

And We Will Still Be Ready To Storm The Heavens Another Time: Against Amnesty

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Preface

Over the last fourteen years, “political refugees” have developed counter-information work on the reality of class confrontation in Italy and about specific publishing attempts; all of this documentation, which is necessarily insufficient, only offered us a partial expression of the revolutionary movement, and only of certain aspects of the armed experience in that country.

The text that we are publishing here, which was published in issue #42 of the Italian anarchist review *Anarchismo*, can fit into this documentation. Its critique of certain models and methods developed by armed organizations is not an overall rejection of the armed struggle of recent years. It tries to present the positive aspect of this struggle, which disappeared in the political solution that a part of the movement is currently trying to carry out.

From the theses of generalization of working-class violence of the 1970s to the military execution of R.L. Hunte (head of the “International Observation Force” in the Sinai), who was killed last February in Rome by the Red Brigades, their remoteness from the “mass objectives” they worked toward is becoming increasingly obvious. The armed party’s military objectives are the only way the problem of class war has been posed. The pretended absence of a more thorough dialectic between the organization and the masses could not have facilitated the proletariat’s abandonment of a project- that of its own dictatorship-which does not interest it.

At present, facing the problem with greater dignity than the *pentiti* [informers] or the *dissociati* [those who have dissociated themselves from armed subversive activity], taking into consideration the tragic situation of thousands of imprisoned companions, a project of struggle for an amnesty has been proposed. Rather than continuing a painful fight or turning state’s evidence, some want to secure a collective amnesty from the State, and start new cycles of revolutionary struggle afterward.

Within the French libertarian movement we have talked about this project by linking it, more or less, to specific struggles against prisons and repression in Italy. We would have welcomed this project’s condemnation of the methods of the armed formations, but we must think more objectively, faced with the obvious ambiguity in the commitment to this struggle. The choice of the present text contributes to this thought. For our part, we note that when it is limited to pure and simple surrender, a critique of the impracticality of the armed model of these failing organizations could negatively influence a later development of libertarian and insurrectional armed struggle.

The companions of *Publications Révolte et Liberté*.

Introduction by Pierleone Porcu

Before it occurred to the revolutionaries, the State took care well in advance to manage the vacuum left by the fragmented movement by putting the project of dissociation into operation. Whoever calls in a loud voice for the restitution of the comrades by any means should not complain afterward of finding himself side by side with docile creatures, instruments in the hands of power.

Never before have truth and lies been superimposed on the Italian political scene as they are today, to the point of becoming a spectacle of positions democratically produced by the gov-

ernment and the institutional opposition with the aim of capturing the attention of uninformed revolutionaries.

I am referring, for example, to the Naria case, which is henceforth an “affair” of State, a symbol of the period that followed the state of emergency, and which is based on a recuperation and general rediscovery of human values. The current problems of prison and of the process of dissociation that is now in progress all seem to converge on this painful human event, which clearly typifies the obvious barbarism of judicial management and administration, mechanisms that, by preventing the liberation of a man who is slowly dying, clearly show the homicidal intent of those who manipulate them. Thus, the Minister Martinazzoli, Doctor Amato, head of the prison system and naturally, the good Pertini (to mention only the best-known ones) announced they were openly opposed to the negative opinion handed down by the judges (who are sovereign in the strict application of the law passed by Parliament) to the request for liberation made by Naria’s lawyers.

Beyond the human significance of this, we should ask ourselves what is hiding behind these fake appeals and the debates that are being provoked and organized on all sides.

We all know that the State, by approving the new law on preventive detention, which reduced its lengths, and by gradually lifting the restrictive norms of the sadly famous Article 90, is preparing to give a different order to internal control of the prisons, a more rational order than the one that was imposed on the special prisons and the “death wings”. Thus, barbarism can travel better on the rails of a differentiated internal sociality. The use of the judicial apparatus for exclusively political ends appears through the assistance given to anyone who dissociates himself from “terrorism”, including reductions of his sentence and “possible openings”.

The State is progressively leaving the tunnel of the state of emergency and regularizing its new position of domination in all sectors of society. The period of conquest of the social sectors that were torn away from it by the struggle and that made themselves independent of its interference is over; it is presently preparing a precise control. The characteristics of this control will no longer be based on a militaristic strategy, but will basically revolve around the ideologization of consensus, in such a way as to normalize “deviant” social behaviour. Now the State wants to promote and activate things from behind the new figures of social operators and controllers, who have been inserted into the country’s microstructures. Among these sad figures-apart from the psychologists and sociologists-the dissociologist of antagonism is conspicuous.

Hence the current spectacle of political positions that revolve around the phenomenon of dissociation (from the document of the Rebibbia 51 to the one by the 40 signatories of the *Prima Linea* trial in Turin, up to the current documents of the thirteen, still from Turin, or those that came out of the *Prima Linea* trial in Milan). The “homogenous” sphere of influence is spreading everywhere, and is backed all the way up to Amato. It is no longer a matter of small groups, but of a compact mass inside the prisons that is taking the road of dissociation, finding advocates outside the prisons as well and breathing life into a labyrinth of positions, where it is difficult to sort things out by oneself.

Everyone is waiting for further information from the State concerning the role it intends to entrust to these revised and corrected subjects, and this argument is the subject of a political battle in Parliament (for example, there is a current of secular people who have dissociated themselves, one of Catholic people who have dissociated themselves, another of so-called “total” ones, and so on).

If the majority of political prisoners in the prisons found themselves drawn into the project of dissociation that the State wants to realize, on the outside things are the same. A large part of the revolutionary milieu insists on echoing the initiatives of dissociation that are coming from the prisons. Even a few libertarian milieu that appear to misunderstand and claim too thoughtlessly to support such a project by showing solidarity with the dissociationist positions adopted by a few prisoners who puffed themselves up with the term “anarchist”, thus enjoying “citizenship” in our movement, which is more and more saturated with an approving conformity disseminated out of “tolerance”.

The matter is seriously considered and analyzed, especially for the negative consequences that affect our subversive activity. Adopting positions like this would lead the anarchist movement onto the terrain of political opportunism and compromises with power, a terrain dear to authoritarian elements who use it to justify their own existence and retention of their positions.

Until now, a part of the anarchist movement has had nothing to do with the matter of repression and social control. The interest it is showing now is connected in particular to new positions adopted by certain libertarian prisoners who are dissociating themselves from the practices and motives that in the past made them opponents of Capital and the State.

Such a sudden convergence of interests between these prisoners and this part of the anarchist movement results from a parallelism of views concerning the value that both of them attribute to liberalism, socialism and democracy.

To be aware of this, it is enough to read various articles published in several anarchist magazines, which clearly give the impression of having chosen to move only in a milieu of study and cultural intervention.

Starting from a self-criticism of their own experience of struggle, the dissociated have reached the point of reducing any conflictive relationship with the institutions to nothing. They therefore put themselves directly in a discussion and parliamentary mediation that are attempting to recuperate all social conflict. And because this self-criticism tries, in its subjectivity, to reassert the value of the individual space that was so neglected before, it follows that it ends up adopting the utopia of modern liberalism, which would like to humanize and socialize State structures by containing them in a sphere of action that is far more restricted than the current sphere. These prisoners are converging by another road with the part of the movement that hopes to empty the State of its functions peacefully and in a utopian way, acting progressively from within by means of a use of mass libertarian culture, capable of proposing autonomous counter-structures of society. It is a project that would like to realize the liberal maxim of “minimal intervention of the State in society”. The “seed beneath the snow” that Kropotkin spoke of.

Another part of the anarchist movement, though in a different and much more restrained way, keeps a wait-and-see attitude of availability concerning dissociation, which is the result of a lack of analysis and an inability to make autonomous proposals. Thus continual postponement of a discussion of the content just poses the problem again unchanged, confirming dissociationist positions without saying so clearly.

This is the case with proposals that seem a little better than so many others and which drive comrades-who, by the way, are generous-to support them, like for example the amnesty proposal launched by advocates of Scalzone’s positions and taken up by anarchists in the pages of the movement’s papers.

These people toy with political solutions, but with a minimum of dignity and hostility toward the State. In short, they would like to remain antagonistic but at the same time negotiate the

comrades' liberation at times and in modes dictated by them, although they do not possess the necessary revolutionary force to impose them. What can one say about such a position? They would like to "make an omelette without breaking eggs".

It should be understood that all the proposals, from those most disposed toward a dialogue with the State to the worthiest ones, actually differentiate themselves only by varied degrees and a greater or lesser moral reticence, with all of them obliged, however, to measure themselves in a domain inside the institutions and to sort out the same problems. The former even appeared to possess more political realism, greater practical sense and a more offhand cynicism in the unreserved barter of what they possessed, conscious of the price set by the State for obtaining any benefit whatever.

The pamphlet we are publishing fits into the heart of the events that have been reported up to now, becoming material for a debate inside and outside the anarchist movement and possibly extended to include the part of the revolutionary movement that is wandering in a desperate search for a different road than the one marked out by power.

Its undoubted topicality—although it has already been published in March of this year in the review *Anarchismo*—can be seen in the judgements and elements of analysis that it presents, which are now no longer fortunate intuitions of something that was emerging at the time in the debate over the problem of prison, but a palpable reality made up of events and decisions that are assailing us from close up.

The comrade who wrote this pamphlet is especially preoccupied with retraveling, outside ideological sanctuaries and commonplaces, all stages of the routes that brought about the forms of association expressed by the revolutionary movement in recent years, the theoretical debate that refers to it, the instruments that were used and the actions that were carried out. He grasps their merits and their failings, their limits and contradictions, trying at the same time to renew a logical thread capable of getting out of the "laissez-faire" attitude that leaves the door open to repressive actions and State control.

Defining problems precisely is very important today, especially in order not to fall into short term perspectives and compromises that would inevitably lead us into the labyrinth of dissociation, denying us any possibility of direct action to transform reality. Many companions will find arguments and concepts that they are fairly familiar with. And others as well, new ones that are expressed in a language that speaks in images and recalls times of exhilarating hopes and times of difficulty and uneasiness. It is an invitation to reconsider all our past experience in a critical manner with the aim of grasping the meanings and the positive or negative things in our experience of struggles that are recent and yet so far away. And doing so not to explain the past, but to provide instruments for future action by going beyond the causes and effects of the mistakes that were made, with the aim of being able to start again on a concrete basis, one that is more in keeping with the reality we are living in.

Faced with the urgency of the problems that await us and the duties we would like to attribute to ourselves as anarchists and revolutionaries, we must overstep the limits of commonplaces and givens, doing so in such a way that association would no longer be a formal adherence to libertarian ideas, but a personal search for a coherent practice of self-fulfilment here and now through social action.

Introductory Note by Paolo Ruberto (October '84)

I think it would be interesting to give a summary account of the rise and development of positions of “withdrawal”, which range from the penitents to those who have dissociated themselves, bearing in mind that a detailed account is practically impossible as there are many variants and modifications even within the same position.

Following the appearance of “greater” and “lesser” penitents who based their desertion of the struggle on an exclusively military and political basis, going over to the State with arms and baggage, taking on themselves the duty of breaking all forms of resistance (the arrests of hundreds of companions, the murder of four companions in Genoa perpetrated by *carabinieri* sent by Peci, etc.), the champions of political “desertion” began to appear in the first months of 1980.

