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LIVING-AND-WRESTLING

VIVRE-ET-LUTTER



*Thus does rigid power always crumble,
While the supple and the humble
Gently endure.*

—Lao Tze, *Tao Te Ching*

The first offensive campaign against Empire failed. The RAF's attack against the "imperialist system," that of the Red Brigades against the SIM (Imperialist State of the Multinationals) and many other guerilla actions were easily repelled. The failure was not that of this or that combatant organization or of this or that "revolutionary subject," but the failure of *a conception of war*, a conception of war that could not be revived beyond these organizations because it was already a revival itself. With the exception of some texts of the RAF or of the June 2nd Movement, there are still today very few documents issued from the "armed struggle" that were not written in this awkward, ossified, armored language, which falls, in one way or another, into Third International kitsch. It's as if they are trying to dissuade anyone from joining them.

Now after twenty years of counter-revolution the second act of anti-Imperialist struggle is upon us. Meanwhile, the collapse of the socialist bloc and the social-democratic conversion of the last debris of the workers' movement have definitively freed our party of everything which might maintain socialist inclinations. In fact, the expiration of the old conceptions of struggle was first manifested by the very disappearance of the same. Then, at the present, with the "anti-globalization movement," by the parody of a higher order of old militant practices.

The return to war demands a new conception of these.

We have to invent a form of war such that the defeat of Empire will no longer be a task which kills us, but which lets us know how to live, to be more and more ALIVE.



There is not a war machine, but a movement, equally shackled, equally elusive, in motion following its inclining, heightening power. It is this movement that assures that the relations of force that cross it never fix themselves into relations of power. Our potentially victorious war, that is to say it carries on, increases our power, on the condition of always making attack dependent upon our positivity. *Never attack above one's positivity*, this is the vital principle of every war machine. Each space conquered from within Empire, in the hostile milieu, should correspond to our capacity to re-use it, to shape it, to inhabit it. Nothing is worse than a victory in which one doesn't know what to do. For the most part, our war will thus be voiceless, deaf, irreducible, unidentifiable; it dodges, flees from direct conflict, declaring little. Thereby it imposes its own temporality. So soon as we are identified we sound the dispersal, never letting the repression ensnare us, already reforming in some unsuspected place. What concern is it to us, whether the aggressor of the moment is this or that locality, so long as -and this is the only valuable lesson of the Zapatista farce- every attack is against Empire? Significantly: never lose the initiative, don't let hostile temporality be imposed. And above all: don't forget that the strength of our attack is not linked to our level of arms but to the virtue of the positivity that we construct.



What we are talking about here is simply the constitution of *war machines*. By war machine, it is necessary to understand a certain coincidence of living and struggling, coincidence which does not present itself without simultaneously demanding to be built. Because each time one of these terms finds itself in some way separated from the other, the war machine degenerates, goes off track. If it is the moment of living that is unilateralized, it becomes *ghetto*. It is in here that we bear witness to the sinister quagmire of “the alternative,” in which the purpose seems without ambiguity to be the commodification of the Self under the envelope of difference. The majority of occupied social centers in Germany, Italy or Spain, demonstrate how simulated exteriority to Empire can be a precious resource in capitalist valorization. “The Ghetto, the justifying of “difference,” the privilege given to all introspective and moral aspects, the tendency to constitute oneself as a separate society renouncing assault on the capitalist machine, on the “social factory,” is all of this perhaps a result of the vague and gushing rhapsodic “theories” of Valcarengi [the director of the counter-cultural publication *Re Nudo*] and his consorts? Isn’t it strange that they accuse us of being a “sub-culture” precisely now when all of the flowery shit and non-violence that accompanies it is in crisis?” the autonomists of *Senza Tregua* already wrote in 1976. On the other hand, if it is the moment of struggling that is isolated, the war machine degenerates into *army*. All of the militant formations, all of the terrible communities are war machines that have survived their own extinction in this petrified form. The introduction to a collection of texts of Autonomia which appeared in 1977, under the title *The Right to Hatred*, has already proclaimed this excess of the war machine regarding all its acts of war: “In thus chronicling this hybrid subject, and with many contradictory aspects which materialized in the area of Autonomy, I find myself practicing a process of reduction of the movement into a sum of events while the reality of its becoming-war machine affirms only by transformation that the subject develops in a concentric manner around each moment of effective confrontation.”



