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Various Authors
Articles from “Machete” #1
2008

Personal communication with the translator

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above all, where earth and water, terrorized by celestial fire, make love night and day, in equatorial America, the rifle drives away the bird that it doesn't kill and the snake crushes the rifle like a rabbit.

The forest has fallen back before the ax and dynamite, but between two railway crossings, it has thrown itself on the tracks, addressing the train's engineer with teasing gestures and tantalizing glances. Once, twice, he will resist the temptation that will follow him along the whole route, from a verdant railroad tie to a signal hidden by a swarm of bees, but one day he will hear the call of the enchantress who has the look of a beloved woman. The engine will be stopped for an embrace that he desires in passing, but the embrace will be endlessly prolonged in accordance with the perpetually renewed desire of the seductress. Though mute, the siren still knows how to draw her victims irretrievably into the abyss of no return.

Thus, the slow absorption begins: piston rod after piston rod, lever after lever, the locomotive goes back into the forest's bed, and from voluptuousness to voluptuousness, it moistens, quivers, moans like a lioness in heat. It blackens orchids, its boilers give shelter to crocodiles' playthings that blossomed the day before while legions of tiny birds live in the whistle, giving it a chimerical and temporary life, since quite quickly the forest's flame will swallow it up like an oyster after having licked its prey for so long.

In the distance, slow skyscrapers of trees will erect themselves to express a challenge impossible to gather.

[Benjamin Peret]

Contents

Nature Devours Progress and Exceeds It

The midday sun skins the specters that couldn't hide in time alive. Their bones, which turned into violins, grate on the ears of adventurous men lost in the forest, imitating a Roman emperor's decadent court.

Tongues of fire, flashes of breasts, reflections of blue pass through the half-light full of vampires. One is scarcely able to walk. The ground has the air of a brain that would like to appear as a sponge. Silence weighs on the ears like a gold nugget on the hand, but the gold is softer than an orange. And yet, the man is from that side. He has opened a corridor in the green, and all along this corridor he has stretched a telegraph wire. But the forest quickly grows tired of embracing this cord that gives nothing back but a human voice, and the plants, thousands of plants, more enthusiastic and insatiable than the others, have rushed to smother this voice under their kiss; then silence falls back over the forest like a rescuing parachute.

There, more than anyplace else, death is merely a temporary way of being of life, which disguises one side of its prism so that the light is concentrated, more brilliantly, on its other faces.

The skulls of the ruminants offer cover among the great trees threatened by thousands of creeper vines to the nests of birds that reflect the sun on their wings the leaves on their throats. And fleck of blue sky throb on the corpses that metamorphose into a mound of butterflies.

Life fights with all its might, in all its time, marked by swarms of mosquitoes on the water's face. Life loves and kills, caresses what it adores with a murderous hand. Seeds sprout like trip-hammers, implacably nailing the ants that devoured them, and to which they may owe their terrible power of germination, to the ground. Blood calls the sobbing flowers back, and the flowers kill better than a pistol. They kill the pistol.

Where genesis has not yet said its final word, where earth only separates from water to generate fire in the air, earth and water, but,

The Machete

The machete is a long knife with a single edge, particularly intended for opening a way when you find yourself surrounded by a hostile environment that prevents you from going down your path, paralyzing all movement. The Machete isn't elegant; it doesn't have the discretion of the dagger or the precision of the scalpel. When it strikes, it doesn't distinguish between the innocent flower and the noxious weed, and it destroys both without distinctions. Heavy and uncomfortable to carry, the Machete can prove indispensable in difficult situations, when there is no time to lose in scientific calculations, exploratory reconnaissance, diplomatic consultations. If need be, it can even be used as an offensive tool. And then — it is said — it can become a terrifying weapon.

This is why we have chosen it as the title for our magazine. Because our compass — rational, emotional and visceral at the same time — continues to point out to us the path to follow, but all around us we perceive ever higher, thicker and more treacherous obstacles. Having no intention of turning back on our steps (trading our dreams of adventure for a more comfortable, organized voyage towards some pleasant locality), not wanting to adapt ourselves to astatic survival in a collective make-shift encampment (even merging in the meantime into the environment), not trusting the expectation of more favorable conditions (fruit of propitiatory activist rituals, through daily repetition), all that is left to us is to go on. To go on, despite everything, against everything. Renouncing this would be damaging, since not a day passes in which we don't feel ourselves gripped by realism, bridled by politics, infected with militancy. We are suffocating from a lack of air, of fantasy, of play — and this form of respiratory impatience of ours requires Utopia, the oxygen of the future freeing the nose from the stench of the present.

Grasping the Machete and neatly cutting through all convenience, we will try to become large in the midst of this foul good sense that would like to draw us into the vortex of its mediocrity, made up of just democracies and neutral technologies, ethical markets and tactical

alliances, traditions of respect and enemies to tolerate. At the cost of causing public scandal and risking ending up in some quicksand, we will not give up the irreverence, blasphemy and iconoclastic fury that today, like yesterday and tomorrow, is flung against this world based on voluntary slavery and repugnant domination. A world that we want to bring to ruin, not to a wiser management.

Machete . . . is not intended to be a receptacle of oppositional antagonism with its specialization, and so it will not host communiqués, flyers, declarations. There are already handouts, bulletins, blogs and so on that provide, in more or less real time for this still necessary function. What is lacking instead are places for fanning the scorching fire of critique, for preparing the corrosive acid of satire, and also — why not — practicing the tenacious cannibalism of polemics.

To achieve this rascally goal, we will make use of the collaboration of many demolishers of certainties and commonplaces. They may be famous or unknown, from the present or the past. We will loot their theoretical arsenal without embarrassment, telling their name, but without specifying their contribution. The articles will therefore all be rigorously anonymous.

Thus, confusing so much the paths of the practitioners of adulation and prejudice, *Machete*> is not the mouthpiece of any area of the movement, the organ of any current, the bulletin of any group. It is the expression of a few specific individuals, enraged at this world and at those who make agreements with this world, which they can share with other specific individuals. Its print-run will be limited because — we won't hide it — the interest that a tool of this sort can currently awaken is limited. But luckily the effects and consequences of an act, any act, escape all statistics and enumeration.

Illegalist

The revolutionary is the ultimate illegalist. The person whose actions always conform to the law will be, in the best of circumstances, a well-domesticated beast, never a revolutionary.

Law conserves; revolution regenerates.

If one wants change, it is thus necessary to start by breaking the law.

To claim that revolution can be made while respecting the law is an aberration, a contradiction. The law is a yoke and anyone who wants to be free has to break it.

Anyone who deceives the workers with the emancipation of the proletariat through legal means is a swindler, since the law forbids snatching wealth from the hands of the masters that robbed us. Their expropriation to the benefit of all is the essential condition for the emancipation of humanity.

The law is a brake and we don't free ourselves with brakes.

Every freedom that humanity has conquered has been the work of illegalists who have mastered laws in order to smash them to bits.

Tyrants die, stabbed, and no article of the legal code could have gotten rid of them.

Expropriation can only come about by breaking the law, certainly not by submitting to it.

This is the real reason why if we want to be revolutionaries, we have to be illegalists. It is necessary to get off the beaten paths and open new paths to transgression.

Rebellion and legality are irreconcilable. Leave law and order to conservatives and hucksters.

[Ricardo Flores Magon]

Individuals or Citizens?

"[Worldless men] were and still are those who are forced to live in a world that is not their own, (. . .) in a world for which they are present, on whose terms they are considered and used, but whose models, aims, language and taste are still not their own, and are not granted to them."

— Günther Anders

Worldless individuals, we are alone with ourselves. Our critics shake their heads before our *meager results* and scold us for our lack of willingness. But in the end, let's admit it, one gets bored. Is it possible that there isn't some small place in the sun for us as well? If many consider extremism an infantile disorder, it is by virtue of this banality: only in youth do we feel capable of refusing the world, this world that is not our own. When we are full of strength, with the entire future before us, we fear nothing, neither police charges nor sleeping under the stars, and so even less, disdaining compromises. In this perpetual childhood, everything seems possible and within reach. This is why we refuse to throw our life to the bookkeepers of survival. We love with passion, we hate with fury. And if this exuberance, this proud love of ourselves, has the consequence of exiling us with our solitude, so be it! But then as the years pass, something intervenes. Energy is used up, stockpiles are reduced, ammunition is lacking, we notice that we have very little within reach for confronting what is left of the future.

Meanwhile, the social winter advances, covering the landscape with frost. In some way, it is necessary to put forth a remedy. Then staying at the margin of this world is not so very comfortable; perhaps at times the heart warms up, not the bones. Community will even be a therapeutic place, curing and removing "deviance", but that torpor within it, the guaranteed meals, the dry beds! And so, bit by bit, with almost unnoticed movement, we approach the *polis*. If earlier this world could not count on our sympathy, if earlier it drew all our hostility, now it can rely on our understanding: the

critical eye has given way to the entranced gaze, the biting word has been replaced by persuasive discourse. And once one has entered the *polis*, it is necessary to lose all the old habits and acquire new ones. Life in community requires respect for schedules and good manners. It is necessary to know how to tolerate if one wants to be tolerated. It becomes indispensable to to avoid behaviors that might provoke public indignation and to close one's eyes before the unwelcomed behavior of others. "The one who does is always right," says a widespread commonplace. It is like maintaining that "the one who speaks is always right". What is valued is not the intrinsic quality of the movement or speech, but their mere existence. And yet silence is revealed to be golden when you don't know what to say: better to remain silent than to let yourself go on in endless, idiotic babbling. If this is so, then why fret so much when one doesn't know what to do? Why dedicate oneself to activism, to this compulsory doing, to this constant, omnipresent mobilization, which, indeed, fills the emptiness of our existence, but without giving it a meaning that our own, that is autonomous, that bears the mark of the difference, the uniqueness, that stands at the origin of every true action?