In May of that year a collective political document drawn up by the partisans of “desertion”, almost all of whom came from the ranks of *Prima Linea*, among them Donat-Cattin and Gai, was published in *Lotta Continua*. In it the need for self-criticism was mentioned, and the fact that people had to reconsider their historical past; it was pointed out that the informers were sons of the movement.

The milieu of desertion and abandonment of armed action arose in this way, backed to the hilt by *Lotta Continua* and the usual gravediggers of the movement, of the Boato and Pinoto variety, flanked by those who are known as democrats, of the Neppi Modona and Mario Scialoja variety.

This first group of deserters was short-lived, because with many of them one never managed to clearly distinguish them from the penitents, and also because almost all of them ended up collaborating with the magistracy and the police.

On September 30 1982 there appeared the document known as that of the 51 (from the number of signatories) which signalled the start of a veritable race to carry out self-distancings, self-dissociations, pacification proposals, amnesty proposals, etc.

In the aforementioned document the signatories, coming principally from the autonomy milieu, maintained that it was necessary to refuse and condemn positions and activity that were “combative” and in favour of terrorism in order to reopen a dialectic of controversy and arrive at negotiations with the State. In practice Negri, Ferrari, Bravo, Vesce and the others are saying that we must advance along the road of past radical antagonism in order to put ourselves in a dialectical relationship, one that is active and a bearer of proposals together with so-called “healthy” social and political forces, who will make their desire to go beyond the contingency of the emergency laws understood. These people maintain that as a result the State will also be forced to make its self-criticism regarding the creation of special legislation and the spirit of vengeance, as a result of which we would see a reciprocal reconciliation of the one with the other and a new way to set the rules of the game, according to new conditions of political struggle based on dissent that is no longer radical and one of total opposition but a dialectical one based on dialogue, with the aim of encouraging the State to give itself ever greater characteristics of democracy and liberty.

This is how there arose and developed a “Dissociation” milieu which would unite, as it went along, a considerable number of differing positions. Then there were those who refused to let themselves be grouped with those who dissociated themselves and tried to sugar the pill by asserting that without renouncing anything it was nevertheless necessary to admit that armed struggle was now outmoded, as it had been incapable of carrying out its project of social transformation.

It was necessary to get started on other projects, intended to build a new critical consciousness that would lead to a transcendence of a generation's past experience and a surpassing of armed struggle by opening onto a cultural revolution.

Another line of people who had dissociated themselves, which appeared later, took Scalzone and other political refugees in France as its point of departure. These people maintained that it was necessary to mobilize in order to organize a great battle for an amnesty for all political prisoners. Given that the armed project had been defeated and that restarting the conflict was no longer possible, it was necessary to give life to a prospect of negotiations and define an armistice with the State. The movement had to guarantee a "ceasefire", that is, a period of social peace.

The State had to guarantee an amnesty to properly ratify the end of hostilities. The two parties would negotiate the price of the movement's defeat by estimating the price to be paid at five years' imprisonment for everyone.

Another large milieu that arose inside the prisons was the one known as the "dis-incarceration" milieu. Its advocates, while still admitting the need for a criticism of the past and while still recognizing that the conditions that led to a development of armed struggle in Italy in the 70s were no longer present, refused however to subscribe to any dissociation whatever, but admitted the need to find other roads to social transformation, roads that advanced through pacifist and ecological struggles and ones for a better quality of life. In their objective condition as prisoners, they intended to mobilize in order to begin a politico-cultural struggle meant to reduce the negative effects of segregation and to allow a normal development of life. It was this milieu that maintained it was necessary to organize meetings, demonstrations, concerts, exhibitions and manufacturing cooperatives as well as cultural ones with the aim of establishing social relations and structures that were alternatives to prison, and all this as part of a perspective that would allow a transition from the dreamed-of political revolution to a possible social transformation. This prisoners' milieu, which ended up with Morucci, Monferdin, Strano, Faranda, Fiora Pirri, Premoli, etc., drew ever closer to the milieu of the self-dissociated proper, which together with them formed what was known as the "homogenous movement", and which organized the famous congress "Alternative Measures to Detention and the Role of the External Community", which took place in late May in Rebibbia prison with the participation of 30 prisoners.

For their part, many ex-militants of Prima Linea (among them Sergio, Ronconi, Rosso, Galmozzi, etc.) began a journey that brought them steadily closer to the positions of the self-dissociated. Initially they developed a self-criticism in relation to the distance between armed struggle and the proletariat's traditional struggles; they then came to the conclusion that Italian conditions today no longer allow the use of armed struggle, concluding that only the presuppositions for a battle meant to get out of the "emergency" situation existed. So they spoke of "reconciliation", and also explained its supposed differences from pacification.

Apart from the positions outlined so far there are a whole series of facets, all of which lead to an idea of the end of a historical period of total antagonism, of total and permanent conflict, as well as the judgement that revolutionary violence was an erroneous instrument and that it has therefore been surpassed by history because it failed to stand the test of action.

"Today, in a complex society, in a phase of the crisis and breaking up of large groups and an emergence of the individual, the local, the multiple, which are implacably opposed to unity and the whole, and to differences, the sole model (post-socialist in the form of society, post-communist in the historical form of the movement) of social transformation seems to be a direct change to a process of extinction of the State" writes Scalzone, maintaining that in modern capi-

talist societies a radical change through revolution is no longer necessary because society itself already happens to be in a post-revolutionary condition.

Negri and other ex-autonomists are of the same opinion as Scalzone in principle, but with different motives. They also deny the very utility of the concept of a revolutionary break and are advancing the hypothesis of a formation of communist communities living in symbiosis with the capitalist one and capable of growing to the point of englobing it.

Thus we reach the point of tears shed over the innocent victims of those sombre years, over the unfortunate people carried away by an ideology of violence that considered itself necessary and even liberatory. This is what Morucci, Faranda, Guerra, Maino and others are doing. These people feel a heartbreaking consciousness of the pain and the victims that an entire movement left behind it.

To begin living again they now feel the need to forgive and cease to hate those who, in those years, chose the path of collaboration.

Let us put aside the “continuist” core of the Red Brigades which, as has been clarified in this pamphlet we are publishing, is locking itself into an inflexibility that is cut off from reality, and which speaks insistently of the need for the formation of a Fighting Communist Party; various prisoners from Palmi, with Curcio among them, appeared in a domain of self-criticism, highlighting the limitations and failings of armed struggle and the organizations that practised it. Although it succeeded in showing that it is possible to make use of revolutionary violence, armed struggle—they maintain—has not succeeded in developing a concrete project that managed to put all the transgressive languages expressed by the proletariat in the last few years in touch with each other. They also developed a critique of the struggles of those who lived and are still living the myth of the Red Brigades as a monolithic and compact armed vanguard, and who represented and continue to represent the element that is most insensitive to the qualitative renewal imposed by the change in the conditions of the struggle. In this analysis, the concepts of the party’s insubstitutable nature, in the Comintern sense, and the form of the Fighting Communist Party disappeared, suggesting the possibility of a guerrilla struggle that would attack within proletarian contradictions and demands. Close to these positions, which were developed in Palmi, one finds Franceschini, Ognibene and others who drew up a document in Nuoro prison in December ’83, on the occasion of their hunger strike against inhuman prison conditions. However, during and after the hunger strike these prisoners instituted a special relationship with the Catholic Church, recognizing its role in the defence of the prisoners’ living conditions. This was not an accidental choice, but one in keeping with their political assessment, which rejects any concept of collective struggle and withdraws into a “do-it-yourself” line according to short-term needs. It is no accident that some of them have defined themselves precisely as ex-communists.

Another group of prisoners, the one that organized and participated in the hunger strike in March of this year against the “death wings” gave rise to a collective struggle against one of the most repressive forms of imprisonment, although, as some of them admitted themselves, it is a form of struggle that can be easily instrumentalized by power, but which was the only one they could use at the time. This does not mean—as they continue to explain that they have become pacifists, and they are careful to point out that they have nothing to do with the “homogenous area”, advocates of “political solutions” or those who talk about a “refounding of the State”.

Finally there are more than a few companions who criticize political solutions, maintaining the need for a renewal of the movement’s initiatives of struggle inside and outside the prisons by posing the problem of liberation from the prisons inside that of liberation from the capitalist

system. Many companions have chosen to remain silent so as not to add to the river of words that is pouring over this subject, but we know that although they are keeping quiet they are opposed in principle to the feasible political solutions.

As for the imprisoned anarchist companions, few have adopted a clear and correct position in a revolutionary sense. Most of them have chosen to remain silent, and from this silence one should infer, until the opposite is proved, a continuation of their initial position of antagonism, against any form of pact or political solution. We obviously consider separately the few anarchist companions who subscribed to the documents of the current of dissociation, and who have therefore officially adopted a position that does not seem capable of being shared from a revolutionary point of view.

And We Will Still Be Ready To Storm The Heavens Another Time: Against Amnesty

It is no longer possible to keep hiding our heads in the sand regarding the prison problem and the “what is to be done?” in relation to it.

Initiatives of support and counter-information are all very worthwhile, especially ones that intend to involve the various elements of the anarchist movement, but they cannot deny that they only address the beginning of the problem.

Having come to this point it seems to me that some remarks are imperative; I hope that these ones will interest anarchist companions and those who are close to the libertarian movement, and perhaps companions who are farther away from it as well, but are well aware of the contradictions and ambiguities that are continually circulating.

I repeat: this essay validates the action of counter-information concerning repression and sides with the goals and methods of realization involved, but wonders about what still remains for us to do. Our companions are in prison and the prison movement is divided into “politicals” and “non-politicals”; among those known as politicals, there are traditional divisions which threaten to become not different routes of consciousness but bloody paths of suspicion.

On the outside a few companions rejected a kind of moral blackmail that came from the prisons, and as a result threw out both the baby and the bathwater. In discussions they confirm the all-inclusiveness of their intervention (prison included); in actual fact, they are carrying out a process of separating it into specialties, which is increasingly evident and also easier to do.

On the other hand, other companions who also gather sighs from prison echo the prisoners’ moods, presenting them as political analyses. As a result they just add to the confusion and incomprehension.

We must say without mincing words what can be done, what has become useless to dream of doing from now on, and what we do not want to do because it is reputed to have an adverse effect.

It seems to me that the time has come for a few people to lift this rock, under which dangerous vermin may already have formed.

Why We Are Against A Struggle For Amnesty

There are many ways to get out of prison. And many other ways to get in there. Prison is an essential component in the revolutionary struggle; it cannot be considered an external variable. When it inserts itself into this struggle, forcing thousands of companions into loneliness and silence, the circle can be completed or be broken. We must not delude ourselves that the people who keep the keys on power’s behalf will toss them into the ditch after having opened the doors. Not one of *them* is inclined to do that for nothing. They will not give us an amnesty. We will have to pay for it.

Their masters are asking too high a price. At the moment we constitute a burden; we are not yet a threat. We are incapable of negotiating from a position of strength; we can only appeal to their pity and sense of democratic order, which are offended by such a large number of political prisoners; to the fact that, first and foremost, they themselves need to assert that “the war is over”, to exorcise the mark of the monster who wanted to be different, who dreamed of the world totally “here and now”.

Today they want us on our knees. After the days of Canossa, in the cold and the mud, they want to have the pleasure of “giving” us freedom.

