

THE DELIRIOUS MOMENTUM OF THE REVOLT



The Complete Works of A.G. Schwarz

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**// THE LOGIC OF
NOT DEMAND-
ING**

DECEMBER WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME we have burned them, and it was not the first time they have used these same lies. “Senseless violence!” the Politician cries out, dabbing at the tears with a flag that on one side shows the national colors and on the other the standard of all humanity. “These protestors have no demands, they are only acting out of anger,” assures the Two Face, who holds a club in one hand and an olive branch in the other. The Media runs up with a podium named The Middle Ground and, placing it directly between these two characters, concludes neutrally, even sympathetically: “They must not know what they want. We’ll have to tell them.” And a curtain flies up revealing a panel of Experts, economists, sociologists, humanitarian activists, and don’t forget the fascists, and they begin to develop the Lie and weave it into the most captivating shapes, but it all starts with this one premise.

The police know that we propose solutions to their violence because they use the literature seized from our homes as evidence in the trials against us. The politicians know we envision a world without their authority because we talk about it in the communiqués that accompany the bombs placed outside their houses. The journalists know we criticize their control of culture and information because they fancy themselves investigators and we put these texts for free on the internet. And what they all know is precisely what they refuse to say in those embarrassing moments when they must admit that we exist: they have no place in our future. We are going to destroy them.

So they talk about us like a rabble of confused children, hoping to deafen the people to our words. And they also hope to fool the foolish among us into translating our words into a language they can understand. The language of demands. The revolutionary dream, reduced to a few pragmatic points that might ostensibly serve as the first steps in the Long March through the Institutions. *Snap!* The trap springs shut.

Carl Schmitt, the influential German political theorist, jurist, and unrepentant Nazi whose work was later taken up by the neoliberals at the University of Chicago, said that government was not a monopoly on violence, but a monopoly on decision. This seems true. In fact, the State permits and depends on private violence in the form of patriarchy, racism, employment conditions, fascist street gangs, and so on, in order to maintain itself. What the State requires, in order to maintain power, is the prerogative to decide, in increasingly miniscule spheres of life, what

is allowed and what isn't; to decide the course of the country and *post facto* legitimate and regulate the initiatives taken by the capitalists. And when some social power contests the reigning order, the State must be involved in the resolution. The pacifists are wrong when they say that violence is the government's strong suit. If they ruled through violence they would never have legitimacy. In fact, the government's strong suit is communication. It is to occupy the central position, the role of mediator and protagonist, in any decision. It will make itself feared if it has to, but above all it survives by making itself heard and making itself necessary, to the point where people cannot imagine a solution to a social problem that is not tailored first and foremost to the needs of state.

This is exactly why anarchists, in December and at other times, refuse to make demands. We will not dialogue with the State, we will not sit down to chat with Capital. We will not tell them what we want because they already know: we want them to die. But not only this; we want to be the ones to destroy these institutions, with the help of as great a part of the society as possible, in order to win the ability to create the world anew in the interests of all its inhabitants.

It is oxymoronic to make demands of something you wish to destroy completely, because the request for change transfers agency from you to that thing which receives your demands, and the very act of communication grants it continued life. Our attacks are to destroy Authority, to open up spaces in order to recreate life, and to communicate with society. We do not wish to communicate with the State.

If a rebellion does not communicate demands, it is not because it is senseless, but on the contrary because it is intelligent. And if the people think that it is senseless, this is only because we have not succeeded in challenging the narrator role usurped by the media, we have not distributed enough counterinformation to contradict their lies.

But one day, if we do our work well, the people watching the TV will hear the commentator say: "They have no demands, they do not know what they want," and they will only smile and think how stupid these charlatans are, playing the same old tricks year after year.

**// THE SPIRIT
OF DECEM-
BERS SPREAD
ROUND THE
WORLD**

I HAVE HEARD MANY ANARCHISTS from other countries ask, “Why weren’t the Greek insurrections generalized to other countries, and what could we have done to make them spread?” Most often, the question was not asked in a constructive way, but posed to suggest that the local movement was worthless because the insurrection was not generalizing. I have to say that this question strikes me as ignorant. A vital fact that anarchists must come to terms with and work their way around is that insurrections usually do not jump national borders. In the early years of the 20th century there was arguably a much better developed common consciousness among the lower classes of Europe that mitigated national divisions, yet the much more extreme situation in Russia, which passed from insurrection to revolution, did little more than encourage pre-existing movements in other countries. It did not spread. The same is true in 1968. A rebellion here certainly encouraged a rebellion there but things always kicked off in response to local situations. The insurrection in Greece came from years of experience preparing society and antiauthoritarians themselves to fight back with everything they had, and that experience obviously cannot follow the photos of the riots as they race across the internet.

Formed in part by the summit-hopping of the antiglobalization movement, many anarchists forget that we live in a reality very different from most people. We are friends with anarchists in other countries or we at least know that when something happens the anarchists in other countries will stand in solidarity with us. In other words, we have emotional ties. I won’t minimize the importance of theory, but I will put it in its place: most people do not risk their lives in struggle on the basis of theory but on the basis of empathy, love, courage, and rage. When an anarchist in Spain hears they have shot an anarchist in Greece and the comrades there are rioting, the insurrection has already come to her heart: she feels rage and a desire to join in the fight; an empathy and even a love for the living comrades who are pushing that fight forward in spite of the repression; and on the basis of these feelings and with the support of comrades in her own town she will find the courage to act. But everyone else in Spain, though they might hear about the assassination on the television, though they may think badly of the Greek police and even sympathize with the rioters, they will not understand how it applies to them. Because solidarity is based on affective bonds.

The nation is not only a trap created by the compulsory education of the State and the cultural institutions of capitalists to divide and conquer the lower classes, although it is that. In the absence of State and Capital the nation is a fictive community united by a common language, culture, and history; it is a context in which common experiences can take place and it is therefore also an affective universe. In other words as the world is not homogenous and there are many languages and cultures, there will also be nations (as distinct from nation-states, which is something else entirely). This is why insurrections are sparked off by local events, rather than spreading between nations: because it is much easier for people to identify emotionally with someone whom they see as belonging to their larger community. The high school students who started burning dumpsters in Patras did not personally know Alexis, but they saw him as “one of us.” High school students in Italy are unlikely to make that connection because they live in a different cultural context and the death of a Greek high school student, even if it reaches them emotionally on some level, does not have the significance of constituting an attack on them. The common experience of the oppressiveness of high school or the oppressiveness of the police does not overcome these cultural differences.

Western anarchists, on the other hand, make up a common cultural group and in some senses we even speak the same language. We are something like a nation in diaspora, so repression against one of our communities in another country will make sense to us and will affect us emotionally. But we would be wrong to assume that other people are like us in this regard.

And we may even be overestimating the limits of our own solidarity. When immigrants in Omonia rioted in June 2009 after a cop ripped up a Koran in a racist police raid, shockingly few anarchists took part. The tearing of a Koran was interpreted by many immigrants as an attack on their identity, their difference, and thus their very survival. Greek anarchists seemed to interpret it as a religious squabble, much the same way that Italian high school students might fail to understand what the killing of a Greek kid has to do with them.

After nation or culture, a second factor seems to be proximity, but I think it is actually a matter of signals. The immigrant neighborhood in Athens below Omonia is full of people who are not culturally integrated into Greek society, people from many different nations,

whose experience of life does not resonate within the national context. In other words they are excluded. Yet they became participants in the December rioting on a massive scale, especially on Monday when the riots kicked off right in their neighborhood. Looking at it from a map, it seems that the insurrection spread geographically. Yet there are many culturally distinct groups that might not join an insurrection even if it is occurring right next to them. The Broken Windows theory of policing used by the authorities may propose a better explanation. Acts of disorder (such as broken windows) provide a signal to the people that authority is weak and further acts of disorder will be tolerated. The State itself implicitly recognizes that authority is a provocation and by showing weakness it invites counterattack; thus everyone carries within them the seed of insurrection.