The fact is that outside the philosophical fogs, there is a horror of the "creative nothing", in which we do not see the opportunity for reaching our fullness, but only the promise of falling headlong into the void. Better then to trust in the perpetual motion of the urgency of things where there is no time to reflect on ends because it is necessary to think about how to organize means. Utopia is beautiful, but it really isn't practical.

The Practice

In France, it is called citizenism, a term that indicates a movement made up of a vast and multiform archipelago of associations, unions, collectives, press organs and political currents, whose aim is to fight for the restoration of "democracy betrayed". The fact that our planet is at the end of its rope from the social, political, economic and ecological point of view, is now not hidden from anyone. The citizenists trace the cause of this situation back to a lack of respect for the

war. Libertad's and Bonnot's greatest critics were the ones to maintain that an anarchist could be a soldier, but not a robber. Behold, the evangelistic double standard.

Finally

Nearly a century later, the revolt of those distant anarchists continues to burn. As voluntary servitude reaches over six billion, as social, technological and environmental catastrophe threatens the mere survival of humankind more every day, as on every side we see the rich respecting the misery of the poor and the poor respecting the abundance of the rich, it is incredible that there are still firefighters who, in the name of revolution but really on behalf of their quiet lives, rush to put out the illegalist fire. Will the calls to tranquility by the evangelists of militancy ever be able to stop the urgency of the social war?

The contrast that Evangelisti makes between Libertad and Pouget is also amusing. The first is an illegalist, the second an anarcho-syndicalist; what a surprise when Pouget's thoughts get described as "much more balanced". One could ask if Evangelisti ever read Pouget's paper *le Père Peinard*. This is what a contemporary wrote in 1905 about this anarchist paper, the most scurrilous with the greatest number of readers among the working class: "Without any display of philosophy (which doesn't mean it doesn't have one) it has openly played with the appetites, prejudices and rancors of the proletariat. Without reservations or deceit, it has incited to theft, counterfeiting, tax and rent refusal, murder and arson. It has advised the immediate assassination of members of the parliament, senators, judges, priests and army officers. It has called unemployed workers to take food for themselves and their families wherever they find it, to supply themselves with shoes at the shoeshop when the spring rains bathe their feet and to do the same at the clothing store when winter winds bite. It has called workers to throw their tyrannical employers out the door and to appropriate the factories for themselves; farmworkers and vinedressers to take possession of the farms and vineyards and to transform their owners into fertilizer; miners to take possession of the mines and to offer picks to the stockholders when they showed they were willing to work as comradely friends, otherwise to dump them down unused shafts; conscripts to emigrate rather than do their military service, and soldiers to desert or shoot their officers. It praised poachers and other transgressors of the law. It told stories about the deeds of old-time bandits and outlaws and exhorted contemporaries to follow their example." If only there were still such balanced anarcho-syndicalists today.

As to the bourgeoisie that was supposed to embody the "illegalist ideal" to the point of triggering off the first World War, to get an idea of how contemptible this hypothesis is, it is enough to recall that in France the anarchist interventionists (those who supported anarchists taking part in the war) were neither illegalists nor individualists, but precisely the anarchists bigots like Jean Grave. Only those who loved the masses to the point of following them and justifying them in every vile action accepte the idea of supporting the

"popular will" which — once it has fallen into the hands of politicians hungry only for power, in cahoots with businessmen greedy only for profit — would be disregarded, manipulated, denied.

Enemies of these politicians and businessmen (more than of the social system of which they are mere expressions), the citizenists are convinced that democracy — in its most genuine, roughest form — is effectively the best of all possible worlds and that it is possible *to improve and moralize* capitalism and the state, by opposing their obvious harmfulness and abuses effectively. But on two conditions: that this democracy expresses itself through a political rebirth that is modeled more after Pericles' Athens than Machiavelli's Florence, or with greater direct participation of the citizens, who should not just elect their representatives, but should also constantly act to put pressure on them so that they truly stick to what they were elected to do. This pressure can be exercised in the most varied manner, including those acts of "civil disobedience" that make the most loutish reactionaries spit venom and that cause so much admiration in the movement.

One could say, in a certain sense, that citizenism is born of disappointment. In its most reformist variant, disappointment about the distance that increasingly separates those who are sent to the Palace from those who remain on the streets. There are many respectable people — to be clear, those who are convinced that it is power that creates and safeguards freedom, that the market should be based on ethical principles or that the military should respect a moral code — that no longer feel that they are represented by a ruling class which is openly accused of forming a privileged caste, of being deaf to the interests of the common people, of being concerned only with maintaining their positions. These respectable people firmly believe in the state, in the necessity of the state, in the usefulness of the state, in the justice inherent to the state, but they are temporarily disappointed with it, holding that today it isn't guided by competent, honest, upright, loyal politicians. This is the source of their distrust for professional politicians, parties or unions, while still not abandoning their search for someone who will meet their highest demands.

Feeling neglected, the citizenists find themselves constrained to go down into the streets to defend their "rights". Their struggles always have precise objectives, are limited to saying a sharp NO to a specific state project that jeopardizes their health, without in the least wanting to call the social organization that produced it into question. They don't concern themselves with radical moments, subversive tensions. They are honest citizens, not "hooligans" or "terrorists". It goes without saying that, though they are ready to carry out formally illegal acts like street blockades, they are declared enemies of violence. They don't support the truncheon of the riot cop that suppresses any more than the sabotage of the rebel who rises up. The only acts of force that they accept are the controlled, minimal, integrated ones that they occasionally carry out to draw the attention of the adversary, or rather of the authorities. The acts of force can sometimes even be quite spectacular, but that wouldn't prevent the one who carries them out from competing in presidential elections in the future. In its less reformist variant, citizenism is the fruit of disappointment in a revolution whose historical project has been revealed as bankrupt. Despite different expressions, in its principles, this project aimed at a reappropriation of the capitalist means of production by the proletariat. In this perspective, the proletariat is seen as the authentic creator of social wealth, which is, nonetheless, is enjoyed exclusively by the bourgeoisie; to the proletariat the effort of sowing, to the bourgeoisie the fruit of the harvest. With such a premise, social change could only be considered as a mere suppression of the usurping class. Therefore, the expansion of the production forces was seen as a step forward on the road to revolution, going along with the real movement through which the proletariat was constituted as the future revolutionary subject that would have realized communism and anarchy. The bankruptcy of this perspective began to peek out in the first half of the twentieth century, with the defeat s of the revolutions in Russia, Germany and Spain. The final shock was the French may of 1968, which opened another decade of bitter conflict. The 1980s put an end to the last great assault on the heavens, marking the irretrievable decline and disappearance of this project of social liberation in conjunction with the restructuring of capital, which, through the introduction

of the anarchist movement, recalling the "nothing analogous is to be found in Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, or in the contemporaries, Malatesta and Reclus". As if saying that, in the face of these founding fathers, these delinquents wouldn't be true anarchists at all! And yet it was Proudhon, in declaring that property was theft, who laid the foundations for the concept of individual reprisal. And what about the unchaining of the wicked passions invoked by Bakunin? Kropotkin theorized the necessity of planting the seeds under the snow, but also that "everything is good for us except legality". As to the "contemporary" Reclus, he maintained that "the ultimate cowardice is respect for the law" and had this to say about Ravachol: "I admire his courage, his kindness, his greatness of spirit . . . I know few men who pass him in nobility . . . he is a hero of uncommon generosity" (while the nephew Paul asserted that "in the current society theft and work are not substantially different. I rebel against the claim that there is an honest way of earning a living, work; and a dishonest way, theft or fraud . . . ") Besides, what sense is there in getting so worked up about Armand (among other things, the most candid of the illegalists) when it is known that the other "contemporary" Malatesta appreciated him to the point of asking "why does Armand continually speak of 'anarchist individualism', as a distinct body of doctrine when generally he just sets forth the principles common to all anarchists of any tendency?"

As if that were not enough, the Bolognese fantasy writer actually manages to confuse the anarchist Raymond Callemin with the situationist Guy Debord! Here he inserts: "Perhaps it is no accident that in 1912, Jules Bonnot's right-hand man, Raymond-la-Science, in an ironic ballad, praises another of Henry's endeavors, the attack against the mining offices in Carmaux, describing the civilian victims of the act as *poulets vulgaires*." Here the historian Evangelisti has made a historical blunder, giving his best: 1) the ironic ballad was written by Debord, who jokingly signed it with the name of Bonnot's "right-hand man" (some people can't help but think in hierarchical terms . . .); 2)*poulets vulgaires* means vulgar cops and is a reference to the local police and the low-level officer that died in the explosion; 3) the only civilian victim was the business's delivery man who helped the cops transport the bomb to the police station.

conflicts with the police such as the events that followed the Tragic Week or Liabeuf's execution. They were all comrades, blacklisted as agitators and hotheads. For this reason, finding work was an even more difficult undertaking for them. So there is nothing surprising in the fact that they decided to resort to individual reprisal. The fact that some of them at times ran up against less than pleasant "mishaps" does not in itself make an individual choice completely consistent with anarchist ideas infamous.

The Misadventures of a Historian

The historian Evangelisti can do no less than get on his high horse to give lessons. So by reading his essay, one gets instructed about many interesting, though often contradictory and sometimes utterly absurd, things.

Already, there is no understanding what Fantômas has to do with the illegalists. First, if "murder, and not theft, is the axis of his criminal activity", contrarily, theft is the axis of illegalist activity, murder being only an unforeseen contingency (whether avoidable or not, this is another question) that happens at times. Second, if "Bonnot's men" (sic!) "appeared a few months after" Fantômas saw the light of day, how the hell did they inspire him? So who were these anarchist illegalists who were supposed to have filled the newspapers, "stuffed" with their misdeeds, provoking Allain's and Souvestre's fantasy?