Their laws only suppress life sentences in order to liberate infamous and suspicious people in the service of betrayal. These same laws will supposedly ratify an amnesty. Everybody out. The game is over. Continue the struggle with other means. The ones that you have used up to now are too boisterous. Please be quiet. “Put aside” the class struggle. Forget the revolution.

But What War Is Over?

For someone who imagined a war of fronts, an engagement of mini-armies and microscopic autumn and spring campaigns, the war is over. But representation in the little theatre of politics does not resemble reality at all. The great blood sacrifice required of the proletarian class continues uninterrupted. The official massacrers kill systematically. Their executioners shoot in the street. When they don the robe, they add thousands of centuries onto the frail shoulders of proletarians responsible for having interfered with sacred property rights.

The conformist neo-Ghibelline smiles skeptically at these considerations and invites us to consider the new Prince’s kindness, his expansion of well-being and the end of the reality of poverty.

But the social war continues; beyond the ideological intrigues of this new race of recuperators, it will still be possible tomorrow to storm the heavens another time.

What Defeat Are They Talking About?

Of their way of imagining the struggle. Obtuse and repetitive, mechanical, determinist and incapable of a critical perspective. Their way of imagining was not a dream but a calculation instead. The book-keeping went wrong. History never repeats itself in the same way. The models of the past- distant or recent-cannot be superimposed at one’s pleasure. But the absence of imagination needs models; it swears by them and lives only through them.

The frontal engagement was defeated. The engagement that intended to match the strength of two armies at war. But *their* war was not the social war. Two rackets that shoot at each other are not necessarily a representative slice of the whole society; they gather only a part of it, often the most marginal and aggravated part.

With many of them, it was good faith, and this was why we expected the miracle of the rosary. In the end, the blind hen also ends up pecking her little seed. But the blindness was too widespread. Ideological sluggishness covered everything with a thick fog. Insolence and mental pettiness went hand in hand with the ridiculous pretense of representing the totality.

What Victory Were They Heading Toward?

Toward the conquest of power. The dictatorship of the proletariat. The constitution of the proletarian State. And others. Other no less dangerous phantasmagoria were found in their gamebag.

We gave them room and critical credibility, because we were always sure of the possibility of an accidental meeting of the ways. Even companions who have started with a perspective that far removed from our own should be supported when they attack. We certainly cannot support them now that they are preparing to betray.

A correct evaluation of what they call a failure should include a critique of the positions they held at the point of departure, of what they believed the class war to be, of how they used the instrument of armed struggle and of the way they conceived their relationship to the reality whose transformation they sought.

Instead of all this, they prefer to simply admit that they have been defeated; that things were correctly prepared but that fortune was not on the right side, that it preferred to kiss power on the brow.

And when a voice is raised to begin a critical discourse they sound the alarm of exceptional present circumstances; four thousand companions are political prisoners and, all of a sudden, this fact becomes the primary one. In fact, an admission of defeat is the first thing that someone who wants to negotiate a surrender must do.

We have always said that even in the case of victory the war would continue for us; this is why we are no longer interested in their defeat, which is on display everywhere. It is the book-keeping of power.

Let us remember that when Togliatti declared an amnesty to get the fascists out of prison our companions began to enter them immediately afterwards. Power always comes to an agreement with the counterpower that has failed to bring off a process of power-sharing by alternation, but it can never set up a dialogue with revolutionaries. There is no way for them to agree.

They Refer To The Critique That They Were Never Able To Use

The same proud and haughty analysts of the proletariat's historical destiny are now witnessing the breakdown of their critique. Those who chose the "critique of arms" with such assurance, and who did not allow people to discuss the correct strategic use of an instrument which was and remains worthwhile (the armed struggle)? these people now seem to have been tormented with crying fits.

In their passion to destroy what they had built-though without wanting to-and in their haste to appear different from what they basically were, they are rejecting everything; the positive and the negative things.

We sense that they are embarrassed by their critical clothing; their way of relying on what the recent and less recent past has produced makes no sense, and shows the real inconsistency of their theoretical preoccupations.

Clever in the elaboration of words, they might be able to fool a few of the more witless companions, but I do not believe they will manage to convince the ones who realize what a clownish about-face is about to materialize. Supple in the elaboration of words, they are now even humble and circumspect in their proposals of hypotheses: they are the same ones who, not long

ago, fired point-blank at anyone who risked putting forward a different hypothesis than theirs, condemning it as a provocation.

The central system of this so-called critique is intended to demonstrate that, after all, their activity never existed, and that if it did exist, it was limited to very little, and that this little part was an excess owing to bad education, a collective craving for violence and illusions stemming from the old days of '68, etc.

There is an element of truth in all this, but as usual it tends to reject the positive things as well as the negative aspect. An all-inclusive rejection of this kind is not a critique; it is a defence lawyer's plea, the long rigamarole of someone in a difficult situation who wants to get out of it at any price.

It is good that all this be said clearly, and people shouldn't try to hide their "desistence" behind a complicated "critical analysis".

If certain aspects of the critique-like that of the one-dimensional sluggishness of the armed model, for example-were borrowed from our positions, other aspects are nothing but the tragic reversal of someone who has just finished saying the opposite of what he said before, and without justifying the reasons for it in a critical way. When these people accuse themselves of having "simplified" social complexity too much they say nothing in practice; they disavow, and that is all. They do not explain -and they cannot explain-what "unsimplified" project they are now proposing for future action.

When they speak of a "crisis" in the Marxist and Third Internationalist vulgate, they do not say what theoretical arsenal they will refer to tomorrow when this digression, the years of lead, has drawn to a close and they obtain "everything in the house" one way or another. Perhaps the ideology of Popper and Feyerabend? Perhaps Husserl's critique of existence?

They were unable to form a critique right from the start, and are only in a position to yell for the "necessity" of a critique today, in urgent circumstances and under the pressure of the opposing party; but what will appear is nothing but a complete rejection, irrational and cheapened, a manner of vomiting on themselves that is quite ominous.

The Intermediate Struggle Of Revolutionaries

In our denial of the practicability of an amnesty, we are not asserting a vague maximalism cut off from reality but are, on the contrary, trying to redirect the present struggle in proportion to its real possibilities.

It has been asserted that each moment spent in prison is a moment lost from one's life. And this is true, as is known, unfortunately, by someone who has been sentenced to life imprisonment.

But it must also be said that we cannot avoid imposing the supersession of this first level of considerations on ourselves. Otherwise, could we understand what we expected from the State, when? all together ? we yelled what it was in its face? Maybe a place in the municipal register?

Yet in the face of the more than easily foreseeable repression, each of us reckoned well. We were never like those adventurers of the pistol who were fascinated by violence for its own sake, drawn into a process that saw strength in numbers and in strength the inevitability of victory. There was always a foundation of revolutionary maturity in our revolt. And this was true for each one of us.

This does not lead us to forget that we must find the means to reduce the imprisoned companions' sentences. We have to reach an agreement about which roads are feasible and which ones are not because they demand too high a price, a far higher one than prison itself.

All genuine revolutionaries have never opposed intermediate struggles on principle. They know that these struggles are indispensable in order to gradually bring the project closer to social conditions that will cause it to bear fruit. It is impossible to propose a directly revolutionary development in a situation of social conflict that only allows us a glimpse of certain aspects of the contradictions that characterize it, while other aspects, perhaps the most important ones, remain hidden.

This is why we participate in street-level struggles, in counter-information, in factory struggles, and ones in the schools and neighbourhoods. We are trying to gradually induce them to move toward objectives that are much broader than simple demands, information or dissent.

For us, intermediate struggles are not a goal but a means that we use (even rather often) to achieve a different goal: that of urging people to revolt.

In spite of all this we will not tolerate people coming to terms with power, drawing up an agreement and selling the imprisoned companions' freedom outright.

We disagree, because a negotiation like this would not be an intermediate struggle but the beginning of the end; it would be a goal in its own right: the companions' freedom paid for with other companions' freedom. Everybody (or almost everybody) out of prison, but stripped of everything, their revolutionary spirit first of all, their dignity and their human worth.

It is not true-as some have already said-that today's agreement would be the prelude to a continuation of tomorrow's struggles. By accepting the agreement today, tomorrow at best we might perhaps struggle inside the ghetto where power will have parked us. The ghetto of people who have suffered failure, defeat and surrender. It is not true-as some have already said-that if we do not bargain this surrender right away, tomorrow's struggles will be condemned to a maniacal repetition of the model of armed struggle that we have already seen. Who could have such a bloody stupid thing in mind?

Future struggles will be quite different if we keep in mind the mistakes we have made and the positive things about them. In the event that we are forced to gamble everything on an unconditional surrender, our past would no longer exist except in oleographic reproductions for use and consumption by the bourgeoisie of the end of the next century, a cheap thrill in their parlours.

The Wretched Prospect Of Collaboration

They are appealing to us to reason and reflect. They are inviting us to not be the naughty boys we have always been and to understand the situation. They are inviting us to collaborate.

On one side (that of power), they are waiting with open arms, even if the initial price of negotiation is still exorbitant. On the other (that of the imaginary ex-counterpower), the arms are no less open, and they are not even trying to get a discount.

Biological urgency is turned into a fact with a high priority. The four thousand comrades' physical and mental solitude is a mountain on our chests, but we cannot shift it by one millimetre. We are not unyielding in error, we are unyielding in our critical appraisal.

We do not want to collaborate because we believe in our ideas and in our capacity to transform reality; it is not because we believe in what we have been that we do not think a modification is possible. We are not idiotic worshippers of a model considered to be the truth. Even less are we collaborationists, who base their convictions on a critique drawn up in the offices of the Minister of the Interior.

Collaborating means surrendering to the enemy outright; they are not proposing an alternative in order to displace the struggle elsewhere. There will never be an “elsewhere” for the collaborators. They will always carry their own past with them, wrapped up in the shit of their present.

Their Reasoning Has Gone Into Crisis

Fierce rationalists, they have now gone into crisis. The list the Stalinist Lukács produced to make his peace with philosophy (denunciations of Nietzsche and Stirner) was not enough for them. Now they have returned to Spinoza’s arms, and even lower, to Husserl’s.

They were priests practically from the beginning. Now they are displaying the radical and possibilist behaviour of someone who has discovered crisis as the (apparently monolithic) other side of consciousness. They are throwing themselves headlong into perplexity like they once threw themselves headlong into certainty.

Now they want to “use” politics. Previously they let themselves be used by it. For them the crisis came after a military defeat. Like a good accountant who can no longer balance the books because someone has subtracted them-by force.

Thus, the crisis becomes an alibi rather than an opportunity. A camouflage for the tumours of its own idiocy, not an opening onto the diverse and the creative. Thus, they thrash about like cats chasing their own tails, around the problem of the cause of the crisis and the one of how to get out of it. They do not realize that they never went into crisis; they just saw themselves, according to the circumstances, in different distorting mirrors: yesterday they thought they were beautiful and strong, now they think they are stupid and weak, sniveling and beaten.

What they were and what they really are, they find very difficult to understand.

What They Never Understood

They never had any imagination. The framework of their existence was cramped and limited. Memory repeated to infinity. Commonplaces of the pulsations of victory and defeat. “Really existing” socialism as communism and freedom. The inner destiny of disgrace transformed into a radiant sign of glory. Not confusion, but sadness and the police state.