The massive rioting on Monday provided a clear signal that everyone with a vendetta against State and Capital (and this includes a majority of the population, potentially anybody from whatever class who has not sold themselves out so completely) is free to take revenge. This idea of the importance of signals of disorder explains why people in different cultural groups with no physical proximity to the rioting, for example the Roma community outside Athens who attacked a police station with rifles, also took part in the insurrection if they had any personal cause to hate the authorities, because the signals of local disorder are also spread via the media. And this is one reason why people living under other governments, no matter how much they personally were affected by the killing of an anarchist youth, did not riot with abandon. The signals of disorder were absent, because other governments were not directly weakened by the situation in Greece.

A substance that lies behind both of these factors is the emotional, the subjective. The masculinized, depersonalized, and bureaucratic politics of the Left have long succeeded in removing emotional concerns from our concept of revolution, but you cannot have a liberating revolution while ignoring the emotional half of human existence. All you can have are square-jawed calls for sacrifice issued by a manipulative leadership and a convenient confusion between freedom that exists on paper and freedom that exists in the heart. It is only through the recognition of this subjective, personal, and emotional revolution that people can fight for themselves and recognize the constant attempts to recuperate the struggle through appeals to a false common good. This is not to say that struggle must be individualistic, but that only

individuals who are free to feel their needs and desires can participate in a liberated collective capable of overthrowing authority and creating free communities.

Many of the things that happen in Greece could technically be carried out by anarchists in other countries—we have the numbers, the materials, and the proficiency—except that we are afraid. A striking feature of the insurrection and the anarchist movement in Greece is the centrality of courage. But courage is largely a social phenomenon. There are always some people who have a little more of it, who are able to make the first strike, even if no one is behind them, but these people will never be a majority, nor should they be (how terrible the world would be with so many impetuous jackasses running about!) In general, humans being social animals, courage is fostered firstly by peer group support, and secondly by broader community sympathy. If you have enough comrades to act with you, or if you are an anonymous member of a likeminded crowd, you can perform superhuman acts you never would otherwise. And if you are in a group of fifty anarchists facing a hundred well equipped riot police, you are much more likely to kick things off if you know that all the bystanders are cheering for you, then if you think they would disapprove of your actions or tell the police which street you ran down after it's all over. The mood on the streets provides another vital signal that directly affects the morale of the police and the morale of the comrades. Take the same 50 anarchists and the same 100 cops, and put them on different streets with different moods, even if no bystanders actively intervene in the situation, and you end up with entirely different outcomes.

But courage is also a matter of practice. The first time you do something is always the scariest. And if you only do an illegal action after meticulous planning—not that planning isn't necessary in many scenarios—you will not learn how to act spontaneously, how to react to the immediate situation, which is a crucial skill for anarchists to have. The December revolts were not planned, they were not prepared by some assembly or vanguard party, but they were prepared for. The insurrection would never have flowered at that moment if the Greek anarchists had not readied themselves to react, and they did this by developing proactive affinity groups united by trust, common politics, and practical experience together; and by carrying out dangerous actions with varying levels of preparation, from spontaneous (reacting in the heat of the moment) to minimal (deciding to do something in just a

few hours or the next day and just going and doing it) to meticulous (with intensive planning). This capacity among hundreds or even thousands of anarchists was built up in the years before December, and it allowed them to react immediately upon Alexis's death and define the character of the revolt in all the days to come. If they had needed to hold a meeting first, a long debate, do reconnaissance, weigh other options, and have the first counterattacks ready a week later, Alexis's murder never would have been avenged.

Additionally, because in the previous months and years Greek society was accustomed to seeing occasional attacks on police stations and banks carried out by anarchists, this form had entered the social consciousness and was ready and available for all the tens of thousands of high school students, immigrants, and others who needed some tool, some expression to their rage. If all they had seen in their worlds were peaceful protests in response to the aggressions and insults of State and capitalism, that is probably all they would have organized in response to the murder. There would have been a few scuffles with police to vent the worst of the rage, and the rest would have to be buried inside them, weighing them down even more and stealing more of their dignity, preparing them for adulthood, for integration, for retirement.

Now it should be clear how the spirit of December can spread internationally. The insurrection of the comrades in Greece can animate us and rejuvenate our hope. It can invite us to study their situation and identify what made it possible, so we can go on building the foundations in our own corners of the world. We can also use it as an opportunity to increase the internationalism of those around us, by holding protests and memorials so our neighbors can consider the possibility that what the police do in Greece is important to us too. But it is counterrevolutionary to pull out our hair, as so many comrades have done, to lash out and insult our local movements for not being able to spread the insurrection, for misinterpreting the geographical limits of the insurrection as evidence of weakness or laziness in other parts. December is an opportunity to rejoice, to boost our morale. How terrible that some hotheads blogging endlessly on the internet have used it as an opportunity to drain us of even more self-confidence. The opposite is needed.

The December insurrection arose from very specific local circumstances, and it was allowed to arise because people believed it could, within an anarchist movement that did not and does not consider itself special. The insurrection will arise where we are, and we can help it along in a number of ways.

\ By understanding that insurrections are not controllable, and they do not follow ideological lines. They are an opportunity for all the oppressed and exploited to fight back in their own ways, but that in this fight, many different people can meet one another, if they are willing.

\ By understanding that insurrections usually do not topple governments, but if people do not base their hopes exclusively on the simple act of rioting, they will see that after people are physically exhausted and the fighting in the street stops, if the movement chooses to it can build off those experiences, lay deeper foundations, use the change in the social balance of power to open autonomous spaces and build the beginnings of an anarchist world, and move closer to stronger insurrections and to revolution.

\ By organizing attacks against authority and developing a capacity for spontaneous reaction, so that anarchists prepare themselves for insurrection and make it more likely that an event blooms into an insurrection, and so that society itself is prepared to accept the reality of struggle and counterattack.

\ By starting now to find whatever communal and antiauthoritarian traditions exist within our society and expanding on them to counteract the effects of capitalism on culture and to create a popular culture that supports violent resistance, distrusts authority, and cherishes communal values.

\ By intervening now in ongoing social conflicts, working respectfully with other non-institutional actors in these conflicts even if they are not anti-capitalists, and forcefully opening spaces or employing methods that transform the logic of the struggle from the mediating loop of conservatism vs. reform into one of authority vs. people.

\ By building infrastructure and vital capacities (skills, habits, traditions) that reflect and cultivate the world that we want, not as

alternatives but as beachheads, so that when we are able to force the police off the streets we will have something creative to move forward with, and so that in the meantime we can give substance to our dreams in a way that sustains hope and sustains us in our struggle, which is hard and long and cannot be fought just for pie in the sky.

These are some of the ways that we can be ready to seize the event and help it expand to its natural shape, a swelling rage and creative collectivity that knows no boundaries and denies logics of control, an explosion that will start to burn away the old world and leave us open ground for the planting of the new one that we carry with us, if only we are courageous enough to seize the opportunity with both hands.

**// WEARE
WINNING**

ANOTHER BATTLE IS COMING. Energized by the fires of December, the movement is claiming more and more ground. They won the fights in the streets, and they still haven't been defeated. Every week they're claiming new buildings to turn into social centers, transforming their new parks into undeniable realities, and pushing the State back. The students in Thessaloniki are demanding that the university deprivatize the cleaning staff and give all the precarious workers permanent contracts. Kuneva's syndicate in Athens is demanding the same for the trams and the trains.

The university director in Thessaloniki has threatened to call in the police. The mayor of Athens has denied the existence of the new park in Exarchia, saying: "I don't see a park there, I see a parking lot." But both of these malakas know that if they touch either occupation, it'll be a war all over again, and we will probably win. But eventually they'll have to act, because like smart guerrillas, we refuse to go on the defensive. We don't mistake these new occupations, these little victories, as ends in themselves. As precious as each one is they are only steps on the road to revolution. We will and we must risk losing them in order to go further because in the war against the State there is no peace or stalemate, and to stop and circle the wagons means to be destroyed. In other words if we do not go further, if we only try to protect what little we've won, we will certainly lose it. So each new liberated space is being developed for the long term even as it is used as a staging point for the next attack.

