Winding Down Of The Clockwork Lips

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1

> ‘Each time we gather like this the pressure grows. We are forcing the G8 leaders to answer our questions. Dracula cannot stand daylight. If you put him in the light, he will shrivel and die.’
>
> Jose Bove
>
> you wish a shining of your light would change the world.
>
> you wish the revelation of corruption, your gazing upon how things really are, could turn the powerful into stone
>
> if only, you think, your good desires were hands upon the levers of power.

But that is not it. The world has tired of scandals and injustices. It shrugs its shoulders at corruption, ‘So what, to the slaughter. So what, to the profiteering. So what, to election fraud. It’s in the nature of things.’

The more frequently journalistic investigations expose dark practices and institutionalised criminality the more the act of revelation functions as a sufficient cause for the final banishing of all ideological pretexts in state misbehaviour. Critique now appears to serve in some small way in the restoration of a kind of unapproachable and godless divine right to power. The instituted right to protest, to blow the whistle, to stage inquiries into governmental lies and illegalities occurs at precisely the moment such activities cease to have any significance beyond demonstrating the state’s ‘democratic’ credentials.

It has got to the stage where you, like a grand master, are well-rehearsed in the winning moves of political debate. You have the details, the facts are easily available, and the state makes no attempt to suppress websites and why should it when the facts make no difference? Now that you have won the argument it has withdrawn from argument altogether and it smiles, like a carnivorous Dalai Lama, saying nothing, laughing, inscrutable. The more you seize hold of its details, and the more your practice institutes a ‘participatory democracy’, the less you have impact upon its decisions.

Perhaps the most astounding perversity thrown up post-1989 is the sudden reversal in expectations of those who accept the spectacular classifications of dictatorship and democracy. Individuals living in countries governed by dictatorship now have much greater chance of witnessing and participating in ‘revolutionary’ political change than they live under democratic conditions. Democracy now means: that which has no reasonable enemies; it is a condition to which all that are not democratic strive, a structure which might only be modified in its details and therefore it has transcended its status as a means and has realised itself as the end of all political practice.

Democracy is is the inescapable conclusion to all politics, even the revolution it seems scrambles for alignment with this magrittian blankness.

If light, as Bove shines it, is understanding then you must recognise how and why understanding does not function as an adequate lever upon the dynamic of economic forces. Understanding, for the existing structure, is not in itself a force.

An understanding of the mechanisms of the commodity does not aid in the overthrow of the commodity system except in so far as to say the understanding of the workings of the commodity aids in the critique of the revolutionary milieu and its integration into the system, it aids that critique because such an understanding would show why the revolutionary milieu can never overthrow the commodity.

The power of the ruling class is not located in their right to power, which may be shown upon investigation to be abused and therefore open to change by proper enforcement of the rules of right, rather their power lies in the exercise of power itself. They do what they do because they can or they must — there is no external framework of good practice against which they may be called to account. You say the war is illegal? Your statement has no meaning.

The issue now is whether anyone else will ever have the material force to take their power from them.

2

In how many ways is the total transformation of earthly society conditioned by the existence and activities of an organised pro-revolutionary milieu, if at all?

A superficial anti-capitalism is born which feeds on various ideologies and which the earlier dissolution of consciousness aids in developing. These ideologies share a common desire to resolve the crisis for the proletariat by economising on proletarian revolution by putting forward a mishmash of reactionary and reformist measures. They reflect a tendency towards communitarian reform on the thin basis of lingering capitalism.

> Negation
>
> Lip and the self-managed counter revolution 1975
>
> (published by Red And Black)

For more than forty years there has been a justified rebellion amongst pro-revolutionaries against that ever-apposite slogan of dispensability, 'the end justifies the means' which they rightly identify as having previously so effectively glossed Party pseudo-objectivity. But now, in the place of local expediency, there has emerged an equally questionable form of political engagement founded on the assumption that only libertarian practice can lead to a libertarian future (the love and peace assumption of what you get is equal to what you give).

