalizing the revolt to the point of compelling the unilateral retreat of the forces of order and physically preventing the elections. The movement’s strength was in the diffuse complementarity of its components—only partially represented by the interminable and hopelessly male-dominated village assemblies and other popular committees. The “communes” of this still-simmering insurrection had many faces: the young hotheads in helmets lobbing gas canisters at the riot police from the rooftop of a building in Tizi Ouzou; the wry smile of an old resistance fighter draped in his burnous; the spirit of the women in the mountain villages, stubbornly carrying on with the traditional farming, without which the blockades of the region’s economy would never have been as constant and systematic as they were.

Make the most of every crisis

“So it must be said, too, that we won’t be able to treat the entire French population. Choices will have to be made.” This is how a virology expert sums up, in a September 7, 2005 article in *Le Monde*, what would happen in the event of a bird flu pandemic. “Terrorist threats,” “natural disasters,” “virus warnings,” “social movements” and “urban violence” are, for society’s managers, so many moments of instability where they

reinforce their power, by the selection of those who please them and the elimination of those who make things difficult. Clearly these are, in turn, opportunities for other forces to consolidate or strengthen one another as they take the other side.

The interruption of the flow of commodities, the suspension of normality (it's sufficient to see how social life returns in a building suddenly deprived of electricity to imagine what life could become in a city deprived of everything) and police control liberate potentialities for self-organization unthinkable in other circumstances. People are not blind to this. The revolutionary workers' movement understood it well, and took advantage of the crises of the bourgeois economy to gather strength. Today, Islamic parties are strongest when they've been able to intelligently compensate for the weakness of the state — as when they provided aid after the earthquake in Boumerdes, Algeria, or in the daily assistance offered the population of southern Lebanon after it was ravaged by the Israeli army.

As we mentioned above, the devastation of New Orleans by hurricane Katrina gave a certain fringe of the North American anarchist movement the opportunity to achieve an unfamiliar cohesion by rallying all those who refused to be forcefully evacuated. Street kitchens require building up provisions beforehand; emergency medical aid requires the acquisition of necessary knowledge and materials, as does the setting up of pirate radios. The political richness of such experiences is assured by the joy they contain, the way they transcend individual stoicism, and their manifestation of a tangible reality that escapes the daily ambience of order and work.

In a country like France, where radioactive clouds stop at the border and where we aren't afraid to build a cancer research center on the former site of a nitrogen fertilizer factory that has been condemned by the EU's industrial safety agency, we should count less on "natural" crises than on social ones. It is usually up to the social movements to interrupt the normal course of the disaster. Of course, in recent years the various strikes were primarily opportunities for the government and corporate management to test their ability to maintain a larger and larger "minimum service," to the point of reducing the work stoppage to a purely symbolic dimension, causing little more damage than a snowstorm or a suicide on the railroad tracks. By going against established activist practices through the systematic occupation of institutions and obstinate blockading, the high-school students' struggle of 2005 and the struggle against the CPE-law reminded us of the ability of large movements to cause trouble and carry out diffuse offensives. In all the affinity groups they spawned and left in their wake, we glimpsed the conditions that allow social movements to become a locus for the emergence of new communes.

Sabotage every representative authority. Spread the palaver. Abolish general assemblies.

The first obstacle every social movement faces, long before the police proper, are the unions and the entire micro-bureaucracy whose job it is to control the struggle. Communes, collectives and gangs are naturally distrustful of these structures. That's why the parabureaucrats have for the past twenty years been inventing coordination committees and spokes councils that seem more innocent because they lack an established label, but are in fact the ideal terrain for their maneuvers. When a stray collective makes an attempt at autonomy, they won't be satisfied until they've drained the attempt of all content by preventing any real question from being addressed. They get fierce and worked up not out of passion for debate but out of a passion for shutting it down. And when their dogged defense of apathy finally does the collective in, they explain its failure by citing a lack of political consciousness. It must be noted that in France the militant youth are well versed in the art of political manipulation, thanks largely to the frenzied activity of various trotskyist factions. They could not be expected to learn the lesson of the conflagration of November 2005: that coordinations are unnecessary where coordination *exists*, organizations aren't needed when people organize themselves.

