Poking Around...

Anonymous

Summer 2022

Contents

Alone in the forest?

"(Isère) Conspiracy theorist and angry with the State, he set fire to cell towers"
"(Drôme) The Pierrelatte arsonist: anti-5G but not anti-fibre optics"
"(Rhône) Two monks arrested for setting fire to 5G cell towers"
"(Paris) Anti-vaccine, he sabotaged 26 5G antennas to save France from the Covid-19 conspiracy"
- Headlines from the last months

State institutions have counted hundreds of acts of sabotage against telecommunication infrastructures since 2018. Arsoned cell towers, severed fibre optic cables, burned exchange points, ransacked telecommunication cabinets: these practices have spread throughout the territory and have clearly seen an increase in the last two years. The quality of the saboteurs' nocturnal activities has also taken a leap: actions affecting particularly sensitive nodes, coordinated actions or repeated in the same geographic area, some aimed at disrupting the communications of a specific structure, in a specific area or at a specific time... In short, attacks continue to target these infrastructures despite repeated warnings from the authorities, cries of alarm from operators and a not insignificant number of arrests. After all, they remain difficult to protect from a sneaky cut or a nocturnal fire.

These actions undeniably target the veins of technological domination, but the particular motivations and broader aspirations of the hands that carry them out often remain unknown. However, repression (one of whose primary tasks is to identify the authors of mischief that disrupts the smooth functioning of society) has revealed something of the diversity of the people who engage in these moonlit strolls. Nevertheless we should remain cautious with the information published in newspapers or the words of those convicted "quoted" by journalists. We don't want to adopt the "profiles" and "categories" established by the state institutions for the purposes of mapping, profiling and repression. We have seen in recent years quite different people being convicted for attacks on the permanent connectivity. For example during the peak of the Gilets Jaunes, a number of small groups carried out sabotage within the framework or on the margins of this kaleidoscopic movement of revolt. Others who were convicted specified in court their ecological orientation, their opposition to 5G for its harmful effects on health and the environment, their leftist affiliation or their refusal of control. Still others, even when confronted with incriminating evidence and finally convicted, refused to engage in lengthy explanations in court or in the press at all. Visions that are not very liberating could certainly hide behind their stubborn silence. However, it is not because you refuse to express yourself in front of a cop or a judge and because you see no sense in explaining your tensions and ideas to a journalist, that you would necessarily have no "problem being associated with conspiracy theorists or the extreme right". In the same way, it is not because you don't belong to a more or less "militant" milieu, because you don't have a "solidarity committee" to defend your ideas when the cops come knocking, or because you don't write public letters to explain your actions, that you are automatically part of "would-be Nazis" who plan the outbreak of a racial war by spreading chaos, or of "conspiracy theorists" who stuff their heads on the digital web or of "fundamentalists" who see technological innovations as the work of the devil.

It must be said, the vast majority of attacks against telecommunication infrastructures have not been followed by a communique and have not provided any clues of ideological affiliation to investigators or to the wary guardians of the family tree. In recent months, however, headlines such as those mentioned at the beginning of this text have challenged what some might

call the "benevolence" towards the silence of the authors of these attacks. They sometimes even provoked *a fit of existential fever* among companions. The reasoning seems airtight: if there have been people who are rather unsavoury (such as those enlightened by God, patriotic activists, or particularly confused beings who are always looking for what isn't there) behind some of these anonymous actions, then every anonymous attack should be treated as possibly, or very possibly, done by dubious people.

The lapse in logic is obvious. But reasoning, arguments and critical or in-depth evaluations are ignored. Because it is easier to believe that we are alone in the forest than to see that other non-despicable people can also move through the bushes (people we don't know and who have visions and sensitivities which are perhaps or probably very different from our own). Alone in the forest, alone as anarchists, pure servants of a lofty ideal, without contradictions in our lives, without "stains" on our heritage, without doubts in our thoughts and without "faults" in our relationships and way of living, clear as a full moon and without any "revolutionary" or "insurrectionary illusion." It is always possible to lie to ourselves. It is always possible to build houses of cards that will be blown away by reality. However, there are also other paths that – in order to give meaning to the struggle and meaning to our lives – do not make abstraction of the world around us and do not put our ideas and those who embody them on a pedestal above all possibility of error.

Because *we are not alone in the forest*. We are not the only human factors of disorder. Humans are not even the only factors that disturb the fragile equilibriums by which this crumbling world seeks to move forward. Other people act, perhaps with less developed ideas than yours or perhaps with more sharpened sensitivities than mine, driven by an immediate desire for retaliation against a mortifying system, by a dark revenge against a life deprived of meaning or by an ideological or religious belief in conflict with the technological march of the world.

Intentions

"*Because ultimately, the essential question is not about the supposed motives of complete strangers who we will never know anything about anyway (except in the case of arrest, which we don't wish on anyone), but how we want, in the midst of the social war, to make acts resonate that speak to us and resound with our ideas. Whether they are collective or individual, diffuse or specific, widely shareable or wickedly heretical, completely anonymous or labeled subversive, out of the spotlight or publicized by their authors in different ways.*" - *Wanted interconnectés*, July 2021

Faced with the fact that the forest doesn't only shelter anarchists, there are basically two possibilities, with, as usual, a thousand nuances in-between.

