Anonymous
Call

Translated for US-English by Lawrence Jarach (in communication with the authors)

theanarchistlibrary.org

Call

Anonymous

might be called traditional medicine — all new age confusion aside. The attachment to research needs to cease being confused with the judicial defense of the integrity of the laboratory. Non-productivist agricultural practices need to develop beyond organic labels. Those who endure the insufferable contradictions of public education, between the defense of good citizenship and the workshop of the diffuse entrepreneuriat, need to become more and more numerous. Culture should no longer be able to boast about the contributions of a single inventor.

Alliances are possible everywhere.

In order to become effective, the perspective of breaking the capitalist circuits requires that secessions multiply, and that they consolidate.

We will be told: you are caught in an alternative which will condemn you in one way or another: either you manage to constitute a threat to Empire, in which case you will be quickly eliminated, or you will not manage to constitute such a threat, and you will have once again destroyed yourselves.

There remains only to gamble on the existence of another outcome, a thin ridge, just wide enough for us to walk on, just enough for *all those who can hear* to walk on it and live.

operation attached to the existence of the sciences: concealing the internal splits, and exerting, from that smoothed over image, an unequaled influence of terror. Terror towards the outside: the deprivation of the status of truth for any and all discussion that is not recognized as scientific. Terror towards the inside: the polite but fierce disqualification of potential heresies. "Esteemed colleague…"

Each science implements a series of hypotheses; these hypotheses are so many *decisions* regarding the construction of reality. Today this is widely admitted. What is denied is the *ethical significance* of each of these decisions, in what way they involve a certain life-form, a certain way of perceiving the world (for instance, experiencing the evolution of various beings as the unwinding of a genetic program, or joy as a question of serotonin).

Considered in this way, scientific language games seem made less for establishing communication between those who use them, than for excluding those who ignore them. The airtight equipment in which scientific activity is ensconced — laboratories, symposiums, etc. — carries in itself a divorce between experiments and the worlds they may describe. It is not enough to describe the way the so-called core research is always connected in some way to military-commercial interests, and how, reciprocally, these interests define the contents, the very parameters of research. To the extent that science participates in Imperial pacification it is firstly by carrying out only those experiments, testing only those hypotheses that are *compatible* with the maintenance of the prevailing order. Our capacity to ruin Imperial Order is conditioned upon opening spaces for antagonistic experiments. For these experiments to produce their related worlds, we need such *cleared spaces*, just as the plurality of these worlds is needed for the smothered antagonisms of scientific practice to be expressed.

It is important that the practitioners of the old mechanistic and Pasteurian medicine rejoin those who practice what

Contents

lenge Neo-Liberalism. This is the way the Party will be built; as a trail of *habitable places* left behind by each situation of exception that Empire encounters. We will not fail to notice, then, how the subjectivities and the revolutionary collectives become less flakey, as they show what they're really made of.

3. Empire is nowadays manifest through the constitution of two *monopolies*: on the one hand, the scientific monopoly of so-called objective descriptions of the world, and of techniques of experimentation on it, and on the other hand the religious monopoly of techniques of the self, of the methods by which subjectivities elaborate themselves — a monopoly to which psychoanalytic practice is directly related. On the one hand a relation to the world purified of any relation to the self — to the self as a fragment of the world; on the other hand a relation to the self purified of any relation to the world — to the world as it goes through me. So it happens that science and religion, in the very process of tearing each other apart, have created a space in which Empire is perfectly free to move about.

Of course, these monopolies are distributed in various ways according to the zones of Empire. In the so-called developed lands, where religious discourse has lost this ability, the sciences constitute a discourse of truth to which is attributed the power to formulate the very existence of the collectivity. It is therefore precisely here where we must begin to prompt secession.

Prompting secession from the sciences does not mean pouncing on them as if on a citadel to conquer or raze, but increasing the prominence of the fault lines than run through them, siding with those who emphasize these lines, who attempt to unmask them. In the same way that rifts constantly plague the false density of the social, every branch of the sciences forms a battlefield saturated with strategies. For a long time the scientific community has managed to give itself the image of a large united family, consensual for the most part, and anyway respecting the rules of courtesy. This was even the major political

ception effective, against the terror upon which Imerial power rests. This is particularly striking in social movements. Even the expression *social movement* seems to suggest that what really matters is what we are moving towards, rather than what's happening here and now. Up till now in all social movements, there has been a prejudice to avoid seizing the time, which explains why they are never able to get together; rather they seem to chase each other away. Hence the particular texture, so volatile, of their sociality, where any commitment appears revocable. Hence also their invariable dramatic arc: a quick ascent thanks to some popular resonance highlighted in the media; next, due to this hasty aggregation, a slow but inevitable erosion; and finally, the dried up movement, the last handful of diehards who get a card from this or that union, found this or that association, thereby hoping to find an organizational continuity to their commitment. But we are not looking for such continuity: having premises where we might meet, and a photocopier to print leaflets. The continuity we seek is the one which allows us, after having struggled for months, not to go back to work, not to start working again *as before*, to keep doing harm. And this can only be built during movements. It is a matter of putting into place an immediate, material sharing, the construction of a real revolutionary war machine, the construction of the Party.

We must, as we were saying, organize ourselves on the basis of our needs — to manage to answer in turn the collective questions of eating, sleeping, thinking, loving, creating forms, coordinating our forces — *and conceive all this as an opportunity in the war against Empire.*

It is only in this way, by inhabiting the disturbances of its very program, that we will be able to counter that economic liberalism which is only the strict consequence, the logical application, of the Existential Liberalism that is accepted and practiced everywhere. To which each one is attached as if it were the most basic right, including those who would like to chal-

Proposition I

> Nothing is missing from the triumph of civilization. Neither political terror nor emotional poverty. Nor universal sterility.
>
> The desert can no longer expand: it is everywhere. But it can still deepen.
>
> Faced with the obviousness of the catastrophe, there are those who become indignant and those who take note, those who denounce and those who get organized. We are on the side of those who get organized.

Scholium

This is a call. That is to say it aims at those who can hear it. The question is not to demonstrate, to argue, to *convince*. We will go directly to what is already obvious. This is not primarily a matter of logic or reasoning. What is obvious is what is perceptible, the realm of reality.

There is an clarity to every reality. What is held in common or what sets things apart. After which communication becomes possible again, communication which is no longer presupposed, but which is to be built.

And this network of obvious things that make us up, we have been taught so well to doubt it, to avoid it, to conceal it, to keep it to ourselves. We have been taught so well, that we lack the words when we want to shout.

As for the order we live under, everyone knows what it consists of: the empire is staring us in the face. That a dying social system has no other justification to its arbitrary nature than its absurd determination — its senile determination — simply to *linger on*; that the global and national police have received a free hand to get rid of those who do not toe the line; that civilization, wounded in its heart, no longer encounters anything but its own limits in the endless war it has begun; that this headlong flight, already almost a century old, produces nothing but a series of increasingly frequent disasters; that the mass of humans accommodate themselves to this order of things by means of lies, cynicism, brutalization, or pills — no one can claim to ignore these things any longer.

And the sport that consists in endlessly describing the present disaster, with a varying degree of complaisance, is just another way of saying: "that's the way it is"; the prize of infamy going to journalists, to all those who pretend every morning to rediscover the bullshit they only just noticed the day before.

But what is most striking, for the time being, is not the arrogance of empire, but rather the weakness of the counter-attack. Like a colossal paralysis. A mass paralysis, which will sometimes cause people to say that nothing can be done, but who will sometimes concede, when pushed to their limit, that "there is so much to do" — which isn't any different. Then, at the margins of this paralysis, there is the "we really have to do something, anything" of the activists.