Another reflex is to call a general assembly at the slightest sign of movement, and vote. This is a mistake. The business of voting and deciding a winner, is enough to turn the assembly into a nightmare, into a theater where all the various little pretenders to power confront each other. Here we suffer from the bad example of bourgeois parliaments. An assembly is not a place for decisions but for *palaver*, for free speech exercised without a goal.

The need to assemble is as constant among humans as the necessity of making decisions is rare. Assembling corresponds to the joy of feeling a common power. Decisions are vital only in emergency situations, where the exercise of democracy is already compromised. The rest of the time, "the democratic character of decision making" is only a problem for the fanatics of process. It's not a matter of critiquing assemblies or abandoning them, but of liberating the speech, gestures, and interplay of beings that take place within them. We just have to see that each person comes to an assembly not only with a point of view or a motion, but with desires, attachments, capacities, forces, sadnesses and a certain disposition toward others, an openness. If we manage to set aside the fantasy of the General Assembly and replace it with an *assembly of presences*, if we manage to foil the constantly renewed temptation of hegemony, if we stop making the decision our final aim, then there is a chance for a kind of *massification*, one of those moments of collective crystallization where a decision suddenly takes hold of beings, completely or only in part.

The same goes for deciding on actions. By starting from the principle that "the action in question should govern the assembly's agenda" we make both vigorous debate and

effective action impossible. A large assembly made up of people who don't know each other is obliged to call on action specialists, that is, to abandon action for the sake of its control. On the one hand, people with mandates are by definition hindered in their actions, on the other hand, nothing hinders them from deceiving everyone.

There's no ideal form of action. What's essential is that action assume a certain form, that it give rise to a form instead of having one imposed on it. This presupposes a shared political and geographical position — like the sections of the Paris Commune during the French Revolution — as well as the circulation of a shared knowledge. As for deciding on actions, the principle could be as follows: each person should do their own reconnaissance, the information would then be put together, and the decision will occur to us rather than being made by us. The circulation of knowledge cancels hierarchy; it equalizes by raising up. Proliferating horizontal communication is also the best form of coordination among different communes, the best way to put an end to hegemony.

Block the economy, but measure our blocking power by our level of self-organization

At the end of June 2006 in the State of Oaxaca, the occupations of city halls multiply, and insurgents occupy public buildings. In certain communes, mayors are kicked out, official vehicles are requisitioned. A month later, access is cut off to certain hotels and tourist compounds. Mexico's Minister of Tourism speaks of a disaster "comparable to hurricane Wilma." A few years earlier, blockades had become the main form of action of the revolt in Argentina, with different local groups helping each other by blocking this or that major road, and continually threatening, through their joint action, to paralyze the entire country if their demands were not met. For years such threats have been a powerful lever for railway workers, truck drivers, and electrical and gas supply workers. The movement against the CPE in France did not hesitate to block train stations, ring roads, factories, highways, supermarkets and even airports. In Rennes, only three hundred people were needed to shut down the main access road to the town for hours and cause a 40-kilometer long traffic jam.

Jam everything — this will be the first reflex of all those who rebel against the present order. In a delocalized economy where companies function according to "just-in-time" production, where value derives from connectedness to the network, where the highways are links in the chain of dematerialized production which moves from subcontractor to subcontractor and from there to another factory for assembly, to block circulation is to block production as well.

But a blockade is only as effective as the insurgents' capacity to supply themselves and to communicate, as effective as the self-organization of the different communes. How will we feed ourselves once everything is paralyzed? Looting stores, as in Argentina, has its

limits; as large as the temples of consumption are, they are not bottomless pantries. Acquiring the skills to provide, over time, for one's own basic subsistence implies appropriating the necessary means of its production. And in this regard, it seems pointless to wait any longer. Letting two percent of the population produce the food of all the others — the situation today — is both a historical and a strategic anomaly.