The old revolutionaries' reliance on strategically applied force of arms and cunning has since been replaced by the long struggle for consciousness. The argument of 'one no and many yeses', is that capitalist power causes an objective unity within its subjects as they encounter its unity via their diverse and partial struggles against it. The objective unity of the many struggles will combine and become one because of the totalised character of what they oppose, at some stage the fractured nature of the many struggles will combine at the level of recognition, understanding and consciousness. The pro-revolutionary milieu now reformulates its function under non-revolutionary conditions as being that of visiting its ideas upon all those who are now ready to receive them. But the problem remains: how is this objective consciousness to be communicated to, induced in, conjured from, the wider populace? How will its ideas displace the contradictory ideological consciousness of partial struggle? By what means exactly is the milieu going to impose its will upon reality?

Although the analysis of pro-revolutionaries has awarded to the milieu a central role in any revolution, there is no historical evidence that milieu consciousness has ever proved decisive, nor is it certain that the milieu is adequate to the task of 'organisation' that it has set itself. To invert Lenin's famous dictum on workers' consciousness, 'revolutionaries' are historically capable only of a managerialist agenda. In the absence of objective revolutionary conditions the milieu appears in thrall to an unconscious urge to manifest this managementalism within the context of counterrevolutionary immediate political distractions and controversies of the moment. The exigencies you detect have transformed you into the little lenins of all that is irrelevant — imagining

yourselves the great men of history when really you are prey, like everyone else, to determinate forces of which your consciousness cannot possibly have any real grasp.

3

A fatal alienation has already occurred at the practical level between the milieu and the proletariat but so far the milieu has refused to recognise it, instead it casts about for and substitutes in other 'antagonistic' constituencies and movements that it now analyses to be its proper subject (Negri, who discovers revolutionary subjects like he is shelling peas, is the master of this ever-shifting redefinition). Nevertheless, revolutionary organisations are now more disconnected from non-milieu people and are therefore more ineffective on their own terms than ever before. Up to the issuing of this pamphlet the pro-rev milieu has not brought itself to reflect upon its isolation and has continued to pretend that if it builds the 'movement', they will come. The milieu projects itself into 'struggles' and causes which have nothing to do with it, it seeks influence upon events but cannot find purchase for its ideas. It's understanding of partial struggles, for cultural identity, for better conditions, for specific reform, is grounded in the assumption that here must be a 'way in' to revolutionary consciousness but when the campaign dissipates it is always the same paper sellers left in the committee hall. Greedy, owlish blinking and mouse tails trickling down their nasty chins.

The long game strategy of the popular front, the seducing, the allying, infiltrating, seizing hold of, oppositional groups does not at all attract 'ordinary' people to the great cause, on the contrary. Recent social upheavals, economic and political, have not reversed the declining trend. The milieu now cannot confronted its failure to spread its ideas within the context of the antiwar movement even though those participating now feel utter despair and cynicism concerning the present political system. It cannot face the dispiriting effect it has on others so it ploughs on, its enemies always outside.

There has been no theorisation on this failure because that would necessarily require judgement on the political interests of the organisations concerned (and no leftist group is able to contemplate itself as an error, still less will they countenance the prospect of their own removal from the scene). On all fronts there is retreat into a fallback position of hard-left 'holding' issues, the treading of the cross-class waters of anti-imperialism and antiracism. And the anti-capitalist phenomena of two or three years ago also has not continued its prophesied expansion, the opposite in fact, it has drifted and is now dominated by the authoritarian left — behold the recent London European Social Forum.

The necessary spontaneity and joy of the pro-revolutionary position has been effectively liquidated as the authoritarian left's leadership seeks to re-consolidate itself on the left hand of the state with its policy of long term 'analysis' of non-revolutionary campaigns and the strategy of a politics of influence within existing institutions. That the major fraction of the libertarian pro-revolutionary strand has fallen directly under the spell of the left perspective or has, at the least, adopted its language and priorities, regrettably proves the continuing absence within the milieu of the most basic consciousness, namely that we are not all on the same side (for example, that the ugly harassment of human rights campaigners in London (May04) by leftist supporters

of Palestinian nationalists could pass off without any organised pro-rev response only further demonstrates the lack of a coherent and forceful free communist presence).