Then, as usual, there is Max Stirner, black beast of all those who love the popular masses, because they intend to lead and domesticate them. At the beginning he is described as "the obligatory reference" for Fantômas and, therefore, according to Evangelisti, for the anarchist lovers of "crime" themselves. But then, a bit later, we see that "not even Stirner can be recognized as the inspirer of the illegalists". And what is there to say about illegalist ideas? Are they a "theoretical corpus of considerable depth" or do they form a "limited theoretical stock"?

To create a no-man's-land around individualist and illegalist ideas, Evangelisti finds nothing better to do than appeal to the big names

of automation, set up the end of the centrality of the factory and the myths linked to it. The orphans of proletarian revolution found a form of protest in citizenism that could console them in their mourning. Some of the ideas that circulate in it, like those about the "redistribution of wealth", come directly from the old workers' movement that planned to manage the capitalist world on their own behalf. In such concepts, one can glimpse a return , a continuity and even a hijacking" of former ideals by citizenism. This is what is called "the art of arranging the remains".

Whether it is enlightened members of the bourgeoisie demanding more transparency in public affairs or disappointed proletarians wanting to fill the void left by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the fact remains that citizenists, incapable of having a unique thought, at least have a common thought: *another state is possible*. If in this vast cloud, it is possible to find so many minds, sometimes even in contradiction, it is because citizenism expresses an integrated form of protest that hopes to be able to put the malfunctions of the economic system back into balance or to readjust its drifts through greater citizen participation. In this way, citizenism manages to cut across party lines, keeping protest and collaboration together. The protest spurs the collaboration; the collaboration satisfies the protest.This explains its success and its certain future. It is the only mediation that allows you to obtain immediate "victories", however partial, through coming to terms with the institutions.

Something Has Been Lost

In Italy, citizenism took its first step in Val Susa, with the struggle against the high speed train (TAV). To tell the truth, the struggle against the TAV in the Piedmontese valley began more than ten years ago in a completely different way, with some acts of sabotage against the earliest construction sites. Small actions brought into the limelight of the newspapers with the arrest of those presumed responsible, three anarchists who later proved to be unconnected to the events. In the course of the investigation, two of them committed suicide. The clamor these events provoked at the time, sufficiently

well-known that we don't need to go over them, drew attention to the state project in Val Susa. This gave birth to a protest movement that — though it met with quite a bit of sympathy — remained limited, for the most part, to the militant milieu for several years. But starting in November 2005, when the real work on the TAV line began, this movement managed to break the dam, assuming a mass character. What happened in Val Susa provoked a general enthusiasm that led many to think that they had finally discovered the magic formula that merely had to be repeated in other contexts to get the same results. From this came the spread of committees, assemblies, popular initiatives against "harmfulness" that are filling the agenda of the movement throughout Italy. But what is behind all this unbridled activism that in July 2006 was coordinating in the Pact of Solidarity and Mutual Aid? The primary discourse is that of creating a "new" and "real" democracy, i.e., the citizenist discourse. The Pact is presented by many as a liberatarian text, but its text is a perfect example of a political document, marked by the ambiguity of those who have a foot in each camp in order to satisfy all palates (and if seeing that so many citizens have taken a step outside the institutions can only bring us joy, what are we to think of those rebels who, in solidarity, take a step into the institutions?). There are anarchists who exult in reading "The National Pact of Solidarity and Mutual Aid is certainly not an attempt to stealthily infiltrate into the politics of the palace, nor does it intend to get hosted in the palaces of politics. It has no friendly governments to which to look with trust. It has no parties to which to give a blank slate delegation, and it certainly has no intention of going down a road that would lead it to becoming a part itself", without noticing that this merely affirms the cross-party and lobbyist nature of citizenism. Citizenists are balanced people, they don't want to become a party, but rather to put a certain type of pressure on parties. They are well aware that fighting in the political arena is not exempt from unpleasant consequences. And the way to avoid this risk is to assume the form of a pressure group that is careful not to directly exercise power. This is why they cannot present "blank slate delegations", since they don't want to talk with a favored few. Anybody who listens to them may be okay. This is why it is pointed out immediately afterwards that the Pact "does not, for this

Behind the scorn of Libertad's words (and those of anarchists like him) for what the exploited allow to be done to them, there is always the passion for what they could do. One may share this approach to the "social question" or not, but stating that it is a practical suggestion against the exploited, a theorizing of blind and indiscriminate violence, is an aberration worthy of an idiot or a slander worthy of a wretch. Evangelisti has shown himself to be both; for instance, when he equates bourgeois warmongers with anarchist illegalists, forgetting that if the first feed "hatred for the weak", the second feed hatred for the powerful. Again, after Evangelisti enrolled Emile Henry into the illegalists, he had to admit that when Henry declared himself in favor of "acts of brutal revolt", he also pointed out that his only targets were the bourgeoisie. As to his victims, the least that can be said is that in the eyes of the evangelists, their blood had to be more gruesome than that spilled by the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists. What was so different about what fifteen comrades did later in Barcelona in the spring of 1923, when they burst into the Hunters' Club, the customary retreat of the most reactionary masters, and opened fire on those present?

In any case, Evangelisti launches his anathemas first and foremost against the French illegalists who went down in history as the "Bonnot gang". Now leaving aside the fact that the "Bonnot gang" as such never existed, being a pure journalistic invention, who were these anarchists? Bonnot had worked a number of jobs and often got fired for his intolerance for masters. Garnier was a draft dodger, a laborer who had taken part in numerous strikes, with a record for offense and incitement to murder during a strike, and had a union card. Callemin already had previous convictions for theft and for conflicts with the police during a general strike. Valet was a smith, always present at demonstrations. Dieudonne was a carpenter and had taken part in several strikes. Soudy was a grocery boy, with a history of offenses, resisting arrest for distributing fliers during a strike. DeBoe was a printer who had been imprisoned for some anti-militarist articles. Carouy worked in a garage. Medge, also a draft dodger, worked as a cook. They were all mere proletarians, active in the movement of the time, who collaborated in various ways in subversive publications, frequented anarchist venues, took part in

Neither Slaves nor Masters (Without slaves No masters)

According to the evangelists, masters are the ones that create slaves. Only when those who command disappear will those who obey also disappear. But as long as masters exist, the only thing slaves can do is bow their heads and wait patiently to die. For illegalists, on the contrary, slaves also create their masters. If the former were to stop obeying, the latter would disappear just like that. This is why illegalists usually tend to let themselves lose the persuasive tone that evangelists love so much, since the former don't intend to convert the exploited, but rather to excite them, to provoke them, to stir them up against the old world.

At first view, it almost seems to be a difference of nuance, but in fact it is about two opposing perspectives that entail completely different practical consistency. When an evangelist curses the masteres and praises the slaves, he does nothing more than criticize the actions of the former and salute the resistance of the latter to the whip. The master is wicked because he oppresses; the slave is good because he endures. And since the evangelists reject the individual revolt of slaves, who are only granted collective rebellion, all together at the same time — a time that is postponed endlessly by those who don't love "simplified profiles" — what follows from this? That the slaves have to go on being good, i.e., enduring, in the hope that sooner or later . . .

On the other hand, when the illegalist curses both the master and the slave, he doesn't do so to compare their responsibility, but to urge the latter to change his life immediately, to act against the master, because the illegalist maintains that it is always possible to do something to free oneself from the yoke. Because commanding is shameful, it is true, but so is obeying. Because before the whip, tolerance isn't acclaimed, but rather revolt. There is nothing admirable about the honest worker who lets himself be exploited, or the honest voter who lets himself be governed. What is admirable is the capacity to rebel, to desert imposed social roles in order to start being oneself; a capacity that always has the opportunity to express itself.

reason, avoid politics and confrontation, and is able to distinguish those who operate with transparency from those who try to contain struggles. The model that it proposes is at the same time the only method that it is willing to accept; that of the active participation of citizens". In fact, citizenists don't avoid politics, not at all; they simply no longer want to be made fun of: clear understandings . . . Far from supporting abstentionism, they preach participation. So it is no accident if the anti-TAV protest in Val Susa is clearly still too rooted in the old world, if after having clashed with the forces of order and devastated the unborn construction sit at Venaus (a moment of rupture that later vanished in the pro-Val Susa narratives, which preferred to dwell on the more presentable popular assemblies), this protest later flowed into the ballot box where the high turnout at the polling stations recorded there in the last elections saw the triumph of the left that was most present. Thus, clashes and barricades (for now?) have not fueled the revolt against all parties, but has rather favored some of them.

And if the large presence of subversives in Val Susa has given the opposition a particularly lively color, the struggles that followed elsewhere mostly seem to be fed by the nonsense of the Grillo boys.[1] For example, in Vicenza, where the struggle against the expansion of the US military base is going on. The No to Molin Committees expressly state that they demand "respect for the Union[2] program" and are coming out against "the project that from the environmental point of view violates the directives already acknowledged by our regulation 2003/35/CE," all in order to "promote change and affirm a new alternative project in defense of the values and common good of the collectivity". Their nature as aspiring governors is such as to cause them to sponsor their initiatives under the aegis of "AltroComune" ["Other Municipality" — translator]. With such a premise, it is no surprise that these Committees, having designated themselves as the only legitimate representatives of the struggle against the US military base, have excommunicated the authors of some acts of

[1] The Grillo boys are similar to Michael Moore — translator

[2] The old name of the Democratic Party of Italy, before the *Rifondazione Communista* split off — translator

sabotage that were carried out against the base last April. Distancing themselves from the acts was clearly not enough. Nor is it strange that any scum with an institutional pedigree gets invited into their paid campgrounds to babble in the name of democracy. Even less, one can get indignant if during the periodic protest marches that parade through the Paladin city, like the one of last December 15 [2007], they play the role of firefighters, coming to openly block demonstrators who intend to sabotage the expected walk. If anything, it is astounding that, after having maintained the No to Molin Committees (with a court-registered trademark!), published their initiatives, expressed their solidarity, spread their slogans — clearly having lost confidence in the possibility of an autonomous intervention in what is a struggle against the US military base and not the No to Molin struggle, which is merely the reformist expression of the larger struggle — is the hope to provoke a sudden radical "turn" with regard to their objectives (among which is the demand for a moratorium, whose principle has been valorized within the movement precisely by the Pact of Solidarity and Mutual Aid, part of which will be translated below).