***Liberate territory from police occupation.
If possible, avoid direct confrontation.***

“This business shows that we are not dealing with young people making social demands, but with individuals who are declaring war on the Republic,” noted a lucid cop about recent clashes. The push to liberate territory from police occupation is already underway, and can count on the endless reserves of resentment that the forces of order have marshaled against it. Even the “social movements” are gradually being seduced by the riots, just like the festive crowds in Rennes who fought the cops every Thursday night in 2005, or those in Barcelona who destroyed a shopping district during a *botellion*. The movement against the CPE witnessed the recurrent return of the Molotov cocktail. But on this front certain *banlieues* remain unsurpassed. Specifically, when it comes to the technique they've been perfecting for some time now: the surprise attack. Like the one on October 13, 2006 in Epinay. A private-security team headed out after getting a report of something stolen from a car. When they arrived, one of the security guards “found himself blocked by two vehicles parked diagonally across the street and by more than thirty people carrying metal bars and pistols who threw stones at the vehicle and used tear gas against the police officers.” On a smaller scale, think of all the local police stations attacked in the night: broken windows, burnt-out cop cars.

One of the results of these recent movements is the understanding that henceforth a real demonstration has to be “wild,” not declared in advance to the police. Having the *choice of terrain*, we can, like the Black Bloc of Genoa in 2001, bypass the red zones and avoid direct confrontation. By choosing our own trajectory, we can lead the cops, including unionist and pacifist ones, rather than being herded by them. In Genoa we saw a thousand determined people push back entire buses full of *carabinieri*, then set their vehicles on fire. The important thing is not to be better armed but to take the initiative. Courage is nothing, confidence in your own courage is everything. Having the initiative helps.

Everything points, nonetheless, toward a conception of direct confrontations as that which pins down opposing forces, buying us time and allowing us to attack elsewhere — even nearby. The fact that we cannot prevent a confrontation from occurring doesn't prevent us from making it into a simple diversion. Even more than to actions, we must commit ourselves to their coordination. Harassing the police means that by forcing them to be everywhere they can no longer be effective anywhere.

Every act of harassment revives this truth, spoken in 1842: “The life of the police agent is painful; his position in society is as humiliating and despised as crime itself... Shame and infamy encircle him from all sides, society expels him, isolates him as a pariah, society spits out its disdain for the police agent along with his pay, without remorse, without regrets, without pity... The police badge that he carries in his pocket documents his shame.” On November 21, 2006, firemen demonstrating in Paris attacked the riot police with hammers and injured fifteen of them. This by way of a reminder that wanting to “protect and serve” can never be an excuse for joining the police.

Take up arms. Do everything possible to make their use unnecessary. Against the army, the only victory is political.

There is no such thing as a peaceful insurrection. Weapons are necessary: it's a question of doing everything possible to make using them unnecessary. An insurrection is more about taking up arms and maintaining an “armed presence” than it is about armed struggle. We need to distinguish clearly between being armed and the use of arms. Weapons are a constant in revolutionary situations, but their use is infrequent and rarely decisive at key turning points: August 10th 1792, March 18th 1871, October 1917. When power is in the gutter, it's enough to walk over it.

Because of the distance that separates us from them, weapons have taken on a kind of double character of fascination and disgust that can be overcome only by handling them. An authentic pacifism cannot mean refusing weapons, but only refusing to use them. Pacifism without being able to fire a shot is nothing but the theoretical formulation of impotence. Such *a priori* pacifism is a kind of preventive disarmament, a pure police operation. In reality, the question of pacifism is serious only for those who have the ability to open fire. In this case, pacifism becomes a sign of power, since it's only in an extreme position of strength that we are freed from the need to fire.

From a strategic point of view, indirect, asymmetrical action seems the most effective kind, the one best suited to our time: you don't attack an occupying army frontally. That said, the prospect of Iraq-style urban guerilla warfare, dragging on with no possibility of taking the offensive, is more to be feared than to be desired. The *militarization* of civil war is the defeat of insurrection. The Reds had their victory in 1921, but the Russian Revolution was already lost.

We must consider two kinds of state reaction. One openly hostile, one more sly and democratic. The first calls for our out and out destruction, the second, a subtle but implacable hostility, seeks only to recruit us. We can be defeated both by dictatorship and by being reduced to opposing *only* dictatorship. Defeat consists as much in losing the war as in losing the *choice* of which war to wage. Both are possible, as was proven by Spain

in 1936: the revolutionaries there were defeated twice — over, by fascism and by the republic.