Seattle, Prague, Genoa, the struggle against GMOs, the movement of the unemployed; we have played our part, we have *taken sides* in the struggles of recent years; and of course not that of extraparliamentary (for now) coalition of Leftists from Attac or the Negrist antiglobalization militants of *Tute Bianche*.

The folklore of protests has ceased to amuse us. In the last decade, we have seen the dull monologue of Marxism-Leninism being regurgitated from the mouths of high school students. We have seen the purest anarchism negate what

would become something other than a specter raised systematically since then by pacifists.

The retreat of this global Left into the Social Forums — a withdrawal due to the fact *that it was defeated in the streets* — is now what we must attack.

2. From year to year the pressure increases to make everything *function*. As social cybernetization progresses, the normal situation becomes more urgent. As a consequence, situations of crisis and malfunction multiply in a completely logical way. From the point of view of Empire, a power failure, a hurricane, or a social movement are all the same. They are disturbances. They must be *managed*. For now, meaning *on account of our weakness*, these situations of interruption appear as moments in which Empire pops up, takes its place in the materiality of worlds, experiments with new managerial procedures. It is precisely there that it attaches itself more firmly to the populations it claims to assist. Empire always devotes itself to being the agent of returning the situation to normal. Our task, conversely, is to *make the situation of exception livable*. We will genuinely succeed in blocking corporate society only on condition that such a blockage is filled with desires other than those for a return to normal.

What takes place during a strike or during a natural disaster is, in a way, quite similar: a interruption of the organized stability of our dependencies. The existence of need (the communist essence) — that which essentially binds us and essentially separates us — is laid bare during each of them. The blanket of shame that normally covers it is torn up. Receptiveness for encounters, for experimentation with other relations to the world, to others, to oneself, as it manifests in these moments, is enough to sweep away any doubt about the *possibility* of communism. About the need for communism as well. What is now required is our ability to self-organize, our ability (by immediately organizing ourselves on the basis of our needs) to prolong, extend, and ultimately render the situation of ex-

to study political economy. From Léon Blum to Lula, the Left has been nothing but that: the party of Humanity, of the Citizen, and of Civilization. Today this program coincides with a fully counter-revolutionary program. That of maintaining the ensemble of illusions that paralyze us. The vocation of the Left is therefore to expound the dream of what only Empire can afford. It represents the idealistic side of Imperial modernization, the necessary steam-valve to the unbearable pace of capitalism. It is even shamelessly written in the very publication of the French Ministry of Youth, Education, and Research: "From now on, everyone knows that without the concrete help of its citizens, the State will have neither the means nor the time to carry on the work that can prevent our society from exploding" (*Longing to Act: the Guide to Commitment*).

Defeating the Left, which means *keeping the channel of social disaffection continuously open*, is not only necessary but is also possible today. We witness, while the Imperial structures become increasingly stronger, the transition from the old workerist Left (gravedigger of the Labor movement though born in it), to a new global, *cultural* Left, of which it can be said that Negrism is the most advanced point. This new Left is still imperfectly established on the recently neutered Anti-Globalization Movement. The new lures they hold out are not yet effective, while the old ones are long gone.

Our task is to ruin the global Left wherever it becomes manifest, to sabotage all of its formative moments methodically, meaning in theory as well as in practice. Thus our success in Genoa lay less in the spectacular confrontations with the police, or in the damage inflicted on the organs of State and Capital, than in the fact that the spreading of the practice of confrontation peculiar to the Black Bloc *to all the parts of the demonstration* scuttled the expected triumph of the *Tute Bianche*. Even so, our failure was not to have known how to extend our position in such a way that this victory in the streets

it cannot comprehend. We have seen the most tedious economism — that of our *friends* at *Le Monde Diplomatique* — becoming the new popular religion. And Negrism asserts itself as the only alternative to the intellectual rout of the global left.

Everywhere militantism has gone back to raising its rickety constructions, its depressing networks, until it is exhausted.

It took no more than three years for the cops, unions, and other informal bureaucracies to dismantle the short-lived Anti-Globalization Movement. To control it. To divide it into separate "areas of struggle," each as profitable as it is sterile. In these times, from Davos to Porto Alegre, from the French bosses' union Medef to the Spanish CNT, capitalism and anti-capitalism point to the same missing horizon. The same truncated prospect of *managing the disaster*.

What opposes this dominant desolation is nothing but another desolation, just less well-stocked. Everywhere there is the same idiotic idea of happiness. The same games of spastic power. The same defused superficiality. The same emotional illiteracy. The same desert.

We say that this epoch is a desert, and that this desert is incessantly deepening. This is no poetic device; it is obvious. This obviousness holds many others. Notably the rupture with all who protest, all who denounce, and all who ramble on about the disaster.

She who denounces exempts herself.

Everything appears as if Leftists were accumulating reasons to revolt the same way a manager accumulates the means to dominate. That is to say *with the same delight*.

The desert is the progressive depopulation of the world. The habit we have adopted of living as if we were not of this world. The desert exists in the continuous, massive, and programmed proletarianization of populations, just as in California suburbs, where distress lies precisely in the fact that no one *seems* to experience it.

That the present desert is not perceived only verifies its existence.

Some have tried to name the desert. To point out what has to be fought — not as the action of some foreign agent, but as an ensemble of relations. They have talked about the Spectacle, about Biopower, about Empire. But this only adds to the current confusion.

The spectacle is not an easy abbreviation for mass media. It lives just as much in the cruelty with which our own *false image* is endlessly thrown back at us.

Biopower is not a synonym for social security, the welfare state, or the pharmaceutical industry; but it pleasantly lodges itself in the care that we take of our pretty bodies, in a certain physical estrangement from oneself as well as from others.

Empire is not some kind of extraterrestrial entity, a worldwide conspiracy of governments, financial networks, technocrats, and multinational corporations. Empire is everywhere *nothing is happening*. Everywhere things are working. Everywhere the status quo reigns.

We continue to see the enemy as a subject that faces us — instead of experiencing it as a relationship that binds us — we confine ourselves to the struggle against confinement. We reproduce the worst relationships of dominance under the pretext of an alternative. We set up shops for selling the struggle against the commodity. We see the rise of the authorities of the anti-authoritarian struggle, macho feminism, and racist attacks by anti-fascists.

At every moment we are taking part in a situation. Within a situation there are no subjects and objects, I and the other, my desires and reality — only an ensemble of relationships, an ensemble of the fluxes that traverse it.

There is a general context — capitalism, civilization, empire, as you wish — a general context that not only intends to control each situation but, even worse, seeks a way to make sure as often as possible, that there is *no situation*. They have planned

is to reconstitute society *in its own image* from the ground up. No matter what form, and however high the price.

We have seen with Argentina that the economic collapse of a whole country was not, from Capital's point of view, too high a price to pay.

In this context we are allied with all those who feel the *tactical* necessity of these three campaigns:

1. To prevent, by any and all means, the recomposition of the Left.

2. To advance, from natural disaster to social movement, the process of communization, the construction of the Party.

3. To bring secession right into the vital sectors of the Imperial machine.

1. Periodically the Left is routed. We enjoy it, but it is not enough. We want its rout to be definitive. Irremediable. May the specter of a reconcilable opposition never again arise to cloud the minds of those who *know* themselves to be incompatible with capitalist functions. What everybody admits today (but will we still remember it the day after tomorrow?) is that the Left is an integral part of the mechanisms of neutralization peculiar to liberal society. The more the social implosion proves real, the more the Left invokes Civil Society. The more the police exercise their arbitrary will with impunity, the more the Left declares itself to be pacifist. The more the State throws off its last judicial formalities, the more they become obedient citizens. The greater the urgency to appropriate the means of our existence, the more the Left exhorts us to wait and beg for the mediation, if not the protection, of our masters. It is the Left which enjoins us today, faced with governments which stand *openly* on the terrain of social war, to speak truth to power, to write up our grievances, to form demands,

extricate ourselves from the situation we've been put in, by discussing it in a dispassionate manner, with reasonable people.