The Misunderstanding

As was already said, citizenism starts out as a *political* reaction from below to the so-called "crisis of representation". A reaction that aims to overcome and cure this crisis through new forms of representation. From this point of view, it arises as a natural heir to the parties and unions in the recuperation of more radical and subversive tensions. But this doesn't take away from the fact that the contexts in which it is manifested present elements of extreme interest, because they are potentially pregnant with favorable opportunities. The citizenist doctor appears where the political invalid is in the throes of agony. Its presence alone is a surefire indication of the opportunity for action. In fact, while the doctor is busy prescribing remedies, couldn't one take advantage of the confusion to carry out a healthy euthanasia on this patient? So it is understandable that many subversives have decided to intervene in these situations of

society. In fact, Libertad overcame the false dichotomy between individual revolt and social revolution, stressing that the first is simply a moment of the second, certainly not its negation. Revolt can only be born from the specific tension of the individual, which, in expanding itself, can only lead to a project of social liberation. For Libertad, anarchism doesn't consist in living separated from any social context in some cold ivory tower or on some happy communitarian isle, nor in living in submission to social roles, putting off the moment when one puts one's ideas into practice to the bitter end, but in living as anarchists here and now, without any concessions, in the only way possible: by rebelling. And this is why, in this perspective, individual revolt and social revolution no longer exclude each other, but rather complement each other.

This conception of life requires an agreement between theory and practice that infuriates the various evangelists who think that they can be revolutionaries while continuing to be bank clerks, university professors, departmental bureaucrats or flunkies for large publishing houses, leaving the task of transforming reality to an external historical mechanism. As Libertad himself said: "our life is an insult to the weaklings and liars who take pride in an idea that they never put into practice". In his memoires, Victor Serge recalls the fascination that Libertad's ideas exercised in this way: "Anarchism gripped us completely because it demanded everything from us and offered everything to us; there wasn't a single corner of life that it didn't illuminate, at least so it seemed to us. One could be Catholic, Protestant, liberal, radical, socialist, even syndicalist without changing anything in one's life, and consequently without changing life: after all, one only needs to read the corresponding papers and frequent the appropriate cafes. Riddled with contradictions, torn apart by tendencies and sub-tendencies, anarchism demanded, first and foremost, the agreement between actions and words".

process itself, constituting its happy ending. They had no faith in leaders, who from the height of their wisdom, observing, measuring, calculating, reached the unfailing conclusion that revolution would happen tomorrow, never today. They were in a hurry and wanted to live, not merely survive, here, in this moment. The first person to forcefully and continuously mock revolutionary evangelists in France was Zo d'Axa, creator of the weekly, *L'Endehors*, in which writers of the caliber of Georges Darien, Lucien Descaves, Victor Barrucand, Félix Fénéon, Bernard Lazare, Saint-Pol Roux, Octave Mirbeau, Tristan Bernard, Emil Verhaeren and many others collaborated (and to think that poor Evangelisti, in his academic ignorance, writes d'Axa off as a "secondary popularizer"!). Persecuted by the legal system, charged with "association of malefactors", d'Axa didn't extol the virtues of future earthly paradises, but bitterly criticized the defects of the present social hells with the aim of inciting his readers to revolt.

After him, it would be Albert Libertad's turn. But unlike Zo d'Axa, who essentially remained a loner, Libertad was able to give his action a constructive form and a social impact, increasing the range of his ideas. Evangelisti himself was forced to recognize that his "fairly well-distributed" newspaper managed to "win approval in some popular sectors". A collaborator in the libertarian press, active in pro-Dreyfus agitation, in 1902 Libertad was among the founders of the Anti-militarist League and, along with Paraf-Javal, founded the "*Causeries populaires*", public discussions that met with great interest throughout the country, contributing to the opening of a bookstore and various clubs in different quarters of Paris. On the wave of enthusiasm raised by these initiatives, he founded the weekly, *l'Anarchie* three years later. On the occasion of the July 14 anniversary, this newspaper printed and distributed the manifesto "The Bastille of Authority" in one hundred thousand copies. Along with feverish activity against the social order, Libertad was usually also organizing feasts, dances and country excursions, in consequence of his vision of anarchism as the "joy of living" and not as militant sacrifice and death instinct, seeking to reconcile the requirements of the individual (in his need for autonomy) with the need to destroy authoritarian

struggle with the intent of exploiting the occasions, of radicalizing citizenist objectives, of getting beyond them and making them face their contradictions. But how?

This problem has perhaps been underestimated. One hypothesis of this sort is a reposing of the old theory of "accidents along the way". Even though a movement is born on reformist bases, it can always jump tracks and change course. After all, it has been noted time and again how banality has been the calling card of revolutions throughout history. This is certainly true, but... it isn't a good reason to begin supporting banality. As to accidents along the way, historical experience teaches that subversives are often the ones to willingly suffer them. These subversive, frantic to take part in reformist movements with the aim of radicalizing them, have often ended up changing course themselves. And this is inevitable when one adapts to events instead of trying to force them by maintaining one's ideas (at the risk of remaining at the margins of the "mass"). Unfortunately, this aspect leaps before our eyes now as never before. Laying aside individual insurrection, one now supports the direct democracy of the people, takes part in more or less massive political demonstrations that one used to call others to desert, hosts the academic professionals of separated knowledge, who one used to despise, in one's initiatives. One is no longer proud of one's qualitative difference, but of one's quantitative identity. One no longer launches radical critiques with the intent of provoking conflict; instead one silences blasphemies to find harmony.

In Val Susa, for once, after such a long time, subversives weren't chasing after the struggles of the "common people", but rather the common people were joining with subversives in their struggle. The presence of the "masses" must have gone a bit to the heads of the subversives since, after they had maintained for years the necessity of keeping hold of the critical aspect in every situation of struggle with the aim of strengthening, in Val Susa this did not happen. Instead, the subversives allowed some conceptual corpses like "the people" and "direct democracy", in their various ideological adulterations, to be put back in circulation.

And what is the *people*? It is an ensemble of subjects characterized by the will to live under a single legal system. The geographical

element is not enough to define the concept of the people, which requires the *consent to the same rights and a community of interests*. The people is a political and historical identity, which has access to stories and memories, the right to commemorations, demonstrations and marble gravestones. The people is visible and speakable. structured in its organization, represented by its delegates, its martyrs and its heroes. It is no accident that its myth has been embraced by authorities of every stripe, or that it was abandoned decades ago by libertarians (at least by the less lobotomized ones). Its uninhibited exaltation in Val Susa has had the consequence of the immediate appearance of the syndrome of populism. Generally, this term is used to refer to any political formulation based on the premise that virtue resides in the people — considered as a homogeneous social aggregate, the sole agent of positive specific and permanent values — and in its collective tradition (Val Susa as land of the partisans . . .). In populism, often the rural element is predominant since those who have remained in contact with the land, with the mountains, look with some suspicion and hostility on those who live in an urban environment. Populism is ecumenical. It excludes any class conflict since it considers the people as a homogeneous mass. From the historical viewpoint, it tends to spread ideologically in periods of transition, as well as those of strong tensions between metropolis and province when processes of industrialization are going on, because they offer a reason for cohesion and at the same time for warning and coagulation. Populist formulas revive whenever a rapid mobilization of vast social sectors and an intense politicization outside of existing institutional channels is seen. The appeal to the regenerating force of myth is lurking even in the most articulate and complex society, ready to materialize in the moment of struggle. And the myth of the people is the most appealing and the most obscure at the same time, the most groundless and the most functional in the struggle for power.

All these characteristics are very much present in Val Susa, exploited by the many sides involved that don't want to let the delicious occasion of a general mobilization with certain potentialities escape them. Even from the anarchist side, there are those who have not flinched, placing confidence in libertarian populism that knows its

Immediately following the first robbery carried out by Bonnot and his comrades, a French newspaper declared that the Paris police needed reinforcements since they had to deal with two hundred thousand outlaws (in a population of three million people). If many proletarians welcomed the anarchist theses about "individual reprisal" more than the morality of a Jean Grave (or a Valerio Evangelisti), if they sympathize with people like Jacob or Bonnot, it is because *they understand where they are coming from.*

And yet, Evangelisti maintains that in the anarchist illegalists, the refusal of wage labor had become contempt for workers, transforming victims of the capitalist system into its accomplices. So the illegalists were supposed to have replaced the division between exploiters and exploited with the division between the accomplices of exploitation and rebels. Evangelisti's entire essay is a denunciation of this "clear-cut simplification", this "crude abolition of all analytical nuance", guilty of leading to the "blurring as much of the strategic perspectives of struggle as of the medium range tactical requirements". In short, Valerio Evangelisti assures us that his are not the words of a former functionary of the finance ministry who feels a chill running down his spine in the face of these anarchists, but rather those of a comrade accustomed to looking at the "well-structured picture of a society stratified into classes" and concerned that it doesn't get replaced with a "simplified profile". For the good of the revolution, needless to say.