We don't disregard these liberated spaces as pawns in a struggle; on the contrary we treasure them. You step into the park in Exarchia and you see the handmade playground and all the new trees and it is obvious that it is a work of love. And if it weren't, so many hundreds of people of all ages wouldn't come here to hang out, and they wouldn't defend it tooth and nail when it's threatened. But we won't settle for this park, or just for its physical existence, giving control of it over to the mayor like he wants. We'll use it as a staging ground for meetings and protests, another bubble of social asylum in the war against the police, and maybe we'll decide one day to convert the bordering streets into pedestrian zones, ripping up all the asphalt. Soon they'll have to strike back. A government cannot continue to issue hollow threats without losing all its legitimacy and inviting more rebellion.

Thursday the 2nd of April was a day of general strike. In the protest march there was a lot of talk about Kuneva. And right next to the march route a group of anarchists entered the office of the company that employed Kuneva and smashed it all up, from the computers to the filing cabinets to the hardwood furniture to the framed Art hanging on the walls. These private contractors rent out hyper-exploited immigrant workers, pocketing the greater part of the labor costs budgeted by the government. But that Thursday was payback. The new Delta Force sped to the scene of the crime but they were too late. All the anarchists had disappeared into the crowd, having caused thousands of euros of damage while hanging a banner off the office balcony to the delight of the crowds below. Later in the day, Kuneva's syndicate occupied the offices of the city trains, demanding the private company be dismissed so that all the cleaners could be hired on a permanent contract. Outside a crowd of anarchists, Alpha Kappa, and some leftists gathered in support, ensuring that the police could not come to save the bosses.

Before long, a cheer went up and the crowd began to clap and talk excitedly. The train company had caved in to the demands, essentially reversing the supposedly unstoppable tide of neoliberal privatizations and austerity measures. The syndicate promised that if their agreement was not honored, they would be back. History was being changed. Outside, the person next to me smiled and proclaimed, "We're winning!"

I remember on the streets of Seattle and Prague, anarchists spraypainted that same sentence on the walls, and later, watching it in some documentary, all the hardened activists smirked a little, cynical. But the possibility has returned. In fact it had never left. It's not going to be over tomorrow, but we can win. And it depends largely on having the confidence to change history.

// **THE MEDIA**
TRY TO KILL
MEMORY

AFTER THE MASSIVE RIOTS OF DECEMBER ENDED and the insurrection continued in new forms, the media adapted their counterinsurgency strategy to the new circumstances. In January and February, mention of the revolt disappeared almost entirely from the media. There were a couple important exceptions to this pattern. A few of the more visible and shocking attacks carried out by anticapitalists in those months were given sensational coverage completely divorced from the ongoing struggle that manifested in continuing protests, occupations, counterinformation, and so forth, all of which had disappeared from the media. These now “senseless” attacks were portrayed as the work of the same disconnected and nihilistic hooligans who ruined the legitimate student movement with too much violence in December. The second exception appeared primarily in the Sunday magazines, which ran photo-filled retrospectives on December that sympathized with the high school students, sanitized their participation in December, forgave their youthful excess, and patted them on the back for their social consciousness. Because photography is assumed to be a presentation of reality more objective than the written word, all the images in these pieces succeeded in the Orwellian exercise of making many of the participants of December themselves believe what was inarguably a lie: that the students limited themselves to protests, occupations, assemblies, and a little fighting on the barricades, but they were not responsible for the smashings, the burnings, the attacks on police. The show of sympathy and the ostensible acknowledgment of their story made this lie much easier for the youth to digest. Thus, in a poll released in these months, the vast majority of the youth expressed the belief that the media coverage in December was completely false and irrelevant, yet a majority also believed that it was outsiders operating with unknown motives who were responsible for smashing the shops. The youth distrusted the media, but they were still influenced by them.

In March, the Greek media tacked into a new wind. They could no longer deny that the revolt was continuing without losing their monopoly on the social narrative, so they gave major, fear-mongering coverage to the continuing attacks, starting with and focusing on the daytime anarchist attack on Kolonaki, as though the breaking of a few windows was equivalent to the sacking of Rome (and as though the barbarians weren't perhaps a bit better than the Romans). They also gave coverage to the continuing occupations, particularly in Thessaloniki, where the students had taken over Aristotelous University in solidarity with the struggle of the cleaning workers. They mixed up an alleged

increase in crime with the occupation itself, suggesting university asylum functioned as a safe haven for antisocial crime and should thus be abolished. It seems clear that the anarchists themselves were an intended target of the media coverage, which sought not only to build popular confidence in a police solution but to threaten the anarchists. Building off the frightful Kolonaki spectacle, the newspapers filled the frontpages with articles on new police measures every day for several weeks in March. *Shop owners call for greater protection to prevent more attacks like the one in Kolonaki! Police specialists from Scotland Yard are coming to advise the Greek police! The government is considering abolishing university asylum! The director of the university in Thessaloniki may call in the police to end the occupation! The government will pass a new law illegalizing masks and hoods in demonstrations, and criminalizing the insulting of police officers! A high judge is looking into ways to evict the squats! The police will create Delta Force, a rapid response unit to be deployed around the city in teams on motorcycles, for the express purpose of arresting the criminals responsible for these attacks!* On 5 April the Athens newspaper *To Vima* reported that the police had about twenty anarchists suspected of participating in the attacks under surveillance, and they expected to make arrests soon. The arrests did not materialize, and in fact over the next months anarchists demonstrated the capability to carry out attacks against the very directors of the police and intelligence apparatus and get away with it. These articles were not a reflection of reality, rather they were part of the police counterattack to restore order and show force.

The media also continued their work of distinguishing the good parts of the revolt from the bad parts. For example in April, a large and sympathetic article with color photographs appeared in a major Athens newspaper featuring Nosotros, the social center of the left anarchist group Alpha Kappa. It portrayed the space as a cultural center that hosted artistic events and provided social services, showing that even anarchists can be embraced by the system if they learn to restrict themselves to acting in certain ways. It's beyond me to say whether Alpha Kappa self-censored their combative aspects or whether this was entirely the initiative of the media, but either way the result is the same. The same also happened with many sympathetic articles about the new occupied park in Exarchia.

In May, the media turned their focus on the immigrants with a vengeance. During the December coverage, they had separated out the

immigrants as the elements responsible for the looting. In the following months, under the guise of humanitarian analysis, they looked at the crisis of immigrant living conditions in Greece in a way that could only substantiate the fascist portrayal of the immigrants as dirty and disgusting. And of course they interviewed shop owners, who with the pragmatic voice of mass murderers insisted that the immigrants stole things and scared away shoppers; that the cities needed to be “cleaned up.” In May and June, the media prepared the summer’s pogrom.

It needs to be explained first that in the past years the European Union had enacted a new anti-immigrant law declaring that immigrants without visas had to acquire papers in the first EU country where they arrived. In other words, they could not go on to Belgium or Sweden or any of the dominant member states with a higher standard of living and more social welfare, and if they did they would be sent back to the country of entry, if not deported altogether. As Greece is one of the main entry points, the country as a whole was turned into a giant border prison, and it was responsible for making it as difficult as possible for immigrants to acquire papers. So, for example, the only place where asylum could be requested in the entire country was in Athens, and authorities did all they could to obstruct immigrants travelling from the islands or Turkish border towns to the capital. And the immigrants who did arrive had to wait forever just for a simple interview, after which they were usually denied even the paper that said they had requested asylum and their case was being considered. Practically nobody actually got asylum.

