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Revolution And/Or Insurrection: Some Thoughts on Tearing this Muthafucka Down

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a brief period of no electricity, it is possible to take that opportunity to awaken people to the complete insanity of the mechanic speed of technological society. The literal powerlessness of the state opens up all kinds of revolutionary possibilities for action. The more the state focuses its efforts on reestablishing its technocratic order, the more open it remains to sabotage on all levels.

Is this situation necessarily preferable? Compared to with the other possibilities we face (i.e. nuclear war) and the inevitability of collapse, who wouldn't want to make a positive experience of it? It is important to remember that we aren't so far removed from a life without technology and we are still fortunate enough to have living memories of the 'old ways'. The hollow material comforts of spectacularized survival will be nothing when real experience and life are tasted. If the chances are taken to empower people who knows what could happen. We should always remember that things get worse before they get better, but we have the potential within our beings to do something about this.

This essay has been questions that I have been thinking about for some time now. An understanding of our situation is vital for us to move forward and far too many folks are standing on the sidelines waiting for something to be handed to them. Perhaps what we're waiting for will begin when we start to make it happen, and what better time than now?

Again, this is far from any final comments on the subject, but an opening for where things could be going. Philosophical or theoretical ideas about when would be the perfect time for something to start aren't making things happen. "Anything can happen", so what are you waiting for?

machines work with some degree of human interaction and the machines still need some workers to maintain/over see them. The power is still in our hands in this regard.

However, current revolutionary power must transcend a purely proletarian understanding. The technological system has grown immensely and it remains the key to state power. Over the last decades Latin American revolutionary currents have utilized attacks on the grid as one method of insurrection. Although their goal doesn't seem to be the overall elimination of the technological infrastructure, their attacks have utilized its importance. For example, in order to successfully hit city-targets, the insurgents would attack the relatively isolated generators, wiping out electricity long enough to strike the institutions, rob banks, etc. What is important here is that taking out the power debilitated the functions of the state, opening up a framework for revolutionary potential.

If there was a large enough effort, continued attacks would essential decapitate the technological system. Electricity is the lifeblood of modern civilization, and a historical look at these actions seems to show that they could have continued their efforts and caused more permanent damage.

To look a little closer to home John Zerzan offers a look at the revolutionary surge that can be awoken via the New York blackout of 1977.¹¹ He points to the looting and street parties that transcended racial and sex lines as those who had nothing else to loose broke free during a period of anonymity. The drives of people into the street that were in that moment, “unmediated/un-ideologized have all the pigs scared shitless.” Imagine global blackout.

And what would happen in the mean time? People can only live off canned foods for so long before people are forced to try and deal with the situation or go down with the ship. There will be other issues as well, and people will be forced to question their dependency upon the technological system as cars and busses are inoperable. In

¹¹‘New York, New York’ in *Elements of Refusal*, Columbia:CAL, 1999.

Disclaimer: “revolution” is for entertainment and historical reasons only.

Right now, our society exhibits every major characteristic necessary for revolution. Historian James DeFronzo has laid out the common factors working for a ‘successful’ revolution¹ (though all five are hardly ever all at work at once); mass dissent, elite dissent, unifying motive, state crisis, and world permissiveness². It takes no professional or specialist to see the bulk of these factors at work here and now.

Revolution is the response to a change in standards in almost all categories of social life within a given system. Traditionally this has occurred during a period of modernization where the State has been a bar from reaching the potential that it’s ‘citizens’ feel they are due (rightly or wrongly). They occur at points when social stratification is at an extreme and the masses are increasingly being marginalized.

The interests here are not in pouring over or disputing the work of ‘experts’ and ‘theorists’, but to look at common elements of revolution and our society and question what some possibilities are for revolution or if it’s even desirable.

(Note: The point here isn’t to reach some ‘vanguard’, ‘movement’, or ‘organization’ goal, but to look into some possibilities that our current situation opens up and point to the possibilities for autonomous resistance.)

Nihilistic Rage

The ‘mass dissent’ that DeFronzo points to is not only present, but defining our times, although it is concealed under mass frustra-

¹It is important to note that DeFronzo is referring to a more ‘traditional’ view of revolution as seizure of state power. While the interests here lie in abolition of all power, the same preconditions seem to remain.