But no, there is nothing apart from the situation. There is no outside to the Global Civil War. We are irremediably *there*.

All we can do is elaborate a strategy. Share an analysis of the situation and elaborate a strategy within it. This is the only possible revolutionary We: a practical We, open and diffuse, of whoever acts along the same lines.

As we write this, in August 2003, we can say that we face the greatest offensive of Capital of the last twenty years. Anti-terrorism and the abolition of the last gains of the defunct labor movement have created the prevailing mood of a population in lockstep. Never have the managers of society known so well from which obstacles they are emancipated and which means they hold. They know, for instance, that the planetary lower middle-class that currently (and from now on) lives in the metropole is too disarmed to offer the slightest resistance to its programmed annihilation. Just as they know that from now on the counter-revolution they lead is inscribed in millions of tons of concrete, in the architecture of so many *new towns*. In the longer term it seems that the plan of Capital is to separate out a network of high-security zones on a global scale, continuously linked up with each other, and where the process of capitalist valorization would encompass all the expressions of life in a perpetual and unhindered way. This Imperial comfort zone, comprised of deterritorialized citizens, would form a kind of policed continuum where a more or less constant level of control would prevail, politically as well as biometrically. As they advance the process of its pacification, the rest of the world could then flourish as a foil and, at the same time, as a gigantic Outside to civilize. The savage experiments of forced cohabitation between hostile enclaves as it has been taking place for decades in Israel would be the model of social management to come. We do not doubt that the real issue for Capital in all this

out streets and homes, language and emotions, even the global tempo that drives all of it, *only for that purpose*. Everywhere different realms are made to slide by each other and be ignored. The normal situation is this absence of a situation.

To get organized means: to get out of the situation and not merely challenge it. To take sides within it. Weaving the necessary material, emotional, and political solidarities. This is what any strike does in any office, in any factory. This is what any gang does. Any underground; any revolutionary or counter-revolutionary party. To get organized means: to give substance to the situation. Making it real, tangible.

Reality is not capitalist.

Our position within a situation determines our need to become allies, and for that reason to establish some lines of communication, some wider current or tendency. In turn those new links reconfigure the situation. We call the situation that we are backed into Global Civil War. Where there is no longer anything that can limit the confrontation between the opposing forces. Not even the law, which comes into play as one more form of the generalized confrontation.

The We that speaks here is not a definable, isolated We, the We of a group. It is the We of a *position*. This position is asserted currently as a double secession: first a secession from the process of capitalist valorization, then secession from all the sterility imposed by a mere *opposition* to empire (extra-parliamentary or otherwise); a *secession* therefore from the Left. Here secession means less a practical refusal to communicate than a disposition to forms of communication so intense that, when put into practice, they snatch from the enemy most of its power. To put it briefly, such a position borrows sudden force from the Black Panthers, collective dining halls from the German *Autonomen*, tree houses and the art of sabotage from the British neo-Luddites, the careful choice of words from radical feminists, mass self-reductions from the Italian autonomists, and armed joy from the June 2nd Movement.

For us there is no longer any friendship that is not political.

Proposition VII

> Communism is possible at every moment. To date what we call History is nothing but a set of roundabout means invented by humans to avert it. The fact that this History has for a good century now come down to nothing but a varied accumulation of disasters shows how the communist question can no longer be put off. In turn it is this deferment that we cannot postpone.

Scholium

"But what do you actually want? What are you proposing?" This kind of question may appear to be innocent. But unfortunately these are not questions. They are *operational issues*.

Referring to every We that expresses itself to an unfamiliar You means first warding off the threat that this We somehow names me, that this We *passes through me*. Thereby constituting the one who merely *writes down* particular terms — that cannot be attributed to anyone — as their owner. So, in the methodical organization of the currently dominant separation, terms are allowed to circulate only on condition that they can show proof of an owner, of an *author*. Without which they risk being in the *public domain*, and only that which is expressed by Them is permitted anonymous diffusion.

And then there is this mystification: that caught in the course of a world that displeases us, there would be proposals to make, alternatives to find. That we could, in other words,

choice between the offensive and the constructive; obviously there exists, in every situation, what increases our power and what harms it, what is opportune and what is not. And when the evidence is lacking, there is discussion, and in the worst case, there is gambling.

In a general way, we do not see how anything else but a force, a reality able to *survive* the total dislocation of capitalism could truly attack it, up to the very moment of its dislocation.

When that moment comes, it will be a matter of actually turning the generalized social collapse to our advantage, to transform a collapse (like the Argentine or the Soviet) into a revolutionary situation. Those who pretend to separate material autonomy from the sabotage of the Imperial machine show that they want neither.

It is not an objection against communism that the greatest experiment of sharing in the recent past was the phenomenon of the Spanish anarchist movement between 1868 and 1939.

Proposition II

> The unlimited escalation of control is a hopeless response to the predictable breakdowns of the system. Nothing that is expressed in the known distribution of political identities is able to lead beyond the disaster.
>
> Therefore, we begin by withdrawing from them. We contest nothing, we demand nothing. We constitute ourselves as a force, as a material force, as an autonomous material force within the Global Civil War.
>
> This call sets out its foundations.

Scholium

In France a new weapon of crowd dispersal, a kind of wooden fragmentation grenade is being tested. In Oregon it is proposed that demonstrators blocking traffic receive twenty-five year sentences. The Israeli army is becoming the most prominent consultant in urban pacification; experts from all over the world rush to marvel at the latest discoveries, both formidable and subtle, in methods to eliminate subversives. It would appear that the art of wounding — injuring one to frighten a hundred — has reached new heights. And then, of course, there's what gets called Terrorism. That is, "any offence committed intentionally by an individual or a group against one or more countries, their institutions or their populations, and aiming at threatening and/or seriously undermining or de-

stroying the political, economic, or social structures of a country." That's the definition of the European Commission. In the United States there are more prisoners than farmers.

As it is reorganized and progressively recaptured, public space is blanketed with cameras. It is not only that surveillance is now possible, it is that is has become particularly acceptable. All sorts of lists of suspects circulate from department to department, and we can barely make out their probable uses. Protected by the police, gangs of paramilitaries replace the positions once held by gossips and snitches, figures of another era. A former head of the CIA, one of those people who, *on the opposing side*, get organized rather than get indignant, writes in *Le Monde*: "More than a war against terrorism, what is at stake is the extension of democracy to the parts of the [Arab and Muslim] world that threaten liberal civilization, the construction and the defense of which we have worked for throughout the 20th century, during the First, and then the Second World War, followed by the Cold War — or the Third World War."

Nothing shocks us about this; nothing catches us unawares or radically alters our feeling toward life. We were born *inside* the catastrophe and we have established a strange and comfortable relation of habit with it. Almost an intimacy. For as long as we can remember there has been no news besides that of the Global Civil War. We have been raised as survivors, as *machines of survival*. We have been raised with the idea that life consists in continually going on; walking in indifference until crushed among other bodies who walk identically, who stumble and get crushed in turn. In the end, the only novelty of the present epoch is that none of this can be hidden anymore, that in a sense *everybody knows it*. Hence the most recent visible hardening of the system: its motives are exposed, it would be pointless to wish them away.