The pro-revolutionary milieu does not understand itself in relation to the structure of capitalist society, it cannot see where it fits in, how it functions within the machine. This critical blindness is perhaps the cause of its own conception of the transforming of society as something similar to present political process, where everyone has their say, only without any disagreement, the democratic fantasy of the unanimous verdict.

The milieu searches for some commonality between its political analysis and industrial struggle, it attempts to force a union between its own ideologically motivated acts and those measures taken in self-defence by the working class. Its desire is to discover some formal unity between itself and 'the people', the ideological purpose of this desire is to prove an objectively constituted holistic 'movement' against capitalism.

Whilst the objective struggle against capital does continue it does not refer itself either to the pro-revolutionary milieu or to any explicit politics or residual revolutionary ideas. There is no place for ideas, or solutions, or politics in the revolutionary struggle, indeed there will be no place for 'revolution' in the revolution. At every instance the milieu confuses itself and its chosen politics with the actual, unlooked for struggle of humanity, and the working class specifically, against money. There is no autonomous 'movement' against capital as Marx imagined it, there is only specific resistances to specific impositions. That these impositions are grounded in an objectively constituted political-economic system, that the aggregate of specific instances might constitute an objective threat to capital is not at all identical to a coherent future conscious and organised anti-capitalism.

What opposes capital is organised by capital.

The pro-rev milieu does not now, and never will, have the wherewithal to bring on the revolution by itself or even in an 'alliance' with the 'people'. Revolution neither begins nor ends with revolutionaries, nor are the actions of revolutionaries central to world events. The milieu is chronically alienated from the productive process, it inhabits a closed world all its own. It's ideas and practices are little more than accelerated democracy and in its very condemnation of how things are it reinvests its practice in easily contained gestures and conventions, 'if enough of us make a stink, things will change,' (if so then what about the antiwar demo of 15 feb 2003?) The problem with the proposed — just do it' realism of pro-revolutionary activism is its essentially idealistic character — your acts, objectively, are never sufficiently real.

4

The milieu exists in the world as a fragmented idealistic by-product of capitalist production, it is characterised by a telltale threefold quality of its thought: firstly, in its reflection upon the nature of production; secondly, in its thoroughly self-defined subjective position; thirdly, in its empathic guessing at the condition of others. From its unique situation the milieu concludes that the world must be changed utterly and from the structural level upwards. But what to do if the milieu cannot break out of the political bubble? What to do if it cannot transmit its consciousness, which it says it must do if it is to expand itself and include everyone? What to do if the milieu is condemned to exist in the multiplicity of all other determined existences as only and always a designated fragment of the specialised bohemian satellite?

The pro-revolutionary milieu does not have direct access to the post-capitalist society via its consciousness. It is trapped by existing conditions, it cannot find a way past all which defeats it, and everyday there is not revolution the milieu is martyred again. The ideological retreat into conceptions of a 'movement' first begun by Marx, which talks of dialectical materialism and historical inevitability, is a lie the milieu constructs so that it may not be displaced from the centre of its account. The milieu calls itself communist but it does not follow that what it does now will ever escape determination by the capitalist generality, there is no line that begins from it and connects to an actual developing communist future. The milieu is in fact only ever pro-communist, communism being a condition the milieu yearns for but which it cannot possess.

The milieu is not autonomous, its consciousness is a curse of the present and not a mark of historical transcendence.

And the role of the milieu is not decided by the milieu. It is not its choice which of its parts are commodified and which are left outside of recuperation — the tourist industry, insurers, security firms, glaziers, cleaning companies, academics, the media all must have viewed anti-capitalist extravaganzas as a jamboree. The milieu is strapped in to its conditions, it dictates nothing of what is to happen, it decides none of the effects its actions will cause. It may choose to push to the extreme only those thoughts which the generality of capitalism has made available to it and as such it thinks, or is made to think, but one of the exit strategies from capital.

The actual position of the milieu is peripheral but nowhere in its interventions is this acknowledged as one of the conditions of its intervening.