²DeFronzo, James, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, Boulder: Westview, 1996.

tion or a nihilistic rage. People are pissed off, and they know it, but they don't know who to blame. Experts and specialists have come up with more theories and 'solutions' to this occurrence than any of us would have any interest in following up on. These experts have typically avoided the issue by missing what is right in front of their eyes: this world we have made for ourselves gives us no reason to live and no reason to die.

This world of megatechnology and ultra-alienation seeks to destroy all that is human inside of us, as Arthur Evans describes it:

"The whole industrial system is like one great night of the living dead where the entire populace has been reduced emotionally to the level of zombies. It has deadened us to our environment, deprived us of art, sterilized our animal nature, robbed us of the skills of survival, degraded our labor and leisure, and decimated our sexual lives. And so it has made us like the living dead — dead to nature, dead to each other, dead to ourselves (pg. 130)."³

We've been domesticated to a new world order of lifeless servitude, obsessed with a machine-run future. All the events in our life that give us meaning have been automated and we are left as the mechanics for the machine that will devour or bore us to death.

What we are seeing in our society are the many forms of "survival sickness" that Raoul Vaneigem spoke of⁴. A rage and misery sweeps over society in a splurge of happiness and 'niceism'. Everywhere in this society is the big smiley face of hyper capitalism to soothe all the unrest and dysfunction. John Zerzan notes that the "face of domination is often a smiling one,"⁵ as a surreal wave of etiquette wipes out all direct flows of rage and contempt.

We are in a society of potential psychopaths who are continuously bottling up rage. Our domestication teaches us to internalize

Looking at the likeliness of collapse and how this beast will fall, the chance of it being brought down from inside seems to be the best of possibilities. Because of this, an insurrectionary current could be working to hasten that collapse. The most obvious way would be to attack the technological infrastructure. Civilization has an intense level of dependency on electricity and 'resources' creating its greatest weakness.

The weakness comes from the fact that what this technological-industrial civilization is built on is limited resources, this means not only limited in future stock, but in present. The coal that fuels plants is brought into all great centers by trains and oil is transported by pipelines and trucks. There is a limited amount of on-hand fuel at all the pivotal power centers. The weakness here is that the system is dependent on electricity for its power over people, but also in order to sustain itself. The power that fuels empires comes from plants, and if those plants can't produce, the empire cannot use it.

It is possible that if power was knocked out for at least two weeks in this nation civilization would be gone for good here. Civilization lacks the ability to bring itself back up to speed without using the same level of technology that it currently uses. For example, a single power storage house could be brought back online quickly so long as there are other machines there to try and fix the entire get up. But if power is wiped out in every major city and there is no other real options, what are the chances that it could be brought back on.

This has made the power grid a target for revolutionaries. It has long been recognized that general strikes completely stop a nation in its tracks because without product, and thus capital, flow, the lifeblood of the nation is cut off. This is a direct precursor to attacks on the grid, because it is about people recognizing that as the producers state power requires their complacency. The people themselves were the mega-machine as to some degrees they remain although the bulk of work has been automated now. Regardless all

³Evans, Arthur, *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*, Boston: Fag Rag, 1978.

⁴Vaneigem, Raoul, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, London: Rebel, 2001.

⁵Zerzan, John, *Future Primitive*, Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1994. Page 136.

From my interactions with people, no matter how much shit they face, they all know in some way that civilization is falling. There is really no secret about it, and the times keep on getting worse. The problem here is that people are so completely disempowered that they see no reason to try and resist. As mentioned in the previous section, a strong insurrectionary surge could serve as a kind of catalyst to redirect all this rage and urge for life that lies just beneath the surface. Revolution isn't handing life to people, but showing them the possibilities.

The Technological Infrastructure is a Target

The possibilities of living wild and free lie in the weaknesses of the state.¹⁰ I recognize that the dis-ease of Capital has infected minds so much that they would rather die with it than give up its material comforts. Thus is the nature of the totality of civilized thought. Many will hold dearly to this system until they recognize that other ways of life are possible, the revolutionary/insurrectionary urge should point towards this potential.