Many wonder why no part of the Left or far-Left, no known political force, is capable of opposing this course of events. "We still live in a democracy, right?" They can wonder for a long

Not having relations of production within our milieu or among ourselves means never letting the search for results become more important than paying attention to the process, bankrupting all conventions of value, and watching that we do not disconnect affection and co-operation.

Being attentive to worlds, to their perceptible configurations, is exactly what renders the isolation of something like *relations of production* impossible. In the places we open, around the means we share, it is this favor that we seek, that we experience. To name this experience, we often hear about everything being *free*. Instead of *free*, we prefer to speak of communism — for we cannot possibly forget what the *practice* of this *freedom* implies in terms of organization, and in the short term, of political antagonism.

So, the construction of the Party, in its most visible aspect, consists of the sharing or communization of what we have at our disposal. Communizing a place means this: setting free its use, and on the basis of this liberation, experimenting with refined, intensified, and complexified relations. If private property is essentially the discretionary power of depriving any person of the use of the possessed thing, communization can only mean depriving the agents of Empire of that possession.

From every side we oppose the extortion of having to choose between the offensive and the constructive, negativity and positivity, life and survival, war and the everyday. We will not respond to it. We understand only too well how this dismembering alternative splits and re-splits all existing collectives. For a force which is deployed, it is impossible to say if the annihilation of a device that harms it is a constructive or offensive matter, if achieving dietary or medical autonomy constitutes an act of war or subtraction. There are circumstances, like in a riot, in which the ability to heal our comrades considerably augments our ability to wreak havoc. Who can say that arming ourselves would not be part of the material constitution of a collectivity? When we agree on a common strategy, there is no

The Party is a collection of places, infrastructures, communized methods, and the dreams, bodies, murmurs, thoughts, desires that circulate among those places; the *use* of those methods, the *sharing* of those infrastructures.

The notion of the Party responds to the necessity of a minimal formalization, which makes us accessible as well as allowing us to remain invisible. It belongs to the communist way that we explain to ourselves, to formulate the basis of our sharing. So that the most recent arrival is, at the very least, the equal of the eldest.

Looking closer at it, the Party could be nothing but this: the formation of intuition as a force. The deployment of an archipelago of worlds. What would a political force be, under Empire, that didn't have its farms, its schools, its arms, its medicines, its collective houses, its editing desks, its printing presses, its delivery vans, and its bridgeheads in the metropole? It appears more and more absurd that some of us still have to work for Capital — aside from the usual work of infiltration of course.

The offensive power of the Party derives from the fact that it is also a power of production; however, in essence, those relationships are *only incidentally* relationships of production.

In the final analysis, capitalism consists of nothing more than a reduction of all relations into relations of production. From business to the family, consumption itself appears as another episode in the general production, the production *of society*.

The overthrowing of capitalism will come from those who are able to create the conditions for *other types of relations*.

Therefore the communism we are talking about is the exact opposite of what has been historically termed "communism," which was mostly nothing but socialism, a form of monopolist state capitalism.

Communism is not made throught the expansion of *new relations of production, but rather in their abolition.*

time: nothing that is expressed within the framework of traditional politics will ever be able to limit the advance of the desert, because traditional politics is *part of the desert.*

When we say this it's not in order to advocate extra-parliamentary politics as an antidote to liberal democracy. The popular manifesto "We are the Left," signed a couple of years ago by all the social justice collectives and social movements to be found in France, expresses well enough the logic that, for thirty years, has driven extra-parliamentary politics: we do not want to seize power, overthrow the state, etc.; really we want to be recognized as valid representatives.

Wherever the classical conception of politics prevails, the same impotence prevails opposite the disaster. That this impotence is widely distributed between a variety of eventually *reconcilable* identities changes nothing about it. The anarchist from the Federation Anarchiste, the council communist, the Trotskyist from Attac and the lawmaker start from the same amputation; they spread the same desert.

Politics, for them, is what is settled, said, done, and decided between men. The assembly that gathers them all, that gathers all human beings in *abstraction from their respective realms*, forms the ideal political situation. The economy, the economic sphere, follows logically: it is a both a necessary and impossible management of all that was left outside the assembly, of all that was determined to be *non-political* and which then becomes family, business, private life, leisure, pastimes, culture, etc.

That is how the classical definition of politics spreads the desert: by abstracting humans from their world, by disconnecting them from the network of things, habits, words, fetishes, emotions, places, solidarities that make up their world, their perceptual world, and that gives them their specific substance.

Classical politics is the glorious staging of bodies without a theater. But the theatrical assembly of political individualities poorly masks the desert that it is. There is no human soci-

ety separated from the sum of human and non-human beings. There is a plurality of realms. Of realms that are all the more real because they are shared. And that coexist.

Politics, in truth, is the interplay between different realms, the alliance between those that are compatible and the confrontation between those that are irreconcilable.

Therefore we say that the central political fact of the last thirty years went unnoticed. Because it took place at such a deep level of reality that it cannot be called *political* without bringing about a revolution in the very notion of the political. Because this level of reality is also the one where the division is elaborated between what is taken for reality and what is not. This central fact is the triumph of Existential Liberalism. The fact that it is now considered natural for everyone to have a rapport with the world based on the idea that each person has her *own life*. That such a life consists in a series of *choices*, good or bad. That each person can define herself by an ensemble of qualities, of *properties*, that make her, through her continual balancing of those properties, a unique and irreplaceable being. That the *contract* adequately epitomizes relations between individuals, and that *respect* epitomizes all virtue. That language is nothing but a means of arriving at an agreement. That, in reality, the world is composed on one side of things to manage, and on the other of an ocean of self-absorbed individuals, who in turn have a regrettable tendency to turn themselves into things, letting themselves become managed.

Of course, cynicism is only one of the possible features of the infinite clinical diagnoses of Existential Liberalism. It also includes depression, apathy, immunodeficiency (every immune system is intrinsically collective), dishonesty, judicial harassment, chronic dissatisfaction, denied affection, isolation, illusions of citizenship, and the loss of all generosity.

Existential liberalism has propagated its desert so well that even the most sincere Leftists express their utopia with its very terms. “We will rebuild an egalitarian society in which each

your own life… Energy is finite; we can’t do everything.” But exhaustion is not an argument. It is a condition.

So communism starts from the experience of sharing. First, from the sharing of our needs. Needs are not what capitalist rule has accustomed us to. *Needs are never about needing things without at the same time needing worlds.* Each of our needs links us, beyond all shame, to everyone who experiences that link. *Need* is just the name of the relationship through which a particular perceiving being gives meaning to such or such an element of its world. That is why those who have no worlds — metropolitan subjectivities for instance — have nothing but whims. And that is why capitalism, although it satisfies the need for things like nothing else, only spreads universal dissatisfaction: in order for it to do so it has to destroy worlds.

By communism we mean *a certain discipline of paying attention.*

The practice of communism, as we live it, we call The Party. When we overcome an obstacle together or when we reach a higher level of sharing, we say that we are “building the Party.” Certainly others, unknown to us at present, are building the Party elsewhere. This call is addressed to them. No experience of communism at the present time can survive without getting organized, tying oneself to others, taking sides in crises, waging war. “For the oases that dispense life are wiped out when we seek refuge in them.”

As we understand it, the process of instituting communism can only take the form of a collection of *acts of communization*, of making common such-and-such space, such-and-such contraption, such and-such knowledge. That is to say, the elaboration of the mode of sharing that attaches to them. Insurrection itself is merely an accelerator, a decisive moment in this process. As we intend it, the Party is not an organization — where everything becomes insubstantial by dint of transparency, and it is not a family — where everything smells like a con by dint of opacity.

ultimate purge. Since then all social relations have become suffering. To the point of rendering preferable any anesthesia, any isolation. In a sense, by the very excess of its triumph, Existential Liberalism is what is driving us to the brink of communism.

