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Des Réfractaires  
How Nice To Be Civilized!

Retrieved on August 26, 2009 from [www.spunk.org](http://www.spunk.org)  
Originally published in "Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed"  
#37 – Summer '93. This text was collectively written, and sent  
from Paris by Gérard. Des Réfractaires is a new group which  
doesn't have a post office box at present. Translated by  
Michael William.

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## How Nice To Be Civilized!

Des Réfractaires

Assassinations, massacres, rape, torture: these crimes committed on the soil of what was once Yugoslavia are not the acts of uncontrollable savages; of educationless brutes.

No doubt as children they respected the family order; are now more or less faithful followers of religions; earnest sports spectators; content with television. In a word, civilized folks; normal people doing what society expects them to!

Each crime demonstrates the success of diverse processes of domestication which have come to be grouped under the heading of Civilization.

The killers, rapists and perpetrators of massacres have exceptionally well internalized today's world's fundamental logic: to survive, other people must be destroyed! This mutual mangling takes different forms, such as economic competition or war. But the result is always the same: some must be trampled in order to give others the impression that they are living more and better. Being civilized signifies not taking your own life and those of others into consideration. It means letting your life be used, exploited and dominated by the always-superior interests of the collectivity where fate decreed that you would be born and live your life. And all for the financial etc. gain of

the authorities of the collectivity in question. In exchange for this submission one is granted the possibility of being accepted as a human being.

Being civilized, as well, signifies sacrificing your life, and those of others, when those in power attempt to solve their management problems with wars.

Aside from a variety of benefits they offer, wars represent a very efficient means of directing feelings of frustration against people who, designated as prey, can then be oppressed, humiliated and killed without qualms. Those who suffer, as with those who take pleasure in making others suffer, become nothing more than instruments of the conditions of social existence, conditions where lives are only important in relation to the use that can be made of them.

Following the collapse and decomposition of the Eastern Bloc, various local and international gangsters have slots to fill, markets to conquer and energies to channel through the formation of new States.

To help slice up the pie, local political gangs have deftly played the religious and nationalist cards. And if these cards work effectively, unfortunately, it is because, for a portion of the population, this collapse and decomposition have not been perceived as openings towards increased freedom. On the contrary, people have experienced an immense emptiness, one that has been alleviated with nationalist and religious alienations which are often decked out in a tawdry grab-bag of local history and culture. Instead of attempting to understand and attack the real causes of our material and psychological misery, too often people are thrown into a state of disarray. In response to this disarray identities are presented as lost values to be recaptured, whereas these values are simply the ideological cement which is the prerequisite to founding and developing State entities propped up by alliances between local and world powers.

Nor, in a climate of generalized terror, is there any hesitation to accomplish this by displacing populations and practising ethnic cleansing in order to redistribute land. In this sense, don't the peace plan concocted in Geneva and hypothetical military intervention rubberstamp the UN's recognition of the dismemberment of the territory of former Yugoslavia? And if this is to be the price of pacification, everyone just closes their eyes to the cortege of horrors which is integral to every war.

The humanitarian organizations, cynically baptized non-governmental, present the dismal paradox of inciting pity and indignation while at the same time impeding the possibility of spontaneous participation from which true human solidarity could be born.

Today humanitarianism is a true lobby in a financial, human and media sense. But beyond generating money humanitarianism carries out an educational task, channeling emotions and arousing feelings of indignation on a specific and regular basis — paving the way to military intervention in humanitarian wars which the State undertakes to supposedly respond to pressure from a public indignant about the very real massacres that they are powerlessly witnessing. This type of media treatment's only goal is to convince people that alone, by themselves, nothing can be done; the State is in a position to come to the rescue and will watch out for their political and strategic interests.

Everything is peachy because everyone consoles themselves with the thought that peace and democracy are a privilege — the proof being that elsewhere, over there, all is war and barbarism.

Denouncing the horrors, collecting accounts from the local population, exhorting the government to intervene, the media have the starring role in this affair. Real recruiting sergeants! As to be expected, the media have carefully edited out any information about those in ex-Yugoslavia who oppose the war, carefully concealing information about the 1992 massacres in

Zagreb and Sarajevo which put the finishing touches on repressing the movements against the war. These horrors are necessary in order to lay the basis for the right to intervene, to invent humanitarian wars and to create tribunals to judge the vanquished. The “New World Order” which is coming into being is cutting its teeth on small nation-State wars; it provides the arms, then comes to the rescue, basing its activities in each case on a flood of horrifying images!

Thus exalting ethnic, national and religious identities goes hand in hand with gang warfare to constitute a new hierarchy of Godfathers.

In response to the growth of ghettos — those artificial separations and false communities which allow the world of money and domination to thrive on human life — we, as people who are refractory to the world around us, would like to affirm our community of struggle and aspirations with those who are refusing the war in ex-Yugoslavia, those who see themselves above all as “human beings who want to live” and not cannon fodder.

We are refractory to all that is the glory of civilization. We want to live human relations that would no longer be based on appropriation, competition and hierarchy, and would thus be relations in which individuals would no longer be obliged to treat themselves a priori as adversaries and enemies.