

“Create Territories”
An excerpt from *Appel à la vie contre la tyrannie étatique
et marchande*

by Raoul Vaneigem¹

It is useless to expect that the arrogance of the State and the greed of the multinationals will tolerate our resolution to create and propagate collectives that are hostile to all forms of power – to begin with, the predation of natural resources. But it is equally obvious that we, on our part, don’t intend to tolerate their bootstrapped, helmeted repression, which is supported by journalistic cowardice. We will not kneel before the programmed desertification of that which lives in and around us.

The crushing of the communalist attempt at Notre-Dames-des-Landes is a warning shot, among others, by the global order and its governmental cogs. The Mexican government and its paramilitary units threaten but do not stop the Zapatista collectives. The interests of the West and its oil-producing dictatorships isolate the fighters in Rojava who fight against this party of death, of which Islamized barbarism isn’t the only component, in favor of a society resolved to instaurate, not [merely] the rights of a people, nor [merely] the rights of the people, but those of the human being.

Life is our only demand. We refuse its shrunken, amputated and sacrificed version. We want it sovereign. We want it ceaselessly creating and re-creating our existence and our environment. For us, it is the ferment of a society in which the harmonization of individual and collective desires is the fruit of an impassioned experience. To push such an enterprise even further, we have no other weapon than life itself.

You who accuse us of being utopians, have the honesty to admit that, in matters of utopia, you have chosen the worst one: the belief in a liberating economy, in a technological progress that leads to happiness. You are up to your

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neck in shit, and yet you dismiss as fanciful dreamers those who escape it in order to prepare a territory where they can breathe without getting bogged down.²

Our true enemies are the hordes of profit, the addicts of crazy money, the mechanical puppets that only have the intelligence of those who control them. The Mafiosi wars that they wage are not ours; they do not concern us.

They know everything about death because it is the only thing that they know how to give. They know nothing of the riches that life dispenses to those who know how to reap them. It is an unknown territory for those who have the creativity and imagination that every child, woman and man has when he or she listens to his or her will to live.

The fear of throwing oneself into battle in order to realize one's most cherished desires is one of the most deplorable effects of voluntary servitude. Though it is rhetorical, Danton's exhortation, "We need audacity, more audacity, always audacity!"³ once again finds its pertinence if it animates those who attempt the adventure of territories that have been wrenched back from the State and the commodity; if it causes them to exceed their simple resistance to the growth of harmful effects and, on the basis of their acquired solidarity, to create, however modestly, radically new modes of collective assembly.

Everywhere that the subversive guerrilla and insurrectionary war have obeyed the abject slogan "Power comes from the barrel of a gun,"⁴ their triumphs have organized a situation that is often worse than the old one. The overthrown State has been succeeded by another, not less oppressive one. The guns at the service of power are turned against those who, by picking them up, gave them the weight of liberty. So-called Soviet Russia, Maoist China, Castroist Cuba, Gueïvarism, FARC, Zengakuren, the Red Army Faction and other paramilitary Leftisms – were these reversals [*palinodies*] not enough for you?

A lesson not to be forgotten. The first defeat of the Spanish Revolution of 1936 dates from its beginnings, when the militarization required by the Communist Party managed to transform into a disciplined soldiery the volunteers who, along with the armed columns of Durruti and his friends, broke the first fascist offensive. The recuperation of the working-class initiatives was conducted in concert with the appearance of an allegedly revolutionary government in which the libertarian organizations (the CNT and the FAI) sat alongside Catalan nationalists, Socialists, Communists on orders from Moscow.

² *Publisher's note:* [*s'embrener* means] *Se salir, s'embourber* [to get dirty, to get stuck in the mud].

³ Georges Jacques Danton (1759-1794), a French revolutionary, exhorting his countrymen and women to defeat the invaders led by the Duke of Brunswick.

⁴ A quote from Mao Zedong.

The functional kills. Poetry is a perpetual rebirth.

The repressive power of the State resides less in its cops than in the State that is inside us, the interiorized State, which bludgeons us with its fear, its culpability, its astutely programmed despair.

The majority of libertarian collectives have succumbed to the residual defects of the old world, which hinder their fight for a new one. Little leaders grow easily on the dunghills that they maintain.

How many libertarian micro-societies have we seen sink into rivalries for power? To fight against barbarism and the party of death with the weapons of barbarism and death condemns one to a new form of voluntary servitude.