The communist question is about figuring out our relationship to the world, to other beings, to ourselves. It concerns the elaboration of the interplay between different worlds, about the *communication* between them. Not about the unification of global space, but about the *institution of what is perceptible*, that is to say the plurality of worlds. In that sense communism is not the extinction of all conflict; it does not describe a final condition of society after everything has been said and done. For it is also through conflict that worlds interact. "In bourgeois society, where the differences between men are only differences that do not relate to Man himself, it is precisely the true differences, the differences of quality that are not retained. The communist does not want to create a collective soul. He wants to create a society where false differences are eliminated. And those false differences being eliminated, all their possibilities open to true differences." Thus spoke an old friend.

It is obvious, as they claim, that the question of what suits me, of what I need, of what makes up my world has been reduced to the legally enforced fiction of private property, of what belongs to me, of what is mine. Something belongs to me insofar as it joins the realm of my usage — not by virtue of any juridical title. Ultimately, private property has no other reality than the forces that protect it. So the question of communism is, on one hand, to do away with the police, and on the other, to elaborate modes of sharing and *uses*, among those who live with each other. It is the question that is avoided everyday with "give me a break!" and "whatever, dude!" Communism of course is not given. It has to be considered, it has to be *made*. Almost everything that opposes it boils down to an expression of exhaustion: "But you'll never make it… It can't work… Humans are what they are… And it's already hard enough to live

person makes her contribution and from which each person gets her needs met from it… As far as individual desires are concerned, it could be egalitarian if each person consumes in proportion to the efforts she is ready to contribute. Naturally it will be necessary to redefine the method of evaluating the efforts contributed by each person," write the organizers of the Alternative, Anti-capitalist, and Anti-war Village against the G8 summit in Evian in a text entitled *When Capitalism and Wage Labor Will Have Been Abolished*! Here is a key to the triumph of Empire: managing to keep in the shadows, to surround with silence *the very terrain* on which it maneuvers, the field upon which it fights the decisive battle: that of manipulating feelings, of defining the limits of the perceptible. In such a way it preventively paralyzes any defense at the very moment of its operation, and ruins the very *idea* of a counter-offensive. The victory is won whenever the militant, at the end of a hard day of Political Work, slumps down in front of an action movie.

When they see us withdraw from the painful rituals of classical politics — the general assembly, the meeting, the negotiation, the protest, the demand — when they hear us speak about the perceptible realm rather than about work, IDs, pensions, or freedom of movement, militants give us a pitying look. "Poor guys," they seem to say, "they are resigning themselves to minority politics, they have retreated into their ghetto, and renounced any widening of the struggle. They will never be part of a movement." But we believe exactly the opposite: it is they who resign themselves to minority politics by speaking their language of false objectivity, whose gravity consists of nothing more than repetition and rhetoric. Nobody is fooled by the veiled contempt with which they talk about the worries of The People, and which allows them to go from the unemployed person to the illegal immigrant, from the striker to the prostitute *without ever putting themselves at risk* — their contempt is that obvious. Their will to *widen the struggle* is nothing but a way to flee from those who are already there, and, above

all, from those they would dread living with. And finally, it is they who are loath to admit the political meaning of sensitivity, who have to rely on *sentimentality* as their pitiful driving force. All in all, we prefer to start from small and dense nuclei than from a vast and loose network. We are familiar enough with that spinelessness.

Proposition VI

> On the one hand, we want to live communism; on the other, to spread anarchy.

Scholium

We are living through times of the most extreme separation. The depressing normality of the metropole, its lonely crowds, expresses the impossible utopia of a society composed of atoms.

The most extreme separation reveals the sense of the word *communism*.

Communism is not a political or economic system. Communism can manage without Marx. Communism doesn't give a damn about the USSR. And we cannot explain the fact that every decade for the past fifty years some have pretended to rediscover Stalin's crimes, crying "look at what communism is!" if they did not have the feeling that in reality everything pushes us there.

The only argument that ever stood against communism was that we did not *need* it. And certainly, until recently and here and there, as limited as they were, there were still things, languages, thoughts, and places that were shared and that endured; at least enough of them not to fade away. There were worlds, and they were inhabited. The refusal to think about, the refusal to bring up, the *question* of communism had practical arguments. Those have been swept away. The '80s, *as much as they endure*, remain the traumatic point of reference of this

The point now is to establish the material conditions for a shared receptivity toward pleasure.

Proposition III

> Those who would respond to the urgency of the situation with the urgency of their *reaction* only add to the suffocation.
>
> Their manner of intervention, of their agitation, points to the rest of their politics.
>
> As for us, the urgency of the situation liberates us from all considerations of legality or legitimacy, which have, in any case, become uninhabitable.
>
> That it might take a generation to build a victorious revolutionary movement in all its breadth does not cause us to retreat. We think about this with serenity. Just as we serenely recognize the *criminal* nature of our existence, and of our deeds.

Scholium

We have known, and are still familiar with, the temptation of activism.

The counter-summits, the campaigns against evictions, against new security laws and the building of new prisons, the occupations, the No-Border camps; the parade of all of this. The progressive dispersion of collectives responding to the same dispersion of activity. Running after the movements.

Feeling our power on an ad hoc basis, but at the price of returning each time to an underlying powerlessness. Paying a high price for each campaign. Letting it consume all the energy

that we have. Then moving to the next one, each time more out of breath, more exhausted, more saddened.

And little by little, through demanding, through denouncing, we become incapable of sensing what is supposed to be the basis of our engagement, the nature of the urgency that flows through us.

Activism is the first reflex. The *standard* response to the urgency of the present situation. The perpetual mobilization in the name of urgency is what our governments and our bosses have made us used to, even when we fight against them.

Forms of life disappear every day; plant and animal species, human experiences and countless relationships between living beings and ways of living. But our feeling of urgency is tied less to the speed of these extinctions than to their irreversibility, and even more to our inability to repopulate the desert.

The activist mobilizes herself against the catastrophe. But only to prolong it. Her haste consumes what little of the world remains. The activist answer to urgency remains faithful to the regime of urgency, with no hope of getting out of it or interrupting it.

The activist wants to be everywhere. She goes everywhere the rhythm of the breakdown of the machine leads her. Everywhere she brings her pragmatic inventiveness, the festive energy of her opposition to the catastrophe. Without a doubt, the activist gets shit done. But she never devotes herself to thinking about how to do it. How to hinder concretely the progress of the desert, in order to establish inhabitable worlds without waiting.

We desert activism. Without forgetting what gives it strength: a certain presence within the situation. An ease of movement within it. A way to apprehend the struggle; not from a moral or ideological angle, but technically and tactically.

Old militantism provides the opposite example. There is something amazing about the cluelessness of militants in various situations. We remember this scene from Genoa: about 50

that we can create for ourselves space-times dedicated to the transmission of knowledge and experience. The Black Panthers equipped themselves with such places, to which they added their politico-military capacity, the ten thousand free lunches they distributed every day, and their autonomous press. Before long, they formed a threat so tangible to Power that the Feds had to be sent in to massacre them.