They did not understand everything that could be liberating in an attack and repeated it as though it was a classical piece, under the gaze of directors who were strict and respectful of formality.

Subversion appears to use the same roads; sometimes it chooses the same objectives, but expands and opens onto different horizons. It does not seek to grow through the magic of the organs of information: it is growth itself. It grows with the growth of the subversive phenomenon; if the opposite happens it reduces itself, withdraws into itself and anticipates other interventions. It

doesn't cry out at the scandal of history, doesn't fall down submissive at the oppressor's feet, doesn't talk about crisis and doesn't wink at collaboration.

They didn't understand that a critique develops when people advance, in times of growth and development. If in this phase you only harbour illusions, then in the following phase when you pay for the mistakes that have been made, you are no longer in a position to make "a critique"; at best, you can recite a "*mea culpa*".

The Real Movement Is Not In The Prisons

They always made the mistake of looking for the privileged interlocutor in this or that part of reality. Today the lumpenproletariat, yesterday the factory worker; between today and yesterday the working masses and tomorrow the political prisoner.

Once again, their myopia puts them out of the game. It cuts them off from reality. So it is not worth the trouble to be crueler, more unyielding and more a butcher of corpses and proclamations than others were in history. The endless night is full of these things.

The imprisoned comrades cannot constitute a privileged reference point. They cannot provide the most advanced indication of the struggle. They are in a sacrificial space, in a state of continuous physical and psychological torture. They are a symbol of the class confrontation. They are not the class confrontation itself.

We are not Christians. The testimony of some of us, even of the companions who are dead, does not lead us to thoughts that are different from symbolic ones. In spite of this, we are afflicted neither with an insensitivity to these companions, nor mental breakdowns of fondness for a symbol. These are all false problems.

We have our banner, but we do not take an oath on it. We have our dreams, our hopes, our desires and our loves, but we do not package all of them into a unilateral vision of life. Having said all this, we are not eclectics or possibilists for all that. Our harshness comes from reason and from the heart. Sometimes, the reasons of the heart prevail for us, and at other times those of reason; but this is no cause for us to feel guilty or believe that we have betrayed ourselves and our principles.

Our feelings for our imprisoned companions cannot make us close our eyes to the reality that they are indeed companions in prison, companions living in conditions of privation and isolation.

If we want to liberate them, we must start from something different, from the real movement. If we start from them and their specificity we will be going about nailing them—one way or another—to their prison situation, however just the success of our initiative would be (even the success of a possible liberation).

It will be the real movement, which is outside, that will produce their liberation; the effort of struggle that we, as a specific movement, will be able to develop by connecting the thousands (or hundreds, or even a few tens) of threads that tie the specific movement and the real movement together.

Otherwise, there will be a thousand years of loneliness for everyone.

There Cannot Be Any Crisis Of Imagination For Someone Who Never Had An Imagination

Only now has a horrible suspicion come to them: that the culture whose bearers they were and the practice they had begun to realize were incompatible. On one hand the dream of something, and on the other, something without the dream. The leap should have been made with the imagination; the leap toward the heaven of the impossible, of the extraordinarily other, something that was always closed to them anyway.

Nevertheless they now see that, on the contrary, the compatibility actually existed and that it was simply heinous. Everyone chooses his means, and these fit them like a glove; they belong to their inventive ability for finding comfortable arrangements and directions, prospects and orientations toward ever changing ends. The stifling of one's means is one of the most horrible ways to die.

For the travelling salesman of death, only end-of-the-year (or end-of-“campaign”) vacations are allowed. As a general rule, he has to operate the guillotine. The noise of the falling blade ends up marking the moments of his day. After a while, one can do no less.

The project is completed. The beginning meets the end. A new beginning and a new end appear, always identical and repetitive. The culture that it promoted is in turn promoted to the level of a promotional act.

Where can we find the corpse of the imagination? Not even the dream of something imaginative existed here.

The Stereotype Of The Armed Party

The party acts as a conveyor belt leading from the organized minority toward the disorganized proletariat. In the scatalogical view of events, the small destructive acts of today mimic the apocalypse.

The party anticipates, classifies, executes, transforms and repeats. The last phase of this repetition always occurs in the same way.

The party is the most organic one-dimensional project one can find. Nothing escapes its organizational chart; anything can be included, depending on the circumstances. This extreme “proficiency” makes it appear as a mini-State in formation, a current tumour of the great and widespread disease that is State politics.

Class War And Leninist Centralism

The orientation given to class disturbances (in the classified imagination) imposes the appearance of a military war on the struggle. As a result, the infinitely complex events of the social struggle are reduced and simplified and find themselves completely hidden by feats of arms.

Peripheral spontaneity, necessary at the outset in an army that is recruited haphazardly and does not receive material regularly from any source of supply at all, and the very fact of having to “make arrangements” to procure arms, becomes a negative limit that must be overcome as soon as possible. The progression is necessarily rapid. Whoever stops is lost. The enemy equips for counter-guerrilla operations. The guerrilla must equip himself, turning himself into a soldier.

The orientation of interventions, political decisions, intermittent campaigns, objectives, possible consequences and so many other things are filtered and provided to various levels by the centralized structure. Preliminary discussions, debates, proposals and analyses are selected to reach the summit in a simplified form, ready to be turned into a new proposal for action, whose development always starts from the center. After all, it is a democratic army.

The reduction of class war to a mere military confrontation carries within it the logical conclusion that, if we undergo a military defeat on this terrain, the class war ceases to exist as such.

From this we come to the not just theoretical but practical absurdity that in Italy today, after the defeat of the combatant organizations, there is no longer an actual class war, and that it is in everyone's interest (and in the State's interest first of all), to negotiate a surrender in order to avoid the development, or the continued development, of a process of struggle that is absolutely nonexistent and completely useless as well as dangerous for all of us.

The Marginality Of The Armed Parties Relative To The Class War

It is easy to see that armed structures, especially those that take the form of a party, are always marginal relative to the class war. Not that they are foreign to it; they are simply marginal.

The course of the class struggle has its effects on them; it pushes them to withdraw into themselves or open themselves, according to situations of greater or lesser social tension. But this all has very narrow limits. A representative relationship is never established, with the exception of very small marginal minorities or groups with a very high degree of political sensitivity.

It is clear that these phenomena are very important, and it is also clear that the State does everything it can to recuperate them into a "terrorist" logic that will present them as exceptional phenomena and their actions as carried out by madmen, deranged criminals or secret service agents.

In this case, the road to take is the one that extends downward toward the people's consciousness, by producing actions and clarifications that affect and include people without immobilizing them in a spectacular fixity.

Well, by nature, the party occurs in the form of a filter which repels people by isolating them in a rigid and amorphous social status: worker, housewife, employee, middle management executive, student, etc. It is like a sieve, which absorbs some of these people, but only after an initiatory acceptance of an ideological type. Politics is an instrument of selection. Thus, the road to quantitative growth is only feasible via the party's organizational chart. Action and clarification are handed over to pedagogical mechanisms that are mistakenly thought to be automatic. Afterward, the State carefully destroys even the little reflexes of machinery like this (when it exists).

What They Can Reject

Is people's conditioned reflexes. Induced sympathy. Everything that is let through by the tight net of State censorship. The support people give to someone who fought the good fight, even if it was fought with methods that not everyone agrees with.

Not much, in order to have an influence in and on the revolutionary process as it progresses. The real movement-which never loses anything-might assert itself there, but this "very little"

must be contributed, inserted in a critical way and consolidated behind the immense black curtain that power was able to put in front of peoples' critical vision. Starting with the word "terrorism".

What is happening, on the other hand: they think they are at the center of an experience that is very different from anything that was written in the newspapers or declared in the courthouses. They are repeating the official truth as though it is a given. They are declaring that the war is over.

Thus, even the last remaining bit of something positive and revolutionary is eradicated.

What They Can Look Forward To In The Future

Absolutely nothing. The irreversible process of the real movement will firmly expel them as collaborationists. No dialectical invention can give credibility to the decision they made today or to their neo-contractualism, which appears in a thousand ways behind the complicated analyses of these wordsmiths.

They can return to their used outline. In times we hope will be better, they will still be able to act out the old and meagre mistake of the temple guardians, the calculators of proletarian remembrance.

It was done in the past; surely it will be done in the future. There are always so many worthy citizens who want nothing more than to believe in something.

But all of this has very little to do with the revolution.

An Instrument In The Hands Of The Real Movement

Basically, we all act and live on the basis of convictions-true or mistaken ones-but most of the time, we are not in a position to anticipate the real consequences of our actions and our lives. In this sense, even the preachers of partyist psalms came in for their share. A baggage of experience and struggle accumulated, available to be used or spread. There is no way to guard it in the vaults of history. We must take it now, quickly, to its farthest consequences. Otherwise, even conscious instruments of the revolution will end up rusting.

Incidentally, this proves the uselessness of decisions like the ones that have been made so confidently today: collaboration is always the act of a part, or rather, of the party. The reality of struggles does not collaborate. It can use men and methods as its instruments, yet reject them and set them apart afterwards in places of solitude and ruthless thinking. But all this will not deflect the course of the social struggle by one millimetre.

Other things set the outcome in action; other levels of consciousness, other participations and other objective modifications. And in the verification of these "other things", even the first of them, the insignificance of already-rusted instruments will cease, despite themselves.

Very Few Companions

Only a few will be present at the crossroads of decision-making. Not due to their refusal to collaborate, but due to their critique of the mistakes and limitations of past actions. Construction is a relational act; it does not tolerate addition and subtraction. Balance sheets are for accountants.

Someone who deluded himself about the possibility of suppressing capitalist exploitation-on the spot-through a military decision must now yield to the fact that a mythology of this kind can only come true if it takes shape in a genuine and suitable spreading of the struggle. The prairie burns completely if the wind is blowing from the right direction, and the wind is not always at our command. Now, someone who does not understand this might very well refuse to collaborate but he will remain cut off from tomorrow's struggles; a caryatid held in place, a self-praise of immutability both in good and in evil.

Beyond The Party

Beyond the party there is the libertarian armed struggle; anarchic, popular and insurrectional. In the time of retreat, when they are already preparing to hand over arms and baggage to those they recognize as the victors, they resolutely assert the impossibility of this kind of struggle.

It is true that those who lived through the experience of the armed struggle from inside an armed party are not aware of this possibility. But it is also true that the initial reasons that blocked a timely operational research in this direction were of an ideological nature, and not undoubtedly strategic or tactical ones. It was the spirit of old-fashioned Bolshevism that imposed the plan of *Iskra* and the Winter Palace. Not the proven certainty of the impossibility of a different method of libertarian guerrilla struggle.

Now, at the moment of collaboration and the plate of lentils, it is senseless to expect critical second thoughts. With them, it may even be a question of a remnant of goodwill to want to portray the solution of defeat as the only possibility. How do we start again? On what basis? That of an unknown program and method? More often loathed or ridiculed? Heading to meet what perspectives? With what credibility? Admitting the defeat, not of a military project (it would just be a common tautology), but of a political project? It would be better to bring oneself to collaborate in order to save what can be saved and start again from the beginning tomorrow, perhaps even repeating the same course of action.

The Anarchist Project

We have spoken many times of the way anarchists consider armed struggle. We did this in unsuspecting times, when everyone marched ahead into the messy space of big spectacular actions that were systematically ground up by the news media for consumption by the populace.