In Athens, there were tens of thousands of immigrants waiting around for their chance to get papers. This visible concentration of immigrants was successfully exploited by fascists, and in May the media announced an “immigration crisis.” Naturally, the only solution proposed was a police solution. In May and June, the government sharply increased the number of immigrant concentration camps around the country. These were fenced in compounds where immigrants were herded together en masse and locked up against their will, called “Welcome Centers” with much the same sense of euphemism as when the Nazis called extermination camps “concentration camps.” Amid all the hysteria, the fascist party LAOS gained a relatively high number of seats in the European Parliament elections in June. And in July and August the police carried out pogroms against the two major immigrant concentrations, in Athens and in Patras, destroying immigrant

settlements and shipping immigrants off to the concentration camps or deporting them. In central Athens alone, thousands were arrested. And where once parts of Omonia had been bustling immigrant neighborhoods with thousands of people from dozens of different countries on the streets, in public, at all hours of the day, now they were “cleaned up,” just as the shopowners had wanted. It was eerie, trying to find those streets again, and only seeing pleasant avenues with tourists strolling hand in hand, browsing postcards outside giftshops, with nothing to disturb their comfort.

In September, all the media coverage was focused on the upcoming elections, psychologically preparing the illusion that the government was going to clean house so that when the Socialists came into power, they would start with as much legitimacy as possible. December had successfully challenged the legitimacy of the State itself, and now the media had to do a bait and switch, centering specific controversies in specific political parties, so that the losers of December would be Nea Demokratia and not the government as a whole.

It is necessary to go back and look at the relationship between the media and LAOS over the last years in Greece. Though on not quite as large a scale, it seems that LAOS has mimicked the media machine used by Berlusconi of Italy to engineer the society, undermine radical movements, and set the stage for the return of a fascist party as an important political force. Even before LAOS formed from dissident members of Nea Demokratia, they had been consolidating control over several media outlets, so that now the fascists directly own or control three major television stations in Greece. They also have several influential tabloid newspapers that focus on voyeuristic and moralistic celebrity news in the guise of social problems.

In a sort of FOX News effect, as they brought more rightwing commentators and sources into the news programs, the other news channels were pushed rightwards as well. Perhaps even more important than the obvious effects on news coverage, has been the role of talk shows, soap operas, entertainment programs, and telemarketing, just like in the Italian phenomenon. The fascist television stations pioneered telemarketing in Greece, providing themselves with potent funding and flooding the airwaves with infomercials for books, videos, and other products relating to beauty (in this manifestation a very

racialized notion reified by blond and brunette models with lily-white skin), nationalistic Greek history and mythology, hunting, weaponry, and paramilitary gear, xenophobia and the protection of a homogenous and Orthodox Greek culture, Jewish conspiracy theories, and more.

After December, the celebrity talk shows openly promoted fascist and racist ideas and brought personalities from the far Right into the celebrity market. For example the wedding of a LAOS parliament member was turned into a celebrity event through multiple days of news coverage. Hundreds of people were brought to the wedding itself, making it a spectacular and popular happening. It was a clear attempt at social engineering designed to turn Greek society into a receptive mass every bit as fashion-obsessed, consumeristic, selfish, tolerant of policing and surveillance and unsupportive of social movements as Italian society has become, a society in which people hide behind designer sunglasses, chase after Aryan standards of beauty, despise anything poor, ugly, or foreign, understand politics as a popularity contest, and care more about the lives of celebrities than about the lives of other people in their community.

**// WHAT
GREECE MEANS
(TOME) FOR
ANARCHISM**

APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS BEFORE THE INSURRECTION flared up in Greece in December, some anarchists of the Platformist persuasion embarrassingly identified Greece as a country of low social struggle, to back up their mechanistic theory that the insurrectionist strain of anarchism only arises during lows, i.e. it is a product of weakness. After December, other anarchists who were convinced that workers were the only legitimate revolutionary subject either minimized the importance of the revolt because the working class *as such* did not participate, or they skewed and entirely misunderstood the events by emphasizing news of the protests by base unions and the blockades by farmers, as though the irresponsible adventurism of molotov cocktails and firebombs was a phenomenon that existed somehow *outside* the events.

On the other hand, insurrectionary anarchists surviving in the most alienated of countries seemed to subsist entirely on a diet of digital imagery and poorly translated poetic communiques, snapshots infused with the smell of burning shops but completely separated from their social context, as though these anarchists somehow hungered even more than the media to kill the revolt by spectacularizing it. And while most Greek anarchists I know tend to share the insurrectionary critique of the Left, or more accurately, they simply take it as self-evident, many Western insurrectionists would be shocked to hear the widespread opinion that “insurrectionary anarchism [referring to the Italian school] has had very little influence here.” Which does not contradict the fact that illegalist and individualist tendencies were passionately adopted by many segments of the anarchist space in the ‘90s; however this has manifested as an entirely different phenomenon from the many blogs and papers in English that regurgitate “notes from the global civil war,” little news clippings of violent actions from here and there completely stripped of their social context and thus of their political content. I understand the need, in a pacified setting, to glorify the very act of violent resistance itself, but I’m afraid these comrades are digging themselves into a hole every bit as deep as the one constituted by the idealization of a class that sixty years ago willingly adopted all the characteristics of its enemy and dissolved itself.

What happened in Greece arose out of a specific culture and history of struggle. It is not an ideological tool to be used for any faction nor a blueprint to be transported to another country or context. It would be a shame for anarchists to convert the Greek rebellion into a dogmatic plank or to ignore it because it does not confirm a

preconceived ideology. And as much as I would like to, it would be wrong of me to use Greece as a tool to urge greater cooperation and solidarity between different antiauthoritarian currents, because all the infighting, the sharp criticisms regarding important questions, are a part of the history of this insurrection, and the rebellion itself was claimed to confirm or contradict people's idea of revolution.

The truth is that all these contradicting currents made up the revolt, and a key characteristic of the revolt that the State and media worked so hard to deny is that at times, in the streets, the many people who were supposed to be different and separate became indistinguishable. But without denying any of the elements that participated, we can and should look at the role they each played, what made them stronger, and what made them weaker.

We are storytellers, not historians. Our job is to relate these happenings to you, not to separate, to objectify, to engrave these living stories and rob them of any connection to the present moment. Just as the solidarity actions in other countries lent more fire to the ongoing insurrection in Greece, the exhilarating smell of smoke rose from Athens and spread around the world. I cannot see it as disconnected that it was also a hot winter in Sofia, Malmö, Oakland, and Guadelupe, nor that anarchists around the world stepped up the struggle after seeing what was going on in Greece.

Several months after December, I was at a small protest in one of those northern social democratic countries where such things as riots aren't meant to happen anymore. But when the police attacked, even though there were only a hundred people in the demo, they rioted, and when the police broke up the riot, they dispersed throughout the city to take revenge by setting afire symbols of wealth, property, and authority. The only similarity between their situation and Greece was that in both places people had the confidence to fight back. And that is an element that no material conditions and no historical process can give you. It may be easier to come by in some cultures than in others but it is entirely yours to claim or disown.

Confidence played a major role in the Greek anarchist practice in all the years before December. Anarchists had enough confidence in their ideas to communicate them with society, and enough confidence that

their struggle was right that they continued attacking the State and boldly upholding an ethic of solidarity with all the oppressed and no compromise with authority, even when they were the only ones doing so.

And in this way they won presence in their society, and everyone, even if they disagreed, knew who the anarchists were—the ones who fought against all authority, who stood alongside the most marginalized members of society, the ones who self-organized, and the ones who never acted like politicians. This social connection was perhaps the greatest foundation of the insurrection. Many anarchists insisted on seeing society as distinct from the State. They participated in all the social struggles, offering a different analysis than the political parties and refusing to sugarcoat or hide their radical ideas, even when this made communication more difficult in the shortterm. And whenever there was a social problem or important event or tragedy, they would meet and take the initiative to respond, so that the government did not have a monopoly on discourse while managing the problem. The anarchists created examples of uncompromising struggles, and trusted that when people were ready they would choose to adopt these examples as their own.