Whoever constitutes themselves as a *force* knows that they become partisans of the global course of hostilities. The question of the resort to or the renunciation of what is called violence does not arise in such a partisan. And pacifism appears as a supplementary weapon in the service of Empire, along with the contingents of riot police and journalists. The considerations that concern us are the conditions of the asymmetrical conflict which has been imposed on us; we must consider the modes of appearance and disappearance suitable for each of our practices. The demonstration, the action with our faces unmasked, the indignant protest: these are all unsuitable forms of struggle against the current regime of domination. They even reinforce it, feeding up-to-date information into the systems of control. It would seem to be judicious, in any case, given that the flakiness of contemporary subjectivity extends even to our leaders (but also from the perspective of a lachrymose pathos in which we have succeeded in burying the least important citizen), to attack the material devices rather than the men that give them a face. This is for purely strategic considerations. Therefore, we must turn to the forms of operation distinctive to all guerrillas: anonymous sabotage, unclaimed actions, recourse to easily copied techniques, targeted counter-attacks.

This is not a *moral* question about the manner with which we provide ourselves with the means to live and fight, but a *tactical* question of the means we give ourselves and the *use* we make of them.

"The expression of capitalism in our lives is sadness," a friend once said.

In ten years, between two censuses, a hundred thousand people have *disappeared* in Great Britain. They have boarded a truck, bought a ticket, dropped acid, or gone underground. They have disaffiliated. They have left.

We would have liked, in our disaffiliation, to have had a place to rejoin, a side to take, a road to follow.

Many who leave get lost. And never arrive.

Our strategy is therefore the following: to establish and maintain a series of centers of desertion, of poles of secession, of rallying points. For runaways. For those who leave. A series of places where we can escape from the influence of a civilization that is headed for the abyss.

It is a matter of giving ourselves the means, of finding the methods whereby all those questions can be resolved; questions which, when addressed separately, can drive us to depression. How to dissolve the dependencies that weaken us? How to organize ourselves so we no longer have to work? How to settle beyond the toxicity of the metropole without going Back To Nature? How to shut down nuclear plants? How not to be *forced* to resort to psychiatric pulverization when a friend goes mad; or to the crude remedies of mechanistic medicine when she falls ill? How to live together without mutual suppression? How to take in the death of a comrade? How to ruin Empire?

We know our weaknesses: we were born and we have grown up in pacified societies, dissolved. We have not had the opportunity to acquire the strength that moments of intense collective confrontation can provide. Nor the knowledge that is linked to them. We have a political education to develop together. A theoretical and practical education.

For this, we need locations. Places where we can organizes ourselves, where we can share and develop the required techniques. Where we can learn to handle all that may prove necessary. Where we can co-operate. Had it not renounced any political perspective, the experimentations of the Bauhaus, with all the materiality and the rigor it contained, would evoke the idea

militants of the Trostkyist *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* wave their red flags labeled "100% on the Left." They are motionless, timeless. They shout their pre-approved slogans, surrounded by peace-police. Meanwhile, a few meters away, some of us fight the lines of *carabinieri*, throwing back teargas canisters, ripping up paving stones to make projectiles, preparing Molotov cocktails with bottles found in the trash and gasoline from overturned Vespas. When compelled to comment on us the militants speak of adventurism, mindlessness. Their pretext is that the conditions are not right. We say that nothing was lacking, that everything was there — except them.

What we desert in militantism is this absence from the situation. Just as we desert the inconsistency to which activism condemns them.

Activists themselves feel this inconsistency. And this is why, periodically, they turn toward their elders, the militants. They borrow their strategies, terrains of struggle, slogans. What appeals to them in militantism is the consistency, the structure, the loyalty they lack. And so the activists revert to old-new disputes and demand — "citizenship for all," "free movement of people," "guaranteed income," "free public transport."

The problem with demands is that, by formulating needs in terms that make them audible to power, they say *nothing* about those needs, and what real transformations of the world they require. Thus, demanding free public transportation says nothing of our need to travel rather than be transported, of our need for slowness. In addition, demands often end up masking the real conflicts. Demanding free public transportation only slows the spread of fare-dodging techniques, at least for this specific milieu. Calling for the free movement of people merely means avoiding the issue of a practical escape from a tightening of control. Fighting for a guaranteed income is, at best, to condemn ourselves to the illusion that an amelioration of the worst of capitalism is necessary to get out of it. Whatever form it takes, the impasse is always the same: the subjective resources

mobilized may be revolutionary, yet they remain imbedded in a program of (radical) reformism. Under the pretext of overcoming the alternative between reform and revolution we sink into a timely ambiguity.

The present catastrophe is that of a world actively made uninhabitable. A sort of methodical devastation of everything that remained liveable in the relations of humans with each other and with our environments. Capitalism could not have triumphed over the whole planet if it was not for techniques of power, specifically political techniques — there are all kinds of techniques: with or without tools, corporal or discursive, erotic or culinary, the disciplines and mechanisms of control, and it is pointless to denounce the *reign of technics*. The political techniques of capitalism consist first of all in breaking the attachments through which a group finds the means to produce, in the same movement, the conditions of its subsistence and its existence. In separating human communities from innumerable things — stones and metals, plants, trees that have a thousand purposes, gods, djinns, wild or tamed animals, medicines and psycho-active substances, amulets, machines, and all the other beings in their realms that co-exist with humans.

Ruining all community, separating groups from their means of existence and from the knowledge linked to them: it is political rationality that dictates the imposition of the commodity as the mediator of every relation. Just as it was necessary to liquidate the witches — which is to say their medicinal knowledge as well as the movement between the visible and invisible worlds which they promoted — today peasants have to renounce their ability to sow their own seeds in order to maintain the grip of multinational agribusinesses and other organizations of agricultural politics.

These political techniques of capitalism find their maximal point of concentration in contemporary metropoles. Metropoles are precisely the arena where, in the end, there is almost nothing left to reappropriate. A milieu in which every-

In Europe, the integration of workers' organizations into the state management apparatus — the foundation of social democracy — was paid for with the renunciation of the least ability to be a nuisance. Here too the emergence of the labor movement was a matter of material solidarities, of an urgent need for communism. The *Maisons du Peuple* were the last refuges for this confusion between the need for immediate communization and the strategic requirements of a practical implementation of the revolutionary process. The labor movement then developed as a progressive separation between the co-operative current, an economic niche cut off from its strategic *raison d'être*, and the political and union forms working on the terrain of electoralism or joint management. It is from the abandonment of any secessionist aim that this absurdity was born: the Left. The climax is reached when unionists denounce any resort to violence, loudly proclaiming to all who wish to hear it, that they will collaborate with the cops to control rioters.

The recent increase of policing functions of the State proves only this: that Western societies have lost all ability to cohere. They are only able to manage their inexorable decay. That is to say, essentially, to prevent any *re*-consolidation, to crush anyone who stands out. Anyone who deserts. Anyone who gets out of line.

But there is nothing to be done. The condition of inner ruin of these societies allows an increasing number of cracks to appear. The continual renovation of appearances can achieve nothing: there, worlds form. Squats, communes, groupuscules, barrios, all try to extract themselves from capitalist desolation. Most often these attempts come to nothing or die from autarky, for lack of having established contacts, appropriate solidarities. Also for lack of conceiving of themselves as full-time partisans in the Global Civil War.

But all of these attempted re-consolidations are still nothing compared to *mass* desire, with the constantly deferred desire *to drop out*. To leave.

paranoia. And for the luckiest, the luxury of periodically fleeing from their local poverty by introducing it elsewhere, someplace still exotic.

We do not impute these weaknesses to the squat form. We neither deny nor desert it. We say that squatting will only make sense again for us on the condition that we clarify the basis of the sharing we engage in. In the squat, like anywhere else, the collective creation of a strategy is the only alternative to retreating into an identity, either through assimilation or the ghetto.

On the subject of strategy, we have learned all the lessons from the tradition of the defeated. We remember the beginnings of the labor movement. The lessons are near to us.