A rejection of vertical structures, unstructured cooperation between fields of activity, control within the limits of security, the self-sufficiency of groups, the choice of minimum objectives, the accessible meaning of these objectives, continuity of intervention, progressive radicalization in social fields, self-information, propaganda activity, critical clarification, the circulation of ideas within the movement, the preparation of propaganda situations, intermediate struggles, the connection between this phase and the following insurrectional phase, the attempts and results of individual actions tied together by a logical thread devoid of incomprehensible leaps, the equality of all levels of struggle, the many-sidedness of the strictly military dimension, the bipolar aspects of organized structures, the ability to destructure easily at any time, the critique of professionalism, the critique of superficiality, the critique of "efficiency-for-its-own-sake", the critique of technological economism and the critique of arms.

The Insurrectional Opening

Participating together with people, with the exploited in general, in intermediate struggles: for housing, against war, against the missiles, against nuclear power stations, for jobs, for the defence of wages, for the right to health, against repression, against prison, etc.

And then using our organizational strength to gradually urge these struggles still further ahead, toward a possible insurrectional opening.

In Practice, The Development Of The Real Movement Is A Process Of Violent Transformation Of Class Struggle

It is not certain that the real movement can grow indefinitely through intermediate struggles. If the contrary were true would mean that anarcho-syndicalism would be the best solution, given that it provides for both a transposition of the structures of struggle into tomorrow's society, and its own transformation into a constituent structure of the new social order.

The important thing is that intermediate struggles must reach a violent outcome, a breaking point, an essential line beyond which recuperation would no longer be possible, except in minimal and therefore insignificant proportions. But to achieve this result, the process of violent transformation must be as widespread as possible. Not in the sense that it must inevitably start from a broad mass movement, one that is violent and denies immediate and tangible results, but in the sense that it must contain, even when it has a minimal size at the beginning, the idea and intention of developing as mass violence. Otherwise, the role of the specific movement becomes purely symbolic, withdrawn into itself, only capable of satisfying (up to a certain point) the components of the minority (or if you prefer, of the racket).

The Ethical Value Of Violence

Discourses on violence are only meaningful from this point of view. Certainly not from that of someone who talks about the value of life as an absolute. As far as I am concerned, the lives of the exploiters and their servants are not worth a cent. And making distinctions-as some have already done-between the death of a Moro and that of a Ramelli seems, in my view, to be the specious prelude to an anaemic discussion.

It is never possible to balance liberatory violence with the conditions of struggle. The process of liberation is excessive by nature. In the direction of overabundance or in that of deficiency. Where have we ever seen a popular insurrection hit the bullseye, clearly distinguishing the enemies to kill? It is a blow of the tiger's claws that rips and does not distinguish.

Of course, an organized minority is not the insurgent people. So it distinguishes. It has to distinguish. But even in the necessary prudence that it imposes on itself, it finds both its own limits and the direction of a possible opening. In this sense it is revolutionary; it is an experience *in vitro*, and can therefore turn itself into a laughable tempest in a teacup.

We should not make a distinction according to the action's decipherability, but according to its reproducibility. The two things, if you like, are not separate, but they are different. The action's decipherability is different from what the minority can accomplish by itself, since it remains tied to the big news media, and therefore to the distortions of power. Reproducibility is something

intrinsic to the action itself. To distort it, power must hush it up, because even in the most risky commentaries the action itself-naked and raw-cannot be questioned.

This difficult problem can be solved as follows. An attack against the class enemy is always justified. The life of someone who oppresses others and prevents them from living is not worth a cent. This attack can be carried out in a generalized manner, then, with a massive intervention from people, so it cannot be measured in relation to the struggle's real conditions: the result is always disharmonious, excessive or reductive. This is the maximal dimension of revolutionary violence, which is simultaneously creative and destructive. On the other hand, in a minoritarian dimension, we always try to measure the blow and adapt it to the real limitations of the struggle. We all think we have a precise idea of the level of class conflict, and therefore we suggest solutions and set limits. But in practice, it is decipherability that guides us. We are pedagogues in search of disciples. It is precisely reproducibility that should be the criterion for measuring minority violence, so that it develops from a minoritarian phenomenon into the generalized one it should be.

The rest is just priestly chatter.

The Simplifying Project Of The Party

Among other things, there is an illusion that the party can simplify the model used to construct action. Decipherability is therefore entrusted to the propaganda organs, which secrete horrible junk known as proclamations, programs or communiques. Language can be standardized like actions. Everything is repeated. Everything becomes familiar to everyone (except to people). The broad mass of people acquire this familiarity through power's interpretations. The result is pre-fabricated models of action. The others help and are satisfied with the thrills of risk on credit. The model becomes a success, like a thriller or a horror film. But it doesn't occur to anyone to cut a man to pieces in his own bathtub to see how it is done. People prefer to see it done at the movies.

It is not a question of a fear of involvement. Many people take far greater risks with a car or a syringe in their hand. It is a question of distance. Of a romantic deformation of reality. Of well-constructed glorifications surrounding liberatory practices that have nothing exceptional about them. Preclusions, often originating in religion, that people may never completely overcome.

The party claims to clarify all of this from the outside, to construct a pre-packaged model of reproducibility. It does not realize that in doing this it does the same work as the State. Offering false desires. The two poles meet via their distance from the real scope of liberatory violence. Power and the counterpower march parallel to each other and reinforce each other.

What Communication Are They Talking About?

The inflammatory effect of the example should have spread by a marvel of distribution. But the action remained indecipherable. There wasn't much initiative in this direction. The rest had to be done by the big news media.

But what can they really communicate, these transmitters of the developing power's ideology? Exactly what power wants them to? But isn't the party a mini-power in the making itself? And this reasoning actually worked, at least at the start. Power itself gave an exaggerated (hence de-

formed) image of the real attack on the enemy. But that was in keeping with its goal of digging an ever-deeper ditch, of transforming the minute reality that was developing then into a general and illusory theatre of death, with its spectators in their paid-for places and the convenient atmosphere of silence and insecurity; in short, all the elements of bourgeois drama. When from that point forward the distance became huge, the closing became total: then came the interruption. In unbridled fantasy, the mysterious action continued inordinately. A cross between the Bonnot gang and Jack the Ripper.

And the timid attempts at generalization? The mass illegality that stammered here and there? The small applications of sabotage? The thousand fires, the hundreds of anonymous “kneecappers”, the broken windows, the really proletarian lootings? All of that swept aside. Trifles for ladies from the charities. Toys for deviant children. Little, peripheral scenes. At the center (but what center?) the great climactic scene was repeated, with the State and counter-State co-producing.

Notwithstanding, despite all of its limitations, the seeds of both the most absurd degeneration and the seeds of dissemination throughout the country were present in this great production. It would have been necessary to shut up the ever more burdensome militarism, the terrifying discourse from before, and the no less terrifying illusions of dazzling actions.

But to do that, a real critique would have been necessary; not just a critique in words alone. A test in the field, not on the tables of the anatomical institutes. A death is a death, no matter how you look at it. One must get there first, build along parallel lines, show people; not restrict oneself to pointing out cracks and fissures that no one wants to accept in practice.

The Anarchist Relationship Between The Active Minority And The Real Movement

Neither a point of reference nor a safe to hold a memory that the movement manages to do very well itself. Neither planners of strategies and methods nor a recycling station. Nonetheless, an indispensable precondition of the revolutionary project. In the magical intervention of a thousand conditions, waiting becomes unbearable and often useless.

We must push and create the minimal conditions, so the event can be confirmed, so the magic of an action can become general and spread like a wave in water. But with our minds and eyes well open. With a project. With the indispensable means.

But the project and the means must also not become the most important thing, the only thing that we are struggling for. Its essentialness can never turn into exclusive rights. We must even know how to let everything fail. Not at first, while we are waiting for the event to be confirmed, but afterwards, if the indispensable, necessary (certainly minimum) conditions do not appear. Not to self-reproduce because we have to continue living. We are different from all that. We are going much farther; that is why we can always start over again.

They are exclusively this. A theorem that grows on itself. A monstrous and complicated imbroglio of tautologies.

The Ideology Of The Separate Surrender

And the others? From the closest to the farthest. From the sub-proletariat that inspired so much shrillness, close, in the same cage, but a thousand miles away because of its own real motives for contestation. To the proletariat in general, the mythical one, but also the real one, the one that wakes up early in the morning, that produces, the one that is massacred with the regularity of a chronometer, the one that received fewer serenades but so many more theories, which were equally useless in any case. There is nothing we can do about it. The surrender is separate.

It doesn't make much difference that we are all supposed to carry the struggle forward together. Now that the vanguards have been captured by the enemy. At least we can say that most of the proletarian army spared itself a similar fate. It shuts its mouth and continues to let itself be exploited. Well, to the devil with it. And along with it send the others who claim to be building their racket, those who say they are ready for political discussion but prove inconsistent later, and who do not take orders or digest theory. Short-term alliances, but not really worth much. And now, let's go it alone: let's come to terms with the State and leave the others in prison (or in the factory) if that's what they want. A thousand years of solitude, but only for them. After all, they are ingrates.

Hell is paved with this kind of reasoning. They're all ready and willing to sacrifice themselves, but they all expect to be paid. From Saint Paul on, the precondition is clearly stated: wages and slavery. Hidden in this so-called reasoning is the secret idea that the proletariat (above or below) should serve as a manoeuvrable mass, an assault force led and enlightened by the combatant party in arms. You could die laughing.

However, when they experienced this in the past, it was as something serious instead, something sadly disarming.

For them, the level of confrontation is determined by the amount of firepower they have succeeded in mobilizing. They do not understand that though the proletariat left them alone when they attacked Moro and his escort (and how could they ever intervene?), they were the ones who left the proletariat alone in its thousand small everyday actions. In its constant struggle. In its suffering. In the collapse of its dreams and hopes. In the tragicomedy that it is forced to watch tirelessly repeated by various trade unionists, party functionaries, bosses and bosses' servants, etc.

If we come to the conclusion that the difficulty of joining the proletariat in this infinite series of armed confrontations (and why must the arms always be the kind manufactured by industries like Breda?), we are forced to conclude that the armed party must necessarily have been alone in its attacks on one or a hundred exploiters. Not only in the physical sense, because that is of secondary importance, but in the political sense, in the revolutionary sense, in the sense of a project of changing the world.

“Putting Aside” As Betrayal

Let's stop for a moment and think. Each of us with yesterday's ideas, but in today's conditions. To solve the problem, we must put class struggle aside and put forward the hypothesis that a moment of idyllic suspension is possible. Ourselves inside, the others somewhere else in a place that is no place at all.

New words for behaviour as old as the world: betrayal. Someone is not a traitor because he wants critical thinking, an examination of mistakes and a correct repositioning of future actions. He is a traitor when he withdraws into a prison much colder and more terrifying than the worst Benthamite prisons. He is a traitor when he puts barriers between us and someone who lived through the same experiences as us, who ate the same bread and made the same mistakes. When he withdraws from the objective that he set for himself, leaving it fixed and unchanging, and looks for a basin to wash his hands in.

One night the traitor gave a kiss on the cheek. Today's traitor has read Lakatos and plays on the ambiguity of words for his remission.