When things get serious, the army occupies the terrain. Whether or not it engages in combat is less certain. That would require that the state be committed to a bloodbath, which for now is no more than a threat, a bit like the threat of using nuclear weapons for the last fifty years. Though it has been wounded for a long while, the beast of the state is still dangerous. A massive crowd would be needed to challenge the army, invading its ranks and fraternizing with the soldiers. We need a March 18th 1871. When the army is in the street, we have an insurrectionary situation. Once the army engages, the outcome is precipitated. Everyone finds herself forced to take sides, to choose between anarchy and the fear of anarchy. An insurrection triumphs as a political force. It is not impossible to defeat an army politically.


Depose authorities at a local level

The goal of any insurrection is to become irreversible. It becomes irreversible when you've defeated both authority and the need for authority, property and the taste for appropriation, hegemony and the desire for hegemony. That is why the insurrectionary process carries within itself the form of its victory, or that of its defeat. Destruction has never been enough to make things irreversible. What matters is how it's done. There are ways of destroying that unfailingly provoke the return of what has been crushed. Whoever wastes their energy on the corpse of an order can be sure that this will arouse the desire for vengeance. Thus, wherever the economy is blocked and the police are neutralized, it is important to invest as little pathos as possible in overthrowing the authorities. They must be deposed with the most scrupulous indifference and derision.

In times like these, the end of centralized revolutions reflects the decentralization of power. Winter Palaces still exist but they have been relegated to assaults by tourists rather than revolutionary hordes. Today it is possible to take over Paris, Rome, or Buenos Aires without it being a decisive victory. Taking over Rungis would certainly be more effective than taking over the Elysée Palace. Power is no longer concentrated in one point in the world; it is the world itself, its flows and its avenues, its people and its norms, its codes and its technologies. Power is the organization of the metropolis itself. It is the impeccable totality of the world of the commodity at each of its points. Anyone who defeats it locally sends a planetary shock wave through its networks. The riots that began in Clichy-sous-Bois filled more than one American household with joy, while the insurgents of Oaxaca found accomplices right in the heart of Paris. For France, the loss of centralized power signifies the end of Paris as the center of revolutionary activity. Every new movement since the strikes of 1995 has confirmed this. It's no longer in Paris that the most daring and consistent actions are carried out. To put it bluntly, Paris now stands out only as a target for raids, as a pure terrain to be pillaged and ravaged. Brief and brutal incursions from the outside strike at the metropolitan flows at their point of maximum density. Rage streaks across this desert of fake abundance, then vanishes. A day will come when this capital and its horrible concretion of power will lie in majestic ruins, but it will be at the end of a process that will be far more advanced everywhere else.

**All Power to
the Communes!**

In the subway, there's no longer any trace of the screen of embarrassment that normally impedes the gestures of the passengers. Strangers make conversation without making passes. A band of comrades conferring on a street corner. Much larger assemblies on the boulevards, absorbed in discussions. Surprise attacks mounted in city after city, day after day. A new military barracks has been sacked and burned to the ground. The evicted residents of a building have stopped negotiating with the mayor's office; they settle in. A company manager is inspired to blow away a handful of his colleagues in the middle of a meeting. There's been a leak of files containing the personal addresses of all the cops, together with those of prison officials, causing an unprecedented wave of sudden relocations. We carry our surplus goods into the old village bar and grocery store, and take what we lack. Some of us stay long enough to discuss the general situation and figure out the hardware we need for the machine shop. The radio keeps the insurgents informed of the retreat of the government forces. A rocket has just breached a wall of the Clairvaux prison. Impossible to say if it has been months or years since the "events" began. And the prime minister seems very alone in his appeals for calm.

FUCK THE POLICE 
THE STATE, THE CAPITALIST AND
ALL AUTHORITY ACTIVE SOLIDARITY
WITH ANTIFACIST AND ANARCHIST
IN THE UNITED STATES