5

Those who sought the eclipse of dreaming by means of their subjective physical agitation (e.g.. Anti-Capitalist Convergence — New York City) claimed they were inspired by the 'principle of direct action' to take the urge to freedom and redefine it as specified transgressions of locality and this principle shows 'people everywhere that there is an alternative to passive acquiescence' (quoted in Black Flag issue 221). The dreamers response to such testosterisimo is in five parts: (a) direct action is not a principle, it is merely a tactic; (b) the assumption that anyone anywhere lives in passive acquiescence fails utterly to grasp the nature of human existence; (c) this communiqué and others like them misrepresent the nature of the writers themselves, it is likely that this 'bloc', as all other similar groups, is really run by only one or two individuals; (d) essentially, the solution of direct action is not necessarily revolutionary at all — as ACCNYC represent it 'direct action means taking action for ourselves either to create our own solutions… or confront the authorities… to stop them doing what they're doing', in other words DA is a serially arranged but militant form of immediatist problem solving. Direct action is a specific, subjective response to what is perceived. DA cannot address the cause of the problems in which it intervenes, the symptoms to which it is chained, it remains stuck in a call and response model and cannot connect to what is most determining of all scenes. What does not appear before it is the generalised force that deliberately does not show in any identifiable locality. On a mass scale the potential for the strategy of direct action might be the establishment of pockets of self-management, however these cannot aggregate into social revolution as utter metamorphosis of society depends on a different order of change, that is a transformative event occurring within the organisation of ownership — thus direct action can resist capitalism locally but it cannot overthrow it worldwide; (e) most importantly, the vast majority of the people of the earth don't give a damn about ACCNYC and unfortunately the 'principle' of direct action will never explain why that is.

Pro-revolutionary theory has been out of fashion since it became academicised. Visionary thought has declined at a rate equal to the milieu's refusal to countenance it, as it refuses to grapple with ambiguous lessons. Everything is in a straight line nowadays, especially radical thought. Theory has been routinely marginalised by direct action groups for more than twenty years. It has seemed to some that 'acts' were unquestionably more real than establishing a coherent theoretical base because acts can be quantified whereas the effect of theory is indubitably incalculable. It is also true that the 'action' of bodies in the street is more malleable to the left, which has more interest in converting bodies into political force, than in 'useless' theoretical critique of the left's role as a semi-religious racket.

As the direct action of an isolated milieu now struggles to maintain itself against superior state firepower, the anti-capitalist/anti-authoritarian fragment must now theoretically redefine itself in order to gain back the positions recently lost to the authoritarian left, (I saw an SWP sticker,'fuck capitalism' [before now the SWP could only swear up to the point of 'stuff'], the patriotic emptiness of this threat having passed from anarchism to trotskyism. We forgive or do not even consider the durational functionality of punk rock posturing within the spectacle of

political gestures — it's the complicity of the Clash repeated, we forgive it its surface character, its t-shirt manifestos, because this is the example. We cast about, and this is what we come up with, it is what stands for us on the screen).

There are four basic matters for consideration:

1. it is not for alienated pro-revolutionaries, whose ideologically based self-awareness is determined wholly by the social generality of capitalism, to overcome alienation by some theologico-speculative stab at 'unifying theory and practice' (as if anyone in pre-rev times can dictate such a unity), there are no grounds for this unity — separation is the actuality.

2. Force is equal only to its effect. It's the penultimate law of pro-revoluionary-dynamics that small group acts have the importance only of the acts of small groups and are therefore confined wholly in terms of their effectiveness to the dimensions of their milieu. Revolutionary consciousness has never been transmitted from the small group to the masses by the actions of the small group. Mass revolutionary consciousness is not catalysed by pro-revolutionaries but is produced solely as a reflection of revolutionary events which occur within the pre-human structure of society (ie in the acts of the mass becoming a force upon the structure);

3. It is the final law of pro-revolutionary dynamics that thought, that is pro-revolutionary consciousness, can be pushed much further than pro-revolutionary acts and is therefore in advance of any proposed acts on its own terms. Pro-rev thought criticises what exists from the perspective of what doesn't, in this case thoughts become acts whilst proposed acts belong to the mere ideological space junk that orbits the heavy inertia of production.

4. It is a pretty passing pity that the pro-rev milieu continues to refer itself solipsistic ally to a conjectured outside audience to which it believes it will eventually appeal but within which objectively it never advances. A pity when it might ask itself a question with genuinely pro-rev implications: why when things are so transparently bad in the world do pro-rev actions continue to have no impact?