He knows that Husserl spoke of a "suspension of judgement" as a methodological step toward a knowledge of reality. But this cold realism is not even that of the East, which had a peasant and rustic heaviness, but that of the West, which is refined, having gone through Louvain. Come off it: in treason, the German professor and the Russian peasant resemble each other a great deal, when both of them have careers in the Party. Each one uses the means that suit him best; the result is the same.

There are those who cross over: they talk quickly and negotiate directly at the source. There are others who are slower and take longer, involving all kinds of complicated concepts before finally reaching an agreement through intermediaries. It is the same filth.

All The Rats Return To The Political Boat Sooner Or Later

A step backward is always a political pact. A step forward may even be mistaken, but it opens onto the social. At times marginally or even on a smaller scale; but what matters is the orientation, the direction of the journey. The rats can throw themselves into the sea to drown, but with a little luck, they find the ship's gangplank. Their instinct saves them.

Negotiation is a political moment: it is a war in a glass of water.

Like a cease-fire. Like a frontal attack and a weakening of class struggle. That too is politics. The art of making arrangements while others do something that we should have done ourselves.

This is why rats are not moles.

Reducing the demand to its realistic minimum, they present themselves as the bearers of an alternative: getting four thousand companions out of prison. The importance of the result strains to conceal the underhandedness of the procedure. The struggle can only be political. A platform of demands, nothing unacceptable; a limited process of liberation which they present as the only possible solution to the most complex problem of the liberatory process. Basically, this is the usual game of hyper-realist politicians.

Reforms can be achieved immediately; the revolution cannot be. Utopia disturbs the masters' dreams and the reformist dialogue of conciliation. Their current anguish consists of the existence of four thousand political prisoners in Italy, who are more or less in contact with a mass of thirty-five thousand so-called "common-law" prisoners. Maybe if the former were put outside, satisfactory schools for social re-education could be organized: a kind of part-time post-prison environment. Utopia for utopia; one good thing deserves another. There are no limits to the fantasy of "little by little".

Back when these rats screamed like eagles, talk like this would have been settled with guns. But those were different times. Now that the candle has burned out, the candelabra has also been lost.

The Uncritical Abandonment Of Militarism

Not even a signal. Cease-fire and that's all! We have to go home, because the war is over.

But who and what was defeated? Certainly not the real movement, which continues its underground progress. Certainly not a method that can suffer neither defeat nor victory. A state of mind, yes; that was defeated.

And not just on the terrain of armed struggle.

But critiques of this mentality are superficial and isolated.

Against a monolithic militarism, they have very little to say.

The Old Caryatids And The Old Arguments

Here is why there is always a risk that the old arguments will reappear. Preferably with new clothes.

Today we see several travesties of the old reformist behaviour, a kind of appeal to all those who want to give the movement a new chance to breathe. Tomorrow we will see a reappearance of the old Leninist centralism. There are no limits to indiscretion.

The Theory Of Escape And The Theory Of Resistance

In regard to revolutionary critique, surrender and ultra-implacability are the same thing.

This statement should not come as a surprise. We are here to examine painful problems, not gloss over areas of agreement. What we need is not a romanticism of form or fidelity to our strategic choices. We need to move forward. That is why we don't want to run.

Not because we think that everything has been done as it should have been, and that everything is fine in this best of all possible worlds.

Running means hiding in the territory of the rearguard, where the revolution is not just denied in words but fought in real terms. The alternative to civil disobedience, reformism, pacifism and demonstrations that are an end in themselves is nothing but surrender, dissociation, alienation and a refusal to continue the struggle. Appealing to the laws, to Parliament and the intermediaries of political traffic, whose meaning has been understood long since, means turning one's coat: betrayal.

But stopping at the old choices, reaffirming the indisputable validity of the method of the armed party and the ongoing belief in minoritarian militarism is also a kind of running away; it is precisely a running away from one's critical responsibilities. Perhaps this way is more inviting; it makes for less mouthing off and invites sincere expressions of solidarity, but one doesn't construct revolutionary conditions with moods.

Changing In Order To Advance

Therefore we need a critique. What we need are methods of involvement where we can use our experience of past struggles to good advantage. In this way, it is possible to understand the armed struggle of the future. As a project in itself, arising from a specific organization, armed struggle doesn't even retain the minimal driving possibility that the experience of its beginnings in the conditions of advanced capitalism might lead us to expect.

We must go forward. The specific organization is good. It is not an instrument that can be replaced, because it is the direct expression of the specific movement: it is what an objectivization of revolutionary consciousness succeeds in giving that can be immediately put to use. But it must be directed exclusively toward involvement. Always exactly one step ahead relative to the masses' degree of combativeness, on specific terrain where this fighting spirit appears, even in the slightest degree, and by limiting our activity to this capacity of the masses. Not advancing in all directions and thereby assuming a significance and roles that are not relevant to the specific organization.

In this sense there is still much to be done. In fact, we must struggle on two fronts. On one hand, against the militaristic mentality that cannot imagine a specific organization that well-defined and limited. On the other, against a reformist mentality that mistrusts even this small step forward, which the specific organization must accomplish, interpreting it in terms of dishonesty and vanguardism.

In an attempt to clarify these problems, we have spoken of insurrection.

In The Amnesty Proposal, There Is A Refusal To Advance

There can be no solution to the problem within the capitalist structure. Prisons must disappear in a total and decisive way. We cannot discuss partial liberation.

Indeed, we can impose intolerable conditions on the State, in such a way that it produces-by itself- a partial solution to the problem. This is not a result of a post-revolutionary negotiation, but of a moment of conflict. Surrender must come from the State. We don't delude ourselves about the possibility of a total surrender; at most, it is or will be a way of concluding a pact. That, yes. That is possible. And imposing this pact must be an act of the real movement: class struggle is not decided by the minority who attach themselves to the reformist fringe, always ready to exploit every available opportunity to continue their conquest of power.

We have no obligation to, nor should we, demand an amnesty for the four thousand political prisoners. We must demand (or impose?) the abolition of prison for all, a definitive end to the concept of "prisoner". It is in the process of a struggle to impose this method of "everything right now" that the State may decide to make a pact and conclude some legal antique that could be called an amnesty, social work or anything else. It will be up to us-on the basis of an evaluation of the struggle's conditions-to accept it or not. This is why the pure and simple proposal of an amnesty hides a desire not to advance.

The enormous moral pressure of the four thousand bodies, who are practically dying in solitude, cannot make us close our eyes to the obvious. By choosing to make a pact and negotiate with the State, we will never succeed in really getting them out of there. We would release four thousand simulacra of women and men, who would fall into a dimension in which they would

just find the bars of another prison: the prison of their uselessness, their discouragement, their feeling of being constantly “somewhere else”, in the space where they left their identity as revolutionaries.

The disgusting thesis that was proposed, that of negotiating the liberation of our companions before continuing the struggle, must be reversed by the much more logical and meaningful affirmation of starting the struggle again in order to be able to force the liberation of the companions. This resumption must not be an unhealthy repetition of monolithic models of the armed party, but a critical development in another direction.

The Illusion Of Reducing The State To Its Minimal Repressive Coefficient

“Backing up in order to jump better” is an old French proverb that is not adaptable to class struggle. Whoever withdraws is finished. The State doesn’t permit stumbling. Repression does not diminish when revolutionary action slows; it simply transforms itself. It becomes more considerate and penetrating. It insinuates itself in the social democratic manner and forces a search for consensus with the cop’s club. It re-establishes the formalities of the legal State. After all, those who make the laws always manipulate them according their own wishes.

By hesitating over the proper course to take, we make things easy for the repression. We concede an un hoped-for breathing space to it. No oppressive method can last for a long time. No special law can be institutionalized indefinitely. Sooner or later, the consensus makes itself felt. Then they must return to normality. The State is aware of this necessity in advance. And it speaks to the most reasonable among us. It tries to persuade. It promises nothing, but it does not dissuade either. It gives us glimpses. Meanwhile it changes the direction of the repression. It insinuates itself with helpfulness at the welfare office, with promises of work and reformist projects.

It is impossible to reduce the State to its minimal repressive coefficient. We can dismantle the attack and thus allow the repressive organism to give itself a social democratic facade; we can take as many steps backward as power gives itself brushstrokes to whitewash and re-establish its credibility.

They want to obtain a sphere of action within the State, to create a larger ghetto within it to compensate for the small ghetto they have now. In this sense, they claim to represent not so much a project-which would be quite incredible, given their irrelevance in the overall scheme of things-as an illusion, a mirage that has nothing to do with the situation of the real movement. Of course, the claim is carefully presented, but it also hides the pretence of being a step forward, although it puts on the appearance of a working hypothesis. The substance does not change: a heritage is being auctioned off. We intend to keep preventing this clearance sale. Not because we think that this heritage is absolutely indispensable for the development of the real movement, but because in the first place, its sale will not produce any “liberation”, and then because we must examine this heritage itself in a critical light; by selling it wholesale, all future critiques would make no sense and just be a resume of a will, of a ridiculous fetish.

Communities Of The Future Will Be Communities Of Struggle, So They Cannot Result From Political Negotiations

Someone who never left his political shell now claims to be starting on a long voyage. He is abandoning an old mentality and acquiring a new one. They want to change everything because everything has remained the same as before. If war was the continuation of politics by other means (but what means?), now politics must be the continuation of war by other means. How many people fell into this imbroglio? Really, there is no end to human naiveté. Everyone thinks he is shrewder than the others, and this is why we systematically run off in all directions.

They were always political men. They declared that they wanted to take the war to the “heart” of the State; now they want to negotiate peace and surrender. All this could hardly be more normal.

But the thousands of companions who took part in the struggle, those thousands through whom the struggle existed with all its mistakes and limitations, that enormous pulse of hope, dreams, joy, unsatisfied desires, the monster with a thousand heads and arms that could really shake the obscene universe of the bosses; all that was encapsulated in a project, with several variants however, but a unique and tragically mistaken project.

Now a large part of that marvellous pulse is in chains. If we want to build the project of tomorrow together, we must create the possibility of a specific movement that is capable of encountering the real movement, in places and moods in which the latter’s pulse becomes perceptible to the former.

In your opinion, could something like this ever result from a negotiation with the State?

A New Guarantee As An Imbroglio

They are asking the State for a space where they can deploy what they have left. The repressive and reproductive mechanism must concede a pause that is equal and inverse to that of someone who-by a generous concession finds himself knocked on his ass, and- is inclined to grant it to the State.

The specific movement must be reborn in this space, with the essential contribution of the companions who have been newly released from jail.

The State, then, must develop a new kind of assistance; supplying a new kind of hallucination to the movement that has been released from the prisons: the possibility of building an imaginary movement. Someone who grew used to the most incredible mystifications of the armed party, of the soon-to-be dictatorship of the proletariat, of the memory that must be ensured, etc. might consider this latest fairy tale from Wonderland acceptable. We hope that Alice has become clear-sighted.

Let’s try to follow a plausible line of reasoning. The State is a regulator of contradictions. It resolves the fundamental aspect of capital, competition; but doesn’t resolve it completely. It resolves a whole other series of contradictions: cultural, physical, logical and mystical ones, but does not suppress them. Now it must also resolve the existing contradiction between the specific movement of prisoners and the minds of the latter, who are trying-rightly-to escape between the trenches and the barbed wire. But the “social State” demands its price from capital and the

individuals who are dragged into illusory solutions (from work to the registry to the self-managed spaces to the T.V.); the same thing is supposed to happen to the specific movement.