There are also many antisocial elements within the anarchist space, and these play an important role as well, because even though society is our most crucial ally, there are plenty of reasons to hate it in its current form, and many people want to drop out from it or stand outside of it. While most Greek anarchists I know look just like any other Greeks—they do not differentiate themselves *as anarchists* in their mode of dress—there are also the anarchist punks and hippies and junkies and metalheads and goths. In other words, anarchism is not a subculture, but it is present in nearly all the subcultures, and in the mainstream culture as well. Anarchism needs to be there for those who hate society for what it is not and those who love it for what it could be.

An antisocial edge has also helped those parts of the anarchist space carry out unpopular and shocking actions without flinching. Society is often conservative, and under capitalism all its members are tied in to their own oppression. Anarchists often have to clash with the reigning order, and this clash creates inconveniences for all those who depend on that order to get them through their miserable lives. Social anarchists who are excessively populist will be unable to do this.

Although the Greek anarchists argue and fight with one another, there is another side to this, harder to see from the outside. They also have a habit of ignoring those they disagree with, and this makes sense, because they do not have enough in common to work together, and no need to try and change one another. They are other people, doing their own thing, and this difference does not entail a contradiction because anarchists don't go marching to the same drummer.

Many anarchists, primarily in Protestant countries, set themselves the primary activity of perfecting and purifying the anarchist space, and they go about massacring ideological opponents, petty enemies, and perpetrators of bad manners with all the righteousness of Crusaders. The personal is political; however it is precisely because there is no clear line between inside the movement and outside the movement that we should not try to erect such a line by attacking the flaws of our selves and our allies with more enthusiasm than we attack the State.

What the rebellion in Greece showed once again is that people do not need vanguards or political parties, that self-organization, direct action, and self-defense are second-nature to everyone. The people who express their rage or illuminate the targets of the struggle with fiery actions far more extreme than what the majority might consent to are not acting as a vanguard because in a given moment, all the exploited and dissatisfied members of society might take up these tactics and go even further than yesterday's extremists.

But in this moment, the anarchists still have a crucial role to play, and we must be confident enough to play it. We have to learn how to communicate and cooperate with society at a higher level, once we meet in the street. We have to keep the institutional Left from recuperating the struggle without creating divisions by judging people in the street by the color of the flag they carry. We have to point out new and more difficult targets as our power to attack increases, otherwise the revolt will exhaust itself smashing banks and police stations without ever becoming a revolution against capitalism and the State. We have to contradict and ultimately silence the media as they try to fabricate hollow explanations for the insurrection and generate fear. We must have the faith in our imaginations to suggest longterm answers to the problems of society and start creating those answers as though we might actually win.

Part of the task of communication with society involves identifying traditions and symbols in a particular society that foster the ideas we want to communicate. One can't simply take the Greek practice and put it to use in Great Britain. Every society has its archetypes of justified violence and heroic defiance, but what exactly those are differs from one society to the next. In a country like Great Britain, that prides itself on the centuries-long stability and longevity of its government, or one like the Netherlands that touts its political culture of dialogue and compromise, this is a difficult task. In the United States there is a deep and lively tradition of hatred for the government, but it is mostly found outside the Left. In Germany, on the contrary, there is a diverse tradition of defiance coming from within the Left, but it runs up against the popular demand for public order.

One of the most powerful specific strategies of counterinsurgency used by the State, which the anarchists will have to overcome in Greece and anywhere else we rise up, is racism. The natives and the immigrants, the whites and the blacks, is one of the most effective divisions to hamstringing society, because there are real cultural differences and thanks to imperialism there is a history of antagonism as well. People from both sides of the line will have to meet and learn to work together to communicate with others, so as not to be separated from society and cast as a scapegoat for the social problems, or to be validated as part of national community and placed unwittingly alongside one's mortal enemies.

I am afraid that if the Greek insurrection does not continue to grow stronger, if it is defeated, the crucial moment will have been its failure to extend *effective* solidarity to the immigrants when the State and the fascists carried out their major operation of ethnic cleansing in the summer. And this failure was probably not due to a lack of response in the moment it occurred—although many anarchists did pass up the opportunity to participate in the immigrant riots—but due to the fact that they had not prepared enough in advance, had not identified this as a key strategic weakness and worked to improve their connection with the immigrants, had not done more to counteract the racism that was being instilled from above by spreading their anti-racist analysis throughout society, and had not made more personal contacts so that when the protests and riots started, they could be instantly notified about what was happening like they were with the death of Alexis. Without these close contacts, the strong and immediate mobilization

that occurred after Alexis' death could simply not occur in solidarity with the immigrants, and in fact most Athens anarchists found out about the immigrant riots in June through the media or because they saw the fires by chance. Even though they had met intimately in the streets and occupations in December, they had not held on to these contacts so that when the immigrants had an emergency, they could call their friends the anarchists.

It must also be said that the immigrants were not passive victims, and on the whole they chose the search for a better quality of life rather than the struggle for a better reality. In accepting the reality of capitalism and only trying to improve their position within it, the majority of immigrants have also accepted the whims, machinations, and violence of capitalism that will always be directed against them, no matter what part of the world they live in or how much money they make.

The second major shortfall, in my opinion, is the disillusionment felt by many youth after the rush of December ended and the many blackmails of capitalism returned to dominate their lives. People who already had a deep anarchist understanding and an experience in the struggle were theoretically and emotionally equipped to deal with the low. They knew that reaction and repression litter the road to revolution and they could take strength from December without expecting the fight to be over in just a month. But the apolitical people, most of them very young, had never imagined an insurrection before, and it changed their lives, but after it ended the depression was profound because their already hopeless lives became even more miserable after seeing that another world was possible and having it slip between their fingers and retreat to an unimaginable distance. The experienced anarchists could have preserved some of the enthusiasm of December by sharing their longterm understanding of the struggle with the new generation and making more efforts to invite the newcomers into the autonomous spaces where the flames of insurrection burn a little brighter.

Most of my Greek comrades disagree with this point, and they clearly understand the situation better. They point out that this ecstatic wave of revolt and then the subsequent disillusionment was something they all went through, with the student movements of each generation, in '91, '99, and so forth. The intensity of the struggle showed them what was possible, and the doldrums that followed taught them that the

struggle was long and hard. And while I agree that learning to survive profound disappointment is essential to being a revolutionary, I think that more young people would hold on to the courage to hope if they weren't so alone, if more experienced radicals took them under their wings and actively invited them to participate in existing initiatives and structures, precisely to break out of this timeless cycle of resistance and repression; to seize on the delirious momentum of the revolt and help the new generation see that things don't have to go back to normal if they don't let them. After all, after December many Greek anarchists concluded that what was lacking was not popular consciousness but more opportunities for new people to get involved, for the anarchists and the other people to continue meeting like they met in the streets.

The necessity to overcome the isolation which the State ceaselessly works to impose requires a Herculean journey to communicate with society and all its potentially rebellious parts. This communication can take myriad forms, from flyers, to protests, to exemplary and violent attacks. All the different types of antiauthoritarians can make their contribution. The revolt in Greece, that continues today, has been built by students, immigrants, theorists, fighters, terrorists, drop-outs, activists, kids, grandparents, artists, ascetics, journalists, small store owners, academics, feminists, machos, drunkards, straight-edgers, soldiers, and union organizers. The revolt has been attacked by politicians, fascists, cops, leftwing party activists, journalists, the media, small store owners, academics, capitalists, bureaucrats, the military, and labor unions.

Though all the participation in the revolt should be valued, not all is equal. By analyzing the attempts to recuperate the revolt and turn it into a harmless thing, we can understand the meaning of the specific elements. SYRIZA, the only political party to participate in the street protests in December, was called on to denounce its actions just before the elections. Predictably, they said that the students were justified in their cause. What they denounced was the violence. They blamed 150 extremists for exploiting December and turning it into something subversive.