6

The cartoonist Paul Petard describes this project as resembling a hectoring schoolmaster inspecting and correcting the efforts of the milieu. With this in mind I will set this week's assignment:

Pro-revs are different from other people because they have consciousness, discuss.

There is an ongoing, perpetuating, contrast between the destructiveness of pro-revolutionary consciousness and the piecemeal bricolage of ordinary thought.

In the real world of experience and disappointment the convention is, if something goes wrong, consider why the malfunction occurred and then come up with other possibilities so it won't happen again. In other words most people most of the time contribute to the machinery of reality by engaging only with their immediate experience — for example academics specialise in ever more defined fields whilst workers see problems in the factory that relate to the part of the process which they are most concerned with.

The closest most people get to a negatively constituted consciousness is in reflecting upon the unfairness of their individual situation in comparison to that of others. When confronted by an other in a different situation, the first urge is to condemn. Suddenly the paltry wealth of somebody else (the riches of welfare payments for example) induces a desire for something more than the machine working well and the wages for it. It is this projected resentment that causes so many to feel they deserve little rewards just for being themselves and doing what they do, 'I'm special'. They don't even get to the consciousness of self-justification, they just do it. They don't think the speed limit applies to them; 'fuck the environment I want my holiday', they let their dogs shit in the park. They really can't, 'see it from another's point of view.' When confronted with the war in Iraq, their solution is to 'bomb it all into the ground, city by city'. They're special, they are certain they deserve the respect that they refuse to give. Everyone else is traffic. They're special. They need the calories their pancreas refuses. They're special, they see everything from their atomised perspective and they never get beyond a kneejerk reaction to their personal experiences: other people are in their way, other people are making too much noise, other people are the problem.

Prolonged powerlessness and the absence of any prospect of redemption, religious or revolutionary, has collapsed into a grey surge of depression — experience has become anti-experience, comfort eating, stupidism and deodorised separation. Pro-revolutionary consciousness is so far from the frozen monkey-seething perspective of those trapped in the cockpits of their automobiles which are, in turn, enmeshed in traffic, that the very idea of the transmission of ideas becomes absurd. Maybe twenty per cent of the world's population take antidepressants right now (250,000 children in UK are on ritalin), how can anyone become 'conscious' under such circumstances? Better to call on the ants to rise up for communism than the proletariat. Consciousness, the supposed antidote to ideology, is interrupted constantly and across multiple levels, so the tendency towards obese, unhappy imbecility is relentless. Every social 'problem' comes packaged with its solution, whether in the form of diet, makeover, emigration, or as a psychological/spiritual 'life laundry.' Every malfunction of existence is supplied with its fix, its revelatory patch.

It is the fate of pro-revolutionaries who have gone to the people to end up despairing of the people.

To compensate they substitute themselves, their consciousness, as a solution.

The people become a totem, an authority referred to but one which has no decisive presence, a vague force which is never connected with.

Even in the most libertarian of revolutionaries, the leninist urge to leadership and example is almost impossible to refuse.

The revolutionary must impose his will, his perspective, his consciousness, how else in his own terms is he to think revolution when he is confronted daily by his continuing defeat?

The absence of pro-revolutionary consciousness in the proletariat is the crisis of the pro-revolutionary milieu.

The milieu looks into the people as a mirror and cannot find itself, it sees nothing that it recognises.

7

It is rare to talk with people about things that have nothing to do with actual lived life, pro-revolutionaries are the exception. When a pro-rev runs up against a problem s/he indexes it against a general social category and then relates that to a proposed abstract universality. When you think of it like this you see what an extraordinary form milieu consciousness takes. Where most ordinary, everyday, consciousness considers malfunctions at the place they appear, pro-rev consciousness performs a strange rite, it burrows out of immediate reality and from a position outside of experience it attempts to find a proposed 'objective' explanation within its subjectively designed theoretical system (thus atrocities perpetrated by Americans in Iraq are contextualised as 'imperialism' or racism but the atrocities of the Iraqi 'resistance' are explicable only in terms of 'responding' to a brutalising context the way a 'criminal' is 'formed by his background'). It is from this perspective of doubled alienation (from production, from other people) that the milieu re-fetishises what it describes as everyday life, and it is from this vast distance that it returns to the world, revisits the world, in the form of 'direct action,' which is an alien's approximation of 'what really matters to you'. Only revolutionaries say, 'we must talk in a language ordinary people can understand'.