The first one consists of thinking that the "acts of revolt", "news of disorder", "fragments of the social war" or whatever we want to call them, certainly make up the setting in which we act, but we must be careful not to lend them intentions since nobody besides us shares anarchist ideas (at least in their entirety – in contrast to ideologies that can be more or less cut into pieces according to the situation or the tendency of the moment). As intentions escape from the darkness of the forest and give a particular colour to these acts, a colour that on principle will never entirely please us (given that anarchists are the only ones who share anarchist ideas), the more there will be the need to affirm or clarify our intentions and motivations versus those of others. Any silence on our part could give fuel to intentions we do not share. We are then forced to light torches in

the middle of the forest and to make sure that the bonfires we light burn even stronger, higher and brighter than those of others. *Anarchist identity* risks becoming our main concern and we'll end up establishing (even within our own circles) a kind of catechism that takes stock of the good and the bad points. Ultimately we'll fail to see the diversity and richness of individuals as a fruit of freedom, seeing it instead as a terrible threat.

The second possibility is always to start from ourselves, from our ideas and aspirations as anarchists, and to understand the other "factors of disorder" not as things to be assimilated or presented as if they were – unconsciously – inspired by the sacred fire of anarchy, but simply as elements that have their weight and their meaning in the *concrete* (and not platonic or idealistic) war waged by humans. A "social" war, if you like, in the sense that it crosses all of society and always revolves around the question of power (in all its variations), and where anarchists are those who defend the necessity of the destruction of power rather than its reorganization. This "social war" is not an expression of the tension towards "total liberation" nor towards "anarchy". It's a conflict from which social relations emerge and change, which in turn shape the modalities of this "social war". The (quietly or loudly) expressed intentions of those caught up in this war are to be placed in their historical context and not to be removed from it to compare them to a pantheon of abstractions.

This second possibility (apologies for the crude simplification) does not take the intentions as the *only* reference, as the *only* indicator of reality, but as *one* among others without denying their importance. The need to trace a family tree of the "acts of revolt" or to probe the motivations of their authors, is less felt here – as is the need to systematically provide explanations of your own. The explanations of singular actions give way to the elaboration of a projectuality that tries to go beyond each of them. The fact that this projectuality has insurrectionary aims (the creation of a rupture) or others, doesn't necessarily make a big difference. It is true, as some critics point out, that this can lead to completely dismissing the importance of intentions. We run the risk of blinding ourselves to this factor, which may not be the only one but which remains one all the same. Even if "intentions" behind the actions of revolt are not the exclusive element that could interest anarchists in what they generate, this should not lead to the complete denial of their influence in the reality of the social war.

Actions that speak for themselves?

"*For nothing can be expressed which such a charge of menace as that which is not expressed.*" - Stig Dagerman

Things are of course more complicated in this complex reality that is ours. All simplifications and insights end up tumbling into a beautiful mess. So let's add a couple of reflections.

On the one hand, the silence of the insurgents can sometimes obscure their intentions. On the other hand, it also responds to the practical need not to provide clues to the state. Similarly, the need to clarify reasons in a confused context is hardly in doubt – such as a context of bitter discontent that comes into contact with a neo-fascist strategy (as with the current opposition to the health pass and the attacks against structures such as vaccination centres). But it is also necessary to remain lucid on the relative weight of words and of what they succeed in expressing and conveying. This is obviously true for any linguistic expression; from a poster to a leaflet, from

a discussion to a newspaper or a claim. All of them are dependant on the capacity of the other to understand what is written or said.

If, for example, we still want to appreciate the actions of others as diverse expressions within the "social war" (from attacks on the police in the peripheries to the anonymous sabotage of infrastructures) then obviously another way of doing so has to be found than simply weighing them on the small scale of anarchism. Or else we will have to exclusively refer to actions that are duly claimed by anarchists. That would be the only way to avoid any risk of speculations, hasty assessments and harmful inquisitions. And even then, we know that this validation would only be temporary. An anarchist who accomplished a beautiful action yesterday can always turn out to be a scumbag in their daily relations today, or a traitor tomorrow...

It is important to take the time to critically examine our relationships with other beings in the forest, as well as our ways of acting. There is no recipe to be applied nor jargon to be recited. At the same time, there can't exist instructions that must be respected on "how to do" things under penalty of being accused of wanting to hide behind vile would-be Nazis and other zealots. *No one* (not even the most narrow-minded) should try to impose on their companions the obligation to explain their actions, to present and justify their project in detail, to label their actions according to certain prescriptions, just to avoid the bitterness of some chronicler of the social war. It will always be up to the individual to act as they see fit. You can choose to maintain the shadows that give shelter to the activities of others and this can mean leaving some in ignorance and misunderstanding. Or you can inspire others by the clear and precise affirmation of he ideas and feelings that have inspired an action and this will entail disappointing some by a display considered too indiscrete.

