

“Homage to André Aubry” By Raoul Vaneigem¹

Those who struggle for the emancipation of Mankind and the end of market oppression do not need to know each other in order to recognize each other. My brief encounter with André Aubry² was enough for me to confirm that everywhere in the world there are voices capable of breaking the formidable silence that condemns each person to isolation and fear with the sole aims of obscuring awareness and swelling the size of the herd of resigned people.

André Aubry was one of the friends who helped me know the Zapatista movement better and who inspired me to ask the question, “In Europe, what lessons can we draw from the Zapatista experience?”

Why Europe?

Because it boasts of being the cradle of democracy but has become democracy’s coffin; it suffocates democracy under a blanket of corruption. Because commercial freedom tramples human freedom. Because in countries where there are no paramilitary groups, no death squads and no political assassinations exploited people resign themselves to their fates; they lay flat on the ground; they grovel as if they were still under the boots of the redoubtable tyrannies that, just yesterday, they didn’t hesitate to fight courageously. Let’s say it clearly: in Europe, the threats from the military and the police have never been so derisory and never before has there reigned so much voluntary servitude among the masses that it renders such threats virtually useless, because the majority of people bow their heads without needing a carrot or a stick. And, finally, because the worship of profitability, commodities and money at any price breaks the impetus for solidarity, rebellion, generosity, the instinct for life and a human sensibility [*a sens humain*] that the Paris Commune, the anarchist collectives of the Spanish Revolution and the Occupations Movement of May 1968 have indelibly inscribed in our history.

Some good people never fail to remind us that the armies of the bourgeoisie crushed the Commune, that the Stalinist party destroyed the Spanish collectives or that the mountain of May 68 gave birth to a generation of bureaucratic and wheeler-dealer rats highly valued by the State and the multinationals. The supposed duty to remember, which teaches us the horrors of the past, wars, massacres, the Holy Inquisition, pogroms, extermination camps and gulags, perpetuates the old dogma of a congenital inability of Mankind to vanquish evil, to free itself from secular oppression. We are supposed to believe that Man is a slave, incapable of creating his own destiny; that he is condemned to being only a cog in the economic machine that crushes the living in order to make it gush blood and money. While the ideologies of the political parties and groups have been emptied of their substance and have given way to a political cronyism that

¹ Raoul Vaneigem, “Hommage à André Aubry,” dated December 2007, sent to the First International Colloquium In Memory of André Aubry, which was held at San Cristobel de Las Casas, Chiapas, between 13 and 17 December 2007. Posted online by *La Voie du Jaguar* on 21 December 2007: <https://lavoiedujaguar.net/Hommage-a-Andre-Aubry>. Translated into English by NOT BORED! on 28 April 2021. All footnotes by the translator.

² André Aubry (1927-2007) was a French sociologist and activist. He lived in Chiapas, studying and defending indigenous culture, from 1973 until his death in a car accident.

imitates the promotional campaigns of the supermarkets, their corpses are presented to us as if they were novelties. That which has demonstrated its harmfulness in the past returns like odors from a sewer: liberalism, the imposture that identifies individual freedom with predation; nationalism, the warmonger; religious fanaticism; the debris of Bolshevism; and the nostalgias of fascism. After that, it is decreed that Man never learns anything and commits the same errors again and again. But it is only from the history of their inhumanity that people learn such lessons. If they repeat the worst aberrations of the past in parodies that are both ridiculous and bloody, it is because everything works to make them forget that, from century to century, they have dared to try to live better.

To me, the suffocation of individual freedom by liberal individualism, by the lie of identity nationalism, by the imposture of so-called Communism, by corrupted socialism and democracy, by the dictatorship of economic freedom is “defeat.” I do not speak of “the defeat” of the Paris Commune, crushed by Versailles, or the workers and peasants councils liquidated by Lenin and Trotsky, or the Spanish libertarian collectives destroyed by the Stalinists. Because what the freedoms of the living have constructed, which the weapons of death have apparently vanquished, is perpetually reborn. It is from the incompleteness of these projects that we must draw our lessons, because it is up to us to go further.

My way of rendering homage to André Aubry, of saluting the battle in Oaxaca³ and of affirming my solidarity with the struggles of the Zapatistas is to contribute to a universal awakening of consciousness, to recall that in each person there exists a real life, a life that wants to blossom, a life full of creativity, capable of breaking the formidable economic machine that breaks us but is also in the process of breaking itself.

There is no greater pleasure and, consequently, nothing more effective than improving our everyday lives, knowing that everywhere in the world there are millions of beings who are guided by the same passion, even if the powers of dead money imprison the oppressed in despair and resignation. Acting on our environment so that it favors our daily existence is working in favor of humanity, because we know that the happiness of one is nothing if it doesn’t aim at the happiness of all.

My conviction is that the violence of the living will sweep away the violence of market oppression. I have no pretenses that *¡Venceremos !*;⁴ I only desire that the *Queremos vivir*,⁵ which is the spontaneous cry of childhood, will grow louder and louder in each woman and each man. It is from this childhood that the childhood of the world to which we aspire will be born.

³ Circa May 2006, during which a non-violent teachers’ strike was attacked by the police. In response, the residents formed the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca.

⁴ “We will win”; Spanish in original.

⁵ “We want to live”; Spanish in original.