It is probable that pro-revolutionaries have not contributed very much to the world's escaping from itself. Their leadership function often seems to drag revolutionary situations back into the old world of politics. Moreover it is possible, more than possible, that the form pro-revolutionary analysis takes is less truthful than that of ordinary consciousness, in other words its 'critique' does not get as close to the 'movement' of capital as that of a drugged ADHD child's bodily understanding of what is being taken from it under conditions of institutional control. So it would seem the milieu ought to be dismissed out of hand. But the question of the desirability or usefulness of the milieu here is irrelevant — the milieu acts and exists, it is objectively determined within its own specialised sphere. Even as we watch the increasing degree of its marginalisation we cannot disband it, we cannot decommission it. The milieu simply cannot be abolished, it must exist, it is fated.

It persists because the capitalist social structure produces a small fragment within the social body which generates social critique in abstract terms, ie there is always a small percentage of people who will say, 'the devil take it all, we need to get rid of everything and start again.' Again, whether this a psychologically driven fallacy or simply an ideological ramification of certain tendencies and logics is not important, the fact is, the milieu has always existed. It exists but cannot perform the role it has set itself, it cannot transmit consciousness, it cannot organise the masses.

If the question of organising is out of the question then in desublimated form it reappears as, 'what can we do with this extraordinary ideological ability to hook everyday life to social forces and then propose the total transformation of those forces?' A tentative answer might take a twofold form: firstly understand what pro-revolutionary consciousness is in itself, in its relation

to the generality, and secondly intentionally push that consciousness, without regard for the consequences, as far as it will go.

8

Pro-revolutionary thought is negative thought because it criticises what exists and because it proposes a solution that is real only in the sense that it can be conceived of — it says no to reality and yes to what does not exist. At this juncture there has always been a separating of the ways as to what to do next, the most obvious solution is to attempt some kind of transfer or projection of the milieu's consciousness onto the everyday consciousness of the masses. When this strategy fails, and for each successive generation of revolutionaries, it has failed, some small fragment of the milieu has recognised the negative character of milieu thought, its incommunicability, and then it rediscovers nihilism. This is the last position, it seeks only to give nothing back, to hold onto the negative, that there is something remaining, not bound in by the suffocating powers arrayed against it. It refuses to engage on any terms. The nihilist fragment seizes hold of the negative character and develops it as far as possible within the confines of the contemporary pro-rev framework. The nihilistic tendency develops (massively, rapidly, like a gall) because it recognises that the only other option is a return to politics and complicity.

The return to positivity erupts at every step within the negative project; you observe how supposed revolutionaries suddenly throw themselves into political campaigns determined by events, particularly during elections, and which have no bearing on expressed pro-revolutionary values. You look on at supposed internationalists arguing for national self-determination for the Palestinians, or argue that the Iraq war is 'illegal' (both these arguments have appeared in the anarchist journal Freedom and originate in 'class struggle anarchist' circles, that is from those who imagine themselves to have the most radical and uncompromising agenda.)

It is too, too difficult to hold on to negative thought. Under pressure of circumstance (e.g. 'get Bush out') you see how negativity gets flipped over into affirmational proposals. Their analysis is overburdened by strategy-think. Groups and individuals abruptly grow weary of maintaining the absolute silence that belongs to the negative position, they long for a route back into conventional thought. As in the aftermath of recent anti-capitalist events there is an explosion of alternatives, experiments and new technologies huzzahed by apparent pro-revolutionaries who are sucked up in the immediatistic whizz of solving stated, specific problems.

In ten years time the next generation of pro-revolutionaries will look upon the 'anti-capitalist' phenomenon and say, 'all that rebellion was nothing but an entrepreneurial exercise in discovering routes out of capitalism's growth crisis,' this after all was the verdict of the anti-capitalists on the naive radicalism of the Sixties.