The over-riding question is whether it will take a conscious revolution or the precise acts of small groups and individuals to force this empire down. The bulk of the U.S. won't be willing to question their domestication until shit gets so bad that they don't have any other option. My interests are in trying to draw a string between the problems that we each face and show the collective origin of those problems in the hopes that people will wake up to the reality that we are being forced to face.

¹⁰It is important to mention that the focus of this paper has been on the U.S. and Western powers, it is because 1) it is where I live, 2) I feel that the U.S. is a pivotal point for global power. I feel strongly that if we can collapse the U.S., it will only spur the fall of other co-dependent empires. The same would be true of European powers. This isn't meant to over-emphasize U.S. revolutionaries (who need a good kick in the ass) or undercut revolutions over the rest of the world, just a contextual point.

it, to 'bite the bullet', and go with the flow. The teachers tell us that nothing good comes from letting it all out.

The youths are getting restless though. Children younger and younger are having uncontrollably violent outbreaks and the only solution is to sedate them. Yet this 'solution' has only resulted in more insane chemical reactions and we aren't seeing any halt to the sporadic episodes of youth murder. But is this just pushing a button, or is there something here? It seems that we are all suffering, we all live in Disneyland and Columbine at the same time. Pointing out this downward spiral isn't just listing off the 'worst' of what happens, but showing how common this has become, and that it is everywhere and it is all of us.

The 'mass dissent' that fires revolutions is here but the Spectacle has kept them as isolated outbreaks and incidents and as group therapy and personal problems. Our rage is collective, but we have been so heavily domesticated to ignore it or push it aside. Perhaps the key to unlocking and channeling this dissent is to realize that we are not alone in our misery and that it has a common source. We have enough rage burning us inside that we could tear this shit down tonight.

Surreal Power Games

The recent corporate/political turns of downfalls and whistle blowing only adds to the surreal reality that has been crafted. When we see top politicians and other fuckers turning on each other, we have to wonder what's going on.

The more I've learned of every one of these fuckers, the more clear it remains that they are no longer humans. The seed of power corrupts absolutely and it corrupts to death, and all of these power mongers are infested beyond return. They are all guilty of the crimes that they have defined, but when they turn on each other, what does that say?

In the past years there has been an increasing amount of unrest among the elites. They are getting bloodthirsty and the results are just all the more entertaining. I really have no interest in seeing any of these bastards come out 'on top', but I don't mind them eliminating themselves, although the result is only increased power holdings. But this is just capitalism playing itself out.

Regardless of whatever the background of these odd turns may be, it is obvious that there is massive 'elite dissent'. The power mongers are shaking things up, and when the cradle rocks, the cradle will fall. While the elites play power games, the breeding grounds for revolution open up. The question remains, what will you do with this opening space?

Tired of Repression?

The factor of 'unifying motive' has always been the most complicated. The reason for this is simple: the city and its counterpart, the countryside, limit human and ecological sanity. We have been raised as dependents of this system and in so, only so many are ready to turn elsewhere. But this opens up a far more serious problem: Where are people looking?

In my eyes, this problem has been the fatal flaw of all past revolutions (see 'Seizure or Abolition of State Power' section). The most divisive factor in this society is the capitalist myth that we can all get a piece of the pie if we just try harder and that this would be desirable.

We are oblivious to the implications of this plastic and metal reality because our eyes are glued on the prize: the constantly raising ceiling of wealth. A friend, Aleksa, points to what this all boils down to:

"Both the fucked and the fuckers have 1) the same idea of life, 2) the same ideology of Needs, 3) the same attitude of the whole non-human world. Both classes believe in Progress, in further "develop-

putting efforts into trying to tear this fucker down in every way? I stand strongly by Fredy Perlman's recognition that "anything can happen", but it's up to us to ensure that everything is tried.

Is Revolution Possible or Preferable?

While I can only put so much faith in the idea, I see that revolution is entirely possible right now. I look around and I see generations being raised in an entirely synthetic life, and I think of Lakota Sioux Medicine Man Lamé Deer's estimation that they will eventually want to be closer to nature, and I think that could be true. There is nothing left for anyone here, all has been automated, outlawed, trivialized, spectacularized, and limited before it got the chance to exist. The youth of today have nothing to live or die for, only to continue the path of shiny new technologies while the world suffers. The pain of these youths pours out as it is smothered by drugs, alcohol, television, and any other addiction which can be bought and sold.