In the Left's history of December, the revolt was only about anger over a police shooting, and the desperation of youth whose future was threatened by an economic crisis. The history of the struggle and

the depth of its negation are censored. Its refusal to make demands is willfully misinterpreted as a lack of political analysis. The violence was its ugly side, but it also had a positive side, praised by many parts of the far Left, especially SYRIZA. These include the creation of parks, the peaceful protests, actions and occupations by artists, even the foundation of new social centers. This politically correct version of December attempts to erase the centrality of the Polytechnic occupation and everything it symbolizes: the continuation of the civil war despite the transition to democracy, uncompromising rebellion against the entire system, constant struggle against the police and the total destruction of corporate stores, the mixing of youth and adults, immigrants and Greeks, anarchists and non-political people. If there were good insurgents and bad insurgents, those described by this symbol, whether they were at the Polytechnic or anywhere else, were undeniably the bad insurgents, and that is precisely why for me they constitute the most important element of the revolt, because they are the only element the State finds indigestible.

The artistic actions, the parties, the occupation of the National Opera, the social centers, the peaceful protests: these elements should not be censored or derided as the weak and reformist side of the insurrection, because they represent the widening of the struggle to the point that it could include anyone who chose to come out on the streets. But it is the uncompromising and violent elements that give the softer elements their meaning, their ability to constitute an attack on the system. Dividing the one from the other is precisely what the State has tried to do in order to defeat the continuing insurrection.

The insurrection is the meeting of society at the barricades assembled from the smashed remains of everything that isolates us. For me it is a vital concept in the anarchist vision of revolution, and it is something that we must prepare the ground for and fertilize at every moment, even and especially when it seems like the wrong moment. Just as the anarchists of Spain would never have been able to resist Franco's coup and create space for a revolution if the *pistoleros* had not irresponsibly embarked on a course of armed struggle a decade earlier, I think the anarchists in Greece facilitated a social insurrection when they wed their uncompromising and illegal approaches with recognition of the importance of communicating with society, in the years before December 2008. The ability to be antisocial allowed them to adopt a course Greek society was not ready for, and the need

to be social brought them back to the people who would eventually rise up, because the insurrection is a function of society and not of a political movement, as important as those movements may be in the development of necessary social characteristics.

The anarchist participation in those movements, because it was both critical and enthusiastic, won a greater visibility for anarchists and their ideas. Simultaneously, the fact that the anarchists had never succeeded in consolidating as a single movement seems to have helped them immensely to diversify and spread and include a greater portion of society. And in December, the lack of a single program and the diversity of strategies made the task of police repression impossible.

What the rebellion in Greece shows, as do the rebellions in Kabylia, Oaxaca, and China, is that although insurrection becomes second nature to everyone and vanguards can only get in the way, the insurrection does not spontaneously provide the people with what they need in order to go from insurrection to revolution. We still have to find the answers to certain questions, and those of us who never go back to normality, those of us who keep dreaming of freedom, need to suggest and deploy these answers when the moment comes. Once we've burned everything, how do we reveal and attack the social relationships that underpin capitalism and the State? What structures and infrastructure can we target that will weaken the counterinsurgency without putting society in a passive disaster mode, waiting to be rescued? How do we help other people believe in another world they would be willing to fight for, and to spread visions of stateless, communal societies that begin now? How do we escalate to revolutionary civil war—that is to say a two-sided war rather than the one-sided war waged against us permanently—without losing social support and participation?

These questions were not answered in Greece, and that is why their insurrection is still an insurrection and not a revolution. Spontaneity is a crucial element without which the insurrection would not exist, but spontaneity is not a God that will deliver us from Egypt if we walk through this desert for long enough. The anarchists, doing what they always do, miss strategic opportunities that previously had never been possible. The apolitical people, exercising secret desires, will have their spirits crushed when a temporary return of order prevents them from being the selves they only just discovered, and with the help of this demoralization the temporary return of order will win the appearance of being permanent.

But order is never permanent. Although we may never achieve the world we want, the very dynamics of control and rebellion ensure that we will never lose and the State will never win. Either we will destroy it, or we will continue fighting against it and troubling its pathological dreams forever. Nature itself is chaotic, making total control impossible. We may not have ultimate defeats and they may not have ultimate victories, but there are steps forward and steps backward. It remains to be seen whether Greek society holds onto the ground it won in December, but it is certain that the anarchists in Greece strengthened themselves for the battles to come. Learning from their experiences, the rest of us can, too.

**// THE RIOT OR
THE ATTACK?
SOLIDARITY
AND QUESTIONS
FOR U.S.
ANARCHISTS
AFTER MAY
DAY**

SINCE THE DISRUPTIONS IN PITTSBURGH during the G20, the Portland riots, and the coast to coast May Day smashings of 2010, anarchists in the US have proven they are a force. My beloved Glenn Beck even has to protect his wayward libertarians from us by insisting that we are communists, and that, laugh of laughs, we're working for the trade unions. The rightwing in the United States plays the curious role of recuperating a very popular anti-state sentiment, and as relatively weak as American anarchists are, they are starting to threaten this monopoly. That's the thing about non-vanguardist anarchists: when we speak and act honestly, we tend to have an influence far beyond our numbers.

Because we now have proven to ourselves that we can start shit almost whenever and wherever we want, anarchists in the US no longer need to be so desperate for a riot that they are willing to throw everything away just to get their game on. Less combative anarchists have intuited a weakness in this new direction, a potential for isolation and repression, but unfortunately for everyone they couched it in the tired old terms of a fetishization of violence. Articles like "Are we addicted to rioting" were correct in sensing a danger, but because their authors were not conscious of their own position nor empowered by the confidence that comes with rioting, they sounded the call to retreat.

A much better critique, written after the Strasbourg riots by honest to goodness Black Blockers, is "Once We've Burned Everything." The InvCom as well were on to something when they wrote, "the question of pacifism is serious only for those who have the ability to open fire. In this case, pacifism becomes a sign of power, since it's only in an extreme position of strength that we are freed from the need to fire."

Let there be no mistake. We had to come to this point. And if we back off now rather than charge across this line, we will deflate, putter around a labyrinth of invective and disconnected bicycle repair workshops for a few more years, and then once we regain lost steam only have to face this challenge again. Rather than spreading recriminations as 11 comrades in Asheville and possibly some in Santa Cruz face heavy charges, let's spread lessons, or we'll only retreat and have to come this way again.

The Riot

What happened in Asheville on May Day was not a riot, and not because of its size or any matter of scale. A riot expands. It is spontaneous, or

it takes hold amidst a backdrop of social struggle. Countersummits provide the unique opportunity of a planned riot, because there is a larger crowd of people assembled there among whom the riot can spread, and the mass protest situation already creates such a logistical nightmare for the police that the risk, normally idiotic, of trying to start a riot right where the cops are expecting it is often neutralized. Generally, however, riots occur as a spontaneous response to the violence of the state or the humiliations of capitalism, as in Portland, March 2010, and Oakland, January 2009. Riots can be and often are provoked by a couple of people with more confidence in their ability to fight back, but their necessary characteristic is their expansion.

The riot is good because it is a catalyst, a magical spark that allows high social tensions to turn into open social conflict. It is a step towards social war. If, in a certain neighborhood, on a certain day, there is no simmering social tension, there will be no riot. On the other hand, if the people are well trained in obedience, the tensions can be boiling over but the lid will not fly off. The threshold for the transformation to a riot is lowered if people have confidence, if they have practice in fighting back. They can win these things through the attack.

The Attack

An attack should never mistake itself for a riot. Normally it never would because attacks traditionally take place at night or in swift, unobserved moments. A riot is a moving commune. It can dismantle the temples of the commodities with leisure, it can turn the smoke filled streets into zones of play. An attack does not have this luxury, and when it makes the mistake of thinking it does, it transforms quickly into a mass arrest.