9

i

Following the deaths of Albert Meltzer and Vernon Richards in London there have been moves to merge the assorted personal fiefdoms of the English anarchist movement into a grand federation, the argument to justify the move (the gloss over the formal end to the feuding) concerns practical, everyday political effectiveness. The example offered up is that of the French Anarchist Federation. The French anarchists are seen as a credible and organised force when considered alongside the haphazard, commercially driven English version. For example, the French FA have been campaigning for businesses to pay transport costs for workers and shoppers. In the real world this is a great campaign, it is after all only fair that if capitalists cause life to be reduced to exchange value then those caught up in the system should be compensated financially for the dead time in travelling to and from the nodes of production/distribution.

Having said this, there seems little obvious connection between the aspirations of revolutionary anarchism and defined political campaigns that would, in the end, have to be enforced by the state. Political campaigns for assuagement, whether they characterise themselves as antiwar or increased social welfarism, have nothing to do in themselves with social revolution and therein lies a quandary for revolutionary thought. The most negative position taken towards society must either modify/falsify its values so as to allow for some strategic 'involvement', or it must, in effect, turn away from the world and preserve itself in pure silence, pure negativity, desiccated, crouching amongst the flints in preparedness for the flood.

As individuals we have many divergent, personally arrived at, opinions on many issues and each of us can think of hundreds of ways of improving the world we ordinarily live in, and it would be perverse not to get involved in initiatives to make things better for ourselves — but that is besides the point, the revolution of everyday life originates out of extraordinary, not everyday, life. Pro-revolutionaries, as pro-revolutionaries, must hold back the negative position for genuinely revolutionary events. This is because as soon as the milieu drifts from its thought of revolution into 'realistic' political issues it begins to function as a counterrevolutionary force, it begins to falsify what revolution is precisely because of its willing involvement with existing structures. Intervention in world affairs (e.g. the recent Surrealist opposition to the Iraq war 'breaking the leash' 08/04) is always a step back from, a betrayal of, the absolute terms of revolution — who are they exactly when they get involved, whose terminology is it that they are using, are they still surrealists, are they still revolutionaries? The analysis becomes confused, falsified; in practical terms the revolutionary element is endlessly deferred, conditioned by political reformulation. In extreme cases this ends in involvement with 'managing' critical situations, thus trade unions are used to pull their rank and file back from the brink, left groups liaise with police when organising demonstrations, their stewards point out the 'uncontrollables'. And when the troublemakers have been expelled the stewards are re-designated as 'uncontrollables' so as to head off any contact with the most negative presence. The left's redesign of its appearance fol-

lowing anti-capitalism has been sophisticated, ruthless, even subtle, it has also been devastating to the anti-authoritarian fragment which has always depended on its surface characterisations to separate it from the state-left.

In the example of the French Anarchist Federation there are two levels of mystification, the first is that of loyalty of the membership to the federation itself and the administrative actions taken continually to preserve it as a coherent body (whether it is pro or anti revolution it is unable to think of its own non-existence, it contemplates itself with/alongside the world, the old buddies. Suddenly there is an anarchist 'tradition', anarchist studies, anarchist culture. And the negation of capitalist reality is ameliorated by the positive patriotism of the members towards the 'party' which, when considered from a negatively orientated pro-revolutionary position, is nothing but a fragment of capitalist reality), the second smokescreen is the strategic orientation of the federation's militants towards medium term political 'issues', they become the vision's ants, workers of the cause — that is people reduced to chess pieces.

ii

It is no surprise that the anarchist advocates of an instituted English 'organisation' should also rediscover the principles of autogeshonnaire/self-management as there are echoes of one in the other and as ever the tendency is towards rigidification, managementism and productive consciousness (all that is melting solidifies into shit). The recent republication of affirmational texts such as 'Reading Capital Politically' and 'Obsolete Communism: a left wing alternative' and the falling out of circulation of their critiques (again the influence on the English language scene of commercial/academic publishing) has also contributed to the theoretical return of autonomy/selfmanagement/self-institutionism.