Among these generations just wasting away lays that urge to live, although it remains covered by anything that comes its way. People are dieing and killing in order to feel something and they hold to this world because it is all that they know. The success of domestication comes by keeping everyone from realizing their own sacrifice is for the sake of others, if this can be broken, generations of revolutionaries exist.

The dire situation we are faced with makes revolution all the more important. It's scary to think what some people are capable of doing if they would have power in their own hands, but revolution is bound to happen. This makes the idea of immediate action seem all the more real, although if it does not wipe out the ability of civilization to continue its kind of domination to continue, there will only be the same old problems.

History is full of examples of insurrectionary power. The success of a revolt will depend on the ability of an insurrection to show the weaknesses of the state. This was the case with Castro's 26 Julio insurrectionary army. While their individual acts were far from successful, their continued resistance was an inspiration. After failed direct assaults upon parts of state power, they remained in hiding on the periphery of Cuba with growing support. The Cuban Revolution had less to do with a constant struggle by the 26 Julio Army, but by those within the grips of state power rising up at the same time after the potential for revolt was becoming apparent.

Again, this is an example of seizure of power, but it was all there if only they would have taken the further step and moved against power. The failure of Cuban revolt was in their dependence upon existing power structures, seeing their only way to continue existing was to continue plugging in to the world addiction to sugar (their prime cash crop) and under the banner of nationalism people continued sacrificing their lives to 'their nation'. The potential for the abolition of power is still there, it just needs to be actualized.

There is little sign of a revolutionary consciousness against the whole of civilization right now, although, as shown above, there is every reason to believe that this would be most possible right now. Almost all past revolutions became possible through the existence of guerilla/insurgent army/forces. Once the ground work has been laid, it becomes more possible for others to see that there are other options than the Future laid out by the domesticators.

It is always taking a risk by being involved in insurrectionary acts of revolt, but this is a question of how serious are we? If we are serious about abolishing this narrow reality, then what is keeping us from trying to realize this? We'll never be sure if revolution will be what takes this down, or if insurrection necessarily spurs individuals to question their domestication, but I know that my interests lie in being a free and full human. Even if all else fails, insurrection is at least taking steps towards this. My question is that if collapse or death is inevitable, what is the harm in at least

ment of productive forces" as the only rational answer to the disaster caused with all previous "developments of productive forces". They dream about the same commodities, same paradise."⁶

So long as we have been embodied by Capital (the world of commodity, work, and development), we will ignore the path of civilization that is at work here: slavery and sacrifice to some other 'great' order.

As Jacques Camatte pointed out, a successful revolution will bring about a new mode of life, not a new mode of production.⁷ The goal here in finding a 'unifying motive' would have to lie in awakening the 'wandering humanity' to the reality of their domestication.

It seems that a serious and full revolution will occur once the people realize their desires and potential within the realm of full communities. Full communities, however, can not exist so long as civilization, the combination of institutionalized division of labor, alienation, and hierarchical, systemic power which requires a constantly growing 'resource pool' to continue existing, haunts them. Civilization must constantly expand to continue existing, and its power lies in an internalized totality (symbolic culture) and external institutions/forces. Any threat to the well being of its totality (web of illusions, morality, etc.), is a threat to civilization, and threats are met with repression or destruction. So the goal is neither fully mental nor physical but an assault on all fronts.

This isn't meaning that people should be unified towards a single goal or society, but under the principle of autonomy and realizing their own self-determination. This isn't a prescription for mass society, but it is the one thing that we all have in common: we are all slaves to the will of civilization so long as it exists.

We return to the 'mass dissent' mentioned earlier. Perhaps the 'unifying motive' is a channeling of the rage and misery that lies

⁶Aleksa, personal correspondence, Jan. 2003.

⁷Camatte, Jacques, *This World We Must Leave*, Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995.

beneath the façade of happiness and success. Perhaps a realization of this underlying factor will awaken revolutionaries from the civilized sleep of the work-consume-die reality.