Because what was put into practice in its initial phase relates *directly* to how we are living, to what we want to put into practice today. The building up of what was to be in *force* called the labor movement first rested on the sharing of criminal practices. The secret strike funds, the acts of sabotage, the secret societies, the class violence, the first forms of unemployment insurance seen in the recovery of individual clearheadedness, that were developed with the consciousness of their illegal and antagonistic nature.

In the United States the overlap between forms of workers' organization and organized crime is most tangible. The power of the American proletarians at the beginning of the industrial era stemmed from the development, within the community of workers, of a force of destruction and retaliation against Capital, as well as from the existence of clandestine solidarities. The perpetual transposition of worker into criminal called for systematic control: the moralization against any form of autonomous organization. Anything that went beyond the ideal of the honest worker was marginalized as gangsterism. Ultimately, there was the mafia on the one hand and the unions on the other, both products of a reciprocal amputation.

thing is done so the human only relates to itself, only creates itself separately from other forms of life, bumps into or uses them without ever *meeting* them.

On the basis of this separation, and to make it durable, even the most minor, tentative, attempt at living outside commodity relationships has been made criminal. The field of legality has long been conflated with the multiple constraints that make life impossible — through wage labor or self-employment, charity work or militantism.

At the same time as this field becomes increasingly uninhabitable, everything that can contribute to making real life possible has been transformed into a crime.

Where activists claim that "No One is Illegal" we must recognize exactly the opposite: today an entirely legal existence would be an entirely submissive existence.

We have tax evasion, fictitious employment, insider trading, fake bankruptcies, welfare fraud, embezzlement, forgeries, and various other scams. There are trips across borders in airplane luggage compartments, trips without a ticket inside one city or within a country. Fare-dodging and shoplifting are the daily practices of thousands of people in the metropoles. And there is the illegal practice of trading seeds that has safeguarded many plant species. There are even more functional illegalities in the capitalist world-system. Some are tolerated, others encouraged, and others still that are eventually punished. An improvised vegetable garden on a wasteland has every chance of being flattened by a bulldozer even before its first harvest.

If we add up the sum of the special laws and customary regulations that govern all of the spaces that anyone can travel through in one day, there is not a single life that can be assured of impunity. Laws, codes, and juridical decisions exist that make every existence punishable; it would merely be a matter of applying them to the letter.

We are not ready to bet that where the desert grows there also grows something that can save us. Nothing can succeed

that does not begin through a break with everything that makes *this* desert grow.

We know that building a power of any scale will take time. There are many things that we no longer know how to do. In fact, those of us who benefit from the modernization and the education dispensed in our developed lands barely know how to make anything ourselves. Even gathering plants for cooking or medicine — rather than merely for decoration — is regarded as archaic at best, at worst as a nice hobby.

We make a simple observation: everyone has access to a certain quantity of resources and knowledge made available by the simple fact of living in these lands of the old world, and we can communize them.

The question is not whether to live with or without money, to steal or to buy, to work or not, but how to use the money we have to increase our autonomy from the commodity sphere. And if we prefer to steal instead of working, or produce for ourselves instead of stealing, it is not due to a concern with purity. It is because the flows of power that accompany the flows of commodities, the subjective submission that conditions our access to survival, have become too expensive.

There would be many inappropriate ways to express what we envision: we neither want to leave for the countryside nor reappropriate and accumulate ancient knowledge. We are not merely concerned with a reappropriation of methods. Nor with a reappropriation of knowledge. If we put together all that knowledge, those techniques, and all the inventiveness displayed in the field of activism, we would still not get a revolutionary movement. It is a question of temporality. A question of creating the conditions where an offensive can sustain itself without fading away, of establishing the material solidarities that allow us to *maintain* it.

We believe there is no revolution without the constitution of a common material force. We do not ignore the anachronism

We have known these conditions of existence, and we will never return to them. They weaken us too much. Make us too vulnerable. Make us waste away.

Isolation, in primal cultures, was the harshest sentence that could be passed on a member of the community. It is now the common condition. The rest of the disaster follows logically. It is on account of this narrow idea that everybody has of their own home that makes it seem natural to leave the street to the police. The world could not have been made so uninhabitable, nor sociality so controlled — from malls to bars, from boardrooms to backrooms — had not everyone been previously granted the shelter of private space.

In running away from conditions of existence that mutilate us, we found squats; or rather, the international squat *scene*. In this constellation of occupied spaces where, despite many limits, it is possible to experiment with forms of collective assembly outside of control, we have known an increase of power. We have organized ourselves for elementary survival: scrounging, theft, collective work, common meals, sharing of skills, equipment, loving inclinations — and we have found forms of political expression: concerts, demos, direct actions, sabotage, leaflets.

Then, little by little, we have seen our surroundings turn into a *milieu* and from a milieu into a *scene*. We have seen the enactment of a moral code replace the elaboration of a strategy. We have seen norms solidify, reputations develop, metaphors begin to *function*; and everything become so *predictable*. The collective adventure turned into a gloomy cohabitation. A hostile tolerance grasped all relations. *We adapted*. And in the end what was believed to be a counter-world amounted to nothing but a reflection of the dominant world: the same games of personal valorization in the realm of theft, fights, political or radical correction — the same sordid liberalism in emotional life, the same spats over access and territory, the same split between everyday life and political activity, the same identity

Proposition V

> To any moral preoccupation, to any concern for purity, we substitute the collective elaboration of a *strategy*. Only that which impedes the increase of our strength is bad. It follows from this resolution that economics and politics are no longer distinguishable. We are not afraid of forming gangs; and can only laugh at those who will decry us as a mafia.

Scholium

We have been sold this lie: that what is most particular to us is what *distinguishes* us from the common. We experience the contrary: every singularity is felt in the *manner* and in the *intensity* with which a being brings into existence something common.

At root it is here that we begin, where we find each other. What is most singular in us calls to be shared.

But we note this: not only is what we have to share obviously incompatible with the dominant order, but this order strives to track down any kind of sharing for which it does not lay down the rules. For instance, the barracks, the hospital, the prison, the asylum, and the retirement home are the only forms of collective living allowed in the metropole. The *normal* condition is the isolation of everyone in their private cubicle. This is where they return endlessly, however strong the repulsion they feel, however great the encounters they make elsewhere.

of this belief. We know it is both too early and too late, which is why we have time. We have stopped waiting.

Proposition IV

> We set the point of reversal, the way out of the desert, the end of Capital, in the intensity of the link that each person manages to establish between what she thinks and how she lives. Contrary to the upholders of Existential Liberalism, we refuse to view this as a private matter, an individual issue, a question of character. On the contrary, we start from the certainty that this link depends on the construction of shared realms, of placing effective methods in common.

Scholium

Every day each person is enjoined to accept that it is naive, out of date, a pure and simple absence of culture to ask about the *link between ideas and actions*. We consider this a symptom. This is nothing but an effect of the Liberal redefinition, so fundamentally modern, of the distinction between the public and the private. Liberalism has put forward the principle that everything must be tolerated, that everything can be thought, *so long as* it is recognized as being without direct consequences to the current structure of society, of its institutions, and of the power of the State. Any idea can be accepted; its expression should even be supported, *so long as* social and state rules are accepted. In other words, the freedom of thought of the private individual must be total, as must be her freedom of expression, in principle; but she must not *desire* the *consequences* of her thought as far as it concerns collective life.

titions happen to crack and break, then things come up that might be unpleasant, which may even appear frightful — but it is a fright capable of freeing us from fear. Calling into question both our individual limits and the borders drawn by civilization can be a life-saver. The existence of any real community necessitates a certain physical danger: when emotions and thoughts are no longer ascribable to any one person, when interactions are recovered in which feelings, ideas, impressions, and emotions are exchanged carelessly. It must be understood that community per se is not the solution: it is its disappearance, everywhere and always, *that is the problem*.