The principal purpose of this type of action is to demonstrate that it is easy to attack capitalism, despite all the flaunted power of the state. An attack that does not get away is, at this principal level, a failure. A demoralization.

I don't presume that whoever carried out the May Day smashings in Asheville were trying to adopt a certain tactic that has been perfected by the comrades in Greece, or that they were trying to do anything other than what they ended up doing. But I will say that certain folks have been doing it much better, and it can be useful to understand how.

Certain anarchists in Greece and elsewhere have been perfecting the public attack. This deviates characteristically from traditional attacks in that it happens in the public eye: in the middle of the day, 20-40 trusted comrades gather punctually on a street where there are no surveillance cameras, mask up, run around the corner to their objective, smash it, and disappear, knowing in advance good escape routes and places where they can unmask and blend in. At least one person keeps time, down to the second, and lets everyone know when it is time to move on. Staying at the objective for more than, say, 30 seconds, is suicide.

The Greek anarchists are courageous, but they would not attempt a public attack when police were expecting it (e.g. May Day, in a city where something was also attempted the previous year). Additionally, and this point cannot be stressed enough, they were developing this tactic for years before they got to the point where they would attempt to smash 6 or more objectives, or objectives on entirely different city blocks, at the same time. I have no idea who shook things up in Asheville and how much experience they have, but one thing that is true for all of us is that if we act out of impatience, we are inviting imprisonment. We won't destroy capitalism through the amount or value of damage we cause, but by the significance of that damage and how it communicates itself. If there's one thing we can learn from the heavy blows we suffered with the repression and failure of the ELF, let it be that.

Many other types of public attacks have been developed that don't focus repetitively on broken windows. There is the supermarket expropriation, where 20 masketeers run into a supermarket, fill up baskets full of food, get out of there in under a minute (some of them make sure the doors remain open and unobstructed), and drop the food off in a park or other public place within a couple blocks where folks are gathered, and disappear. A similar group of people could open up a metro station to temporarily provide everyone who passes through with free public transportation. Another group publically dismantles a surveillance camera. These and many other forms of public attack communicate themselves much better, and are more likely to win sympathy for illegality and anarchy.

This is not at all a denunciation of the broken windows. Without negation, we are nothing. But it is much easier to understand how healthy it is to make total destroy if it is connected to a more embracing practice rather than an almost ritualized, self-caricaturizing repetition.

The attack is good because it gives us strength and confidence, it helps us manifest as a material force in the social conflicts, it illuminates the rage and dissension brewing in the ranks of capital, it disrupts the illusion of democratic peace even at times of lower social tension, and it communicates that we have an enemy, and this enemy is easy to attack.

Next Time Smash the Template

A peculiar problem of US society is how televised it is, and I think this has a negative impact on the anarchists as well. The errant irony and generic behavior are pervasive. Just like a high school movie, the anarchist space also has its cool kids. They are certainly the vanguard in the changing sense of theory and strategy, but it seems that US anarchists on the whole participate in a general substitution of fads for tactics. It's no surprise. The spectacle has trained us to live in templates, and this extends to our struggles. Smashing windows can become and is becoming the signifier of belonging to yet another clique, little different from organizing Food Not Bombs or riding bicycles or holding mycology workshops. Make no mistake, the temples of the commodities must be smashed, but the templates for how we go about that must be smashed as well.

Communication and Society

Does a disdain for populist mass movements mean that we want to be alone in our struggle? That would certainly be a caricature of the insurrectionary. If the strongest motion of capitalism is the movement towards alienation, than the strongest attack would be the one that communicates, the one that connects us, the one that mixes us, the one that overcomes isolation. Burn everything but our bridges!

Where was the communication on May Day? Shattering glass has a voice, but only sometimes is it the one that speaks most eloquently. Where are the other voices to help add meaning to its words?

From a distance it seems that the provocations shouted by May Day's falling shards caused many people to take the side of property. There

is something valuable in making people's alliances clear, but there is nothing valuable in refusing to challenge the alliances of capital, to instead defiantly occupy a lonely moral high ground as the only enemy of the system.

We are not Christians who take joy from the mouths of Roman lions. People who rallied around broken windows and damaged cars, in their own minds, were rallying around the false constructs they've been given of community, respect, safety, and so forth. Additional communication is needed to show what these things actually mean in the world we inhabit, to clarify what side they've actually chosen.

Social war means society against the state. Homo sacer is the most honest and honorable member of capitalist society, but also the weakest. For now, we will be the unpopular ones. To have the hope of seeing something different, there will need to be ten flyers for every flying brick, and many more of each.

Solidarity

In "Against the Corpse Machine," Ashen Ruins wrote how in the 1880s, US anarchists could stand fully in support of the Haymarket martyrs, but forget to show similar solidarity for all the sharecroppers and lynching victims in the South. It worries me immensely that within about a week, a half dozen comrades get killed or disappeared in Oaxaca, including anarchists, and a dozen comrades in the States get arrested on felony charges, and all the attention and solidarity goes to the latter.

This does not at all mean that solidarity with the arrested or the May Day smashings themselves come at the expense of solidarity with Oaxaca. Only a liberal would counterpoise international solidarity with attacking the bars of our own prisons. But if this new direction in the anarchist struggle here could ignore the Oaxaca massacre even at a moment of growing power, it is empty and doomed to pathos and narcissism. How we respond in similar situations in the future will answer the question: are we strengthening ourselves as part of a global struggle that truly believes in doing being totally out of control, or are we just pursuing the new fad?

Those arrested on May Day deserve our fullest support, regardless of things like guilt or innocence. The smashings should also be celebrated,

because they mark an important expansion of the struggle in the US, showing that anyone in this country is powerful enough to attack this system. Only by taking this realization and moving forward can we come to occupy a terrain where we are not desperate or impatient to attack because we know we can do it at any time, and therefore choose the best moments.

Your Cooperative will Sell your Soul, your Nemesis will Save it

Anarchist bookstores, cafés, and social centers, squatted or rented, are a commonplace in our struggles worldwide, so it seems peculiar that in the States so many would be subjected to criticisms of being businesses, of selling out, of not deserving our solidarity. It seems even more peculiar that in the wake of riots or instances of repression, so many members of these spaces should in fact join the business owners in denouncing illegality and distancing themselves from the disturbances, from the bad protestors, from the masked ones.

The anarchist spaces, even if they are rented, even if they have to sell things to pay their rent, are our spaces, and they face the same compromises we do when we decide whether to get a job, whether to make use of state welfare, state infrastructure. And these spaces are meaningless without a connection to the anarchist struggle. Without the struggle, without the masked ones, without the smashings, they become just another business, and a poorly managed one at that. Running a cooperative threatens nothing. It does not provide an image of the future unless it exists to support a struggle capable of destroying the power structures that stand in the way of that future. Our spaces sustain us in the struggle and prevent our isolation, and our attacks give those spaces their true meaning, but only if they refuse to be separated.

After a bout of smashing, the local media will demonize the visible anarchists, the public anarchist projects, precisely to get them to denounce the invisible and illegal manifestations of the anarchist struggle, to divide us and weaken us all. The plan is for the public ones to scramble to portray themselves as upstanding citizens, which is to say, to defeat themselves; and for the invisible ones to lose and in fact deny themselves access to those few spaces where they can show they are only a threat to those who are the enemies of all of us. In short, the purpose is to isolate those who attack. More often than not, the public ones and the invisible ones cooperate quite well in fulfilling this purpose.

Enough Words

Let's not come this way again. There's so much to be done well, why do anything poorly? All power to the communes! Freedom for the Asheville 11! Freedom for everyone!

**// SIGNALS
OF DISORDER:
SOWING AN-
ARCHY IN THE
METROPOLIS**

IN AN ARTICLE IN THE RECENT BOOK, *We Are an Image from the Future: the Greek Revolt of December 2008*, I briefly made a point that a friend convinced me needs to be elaborated. The idea is that of “signals of disorder,” and their importance in spreading rebellion.