Illegalists, not Evangelists

The trouble with Eymerich's creator is that of all gray, leftist[3] militants. He doesn't understand that these anarchists didn't have time to wait patiently for the arrival of the "Great Dawn", of the mass revolution that was supposed to resolve the social question freeing them from exploitation. They had no desire to hear the gospel of the red priests, according to which liberation is inscribed in the capitalist

[3] A wordplay. In Italy, "sinistro" means both leftist and ominous, ill-omened, baleful, spooky

those distant anarchists. It isn't clear what Emile Henry has to do with illegalism if this term is used to refer to the ensemble of extra-legal practices used to get money: theft, robbery, con games, counterfeiting. It wasn't and isn't the delusion of omnipotence or moral degradation that pushes anarchists toward illegalism, but rather *the refusal of wage labor*.

The worst blackmail that society subjects us to is that of choosing between working or dying of hunger. Our whole life is frittered away in work, in looking for work, in resting from work. How many dreams are shattered, how many passions shriveled, how many hopes disappointed, so many desires left unsatisfied in the terrible daily condemnation to work that has always been the most savage life sentence. Some anarchists, rather than bowing their head and bending their back for their wage and someone else's profit, have preferred to procure the money necessary for living in another manner. And this choice of theirs has been shared and practiced by many other proletarians. The priggish Evangelisti is careful not to recall that at the time, Paris was full of those who lived by their wits, for example, the majority of the proletarian population of Montmartre. As Victor Serge recalled later: "One of the particular characteristics of working class Paris at that time was that it was in contact with the riff-raff, i.e. with the vast world of irregulars, decadents, wretched ones, with the equivocal world. There were few essential differences between the young worker or artisan of the old quarters of the center and the pimps in the alleys of the neighborhoods of the Halles. The rather quick-witted driver and mechanic, as a rule, stole whatever they could from the bosses, through class spirit and because they were 'free' of prejudices." In fact, there were quarters in Paris that were more or less "at risk", mainly the northern outskirts of the city (Pantin, St.-Ouen, Aubervilliers and Clichy), in which many professional thieves and pickpockets, swindlers and counterfeiters lived, along with thousands of proletarians forced to prostitute themselves on occasion in order to scrape by. When not themselves a part of this "equivocal world", Parisian proletarians were usually sympathetic to it and naturally hostile to the police, and they were not at all opposed to carrying out small thefts themselves.

distinguished theorists and has its best expression in popular assemblies. Starting from Val Susa, the feeling has spread that every individual can have control over the decisions that determine the destiny of our society: it is enough to know how to discuss with others. This conviction has led to the revival of direct democracy, of *politika* in the Hellenic sense, of the myth of the agora — the civic space in which citizens can gather informally to discuss, exchange ideas and involve themselves in useful relationships, in view of those popular assemblies where they will confront the common questions with the aim of reaching agreement in a direct, face-to-face way. In short, what the flabbiest, sorriest anarchist militants have describes for years as "non-state public spheres".

It is certainly no accident that the Greek word for assembly is *ecclesia*[3]. If the most perfect organization in the universe can be called God, then the link between politics and religion is emphasized. Less obvious is the attractive force it exercises over those who intend to subvert this world from top to bottom. The monstrous aberration that causes men and women to believe that language is born to facilitate and resolve their mutual relationships leads them to these collective gatherings,where they debate how to face the affairs of life. That theses affairs are experienced in different ways among those present, that the debate cannot be equal since capacities will not be equal (those who know more and speak better dominate the assembly), that the minority has no reason to accept the decision of the majority . . . all this gets noted only when one doesn't frequent the agora. As soon as one sets foot there, perhaps prodded by events, old perplexities dissipate; a miracle that occurs much more easily if one discovers that he has a fine "capacity for oratory". And yet there are still those who go on thinking that this effort to unite individuals into a community, to supply them with something to share, to render them equal, is odious. Because it is dripping with hypocrisy. The same hypocrisy that, after ignoring the slaves that allowed the ancient Greeks to deliberate non-stop, after removing the amorphous and anonymous plebeian unworthy of being a part of the people, is now prepared to overlook the fact that human beings

[3] Which also means "church", hence, the word "ecclesiastical". — translator

can join together only if they renounce their respective worlds — sensitive worlds, without supermarkets and highways, but rich in dreams, thoughts, relationships, words and loves.

In political reason as in religious faith, the leading idea is that equality comes from identity, from common adherence to one vision of the world. We are all equal because we are all children of God, or citizens of Society. The opposite possibility, which has also cropped up in the course of history, is never considered. That general harmony of humanity might originate in the division of individuals pushed to infinity. Individuals are equal either when they are all identical or when they are all different. In the assembly that unites everyone, reason — the *Logos* — is evoked through discussion. Speaking, reasoning,arguing, this is where problems melt like snow in the sun, conflicts are settled, agreements are made. But how many compromises, how moderation, how much realism are necessary to reach a common agreement, to suddenly discover we are all brothers?

Thus, after having so thoroughly criticized the conviction that one can return to a science of social transformation, after having affirmed that there are no laws that control social events, after having refuted the illusion of an objective historical mechanism, after having cleared the field of all the fetters that get in the way of free will, after having sung the excess that repudiates every form of calculation, one goes back and takes a yardstick in hand to measure the steps carried out. The participants at initiatives get counted, the media coverage received is controlled, continuous forecasts of the balance are made. Clearly then, the passions were not so wicked, the desires were not so wild, interests were not so distant.

Nor is it understood why direct democracy, as a mediation between various forces in the field that arises in the course of an insurrectional rupture (as has happened historically) should become an ideal to realize here and now in collaboration with various mayors, local authorities and politicians put on the spot by disillusioned citizens. Direct democracy is a sham good idea, It shares with its big sister, Democracy in the broad sense, the fetishism of form. It holds that the manner of organizing a collective pre-exists the discussion itself, and that this method is valid everywhere, at all times, and for every kind of question. Defending direct democracy, counterposing

slaughter seen up to that time. They would be the ones to collectively embody the illegalist ideal, as much in the hatred of the weak as in an absolute freedom from moral obligations". The conclusion is unforgettable: "From a minority ideology, illegalism became the ruling thought, with all the blood that this entails".

You couldn't call Evangelisti's arguments very original. They merely repeat the anathemas most frequently showered on illegalist anarchists, anathemas hurled both by the more reactionary anarchists and by marxists of every stripe, haughty intellectuals hostile to the "lumpenproletariat". All these fierce enemies of the individual and loyal friends of the people have striven for nearly a century to spread the image of Bonnot as an alter ego of the savage bourgeois (kind of like in philosophical circles where there are those who have tried to present Sade as an alter ego of the savage nazi). As if an individual in revolt against society could ever have anything in common with a man of state drunk on power. As if those anarchists of the past (but in the author's hidden intentions, the reference is to a few present-day anarchists) were a gang of raging lunatics, hungry for blood, aspiring slaughterers. Perhaps it is time to oppose this lie with something other than the silence of indifference or the laughter of merriment. Evangelisi's text — a small anthology of errors, contradictions, slander, the whole thing seasoned with amusing blunders — supplies an optimal occasion for doing so.

Down With Work!

It has been noted time and again that the worst enemies of history are often precisely historians. Unlike those who make history, they limit themselves to recounting it. Their objects of study — other people's adventurous lives — can sometimes become a mirror in which they see the banality of their own lives reflected. A mirror to break, its view is so unbearable. Aware of their own passive role of mere contemplation, they get their revenge on those who have lived in the first person and acted directly. So it isn't surprising that Evangelisti, this history graduate, this prolific author of essays with historical themes, this director of a historical archive, mystifies the history of

Like Cacucci, he has taken an interest in the French illegalists anarchists of the early twentieth century known as the "Bonnot gang". Cacucci wrote a novel that, a short while ago, could even be found on supermarket shelves between the bread and the toilet paper. Evangelisti dedicated an essay to them that appeared in an anthology that was meant to pay homage to the literary character created by the imagination of Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre, Fantômas the King of Terror. "Fantômas and the Illegalists" is the title of this essay, which is a noteworthy example of Evangelisti's passion: uniting fantastic fiction with political critique. It is necessary to say here that the fantastic fiction, evoked by Fantômas, is very much a pretext for giving free rein to the political critique of illegalist anarchists. Of the six paragraphs that make up this text, only the first is dedicated to Allain's and Souvestre's. The rest of the text gives body to the nightmares of this left militant in the face of an anarchist revolt that is determined not to remain smothered in the dust of the archives.

Evangelisti's thesis can be quickly summed up: Fantômas, a criminal capable of committing the most heinous crimes at anyone's expense, was created in France in the early twentieth century; he was inspired by illegalist anarchists who filled the papers of the times with "crimes, at times gratuitous", committed to gratify their unconstrained individualism outside of any context of social struggle;this illegalism had experienced an earlier generation in which episodes of brutal violence had been limited (Ravachol and Henry) and, in any case, still linked to a class perspective, but had later suffered a degeneration that led it to defend undifferentiated violence against the exploited themselves, as witnessed in theory in the writings of Libertad and in practice in the actions of the "Bonnot gang"; illegalist ideas would remain completely circumscribed in a marginal sphere of the anarchist movement, not finding confirmation among other enemies of the state where "the revolutionary process is constantly conceived as mass action, even when the task of triggering it might be attributed to a narrow vanguard". This blind exaltation of violence in the name of an Individual attentive only to his own ease is, in reality, akin to the worst reasoning of the state, since "The bourgeoisie, made into the state, would be precisely the ones to inaugurate the age contemporaneous with the most widespread and indiscriminate

— as "real" democracy — to "false" representative democracy, means believing that our authentic nature can finally be revealed when it liberates from the constraints that weigh on us. But being liberated from these constraints supposes a transformation such that at the end of the process we will no longer be the same, or better, we will no longer be what we are in this civilization based on domination and money. The unknown cannot be reached by known routes, just as freedom cannot be reached through authority. Finally, even in accepting the possibilities of establishing an effective direct democracy, there would still be an objection: why should a minority ever adapt itself to the desires of the majority? Who knows, perhaps it is true that we are living in an ongoing and terrible state of exception. However, it is not the one decreed by power in the face of its own rules — rights are a pure lie invented by the sovereign who is not held to be consistent with this lie — but rather that of the individual in the face of his own aspirations. It is not living as one would like to live. It is not saying what one would like to say. It is not acting as one would like to act. It is not loving who one would like to love. It is having to lower oneself, day after day, to compromises with the tyranny that condemns our dreams to death. Because here it is not about winning or losing (a typical obsession of militants), but of living the only life one has available, and living it in *one's own way*. Small gestures and common words can hold crowds and crowded streets together, but can we only seek these gestures, these words, outside ourselves to satisfy a new sense of belonging to a community? Not unless we want to give the individual a blank check, only in order to later let them know that it was really toilet paper.

