

“Salute to Diego”

By Raoul Vaneigem¹

There is no ordinary existence that doesn't secretly contain a treasure. It most often escapes us when the key to the dreams with which our childhood plays gets lost. Adult age deliberately loses it, because education tries so hard to steal it from us. History has to shake us so that suddenly we recover it.

The personal history of Diego² collided with the history made by all and against all. He was prepared for it. His dream was called revolution. This was an idea that floated in the air of the times, of course. But those times were immemorial and the idea had congealed into a reality in which submission and rebelliousness overlapped in an incessant tumult.

What the writer of serialized novels Eugène Sue called *Les Mystères du peuple*³ had their sources in a fatality in which, for millennia, the oppressed have groveled, terrorized by their masters, who are themselves gnawed at by the fear of an always imminent revolt. Like millions of others, Diego lived this laborious existence immensely tired and so full of desire that a new life at hand actually became tangible.

The anecdotal course of everyday life merits an analysis that, instead of dwelling on the recounting of events, focuses on the genesis of their accomplishment. In the former, what is done is done and belongs to the past but, in the latter, something is still being born, its nature is to trouble the present, it constitutes a threat to the order of things, it disturbs the economic and governmental order that reifies the present, packages it like a commodity and forgets that what's alive easily breaks out of such packaging.

Real revolution, which I take to mean one that makes of life lived without constraints, hierarchies and bureaucracies the basis of a truly human society, comes from an existence that is always damaged and always being reconstructed. The libertarian collectives of the Spanish Revolution of 1936 had the time to demonstrate that such a society was possible. The insurrection of life that is appearing in France, Algeria, the Sudan, Mexico and Rojava⁴ comes from memories of lived experience whose thoughts dissipate nightmares and, despite appearing futile, awaken [people] to the reality of dreams.

Looking over these pages, a remark by Diego struck me. The man who'd felt on his neck the cold steel of a pistol wielded by a Falangist killer liked to say: “I took up arms but I never killed anyone.” I like to think that there is in this vital energy, which always guided him and of

¹ Raoul Vaneigem, “*Salut à Diego*,” August 2019, preface to the French translation of Abel Paz's book *Chumberas y alacranes (Memorias 1921-1936)* by Pierre-Jean Courney-Bourgeat and Sarah Feuilherade, published Spring 2020 under the title *Scorpions et figues de Barbarie. Mémoires 1921-1936* by Rue des Cascades. Translated from the French by NOT BORED! on 3 July 2020. All footnotes by the French-to-English translator.

² Born Diego Camacho Escámez in Spain in 1921, “Abel Paz” (Paz is “peace” in Spanish) was an anarchist and anti-fascist who fought in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1937. His books include a history of that war, a biography of Buenaventura Durruti, and a four-volume memoir. He died in Spain in 2009.

³ Circa 1842-1843.

⁴ All of which saw popular insurrections in 2019.

which we are the custodians, a power that advances on all fronts, never killing, never giving an inch.