State Crisis

What more could qualify as ‘state crisis’ than the mounting war efforts? This war, the product of civilization running on emptiness (literally), is the outcome of abusing and destroying the Earth and the relations of all life. The powerful are grabbing for the last drops of oil, air, water, and soil to buy and sell. We are seeing the process of collapse (ecological and civil), but this time on a global scale. The mounting situation (which will be dealt with in further detail in the next issue of *Species Traitor*) is possibly a look at the end of civilization.

This situation really doesn’t need a lot of elaboration. The kind of political and economic instability occurring here and now is a huge crisis, and we’re likely to see the worst outcomes for it. There is really no time better than now to attack the system while it’s at its weakest (despite its illusions, Marshal Law is a heavy potential, but we risk it either way).

What I’m interested in pointing to here is the possibilities that are opening up while the State is preoccupied with itself. All the major revolutions have taken place as state crises have weakened the power structure. It is at these points that the States’ control is heavily focused on one issue only. While the military is off in foreign lands, the State is left with the security that the totality and overbearing nationalism will keep us here at home from questioning what’s going on, or rising up to seriously contend to its action. The simplest possibility is usually the one right before you.

The days of the concrete reality that we exist in are numbered. Moving from this will be the act of beings seeking a true connection to the Earth and each other; otherwise it will never be completely obliterated. It is vital to realize that revolution is not an act, but a process. While it is primarily a mass uprising against an existing order, it historically remains as the reconstruction of relations. I’m interested in trying to draw on the ecological and evolutionary understanding of the human-animal as an image of what these relations look like. And yet, I’m interested in trying to make this move without ideological restraints. I’m not here to provide answers, only to open questions and possibilities.

The Role of Insurrection

At this point, it becomes vital to speak of insurrection and guerilla warfare. Insurrection is the act of people who simply refuse to sit by and wait for revolutions. However, like revolution, insurrection has its history of use by those who would rather control their own domestication rather than those who desire autonomy. Regardless, it is important to focus on its use for the purpose of liberation.

Insurrection remains a tactic for those who seek an outlet for their rage against the great domesticating force. Acts of insurrection are powerful not only in their contribution to revolutionary struggle, but in their refusal of the civilized consciousness, a refusal of the happiness and niceism of Capital.

Insurrection becomes all the more vital when channeled beyond the realm of Capital and transcends the whole of civilized relations. Insurrection is one of the most powerful acts of a revolutionary movement since it is ‘propaganda of the deed’. Not only is an individual or group of people breaking the totality of civilized restrictions, but they are empowering others to realize that this is a possibility, that another world awaits if they choose to make it.

helped bring those in power to that position. This was the case with the Spanish Revolution as well.

My interests aren't in forming some kind of mass ideology or for some mass change-over in consciousness. From what I've seen from past revolts, the denial of the individual to the 'will of the people' has only created soulless revolutionaries. The success of civilization has been in the subjugation of peoples, successful revolt will only come through their complete liberation. My understanding of past revolutions is essentially one of compromise, and this is an unfavorable aspect that I've skipped over so far. While realizing the potential for revolution, we should keep in mind whether or not one is even desirable. In order to address this it's important to take a step back and to look at what is being dealt with.

The revolution that I'm interested in isn't using propaganda to create a zombie army of those sacrificing themselves so they can perpetuate their own slavery. My interests lie in bringing about a situation where people can realize their full potential, as I spoke of earlier. Am I pushing my interests upon people? Perhaps if I was into movement building, but this is far from where I'm heading.

'Road to Revolution' is a movement building article, which addresses important questions of revolutionary discipline, but the methodology is not addressing the internalized technological structures. A revolutionary force will only be viable if it is made up of individuals who have collected on their own terms.

I'm not for any kind of 'mass consciousness' or mass anything, in fact, 'mass' is one of the underlying problems that comes with civilization. I'm most interested in autonomous resistance. The primacy in this essay on the preconditions for revolution is merely an estimation of the situation we now face. Frankly, I feel that we are seeing the final days of civilization and collapse is inevitable. However, the way that this beast falls remains up in the air. It most definitely will fall, but whether it is from within or from outside or both is up to us to determine.