Excerpt from the "National Pact of Solidarity and Mutual Aid"

At the end of the Venuas-Rome NO-TAV Caravan, the Committees, Networks, Movements and Groups assembled here in the room of the Protomoteca of the Municipality of Rome, on this day of July 14, 2006, in common agreement, determine to create a PERMANENT NATIONAL NETWORK AND A NATIONAL PACT OF SOLIDARITY AND MUTUAL AID in order to affirm in our country:

- The right to precautionary information and active participation of the citizens with regard to every intervention that wants to operate on the territory on which they live, sharing the common goods (water, air, land, energy);
- The use of systems of promotion and consumption that valorize territorial resources, minimize environmental impact and the movement of merchandise and people, and that are not based on exploitation, particularly of the South of the world.
- The beginning of a national moratorium on the carrying out of large public works and on the localization of energy plants [. . . *here I left out a list of specific types of energy plants, because I couldn't find translations for most of the Italian words in any of my dictionaries*. . .] both due to the lack of a national energy plan and to prevent the business logic of the few from devouring the resources of the many.
- The urgency of the cancellation of the Objective Law, the Environmental Proxy Law, the Central Release Law, Green Certifcates for incinerators and the radical modification of the Design Law on Energy.

On these bases, we are giving life to a National Coordination (with website and e-mail) constituted of a representative from every participating otganization and we invite all other Committees, Networks, Movements and Groups to join together in this National Pact of Solidarity and Mutual Aid.

Bonnot and the Evangelists

Survivors have always hounded social movements. Survivors of battles considered lost, survivors of decomposed ideologies, survivors of unrealized utopias, sorry figures who present their own personal defeat as if it were a historical defeat with the aim of finding some public justification for their human misery. As is known, since life is over for the survivor, it is necessary to consider how to face survival, and some of them can't resist dedicating themselves to literature. If their experience and knowledge did not serve yesterday to make the revolution, let them at least serve today for getting by!

One of these good people is Valerio Evangelisti, a well-known science fiction writer, creator of the character Eymerich the Inquisator. And that's not all. He also curated the "Project Memory: the Commune", was president of the "Marco Pezzi" Historical Archive of the New Left in Bologna, is a collaborator in *Le Monde Diplomatique*[1] as well as the editorial director of the magazine *Carmilla* ("literature, imagination and the culture of opposition"). There is a little thing gnawing at all these writers with radical cravings, the attempt to connect profit and militancy. But to be honest, we have to recognize an undeniable qualitative leap in him. Unlike those who have gone to the assault on the sales chart after having given up the assault on the heavens, Evangelisti alternated between an academic career and work as a functionary of the Finance Ministry.

Like his colleague Pino Cacucci[2], former anarchist revolutionary, Evangelisti was born in the Emilian capital (Bologna), which holds the dishonorable record for having spawned a whole generation of "creative" recuperators (from Bifo to Luther Blisset to Helena Velena).

[1] A French language journal that is one of the main sources of current leftist theory in Europe today.

[2] Author of *In ogni caso nessun rimorso,* translated into English as *Without a Glimmer of Remorse* (Christiebooks), a novel about the Bonnot Gang. Unfortunately, it seems that some people in the US take it for a nonfiction account, despite the fact that the author intended it as fiction, and the English-language publisher advertises it as such.

accustomed to the harness. In the time of youth and strength, the only ones not protesting are the slaves.

The special honor of the proletarian consists in accepting outright all the lies in whose name he is condemned to forced labor: duty, fatherland, etc. He accepts them, hoping in this way to raise himself to the bourgeois class. The victim becomes accomplice. The unfortunate talks of the flag, pounds his chest, takes off his cap and spits in the air:

— I am an honest worker.

The spit always falls back in his face.

[Zo d'Axa]

And You Call This Living?

Rising at dawn. Quickly going off to work, using some fast means of locomotion; in other words, getting locked up in a more or less spacious place, usually lacking air. Seated in front of a computer, typing without rest in order to transcribe letters, half of which wouldn't even get written if you had to do it by hand. Or operating some mechanical device, manufacturing objects that are always identical. Or never moving more than a few steps away from an engine whose motion needs to be ensured or whose functioning needs to be monitored. Or, finally, standing in front of a loom continuously repeating the same gestures, the same movements, mechanically, automatically. And this for hours and hours without changing, without taking any recreation, without a change of atmosphere. Every day!

AND YOU CALL THIS LIVING?

Producing! Still producing! Always producing! Like yesterday, like the day before yesterday. Like tomorrow, if disease or death doesn't strike you own. Producing what? Things that appear useless, but whose superfluity you aren't allowed to discuss. Complex objects of which you only have one part, perhaps the lowest part, in your hand. So complex that you have no idea of all the phases necessary for its manufacture. Producing? Without knowing the destination of your product. Without being able to refuse to produce for someone you don't like, without being able to show the least individual initiative. Producing: quickly, rapidly. Being a production tool that is spurred, prodded, overloaded, worn down to the point of total exhaustion, to the point where you can't take anymore.

AND YOU CALL THIS LIVING?

Starting the hunt for customers in the morning. Pursuing, ensnaring the "good customer". Jumping from the subway into a car, from the car onto a bus, from the bus onto the tram. Making fifty visits a day. Taking a great deal of trouble to overestimate your merchandise and shouting yourself hoarse belittling that of others. Heading back home late in the evening, overexcited, fed up, restless, making everyone around you unhappy, lacking any inner life, any impulse toward a better ethical existence.

AND YOU CALL THIS LIVING?

Pining away inside the four walls of a cell. Feeling the unknown future that separates you from your own or those that you at least consider your own, through affection or the community of risks. If sentenced, feeling the sensation that your life is escaping from you, that you can do nothing more to determine it. And this for months, for entire years. No longer being able to fight. Being no more than a number, a mockery, a wet rag, something regulated, monitored, spied on, exploited. All this to a much greater degree than the consequence of the crime.

AND YOU CALL THIS LIVING?

Wearing a uniform. For one, two, three years, endlessly repeating the act of killing other individuals. In the exuberance of youth, in the full explosion of virility, being locked up in immense edifices where you leave and enter at determined times. Consuming, walking, waking up, going to sleep, doing everything and nothing at fixed times. All this in order to learn how to handle tools intended to take life away from other being completely unknown to you. In order to prepare you to fall one day, killed by some projectile that comes from far away. Training yourself to die, or to cause death, a robotic tool in the hands of the privileged, the powerful, the monopolists, the hoarders. When you are not privileged, powerful, the possessor of anything.

AND YOU CALL THIS LIVING?

Not being able to learn, or love, or seclude yourself, or squander time at your pleasure. Having to stay inside when the sun shines and flowers send their fragrances into the air. Not being able to head toward the noonday sun when the north wind blows icy and snow beats on your windowpanes; nor to head north when the heat becomes sweltering and the grass dries in the fields. Always and everywhere, bumping into laws, into boundaries, into morals, into conventions, into rules, into judges, into workshops, into prisons, into barracks, into men and women in uniform that protect, maintain, defend, an order of things that is mortifying and gets in the way of the expansion of the individual. And you — you lovers of "life", incense-bearers of "progress", all of you who turn the wheels of the cart of "civilization"? —

The Honest Worker

It is the incurable enervation of the mass of the exploited that creates the growing and logical ambition of the exploiters.

The Kings of the mine, of coal and gold, would be quite wrong to worry. The resignation of their slaves consecrates their authority. Their power no longer needs to appeal to divine right, that decorative nonsense; their sovereignty is legitimated through popular consent. A workers' plebiscite made of fanatically patriotic adherence, declamatory banality or silent acquiescence, ensures the empire of the employers and the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The artisan of this work is identified.

Whether in the mine or the factory, the Honest Worker, that sheep, has given mange to the herd.

A counter-owner ideal perverts the instincts of the people . A Sunday overcoat, talking politicians, voting . . . it is the hope that replaces everything. The odious daily work awakens neither hatred nor rancor. The great party of workers despises the loafer who earns the money granted by the boss poorly.

They are passionately dedicated to work.

They are proud of their calloused hands.

However deformed their fingers are, the yoke has done worse to their heads: with the continuous rubbing of the harness on their scalps, the lumps of resignation, cowardice and respect have swelled up. Old conceited workers brandish their certificates: forty years in the same company! You hear them talking about this as they beg for bread in the courtyards.

— Have pity, sir or madam, on an old invalid, a fine worker, a good patriot, an old non-commissioned officer who fought in the war . . . Have pity, sir or madam.

It's cold; the windows remain shut. The old man doesn't understand . . .

Educate the people! What then is needed? Their misery has taught them nothing. As long as there are rich and poor, the latter will yoke themselves for service on order. The worker's spinal column is

much oxygen as the cells of the rest of the body, meaning that they are particularly damaged by a lack of air. Breathe deeply three or four times, slowly and emptying your lungs properly, the moment you feel the need to breathe. Departures and changes of atmosphere are highly recommended.