Fundamentally, our point of departure is not that different from that of the RAF when it states: “The system has captured the totality of the free time of the human being. To the physical exploitation in the factory has been added the exploitation of thoughts and feelings, of aspirations and utopias by the media and mass consumption. [...] The system has succeeded, in the metropolis, in plunging the masses so deeply in their own shit that they have apparently lost the perception of themselves as the exploited and oppressed; so for them, a car, life insurance, or a lease makes them accept all the crimes of the system, and excluding the car, vacation, or the bathroom, they can neither be represented nor hope.” The characteristic feature of Empire is that it has understood its front of colonization as the totality of existence and the existent. It’s not simply that Capital has enlarged its human base, it’s that it has also deepened its well of resources. Better, on the basis of the final disintegration of society as well as its subjects, Empire presently intends to recreate an ethical tissue all on its own; it’s from here the hipsters, with their neighborhoods, their press, their codes, their food, and their modular ideas are at once the guinea pigs and the avant-garde. And this is why, from the East Village to Oberkampf by way of the Prenzlauer Berg, the *hipster* phenomenon has immediately had a global scope.

It is upon this *total* terrain, the ethical terrain of forms-of-life, that the war against Empire is currently being played out. This war is a war of annihilation. Empire, contrary to the belief of the RB for whom the game of the kidnapping of Moro was explicitly the recognition of the State as the armed party, is not the enemy. Empire is only the *hostile milieu* that opposes our schemes step-by-step. We are engaged in a struggle in which what is at issue is the recomposition of an ethical tissue. This is embedded in the progressive gentrification of previously secessionist places, in the uninterrupted extension of chains of dispositifs. Here, the abstract, classical conception of war, which culminates in the total confrontation, where it ultimately returns to its essence, is obsolete. War can't be allowed to be put away as an isolated moment from our existence, as the decisive confrontation; *from now on, it is our existence itself, in all of its aspects, that is war.* That is to say that the first movement of this war is *reappropriation*. Reappropriation of means to live-and-struggle. Reappropriation, then, of spaces: squat, occupation or collectivizing private spaces. Reappropriation of what's in common: constitution of languages, syntaxes, means of communication, of an autonomous culture –snatching the transmission of experience from the hands of the State. Reappropriation of violence: communizing fighting techniques, forming self-defense forces, arms. Lastly, reappropriation of basic survival: diffusion of medical knowledge-ability, progressive organization of a network of autonomous resupply.



Empire is well-armed for fighting against two types of secession that it recognizes: secession “from above” of the *older ghettos* – the secession for example of global finance in relation to the “real economy” or of the imperial hyper-bourgeoisie from the rest of the biopolitical tissue—and the secession “from below” of the “no-go zones” – that of the cities, ghettos, and slums. It is enough, each time one or the other threatens its meta-stable equilibrium, to play them against one another: the civilized modernity of the trendy/hip against the reactionary barbarism of the poor or the demands of social cohesion and equality against the incorrigible selfishness of the rich. The advisors of Empire have already theorized this, on the part of Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin in *The United States between Local and Global*: “It’s a matter of giving a political coherence to a social and spatial entity in order to avoid all risk of secession by territories inhabited either by those excluded from the socio-economic networks or the winners of the global economic dynamic. [...] Avoiding every form of secession entails finding the means for reconciling the demands of this new social class and those of the economically excluded in which spatial concentration is that which induces deviant behaviors” Might as well, for the exodus, the secession that we are preparing, which in its exact measure is not simply physical but *total*, Empire is helpless in preventing. The sharing of a technique, the turn of an expression, a certain configuring of space suffice to activate our plan of consistency. All of our strength lies here: in a secession which cannot be recorded on Empire’s maps because it is neither secession from above nor from below, but secession *from the middle*.