Do you remember the old and miserable project of little self-managed activities of the hand-craft type; jewelry, leather, Oriental decorations and trashy mysticism? Well, something like that. Why couldn't the State, which finds and extracts a useful product (in terms of production of social peace) from the specific movement's decisive surrender, take responsibility for financing initiatives of this type? After all, why not give a good lifestyle (almost) to a penitent: remake his face and give him a new identity, give him a pension; it costs billions, why couldn't we find an M.P. (or a hundred) who is inclined to table a bill along these lines?

It could be said that deep in the minds of many super-heavies hides the sad, calculating sensibility of a grocer.

The State is not being asked for money, but a guarantee. To set the boundaries of a space in which they can breathe new life into the movement, one based on another project.

Doesn't this space, on closer inspection, resemble a prison in all important aspects? Wouldn't there only be ghosts there, without a name or identity, ghosts who would move in the confusion, trying to survive in the universe of jewelry, leather bags and samovars made in Gallarate?

Decidedly not. They have a much more expansive idea of this ghetto.

It is not a question of a new kind of commercial mentality, but of a political self-management of spaces where power permits the quantitative growth of the specific movement or a liaison with the real movement. A subtle and ingenious structural ramification, which resembles a well-tied pork roast.

Of course, all of this would revive party morale. Nothing dangerous, naturally, otherwise the backer would lose its temper. A little game, simple and loyal, a new type of oxymoron; in other words, a verticalization of the horizontal.

But by negotiating and obtaining this space of poverty and survival, what would happen to the others? To those who don't agree? And to others who are even further away, but still in the same boat with the proles? And also to the regular prisoners?

The Class-Collaborationist Soul Of Ultra-Revolutionism

For them the centrality of something is indispensable. Yesterday the working class. Today themselves. Not as a class, obviously, but as privileged go-betweens for the State, to silence everything that might remain of the revolutionary contradiction through an external agreement, suspended in the void of class collaboration. In reality, even when they were ultra-militants they had a class-collaborationist perspective. The centre was the guide, the element of coagulation. We could go on infinitely with hypotheses describing the progressive transition to the all-inclusiveness of the class, describing unlimited quantitative growth. To the point where it would encounter a small nucleus of anti-social rebels defined-*a priori*-as counter-revolutionaries. Sure, violence was a discriminatory element, but accidental, a pedagogical instrument, a means of communication. Understood in this way, things could reach their logical outcome all by themselves. A touch of the brush and it's all done. The blow to the heart of the State.

They always saw class struggle as a half-completed project; something to resolve between the autumn and spring campaigns. In that lay their class collaborationism. In an inability to understand the innumerable and subtle contradictions of the real class perspective, of the social

war. The thousand little streams that make up the class front. The impossibility of separating the good ones from the bad ones.

It was the inheritance of the Third International, of the impulse toward simplification. The same process has now returned to keep the faith in this political method intact. The nuances are only picked up in the abstract, in the world of negotiation with power and the reformism of the self-managed community; not derived from the struggle but from compromise. In this sense, they are all extremely penetrative, discovering links and recommending relationships that no one else could discover. In the true sense of revolutionary theory, they are crude and superficial. They always repeat the same thing: defeat and capitulation, running away and the inevitability of having to declare ourselves defeated.

They are Fabians of the old school, yet modern in their language. Neo-socialists of the social contract, they don't even have the appearance of angels that have fallen from heaven. They never made an attempt in that direction. Their flight was always inept and without a horizon. A true skipping after lost opportunities.

The Unfeasible Path Of Innocence

At least we agree on one point: it is impossible for us to declare our innocence. It is impossible technically speaking, and also from a revolutionary perspective.

If we exclude the limited cases where a precise act is disputed because it is possible to demonstrate its falseness beyond all doubt, in most cases, declaring one's innocence leads to a separation from the other companions and the poverty of declaring oneself to be elsewhere.

And it means joining the shabbiness that anyone who has used this attempt at reification has fallen into: not so much a refusal of his responsibility, but rather a refusal of his revolutionary development and his own ideas. Arms lifted to the sky as a sign of emancipatory joy, or instead as a sign of unconditional surrender?

Sadness accumulates in the face of this poverty, when we see the fastidiousness with which someone who made total innocence a passport to leave the walls of the prison lowers himself to prove the unprovable. What wordy and self-justifying manoeuvrings he clings to.

And even then, at the very bottom of such a position's poverty, we cannot say that the result is guaranteed. The course of an individual denial of whatever significance would not convince even the most superficial of inquisitors.

And then we are all responsible for our dream of storming the heavens. We cannot turn ourselves into dwarves now, after having dreamed, elbow to elbow, each feeling the others' heartbeats, of attacking and overthrowing the gods. This is the dream that makes power afraid. To deny it means to deny the community of gentle feelings that bound us together when we decided to begin the ascent, even if we were so far apart, even if we were so ignorant of ourselves, even if-ultimately-we did so with strong critical biases. To deny it is quite simply despicable.

On the other hand, to take advantage of innocence is a recognition of the State; negotiation, just like someone who is seeking an amnesty for political prisoners. The innocent self makes the other one feel guilty; the idea that we were different once, and not that this or that act did not happen the way we intended, but as an oddity and a renunciation.

No one can be neutral; we are guilty of the planning and preparation of that climate which filled us with enthusiasm and led us along. Even the most critical of us could not claim perfect

innocence. In the eyes of the State, it is precisely this climate that is guilty. We must assume responsibility for this. Our struggles against repression, prison and exploitation were not just dreams. Power knows this. Its servants are perfectly acquainted with us. This is the great denunciation that brings us all together.

In addition, this means a recognition of the mechanism of repression: the court first of all. It is true that the old process of making demands has been put aside and, incidentally, that it belonged to the militaristic conception of armed struggle. But from there to admitting the legitimacy of the justice that administers the courts is a big step.

The Legal Struggle

The State has never had legal credibility. The norms of its legitimacy are seized by force. In this sense the reality of the courts is a ridiculous farce which should not interest us. The balance of power-if we are able-can be reconstituted elsewhere. In the real movement. Otherwise, any trial is a losing one from start to finish.

There are obviously special legal cases whose falseness can be proven in a precise way. These should be exploited to the full, forcing power to respect its own rules by denouncing the irregular procedures in them; often this tactic works, at other times it doesn't work. In any case, it is worth a try.

Afterwards, it is for propaganda in general to directly demonstrate the incredible contradiction that is visible between what is dictated by law and its inquisitorial and repressive application. Also, it is beneficial. The progressive bourgeois feels his rage rise whenever he sees things like this. Noise and agitation in matters like this never do any harm.

But we must not delude ourselves. We are perfectly aware that the rule of law and the anger of radical do-gooders are equally relative. Justice is always run by the strongest.

The So-Called Penitents

The State has made a deal with a handful of poor clowns with submachineguns who, by accident, found themselves in a fire team.

Troubles caused by indiscriminate recruitment? The fault of the quantitative myth? A distortion of their military logic? What does it matter whether we are specific or not? At the right time we will settle accounts with these people.

For the moment we must understand that while making its agreement with the penitents the State used every available legal principle to negotiate life imprisonment for our companions. This is something completely normal. For anyone who was unaware of it, all States have a special organization made up of spies (the secret service), and at times every good cop is a good spy. The fact that the number of these fine people has increased recently comes as no surprise.

The surprise is that of people who delude themselves about the existence of a "legal" State, the ideal counterpart to the merchandise they want to sell. This is exactly the case with those who gab the most against the the State's actions in releasing penitents from prison who have admitted to dozens of homicides, yet keep companions in prison who have not confessed to anything. But why are they surprised? Because of the simple fact that it is less embarrassing than to consider making an agreement with people who don't even respect their own rules. What would happen

if, after the neo-contractualist attempts and the more-or-less legalized promises, the pacts were not respected?

The funniest thing about any contract is its bilateral aspect. There must be two parties before we can speak of a contractual agreement. But also, neither of them must be a professional cheat.

They will retort that nevertheless, the State has respected its deal with the penitents. Yes, but it has not respected its own laws, according to which a cat is a cat and can never become a rabbit. But laws change by themselves. So do contracts.

The State will respect its agreements with the new entrepreneurs of social self-ghettoization, but only if these agreements correspond to an effective lowering of the level of struggle. The new infrastructure that is appearing must produce social peace. Think about the way people take up a project like this: people who used to march in the front rank of demonstrations, and who formerly linked together the most advanced actions (from their point of view). Think about what certain personalities are saying and doing today, who formerly theorized the liberatory violence of the proletariat. They are seated on the most obscene of all stages, mummies beside other mummies, talking over their shoulders about peace the way others talk about war. They are useful to the State.

But are they to the revolution? Certainly not.

Attention, comrades. Repentance can take several forms. Some are noticeably repulsive, others are somewhat more tolerable; they are served with a sauce of helpful reformism, full of words stripped of meaning, and can only wear a fig leaf to cover their shame.

At least the real penitents, those who sold dozens of companions wholesale, know what awaits them: today a false freedom, a passport just as false and a false identity; tomorrow a bullet in the head.

The neo-contractualists don't know what awaits them, either from their relations with the State or from their relations with their companions.

Dissociating From Whom And From What?

It makes sense to give up when a project is in the process of being accomplished. We can be more or less in agreement with the project.

We could see something different in the changing situation or a change in the initial situation that drove us to take action. And in this context we pause and prepare our critique. We investigate the reasons for our disagreement. We measure it with our companions in the reality of revolutionary perspectives and we make choices.

But when it is the State that invites us to retreat and offers us a good price for our surrender, then it is a different matter. We are not being asked for a critique, we are being asked for a renunciation. There is nothing here to back away from; also because at the operational level, there are no consequences for the project of the armed party. There could be future developments in a different direction, leading to the construction of a libertarian model of armed confrontation. And it is because of this possibility that they are inviting us to desist.

Here is the dangerousness and the gravity of the request. Many companions think that an uncritical defence of a model of intransigence, based on positions that reality has shown to be anachronistic, is foolishness. And their thinking is correct and reasonable. But it does not reflect

the fact that surrender is being asked for relative to possible future opportunities, not to the extent that a way of theorizing class struggle is currently blocked.

We cannot demand an autonomous behaviour in surrender. The only possibility is criticism. It doesn't matter whether it receives adulation or indifference from the State organs, and it also doesn't matter whether it is linked to an intransigence which, although it no longer has a revolutionary basis, at least contained a moral clarity.

A non-existent project doesn't allow dissociation or surrender. We must develop another project, one that is critical of the first and is a proposal in its own right. But this development cannot start with a reification, with the State as its guest; it must start from an analysis of the current level of class struggle. Revolutionary solidarity is no more than the result of a great moral initiative, but it cannot constitute a qualitative basis for the future development of the specific movement. Even less so for dissociation.

It is not a question of distance. It is a question of the road. We are heading toward class struggle. In the other direction, there are people who are withdrawing from it. Whoever wants to continue the struggle must grow. And above all, critically. He must, then, identify inflexibility as a perverse mechanism for reproducing something non-existent. He must also identify neo-contractualism as an equally perverse mechanism of stagnation and resignation. These two roads do not lead to liberation. They lead only to Rome.