8. Refuse all improvements in order to keep your sights fixed on nothing but the totality. Don't beat around the bush. Pump in the enthusiasm, especially the first days. Look for stimulants (breaking free from all social restraints) and heavy, convoluted arguments with your ex-bosses. Drink between meals in order to activate the elimination of moroseness. Give priority to the healthiest activities — the ones you participate in directly — and to natural, vital needs which are rich in pleasure (love) and to full moments which are rich in satisfaction (departures, parties). To avoid nervousness, which frequently occurs during proletarian detoxification, naps are important. Certain subversive readings can be added to respond to the particularly important need to destroy the system during the detoxification cure. Reduce stress, fear and hesitation in order to avoid losing weight.
9. Get enough sleep. Because the hours when everything is possible are those after midnight, go to bed late.
10. Get the most radical ideas and what goes beyond them flowing in order to fight uncertainty, which occurs frequently when wage labor ceases.

And if you wish to remain successful, always be sure to refuse the first job offer.

YOU CALL THIS LIVING?

[Emile Armand]

Ten Tips for How to Stop Working

1. Want to stop. Make use of everything that can strengthen your desire: slavery, a lack of excitement, and a wage are dangers to the health of all, and particularly to creativity.
2. Stop completely. Because the worker increases his or her dose of work with the slightest desire to consume, half-measures are ineffective. Experience shows that it is easier to stop abruptly all at once, rather than progressively.
3. Choose the right moment. Preferably right away. The present period, with its living conditions of interchangeable misery, is particularly favorable. Following a holiday, when the need often disappears spontaneously, you can decide not to start again.
4. Immerse yourself in a favorable atmosphere. Stopping at the same time as the person you are living with, friends or work colleagues and helping each other psychologically is effective. Often, at the same time, this permits not living in an atmosphere of fear (one to be avoided to the utmost during work detoxification). Making the people that you know aware that you're stopping can be of help.
5. Get rid of temptation. Make work and its accessories (car, television, alarm clock) vanish from your environment. No longer wear a watch or have a clock at home. Avoid getting into situations where you are used to occupying spare time with your preferred activities (puttering, dull reading material, films, shopping). Avoid public transport and certain festivities, such as political meetings, during which docile renunciation is habitual.
6. Influence your conscious and unconscious mind by affirming your decision to stop working and by insisting positively on the expected benefits. Do not hesitate to repeat out loud several times each day, "I choose to stop working and my health is improving every day," or any other positive formula of your choice.
7. Breathe deeply in order to relax and to feed oxygen to your nervous system. Nerve cells, in effect, consume four times as

— We have freedom to speak, to write, to drink, to smoke, even to get drunk, except, obviously, in circumstance barred by the law that is the contract that free citizens have freely accepted.

— Yes, but don't you find certain freedoms to be less pleasant? For example the freedom to sleep under bridges if you can't pay the rent . . .

He made an indignant gesture.

— Perhaps for vagabonds, the homeless, the jobless, misfits.

— But, in short — I replied, rather enraged — there are quite a few circumstances . . . for instance, disease, unemployment, that leave you with no freedom except that of croaking from hunger.

— Wrong, sir — he said, sententiously — honest people have nothing to fear from such eventualities. Where I come from, for example, there is no unemployment, and the people you are talking about are those who make a bad use of freedom.

— Excuse me, but you who go on and on about freedom, what do you do?

— I, sir, am a prison guard.

Safe as Death

"They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

— Benjamin Franklin

It's a problem that gets talked about a lot, but whose diagnosis is terse. On the right and on the left, the verdict is the same: we live in an "unsafe climate".

Everyday the news showers us with gallons of blood gathered at the scenes of ambushes, rapes, murders. Bloody events described and filmed with a maniacal wealth of details, making horrible shivers run up our spines that are already weakened by daily genuflections.

Watching the misfortunes of others is no longer a consolation. We aren't able to heave a sigh of relief at having escaped it. It is a nightmare, because these misfortunes seem to press against the screens, so as to hurl themselves onto our living room carpets. And if one day we become the protagonists of these news broadcasts that now drip only death? Prey to terror, we begin to triple lock the door, not talking to the neighbor or going out at night any more. Panic spreads as the following certainty is generalized: lack of safety is the scourge of our times. If it is solved, the gates of paradise will open for us.

To be blunt, there is some perplexity over the real increase in violence. Facing explicit demands, the "experts" themselves are forced to recognize that there is no substantial difference in comparison to the past: the leap in statistics is the fruit of different bookkeeping criteria. But also of *visibility*. It works like this. The political class puts the question of safety at the center of all its interventions. Journalists, accommodating to their masters as usual, repeat the concerns of the politicians and enhance them, illustrating them with news items. There is no lack of news to report. If the stories aren't relegated to a paragraph on the fifteenth page, they will expand out of proportion until they become exemplary. All that remains to the politicians is to comment about them and the play is made: "Do you see that our

concerns were more than justified, they were indisputable? There truly is a safety problem!"

Ultimately, all this ado would not have much importance if it didn't aim to spread terror among the people, pushing them to demand drastic measures from their representatives. Against whom? Why, against those petty criminals who become giants of crime as soon as they end up under the spotlight.

It goes without saying that petty criminals are not exactly at the top of the list of problems that disturb our lives. Quite different problems place our survival and that of our times in danger. The planet is threatened by ecological imbalance, cuts and restructuring loom over workplaces, our houses are at the mercy of theft by the banks, our health is threatened by the poisons we eat and breathe. Our entire existence is threatened by immanent danger (no to speak of current and future wars with their unforeseeable collateral effects), whose consequences are much worse than the theft of a wallet on the bus. The inventory of possible misfortunes is so vast, our days pass so much under the sign of precariousness and misery, that it is completely crazy to think that petty criminals are the cause of the social malaise.

Well, then, why the hell is it repeated until we're dizzy that aggression waits in ambush just around the corner? Simple. Because the state can dress up as the Great Protector around which to rally and the Righter of Wrongs to whom to turn. Muggers, purse-snatchers, drug dealers, rapists or murderers — random or hardened, real or presumed, native or foreign — not being the ones responsible for environmental devastations, job losses, financial devastation, food adulteration, workplace accidents, bombings of civilians, famines that afflict the world or any other great social problem, is it necessary to reveal those who are most directly responsible for all these occurrences? The punishment of chicken thieves in the public square serves the state and its hired killers by diverting the general attention from the private foraging of the sharks. One worry drives out another — this is why the institutions spread a panic to be attributed *to someone else*, feeding it continuously and increasing it in every way.

Long Live Freedom

— I really don't understand why you have bad things to say about the Republic. Don't you appreciate the extreme freedom that it offers?

— Unquestionably, but . . .

— Me too, sir. I am utterly aware of my complete freedom. I was born into a modest family, my father was a road worker. In other regimes, I would have been immediately assimilated as a slave, and might have become the property of some country gentleman. Instead, sir, even though I come from a poor background, I am born a free citizen. Instead of being looked upon as a beast of burden, I have freely chosen my profession. Or better, my father chose the boss, who was supposed to live off my work, for me. I was quite wretched, sir, in the material sense of the word; my wages were ridiculous and expenses were quite high. But when the evening came, I looked in the mirror and said, "Here is a free man", and this made me proud. At the age of 18, I freely enlisted in the military force that I liked best, and I very much appreciated this freedom that allowed me to go on missions in foreign countries and earn this medal, which is my life's honor.

I will not tell you the freedoms that were granted on those missions. The newspapers talk about it enough.

Since then, I have done nothing but bless the Republic. Now, I am a salaried employee, and I don't earn high pay, but I know that I am an honest person and have the dignity of being a free citizen. In other times, under the empire, you'd be defrauded by a gang of aristocrats that sprung up from who knows where. But today we have the freedom to choose who to obey ourselves, and if we don't like them, we can change them every four years. Don't you appreciate this advantage?

— Very much.

As a result, the hang-up about safety provides another advantage to the political class, justifying its recourse to increasingly tougher and more severe measures demanded by the population itself, to obtain, first of all, "the certainty of punishment". (For whom? but that is another matter.) Be that as it may, a population terrorized by the possibility of having their pocket picked applauds the increase in the forces of order. A population intimidated by crimes committed by immigrants welcomes the CPTs (Centers of Temporary Residence) with relief. A population frightened by the possibility of finding that someone has broken into their house is favorable to the spreading network of surveillance, and so on. But the provisions enacted in the name of the struggle against a few petty criminals will come in handy especially against the many potential rebels. More than petty criminality, the real danger to repress is social conflict. The political exploitation of the feeling of being unsafe is a formidable force for repressive laws. the climate of terror in which we live is not the natural outcome of hateful social conditions. It has been deliberately created to slip the satisfied city dweller into an unprecedented police regime. The state identifies the problem of public safety with "micro-criminality" with the aim of imposing its solution: Public Safety, i.e., the cops.

All safety measures are authentic attacks on individual freedom and couldn't be taken so lightly if there hadn't been a genuine thought police operation aimed at imposing the idea that safety is the guarantee of freedom rather than its preventive negation. So the disease and the cure have been created, reconciling *safety* and *freedom* in a firm ideological alliance. An absurd alliance, impossible between two contradictory notions, which, like water and fire, cannot remain in contact without dissolving each other.

The construction sites of safety are built on the tombs of freedom. Safety has the objective of distancing all danger, while the practice of freedom, on the contrary, entails a challenge to every danger. It's no accident that the expression "making safe" usually means the act of putting something under lock and key. The typical example is that of the wild animal snatched from the jungle to be locked in a cage. In this way, the zoo administrators assure us, the animal is rescued from the dangers of the jungle and *made safe*. Behind bars it will

not incur the risk of being shot by hunters or torn apart by savage beasts. Well, this animal is certainly safe, but at a heavy price — its freedom. It is well-known: when one avoids danger, one doesn't live life, one barely preserves it; because only by going to meet danger does one live life in its fullness.

Thus, safety and freedom are utterly incompatible.