The theory of self-management probably originates as an alternative to statism and draws its inspiration from and becomes a reified celebration of the workers councils of 1917–20. In the '60's it was adopted by most anti-statist splinter groups and theorists advocating what they called 'participation' (including groups such as SouB and the situationists). The workers councils have ideological and political variants such as direct democracy, municipalism and so on. A year or so ago in response to the failure of the British railway infrastructure an Anarchist Federation (of England) argued for the railways to be taken over by the workers, a classic (albeit unrealistic) example of a self-management strategy; there are also examples we are told by its enthusiasts of popular management in Argentina where workers have spontaneously taken control upon the withdrawal of established capitalism.

But self-management is not identical to revolution and it is not at all an unproblematic term for pro-revolutionaries. Typically, episodes of self-management are put into practice in specified locations during moments of crisis and the move of the workers seems to function as a bridge back to a proper capitalism when more stable conditions are re-established (there is no evidence of its application as a means of seizing hold of the generality of all production which would involve something more than a simple prescription of this specific tactic).

Capitalism is a generalised social relationship which determines the character of all of its instances and not the other way round, thus to alter the character of an instance does not assert an autonomy but only succeeds in establishing a temporary alternative means of achieving productive capacity. No organisation can escape the general social relation of capitalism and that

includes workers' doomed experiments in self-management which always end in the administering of economic imperatives against the interest of its now de-antagonised workforce. A celebratory productive consciousness induces enthusiastic workers to retain their status as workers whilst also taking on the role of managers and often for less or even no pay. In self-management the workers are asked to step in to save capital during its crisis — they are expected to exploit themselves.

Workers self-management contradicts the pro-revolutionary position because revolution out of capitalism necessitates the destruction of the working class as much as of the bourgeoisie — all economically constituted identities must be rooted out. The revolution out of capitalism necessitates the end of work and management, of the commodity form, of the economy generally and of all separated firms, markets and industries. Therefore the call for the establishment of self-management is yet another example of pro-revolutionaries desperately clawing at alternative 'solutions' and drifting towards affirmational cure-all quackery. Having said this, it is also only reasonable to add that such solutions are undoubtedly preferable to what exists in our present everyday experience. And this is precisely the reason why pro-revolutionaries must forbid themselves the pleasures of formulating neat alternative scenarios for production.

It is not the role of pro-revolutionaries to cheerlead popular innovations in revolt, that scanning of the news in search of mere instances to celebrate. Instead it falls to the milieu to point out why such experiments must fail and how exactly capital will crush and exploit them. The negative pro-revolutionary role is to criticise rebellion, to jab its bony fingers at proud and trembling proletarian chests and incite them to further outrages and into, as Ignatus J. Reilly would put it, ever greater abominations. Everything must be pushed further, everything must be made to teeter on the lip of itself. Why? Because there is nothing else for the milieu to do. It is not for the milieu to campaign against Bush, not for it to oppose the war, on the contrary it must attack those who oppose the war. It must state categorically that we are not all on the same side. It must savage the left's fawning preoccupation with democracy at the expense of life lived. It must confound the headlike impulses of latent leninism. Thwart the Cromwellians. Spill over. It must define itself in opposition to the left, separating itself out, renouncing the values, rejecting the campaigns and disrupting the fronts of popular unity. The goal is to remove all mediating, representational and leadership orientated tendencies. Only when the left is in disarray, turning on itself in a fury of self-hatred do ideas of revolutionary value break out, only when the left despairs of itself is there room for a vaguely human becoming. The target is not capitalism itself, which is beyond the milieu's capacities but the left and its role within capital. And it is the destruction of the institutions of the left, the removal of those who would lead us back into predetermined forms, that is the proper objective for the most negative fragment of the milieu.

Conclusion

In conclusion three notes:

1. There should only be organisation to the degree that organisation facilitates the measures taken. Organisations should coalesce spontaneously and informally around and within events.

2. What is the worst, the absolute worst, is a return of pro-rev theory from negation. Its finding a form as a politics of solutions. Return is always an accommodation, a dialogue with existing non-revolutionary forms. It is a return to common sense, it abandons thinking once more, as we must live, caught up in the world's details.

3. The huge maggot of the 'movement' and the tiny fly of its arrival, the staggered procession of transitionary phases, each more prolonged than the last.

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