Claiming Our Struggles As Anarchists

In these times of liquidation and stagnation, we reaffirm that our struggle is a struggle for total liberation, now and right now. This why we supported even this overstated project, which declared, *a priori*, that it did not see liberation the same way we did. Because a wrong turn was possible; a change with a negative sense for them and a positive one for us. The change did not happen, but we were not the birds of ill omen. It was others who cast the facile *a priori* anathemas, facile critiques in front of brass guns. We did not make a mistake. The mistake did not lie in inadequate means but in the impossibility of the method.

And we carried the critique inside the organizational project. We did not stop at words, like the amateur scribblers who knocked out analyses like Fiat knocks out cars. From inside, other people's mistakes even shone a pitiless light on our own, and we too had our stagnant moments: vanity, flag-waving and defence of principles. But they weren't much, compared with the intrusive stubbornness on one hand, and on the other the pathetic acquiescence that turned into simple and superficial critiques.

Now it is time to take another road. Someone who asked for a pause for himself, without also having the courage to voice it as an attitude to be shared with others, well, he should stay where he is, in his slippers and warming himself by the fire. We insist on the necessity of going outside, in the fog and the cold. Outside, where it is no longer possible to be certain about what should be done and what direction we should take.

...The Use Of Organized Violence Against Exploiters Of All Kinds

In times like these when birds fly close to the ground, there are only a few who still consider revolution a possibility. It is always easy to find some enlightened soul who “talks” about revolution, yet there are few who try to achieve something concrete in the right way.

As long as we do nothing but talk, we can all be more or less in agreement. But later, when it is time to go into action, even in a minimal, peripheral, microscopic way, then the disagreements start.

We always have to wait for something else to happen. For a signal to come from somewhere, announcing that the time is right. And we anxiously open the bellies of birds, but their entrails never tell us anything.

We insistently reaffirm that the use of organized violence against exploiters, even if it takes the form of minoritarian and limited action, is an indispensable instrument in the anarchist struggle against exploitation.

... Our Idea Of Proletarian Justice

In this sense, even where a critical or sceptical attitude prevails, and after the bitter realization (bitter for whom?) that there is no “justice” in the clutches of the State, and where people think about this, they come to the conclusion that there is no proletarian justice, nor should there be.

Here too, we disagree. We think it is right to remember exploiters and their servants. To remember this when the time comes, when it will be possible to discuss the destruction of bourgeois justice and the construction of proletarian justice. Not in order to recreate the courtrooms in a different form, installing new judges, new prisons and new ministers with portfolio, but simply to settle accounts with those responsible. And by settling accounts we mean simply putting a bullet between their eyes.

If some innocent soul finds this program excessive, he should try to remove his feet from the water now and then-he might catch a chill.

We say these things today, in times that are-relatively- relaxed, not in order to appear on the list of extremists who dare to say the most advanced thing, but because we remain firmly convinced of the need for a procedure of this kind.

When the revolution awakened in Russia in 1917, anarchists organized the systematic execution of all the station-masters on the St. Petersburg-Moscow line, since they were responsible for the denunciations of 1905 which sent thousands of anarchist railway workers to prison. These companions were not trying to apply any pedagogical theory, nor were they trying to teach anything to the other station masters, or to people in general; they were even less interested in donning the filthy judge’s robes of some tedious tribunal of proletarian justice: they just had the modest and limited goal of shooting all the station masters responsible for the denunciations on the spot. No more, no less.

This is what we mean by proletarian justice.

...The Right To Remember Traitors

This too. Let no one come along afterwards with some complicated story, with the justification that this or that behaviour was dictated by necessity. One never knows, because even among us there is always some theoretician of ethics who raises doubts about the right to throw out traitors. And the discussion always starts with the customary chatter about the death penalty.

People often ask themselves now whether the State has the right to condemn an individual to death who, according to it, has committed some crime. And we fight the death penalty. A very just struggle, which intends to limit the repressive action of States. But that does not mean that a State that has abolished the death penalty is a "legal State". No such State exists. It is a legal fantasy and no more. There are States that mobilize a different equilibrium, like the so-called democratic one, for example, whose equilibrium can or must be maintained through the use of the death penalty. Sometimes this space (of the death penalty) is one that we tend to reduce ourselves, through our struggles for reforms and civil liberties, and this is a good thing, because this is how we push back their dictatorial and repressive whims. But that doesn't move by one centimetre the fact that the State bases its laws on force, not on right.

At the right time, during the revolution, and even at the first signs of it, we will not attempt to substitute our force for that of the State or build organizations of counterpower, which would impose their own kind of law to settle accounts with traitors. We just want to carry out this process of proletarian justice without having to develop a theory of revolutionary law to justify it. We will not need it. The actions committed by these people will speak for themselves, not any laws made a priori that we might use to mass manufacture similar acts. We will not make this kind of law (we will make no laws at all and that's all there is to it!); these laws have been in people's hearts for thousands of years, and there we read that traitors must be eliminated.

The Stifling Attitude Of Certainty Was Not One Of Our Mistakes

We didn't make them "in good faith". We don't know what good faith is. We made them in the full knowledge of making them, but considering that it is right in certain circumstances to prefer a mistake to an abstract truth that is based only on an a priori critique.

All anarchists know about the mistake of the party and the Leninist conception from long experience. But, faced with the concrete emergence of this kind of experience, our critique was never pursued in the abstraction of principles. We preferred to conduct it through the carrying out of actions, even in the difficulty of the specific organization, entering fully into the contradictions involved in taking action. And on this wind-swept ground we met companions with great hearts and courage, capable of facing the struggle with serenity, even when the result was worse than uncertain and the means at our disposal worse than dangerous. And this was because we had confidence in our companions and in the possibility that a wrong turn could be transformed without further delay into a critique-in-action, capable of calling plans and doctrines into question and burning mummies and programs. That did not happen. Might things have happened differently if we too had donned the severe robe of political censor? If we had developed a critique of the ideology of efficiency and doctrinaire thought?

Our Theses On Creativity, On Subversion, On Joy

While we were searching for the right path, however, we developed various critiques and projects for a long, long time. We saw how there was no joy, after all, in what they were doing, or in other activities which, through self-examination in light of the situation, ended up strongly influenced by the direction forced on them by the struggle. And finding no joy there, we managed to miss the very foundation of the struggle; the creativity of our intervention, the subversive content of the project whose bearers we were.

Even at the macroscopic level, this element should have been present in our revolutionary work, otherwise we would have been forced to accept what we did only because we were the ones who did it. It could not have worked. And it did not work.

In this sense, and through our experience of past limitations, we are ready to start again from the beginning.

There Is No Separate Solution

The more we think about the conditions of past struggles, the more we see to what degree the present situation is the product of past mistakes, and only offers a possible opening on the condition that a working critique is included; the more we also realize that there is no separate solution to the problem of the imprisoned companions.

By accepting a commodification like the one proposed by the neo-contractualists (an amnesty, an equal number of years of imprisonment for all, a period of social work outside prison, etc.), we would have to pay for it by putting our whole past at risk. This would mean a denial of the revolution, a denial of anarchy, a denial of our own identities as women and men and a denial of our future.

The only solution, then, is a continuation of the struggle. In a critical way, of course, with different objectives and methods more appropriate to the present situation, but a continuation of the struggle.

The Prison In All Interventions: A Qualitative Moment Of The Struggle

The dismantling of sector-based intervention must be complemented by an ability to propose new forms of struggle, otherwise it becomes a tedious methodological formula. If we limit ourselves to “informing” people about the viciousness of power, we will miss the forest for the trees, and be immediately forced to arrange the worst crimes in order of importance, in order to appear more specific and thus more incisive. If we talk to people about nuclear power, we can certainly bring the problem of the imprisoned companions into the discussion, but we don’t do it all the time: we predict death and destruction, atomic pollution, the end of life on earth, war and apocalyptic conflict. People are more impressed, and we let ourselves be fascinated by the fact that we have managed to impress people.

The destiny of counter-information is this: to always end up divided into sectors. Today this, tomorrow that. We end up as specialists in anti-militarism, in problems of the world of labour, in prison problems, in feminism, in movements involved in rent struggles, etc.

So, we must have two levels of clarity:

- a. A totally comprehensive counter-information is impossible.
- b. We cannot “jam together” different problems (without people ceasing to understand us).

Yet there is another way of seeing things. By focusing on a problem (on neighbourhoods, for example) and connecting it to problems that are the most closely related to it. Then we will realize that without necessarily intending to develop a well-argued discussion, we will succeed in including even the problem of the imprisoned companions. Even so, this can only be on the condition that we don't confine ourselves to mere counter-information. If we limit ourselves to this first stage of revolutionary intervention, the prison problem will happen to be introduced from the outside into the reality we are trying to intervene in.

Let's frame the discussion differently, with a different project. We move from the simple phase of counter-information to a second phase, which can be defined as commitment. We propose an organizational structure that will take care of a specific problem (let's return to the example of the neighbourhoods), and which permits the inclusion of the problem of prison and the imprisoned companions.

Let's establish a relationship between this organizational structure (outside the specific movement) and the specific movement itself. From the response that this relationship gives us in practical terms, we will have a sufficiently clear image of the state of the real movement. On the basis of this image, we can construct our interventions as a specific movement outside of and even independent of the organizational structure of commitment) and in this phase then, we can be far more comprehensive in solving the problem of the imprisoned companions.

The elimination of special laws, of different conditions of imprisonment, of special prisons and Article 90. The reduction of preventive detention. The abolition of life imprisonment, long sentences, special trials and special treatment. Obviously, these measures must apply to all, not just to our companions.

This perspective of struggle should try to involve people, and should also have its own autonomy of action. Our ability to measure the results depends on the way people are involved, the way they achieve a harmonious autonomy of action, and what we succeed in doing outside the specific movement. Only on the basis of these results can we impose a solution to the problem of the imprisoned companions.

We should not forget that our road goes on much farther than the road of those who are preparing to collaborate today. Power's road, on the other hand, still turns around us.

In the final analysis, we are all in the gunshots of the repression. We must develop our struggle. If we are unable to they will destroy us all, in prison and outside prison.

With a rise in the level of confrontation and a broadening of the objectives, the repression will strike again. No one is trying to guarantee a danger-free way of getting out of prison here. All of us, when we were sent to jail, were sent there because we were convinced of the validity of our revolutionary action, not because of some trick of fate. Of course, objectively speaking, there is always something like this: the initiative of a spy, something that went wrong, a repressive interpretation of an act which was in itself completely legitimate. But the true reason for our imprisonment has always been the fact that we are anarchists, that we believe in the revolution. For an anarchist jail is a constant part of his activity.

Our problem today, one of central importance, is that of getting our companions out. We can only solve this problem by intensifying the struggles in various sectors of intervention, linking these struggles to a real perspective of insurrectional development and not limiting ourselves to platonic dissent or beautiful declarations of freedom for all, which only serve to silence our consciences in order to express, later, a facile disagreement with someone who, on the contrary, wants to do something concrete.

Only in this way will we force the State to solve what will become the (its) problem of the (our) companions in jail. As long as this remains our problem, we will be unable to solve it except by selling out our whole future and consigning it to the repression.

We don't think there can be any doubt about which road to take.

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Alfredo M. Bonanno
And We Will Still Be Ready To Storm The Heavens Another Time: Against Amnesty
1984

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