"The more control there is the safer we are," say the knuckle-headed people. And then add: "Video surveillance cameras are useful because nothing can happen under their eyes." Appalling expressions, symptoms of unconditional love for big brother. But who would want to live a life subject to *control* where *nothing happens*? Only at the cost of completely clouding the mind could one happily enter into the emotional desert through which our era trudges. Freedom is self-determination, choice of any possibility, risk, a challenge to the unknown that cannot be pampered under a glass bell.

But in our times the first quality required of an "honest" person is precisely that he conduct his life in *transparency*. A transparent person has nothing to hide, nothing to silence in his public or private life, thus, nothing to fear from others watching him. In the name of transparency, every intrusion is justified, any will to keep a secret indicates guilt. It is curious how the private life of individuals, which was once surrounded by respect and discretion is now watched with suspicion. Through logical and rhetorical acrobatics, protecting one's secrets has been made into a shady behavior. Banishing private life, it is clear that what allows its unveiling — investigation — is consecrated as a primary value. If this is so, then the means employed for this purpose are not and cannot be questioned. A defense of wiretapping!

At first, this demand for transparency was developed to contain the abuses of those who hold power. Requiring transparency in the lives of public men, of those who have high responsibilities, has a more than understandable function. They have to answer for the way that they manage the "public thing", i.e., put in a position where they can't abuse their privileges. But the reverse demand — that common people should be transparent to the eyes of those who hold power — is more terrible than one can imagine. Under the pretext

concentration camps from Guantanamo to the Centers of Temporary Residence (CTPs). But anyone who doesn't stop in the face of the lack of gas chambers, who doesn't believe that the ruthless ness of a regime is determined by a particularly gruesome aspect, can't avoid grasping the similarity that exists between the two eras. It is enough to look around to notice the same banality of evil, and identical alienation of the individual, the same loss of the I through a combination of ideology and terror. Today a single model of life reigns from west to east, without being called into question from any side. This omnipresence is becoming its concern. As long as capitalism had an enemy, it also had a scapegoat on which to unload all responsibility (a thing that occurred reciprocally for the other). But now, who is there to blame if the world finds itself on the edge of an abyss?

The world at last affordable to all — a vast supermarket vomiting out plastic-coated goods — has not at all increased happiness, peace or equality. The enemy has now become anyone who protests against the world, i.e., potentially everyone.The ideology of safety anticipates the times. It doesn't wait for the explosion of rage. It attributes the terror of current social relationships to the freedom of individuals, suddenly transforming everyone into the enemy, making us all suspicious in the eyes of the other, isolating us in our fear, provoking a war among the poor in order to defuse a social war. And it takes the legislative and police measures necessary for repressing such a threat. In this sense, what some people call the safety drift can be thought of as a huge preventative couterinsurgency operation.

to ask a simple question: Why don't we commit an act like, for example, rape? Do we reject it because we consider it a repugnant act, which goes against our ideas and feelings, or because there is an article in the legal code that prohibits and punishes it? In the first case, our motivation could be described as ethical. In the second, it is legal. Maintaining that human beings should follow state legality rather than their own individual ethic means declaring that it is impossible for an individual to establish what is right and wrong for himself. After the capitulation of free will in the face of the will of authority, the penal code becomes *the conscience of a world that no longer has conscience.* A world in which the human being is thought of as lacking intelligence, with dulled feelings, insensitive to suffering — a savage beast to cage, control, repress. It is the price to pay in order to keep ethics from rising up against legality.

A society that sees its members as its enemies and entrusts authority with the task of repressing their thoughts and actions, a society quick to sacrifice every freedom in exchange for a crumb of safety, a society that sees Good as obedience to the law and Bad as transgression of the law, can only end up becoming totalitarian. How else can you describe a society placed under a regime of probation by a state that is granted every weapon and every police method for dealing with every particle of a person's life? As Hannah Arendt maintained, even a democracy can be totalitarian. A totalitarian state is one that makes it a required civic duty not only to respect the law, but also to think what those laws require you to think. Put simply, the insurgents who broke bank windows in Genoa in 2001 were not the only criminals; those who "psychically participated" by not stopping or denouncing them are also criminals. This social order doesn't limit itself to repressing hostility against itself, but also indifference: loving it is a duty, and whoever doesn't carry it out is persecuted.

Unfortunately, there is a blind spot in our minds that keeps us from comparing the totalitarianism of the modern world to the kind that characterized the first half of the last century. As if the heaviness of what happened in the past certifies the lightness of what is happening in the present. As if the barbed wire that surrounded Auschwitz was of a different gauge than the wire that surrounds present-day

of the exchange of "information" and of mutuality in control, the foundations for totalitarianism are laid.

Already in itself, transparency at all costs has unpleasant fallout. There are areas in the human being that naturally escape every indiscreet gaze. A person's intimacy, with his sexual tastes, is one of these. There was a time when someone who was interested in the intimate life of others was accused of wallowing in rumor-mongering and looked upon with disapproval. Renamed "gossip", rumor-mongering is now considered the spice that gives flavor to otherwise insipid conversations. The dreariness of a world that has transformed private vices into public virtues.

But who stops to reflect on what the cause of this effect might be? Our houses have become caretaker's lodges[1], it's true, but it is a matter of a contraindication to the shock treatment ordered against freedom of thought. To flush out this freedom that can always be protected by the secret, the whole pile gets set on fire. The demand for freedom is the eulogy that comes before the funeral of the corpse of freedom in every sphere of human life.

And rather than rebel before the firing squad, we bow our heads. We live in a society where we are all on probation, and every day we diligently go back to sign the register of resignation. Because of the uneasiness we feel in the face of absolute freedom, without limits or boundaries; because of the deafening media overkill that causes us to see enemies everywhere, spurring us to opt for the lesser evil of social control; but also because of our co-participation in degradation — we feel somewhat relieved. Over the past few years, television has reassured us about the goodness of the police, federal agents and judges — heroes of numberless TV shows — but how often has it invited us to directly spy through the keyhole. So-called 'reality shows" have had the effect of making the idea of a transparent life, that unfolds before all eyes and is periodically judged, punished and rewarded, familiar and normative.

The protest against the devastation of discretion runs into a barrier that has become classic: "if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear from control". Astounding, cop-like reasoning, which

[1] In Italian, there is a saying: "gossip like a caretaker".

once again uses a logical reversal to make discretion a vice and meddling a virtue. More and more, daily life comes to resemble a prison, where they take the fingerprints of everyone born, where you walk through numberless metal detectors, where you are observed by electronic eyes, where the presumption of innocence has given way to the presumption of guilt.

There is a further consequence of the climate of terror fed by the ideology of security. If everyone feels unsafe, it means that each represents a threat to the other. Thus, there are no victims, only the guilty and the potentially guilty. If I want to be protected from my neighbor and my neighbor wants to be protected from me, it follows that we are both potentially aggressors and it would be dangerous to grant us our freedom.

We have all become suspects for what we might do if we used our freedom. The state goes all the way with this logic and asserts its right to punish this threat even in its most innocuous manifestations — even preventatively repressing it. Earlier at least, it was maintained that the individual would become punishable by law when he put his transgressive intents into practice. Anyone could dream of killing, you just couldn't do it with impunity (unless you were dressed in a uniform, of course). Western, democratic civilizations loved to shove its superiority over other civilizations down our throats. These other civilizations were judged as obscurantist because they did not guarantee complete freedom of thought to those within them. Just lying propaganda, of course, but that at least had to disguise itself to appear true. Today, repression has rid itself of the burden of any embarrassment, , and it is obvious to all that the mere dream of transgressing, the mere deviation of thought, is enough to attract the iron fist of the judicial system. An example? The busts that periodically snap the handcuffs onto someone who has downloaded images of "child pornography" from the Internet. However contemptible, criticizable, hateful such behavior may be, the fact remains that these people are incriminated not for having abused any minors, but for looking at photographs in the privacy of their own homes. How long until the public burning of the works of Sade? Another example on the horizon is what happened to some friends of those arrested last February 12 in relation to the investigation of

the so-called "new BR" (Red Brigades). Stopped by a police patrol in the very serious act of putting up posters, they were taken in for arrest. Already the event is telling in itself, since atmost, a poster can express an idea. Furthermore, the idea expressed in these posters wasn't an incitement to armed struggle, but rather the leveling of th War on Terrorism. How long until the raids against anti-militarists and pacifists?

The individual, with her ideas, desires and impulses constitutes a threat for the social order, but also for himself and others. From this is born the climate of civil war that is spreading: nocturnal curfews, patrols by armed soldiers, roadblocks. It is as if war had been declared on an imaginary enemy, that isn't there, but that might be us. On everyone and no one. If each individual is a potential criminal and if every criminal is an enemy of the state, then a war against individuals is being carried out. Now there is a substantial difference between the concept of the criminal and the concept of the enemy. The former is recognized as part of the community. The latter is not. The enemy is not granted extenuating circumstances, his punishments are not negotiated. No pretense is made of wanting to rehabilitate her. She is destroyed. Against him, everything is allowed. Wars are police operations, and police operations are wars.

There is only one way to avoid being considered an internal enemy to eliminate. Respecting legality. But prayers to this modern idol don't protect you from dangers, except maybe that of divine wrath. In an atheist, however, a horrible doubt arises: Why should the law as such by synonymous with the good? Under nazism, the persecution of Jews was legal. The death penalty, torture as a means of extorting information, the manufacture of nuclear warheads, these are all legal in many states . . . The legality of an act merely denotes its conformity to what is prescribed by law, i.e., to the interests of the ruling class that is its author. It tells us nothing about the value, the meaning, the consequence of the act. The culture of legality thus leads exclusively to ignorance through obedience, which ceased to be a virtue many years ago even for priests (while continuing to be the sweet dream of tyrants).

And this isn't even the worst aspect. To catch a glimpse of the abysses toward which the exaltation of legality pushes, it is enough