As far as Greece is concerned, the argument is that by carrying out attacks—primarily smashings and molotov attacks against banks and police stations, which constitute the most obvious symbols of capitalist exploitation and State violence for Greek society—insurrectionary anarchists created signals of disorder that acted as subversive seeds. Even though most people did not agree with these attacks at the time, they lodged in their consciousness, and at a moment of social rupture, people adopted these forms as their own tools, to express their rage when all the traditionally valid forms of political activity were inadequate.

An interesting feature of these signals is that they will be met with fear and disapproval by the same people who may later participate in creating them. This is no surprise. In the news polls of democracy, the majority always cast their vote against the mob. In the day to day of normality, people have to betray themselves to survive. They have to follow those they disbelieve, and support what they cannot abide. From the safety of their couch they cheer for Bonny and Clyde, and on the roadside they say “Thank you, officer” to the policeman who writes them a speeding ticket. This well managed schizophrenia is the rational response to life under capitalism. The fact that our means of survival make living impossible necessitates a permanent cognitive dissonance.

Thus, the sensible behavior is not to reason with the masses, to share the facts that will disprove the foundations of capitalism, facts they already have at their fingertips, and it is not to act appropriately, to put on a smiley face, and expect our popularity to increase incrementally. The sensible thing to do is to attack Authority whenever we can.

Attacking is not distinct from communicating the reasons for our attacks, or building the means to survive, because we survive in order to attack, and we attack in order to live, and we communicate because communicating attacks the isolation, and isolation makes living impossible.

Why do signals of disorder constitute attacks on capitalism and the State? After all, the police are basically the punching bag, the shock absorbers, for the State, and one of the limitations of the insurrection

in Greece was that anarchists focused *too much* on police, rather than on the State in all its manifestations. And what about smashing insured bank windows? Creating a signal of disorder could even involve mere spraypainting, or hanging out on street corners. Isn't this just the ritualization of aimless and impotent rebellion, as the naysayers are so quick to say?

Turns out, the devil is in the details.

In a way, the idea of signals of disorder is an inversion of the Broken Windows Theory of policing. Wilson and Kelling's article, "Broken Windows," first advanced the policing theory of the same name in 1982, but it wasn't until Kelling was hired by the NYC Transit Authority later in the decade that this flagship of minute social control was launched. When Rudolph Giuliani was elected mayor of New York in 1993, Broken Windows policing took on city-wide dimensions, and it soon spread to the rest of the country. By the early '00s, Broken Windows was being adapted for the social democracies of Europe.

Among the technocrats, Broken Windows is controversial, because it easily blurs causation with correlation: just because broken windows and other signals of disorder often *accompany* higher crime rates does not mean they are the *cause* of crime. Occasionally, you'll hear a whimper that without proper sensitivity training, Broken Windows policing encourages harrassment of minorities.

All this misses the point: the State is not interested in reducing crime, the State is interested in increasing social control, and Broken Windows policing is a critical expansion of its arsenal. Giuliani's reign of "zero tolerance" didn't just go after fare-dodgers, graffiti writers, and the squeegee men. Under his stewardship, the NYPD became the first ever police department in the history of the world to log more arrests than reported crimes. Entire neighborhoods became depopulated of certain demographics as young black men were shipped to the prisons upstate. A policing that targets the petty details of every day life, that criminalizes our minor strategies to cope with the impossibilities of life under capitalism, is part and parcel of an expansion of police power as a whole.

Why does the city government in San Francisco want to criminalize sitting or lying in the streets? Why did the city government in Barcelona ban playing music in the streets without a license? Why did the government of the UK prohibit a detailed list of "anti-social behaviors"?

Because the goal of the State is total social control. Because the trajectory of capitalism is towards the total commercialization of public space. Every time we identify another invasion of State and capitalism into the minutiae of daily life, every time we confront that invasion, we are potentially fighting for revolution. As Authority increasingly manages us at the nano level, the can of spraypaint, the rock, the molotov, deserve the same significance as the AK-47.

Spreading signals of disorder accomplishes a number of things. It increases our tactical strength, as we hone a practice of vandalism, property destruction, public occupation, and rowdiness.

It interrupts the narrative of social peace, and creates the indisputable fact of people opposed to the present system and fighting against it. It means the reason for this fight, the anarchist critiques, have to be taken more seriously because they already exist in the streets. In this way, the attacks create the struggle as a fact in a way that would otherwise only be possible in times of greater social upheaval and movement. To have this effect, the signals of disorder need to explicitly link themselves to a recognizable social practice, one that would otherwise be ignored or chopped up into disconnected eccentricities of lifestyle. People in the neighborhood must know that the graffiti and broken windows are the doing of “the anarchists” or some other group that has a public existence, because signals of disorder that can be isolated as phenomena of urban white noise can be legitimately and popularly policed with techniques reserved for inanimate objects and aesthetic aberrations; they would rub us off the streets with the same chemical rigor as they clean graffiti off the walls.

Signals of disorder are contagious. They attract people who also want to be able to touch and alter their world rather than just passing through it. They are easy to replicate and at times, generally beyond our control or prediction, they spread far beyond our circles. They allow us, and anyone else, to reassert ourselves in public space, to reverse commercialization, to make neighborhoods that belong to us, to create the ground on which society will be reborn.

In a neighborhood where the walls are covered with anarchist posters, beautiful radical graffiti stands alongside all the usual tags, advertisements never stay up for long, the windows of luxury cars, banks, and gentrifying apartments or restaurants are never safe, and people hang out drinking and talking on the street corners and in the parks, our ideas will be seriously discussed outside our own narrow

circles, and the state would need a major counterinsurgency operation to have just the hope of uprooting us.

Whenever we can break their little laws with impunity, we show that the State is weak. When advertising is defaced and public space is liberated, we show that capitalism is not absolute.

But at the same time, we cannot make the mistake of exaggerating the importance of the attack, of signals of disorder. At times it may be necessary to be a gang, but if we are ever only a gang, if at any point only our antisocial side is visible, we are vulnerable to total repression. There is a lot of rage circulating, without an adequate outlet, which we resonate with through our attacks. But there is equally a lot of love that is even more lacking in possibilities for true expression. People desire the community and solidarity that capitalism deprives them of, and our way out of this labyrinth of isolation is to go looking for the others and meet them where they're at. To encounter people, in our search for accomplices.

Except in the magical space of the riot, we cannot safely find spontaneous accomplices for the attack. But in the stultifying oppression of everyday, we can find accomplices to share in the little gestures of defiance, the small tastes of the commune we are building—a random conversation, a flyer someone is actually interested to read, the passing around of a stolen meal, collaboration in a community garden, the giving of gifts.

The anarchists must simultaneously be those who are blamed for acts of startling indecency, of inappropriate extremism in all the right causes (“they burned four police cars at our peaceful march!”) and those who are around town cooking and sharing free communal meals, holding street parties, projecting pirated movies on the sides of buildings, running libraries and bicycle repair shops, and appearing at protests (“oh look, it’s those lovely anarchists again!”).

We will be safest from the right hand of repression and the left hand of recuperation when everyone is thoroughly confused as to whether we are frightening or loveable.

**// ON THE
IMPORTANCE
OF GOOD AIM:
AN INSUR-
RECTIONARY
MESSAGE IN
EIGHTHAIKUS**

Marighela said
“the guerrilla lives to shoot”
go rev: train with guns.

Commie thought winning
came through armed warfare against
capital’s army.

We know it’s about
struggle and relationships,
but good aim is key.

Some people will dig
our project of negation
if we aim wisely.

In some hoods they’ll cum
if the banks and chains are smashed,
but not mom n pop.

Little business sucks,
true, but to show this, you must
find one that’s hated,

that shits on workers,
and has a bad rep: smash them
intentionally

and tell people why.
Other days just smash the big
motherfuckers. Word?