World Permissiveness or Global Preoccupation

The 'world permissiveness' factor is always problematic, only in rightist/statist 'revolutions' (coups) have the major world powers been there to watch over or turn the other cheek. In all other cases, this remains a serious factor. No other major world power has interest in a trade of hands unless there is an economic incentive for them to do so (i.e. the new powers will offer trade deals, etc.).

It is possible for a revolutionary force to be successful while under this threat. The Cuban Revolutionary Army was able to defeat the US backed attacks after the revolution. But planning is a major factor. The Mexican Revolution was able to succeed because it occurred during World War I while the U.S. (who had immense economic interest in Mexico) was preoccupied.

These are things to take into consideration. We have to look at the world situation as things are and as they are heading. The U.S. is heading towards war with North Korea and Iraq, on top of the 'war on terrorism'. These two fronts definitely require the bulk of U.S. armed forces, whose deployment is already underway. North Korea has threatened World War III if the U.S. attacks, even though the possibility has already existed. With the U.S. spread out so thinly, things are still relatively open here. There is the chance of global preoccupation and if the U.S. is falling, it seems there would be plenty of nations with interest in keeping it from coming back. These are all things to take into consideration, albeit it they are all taking chances, but how long are we to sit and wait?

So far, this examination has been regarding revolution, but it should be said that these same principles would apply equally for insurrections or guerilla warfare. The connection will be dealt with further in coming sections.

Seizure or Abolition of State Power

As an anarchist, it's easy to see why the past revolutions have failed to produce any more desirable reality. As was mentioned earlier, the problem is that the entire terminology of revolution in the past centuries has revolved around Capital. Camatte (1995) extends on the definition of Capital to include the entire mode of production and its values. In this respect, capitalism and communism differ only in their methods of pursuit of Capital. Through this vision, humans are reduced to Capital, or proletarianized, meaning valued only by their potential as labor.

Past revolutions have typically been carried out within this realm of Capital. These revolutions have been the forbearers of modernization, and therefore have sought to only become their own slave drivers. Camatte continues, "Liberation begins with the refusal to perceive oneself in terms of the categories of capital, namely as proletarian, as member of the new middle class, capitalist, etc."⁸

To continue the process that Camatte has started, it is necessary to follow his understanding of Capital as the domesticator to the very source of domestication, civilization. In this we find that domestication comes hand in hand with agriculture/division of labor which is the origins of property and thus the State.⁹

From this point, we are in a clearer stance to understand the failures of past revolutions. The source of oppression lies in power itself, not in who holds it. In order to liberate oneself from these means, it is necessary to destroy power in all respects. So revolution would entail the abolition of power, whereas in the past it has only meant its seizure and redistribution.

⁸ibid, pg. 68.

⁹This is essentially the bottom line of the anarcho-primitivist critique of civilization. More on this critique in this issue of Species Traitor as well as the work of John Zerzan and his 'origins' essays.

This point is vital to an understanding of relations. I believe that humans are inherently 'good' beings, but power corrupts absolutely. It doesn't matter the intentions of who is chasing it, once they have it, their will is contested by their ability. It is only a matter of time before power takes over and the Earth and all life become mere pawns for the interests of power.

Past revolutions have been carried out by the means of a mass possessed by the propaganda of collectivity, nationalism and so on. This propaganda remains hollow words once the power has been seized. The people's faith is put entirely on some obscure Ideology or party line. The potential for liberation lies not in the ability to manipulate the masses into some sacrifice for the 'common good', but in the realization of a way of life that enables all life to realize autonomy and self-determination.

This brings us to a question of the 'movement' and interests of revolution.

Mass Movement or Autonomous Resistance

The talk of revolution is generally implying that it is in the best interests of those within the given system. Revolution is widely acknowledged as a mass-based uprising with a common goal (as I feel 'the Road to Revolution' aspires). Typically, this 'common goal' has been organized along the lines of the lowest common denominator of what people might want. The result of this is a larger mass of people, but you have all people reading into the 'party line' or ideology, what they want out of it. When you have Ideology, you have something which uses a specific agenda and plan for action in order to seize power, the outcome of these movements have always been failure. This applies to the Mexican Revolution, in which people would be propped up under the same banner of 'nationalism' and would only be self serving once in power, causing a revolving door of power and ensuing use of military force to crush those who