We do not perceive humans to be isolated from each other or from the other beings of this world; we see them bound by multiple connections that we have learned to deny. This denial allows the blocking of emotional exchanges through which these multiple connections are experienced. This blockage, in turn, is necessary to make us accustomed to the most neutral, the most lifeless, the most average feelings; that which makes us long for vacations, lunch-breaks, or evenings out as a godsend — that is to say something just as neutral, average, and lifeless — but freely chosen. The imperial order, which is particularly Westernized, is nourished through this boredom.

We will be told: by advocating the experience of sharing intense emotions, you go against what living beings require to live, namely gentleness and calm — quite expensive these days, like any scarce commodity. If what is meant by this is that our point of view is incompatible with authorized leisure, then even winter sports junkies might admit that it would be no great loss to see all ski resorts burn and to return that environment to the marmots. On the other hand, we have nothing against the gentleness that any living being, as a living being, carries within itself. “It might be that living is a gentle thing.” Any blade of grass knows this better than all the citizens of the world.

knows what these places are about, the real question is to know why — despite that — they can still be so popular. Why wish for, always and above all, that nothing happens that might provoke stirrings that go too deep? Out of habit? Because of despair? Because of cynicism? Or else: because you can feel the delight of being somewhere while not being there, of being there while being *essentially* somewhere else; because what we are at base would be preserved to the point of no longer even having to exist.

These are so-called ethical questions which must of course be asked and above all, they are those that we find at the very heart of the political: how to respond to emotional neutralization and to the potential effects of decisive thoughts? And also: how do modern societies work with these neutralizations, or rather, how are they made into essential cogs in its continual functioning? How does the material effectiveness of the empire relate to our predisposition toward giving up, regardless of our collective experiences?

The acceptance of these neutralizations can of course go hand in hand with great creative efforts. You can experiment up to the point of madness, on condition that you are a single creator, and that you produce the proof of this singularity in public (your works). You can still know what the stirrings are, but only on condition that you experience them alone, and that you are limited to passing them on indirectly. You will thereby be recognized as an artist or as a thinker, and, perhaps if you are *politically engaged*, you will be able to toss as many bottles into the ocean as you like, with the clear conscience of one who sees farther and who has warned others.

Like many, we have experienced that emotions stuck *internally* turn out badly: they can even turn into *symptoms*. The rigidities we observe in ourselves come from the partitions that every person believes herself obliged to put up in order to define her own limits, and to contain within her self what must not burst forth. When, for some reason or other, these par-

Liberalism may have invented the individual, but it invented her mutilated from the get-go. The Liberal individual, who has never expressed herself better than in the pacifist and civil rights movements of today, is supposed to be attached to her freedom insofar as her freedom does not commit her to anything, and certainly does not try to impose itself upon others. The stupid precept "my freedom ends where that of another begins" is received today as an unassailable truth. Even John Stuart Mill, though one of the essential facilitators of the Liberal conquest, noticed that an unfortunate consequence follows: one is permitted to desire anything, on the sole condition *that it is not desired too intensely*, that it does not go beyond the limits of the private, or in any case beyond those of *public free expression*.

What we call Existential Liberalism is the adherence to a series of facts, which at their core, show an essential propensity toward betrayal. We have become accustomed to functioning at a sort of low gear in which we are relieved of the very idea of betrayal. This emotional lower gear is the guarantee we have accepted for our becoming-adult. Along with, for the most zealous, the mirage of an emotional self-containment as an unassailable ideal. Nevertheless, there is too much to betray for those who decide to keep those promises, no doubt carried since childhood, and which they continue to believe.

Among Liberal tenets is behaving like an owner, even towards your own experiences. This is why not behaving like a Liberal individual means primarily not valuing your properties. Or really another meaning should be given to "properties": not what belongs to me in particular, but what *connects* me to the world, and what is therefore not reserved for me, has nothing to do with private property, nor with what is supposed to define an identity (the "that's just the way I am," and its confirmation "that's just like you!"). While we reject the idea of individual property, we have nothing against commitments. The question of appropriation or re-appropriation comes down to the ques-

tion of knowing what is *appropriate* for us, that is to say adequate, in terms of use, in terms of need, in terms of relation to a place, to a moment of the world.

Existential Liberalism is the spontaneous ethics suitable for Social Democracy seen as a political ideal. You will never be a better citizen than when you are capable of renouncing a relation or a struggle in order to maintain your status. It will not always be without suffering, but that is precisely where Existential Liberalism is efficient: it even provides the remedies to the discomforts that it generates. The check to Amnesty International, the fair trade coffee, the demo against the last war, seeing the latest Michael Moore film, are so many non-acts disguised as gestures that will save you. Carry on exactly as usual; that is to say go for a walk in the designated spaces and do your shopping, the same as always. But on top of that, *in addition*, ease your conscience; buy No Logo, boycott Shell. This should be enough to convince you that political action, at bottom, does not require very much, and that you too are capable of *engaging* in it. There is nothing new in this buying and selling of indulgences, but the problem becomes palpable in the prevailing confusion. The invocatory culture of Another World Is Possible leaves little room to speak of ethics beyond consumer etiquette. The increase in the number of environmentalist, humanitarian, and solidarity associations opportunely channels general discontent and thus contributes to the perpetuation of this state of affairs, through personal valorization, official recognition and its first prize of honestly awarded subsidies; the worship, in short, of social usefulness. Above all, no more enemies. At the very most, problems, abuses seen as catastrophes — dangers from which only the mechanisms of power can protect us.

If the obsession of the founders of Liberalism was the neutralization of sects, it is because they united all the subjective elements that had to be banished in order for the modern State to exist. For a sectarian, life is exactly what is required for its particular philosophical truth and how it gets explained — a

certain *disposition* toward worldly things and events, a way of not losing sight of what matters. There is an obvious overlap between the appearance of Society (and of its correlate: Economy) and the Liberal redefinition of the public and the private. The sectarian collectivity is, in itself, a threat to what is referred to by the pleonasm Liberal Society. This is due to it being a form of divisive organization. Here lies the nightmare for the founders of the modern State: a section of collectivity detaches itself from the whole, thus ruining the idea of social unity. Two things that Society can't handle: 1) that a thought may be embodied, which is to say that it may have an effect on a person's existence in terms of how she manages her life, or the manner in which she lives, and 2) that this embodiment may be not merely passed on to others, but also shared, *communized*. Any collective experience beyond control will be banally discredited as a so-called sect.

The pervasiveness of the commodity has inserted itself everywhere. This pervasiveness is the most effective instrument for disconnecting *ends* from *means*, to reduce everyday life to a living-space we are only required *to manage*. Everyday life is what we are supposed to want to return to; the acceptance of a necessary and universal neutralization. It is the ever-growing renunciation of the possibility of an unpostponed joy. As a friend once said, it is the average of all our possible crimes.

Rare are the collectivities that can escape the abyss that waits for them: mashing of the real into an extreme flatness, community as the epitome of average intensity, a slow disintegration clumsily filled with a bunch of banal and falsely sophisticated banter.

Neutralization is an essential characteristic of Liberal Society. Everybody knows the centers of neutralization, where it is required that no emotion stands out, where each person has to *contain* herself, and everybody experiences them as such: businesses (and what isn't a business these days?), night clubs, bowling alleys and golf courses, museums, etc. Since everyone