[...] ⁵ The committed position of [being in favor of] life keeps us from forming a party. See what's become of the movement of the Indignes, which, in Spain, gave way to the Podemos Party, or the anti-parliamentarianism of an Italian group, which was very quickly induced to constitute the Five Star Movement and to flash brown lights in the lower chambers of the government. In January 1938, in Republican Spain, the Stalinist Togliatti had already revealed the trick. He declared that he preferred the opening of a single front with the libertarian bodies (the CNT and the FAI), rather than risk confrontation with them. Because, he said, the union would permit the definitive defeat of anarchism for the very good reason that, in the eyes of the working masses, the CNT had the advantage of not participating in the government.

To cultivate the gardens of terrestrial life (there are no others) is to invent territories that – offering no handle to the enemy, neither appropriation, nor power, nor representation – render us elusive. Not invincible, but inalienable, like the life that perpetual rebirth delivers from its ancestral yoke. No destruction will bring to an end to any experiment that we are determined to begin again without a break.

The more we develop the existential adventure of life-to-be-explored, the more we will dissuade the cadavers, galvanized by power, from transforming the earth into a cemetery. It is enough that the mechanism that moves the bureaucratic *palotins* ⁶ of the governmental authorities seize up and squeal. Have confidence in yourselves, not in a God, a master or a guru. Blunders and errors don't matter; they will correct themselves. Abandon Sisyphus at the rock of ambition, which his enslavement pushes day and night.

Our education has only taught us the game of death. It is a rigged game since it is understood that death wins it right away.

It is into a game of life that will initiate ourselves. One neither wins nor loses it. What a puzzle for the political storekeepers who, other than supply and

⁵ Ellipsis in published excerpt.

⁶ Term coined by Alfred Jarry (1873-1907). One might say: minor functionaries.

demand, see nothing, perceive nothing. This didn't prevent the governmental *bulldozers*⁷ from crushing the collective gardens, the sheep pen, the homemade buildings and the social dreams of Notre-Dame-des-Landes. Certainly not, but the dead eyes of power do not suspect that everything returns to what's basic, reconstructs itself, begins again and becomes firmer.

From infancy, the human being possesses a playful genius. It is this genius that stimulates the struggle for life; the poetry into which it breathes life restores to it the energy that the absurd competitive struggles of survival and work drain away. Do not be surprised that its tiny sparks set alight a world that aspires to the illuminations of joy, of which it has been dispossessed.

The surest guarantee of the territories that have been liberated from governmental and commodity tyranny is the fact that the inhabitants accord priority to new modes of life, to the development of creative pleasure, to festive solidarity, to alliances with other hitherto-scorned species, to the progress of the human consciousness that excludes all forms of hierarchy and power.

Rather than describe the insurrection of life as pacific, we should speak of its pacification. We are caught between a will to live that doesn't tolerate prohibitions or oppression and a system whose function is to exploit and repress the living. How to fight a war by avoiding it? That is the challenge.

At the periphery of this vital radiance, this indivisible core, there exists a zone of friction in which the old hostility to life is revealed, a force of aggressive inertia, accumulated over the centuries by voluntary servitude. At the margins of liberated territories there is a *no man's land*,⁸ a zone of disquiet, a fringe of anxiety. This fear will fade to the extent that the core of life will radiate further and further, but it is here that we see the necessity of eradicating the threats of destruction that weigh upon our reinvention of life. Some are stigmatized as "troublemakers" ["casseurs"], but the real troublemakers, those responsible for global degradation, are the drab palotins of finance.

*What's free*⁹ is a weapon that doesn't kill. It is completely legitimate that we have the right to refuse to pay the taxes, fees and tolls of all kinds that the State and the financial mafias that manage it impose upon us. Formerly used (in part) for the public good, this money now bails out funds misappropriated from banks.

Individual action will soon fall under the blows of the laws decreed by profit. Collective action, on the other hand, assures impunity.

⁷ English in original.

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⁹ Cf. Raoul Vaneigem, "What's Free is the Absolute Weapon" (2011)
<http://www.notbored.org/sine-mensuel.html>.

“We will no longer pay” is an appropriate response to those who impoverish us so as to enrich themselves. We will no longer pay for the trains, for public transport. We will no longer pay the State, we will no longer pay its taxes and its fees. We decree the autonomy of the places of life where cooperatives and collective inventiveness are setting the foundations for a society of abundance in which everything is free.

The Zapatistas in Chiapas have shown that small autonomous and federated collectives can cultivate the earth by and for all, provide medical care, and produce renewable and free natural energy (an option completely ignored by the ecological mafias). It is essential that what's free, like life itself, penetrates into our customs and habits and mentalities, from which it has been banned, excluded and prohibited for millennia. But no illusions: the battle against the chains with which we have deliberately been shackled could be very long. Which is a good reason to devote oneself to that battle immediately.