After all, *do actions really speak for themselves*? On the one hand, yes. In the sense that they are the manifestation of a concrete attack against a concrete structure or person. The destruction of a cell tower is the destruction of a cell tower, no matter how one wishes to interpret it. On the other hand, no. Because they cannot by themselves express all the intentions, tensions and sensitivities that pushed the author to carry them out. Thus the actions are what they are: a destructive material fact that can inspire or open the imagination (or not). No more, no less. At the same time, it is all these actions that make up the surroundings in which one acts, and of which one is a part. They make sense in a context, and not only thanks to the possible explicit expression of the authors. They can never be the exclusive property of their authors while disturbing, shaking up, questioning the lives of other people. And the authors will never be the only ones to give them meaning (no matter if it is to appreciate or to condemn them). Faced with this, the fact of claiming or not claiming an action does not radically change the situation. The "others" are not simple passive spectators. They don't undergo without flinching both the actions and the meanings that their authors want to give them. They are directly implicated, given that their lives are changed (in a more or less ephemeral way) by the action, given the disgust or the enthusiasm that it inspires in them, etc.

So, can a claim help to understand an action? Of course, but it can also make it incomprehensible to its readers. It can be so inflated or backed up with so many words that the statement almost ends up drowning the action and burying the simple suggestion it always contains: *let's destroy what destroys us*. By the way, does the fact of claiming protect us from being lumped together with unsavoury people? We're inclined to put all of this into perspective given that the forest is vast and that actions resonate far beyond our own words (the "effects" of propaganda – whether through anarchist newspapers or claims – will always remain relative). And we don't

consider the claim as a kind of magic solution, a bicarbonate that would solve all the problems posed by actions and their possible interpretations.

Left, right, left, right: outside of it!

"*That leftists are on the streets hand in hand with fascists/conspiracy theorists for weeks should alert us to the danger of the idea of common struggle (which means that one doesn't care who one struggles with as long as we have the same practices and the same target). One forgets that these people whose actions one applauds or who one demonstrates with have positions opposed to ours on just about everything, and that we would be their target in other contexts.*" - *Des réfractaires solidaires*, in their claim for the arson of an Orange vehicle in Grenoble, September 2021

For several months, a large part of the opposition to the government's restrictive health measures seems to be led by right-wing figures. In other countries as well (such as Italy, the Netherlands and Germany), would-be Nazis have taken to the streets in large numbers and have made their presence clearly felt in what are otherwise very diverse mobilizations. On several occasions, anarchists have been attacked by fascist groups, and fortunately, the opposite has also happened. However, being on the same terrain of conflict does not necessarily imply appropriating the indigestible vocabulary of opportunists in search for "common fronts" or theorizing "objective alliances" as a political strategy. We always have the possibility to slam the door and to abandon a terrain of struggle which doesn't seem to offer any possibility of subversion or of actions that carry freedom. At the same time, no conflict will totally correspond to all anti-authoritarian criteria. To act on a conflictual terrain which is not "pure" (and which terrain would be?) doesn't mean to support the authoritarianism which can be present there. The question will always be much more about *how* we act, and with which *perspective.*

On the other side of the Rhine, there are large parts of the radical and libertarian left who accuse those who defend anonymous attacks on telecommunication or energy infrastructures of "joining forces" with the Nazis or at least, of playing their game (since Nazi activists are generally not very fond of claims and also theorize about attacking infrastructure to precipitate *Tag X*, the Day of Societal Collapse and the beginning of the "race war"). In addition, attacks on infrastructure are no longer seen as a sabotage of the techno-world but as evidence of Nazi virulence since much of the terrain of 5G opposition seems to be occupied by openly conspiracy-minded (*Querdenker*) and far-right-friendly committees. Once the para-police principle that "unclaimed action against infrastructure equals Nazi action" is established, unclaimed actions are discredited by antifascist collectives and circles of the movement. All the more so since some of them (fans of collective and civilizing progress) cannot understand the subversive significance of attacks on electricity or virtual connectivity which is, in their eyes, a "common good".

A little sentence of Orwell – certainly not an enemy of all authority – remains disturbingly topical in the face of the current technological restructuring of domination (however it might be received): "The real division is not between conservatives and revolutionaries, but between authoritarians and libertarians." Across the Rhine, these voices coming from the German radical and/or libertarian left accuse the anarchists of wanting to unleash a "civil war" through attacks on infrastructure (whose main goal is to create disorder and to undermine technological chains, whether practices are inserted or not in an insurrectionary projectuality). And then, the accusing finger raised, they insist that such attacks should at least be accompanied by political certificates

of good will ("social justice" and "progressive emancipation" rather than the unleashing of freedom, "against the rulers" but always showing understanding towards the submission and adherence of the ruled). In fact, they only demand to stay within the good old opportunist tradition which is certainly willing to use the weapon of sabotage, but only if it serves as a vehicle and megaphone for their *political* aims.

What if anarchists here and elsewhere end up doing more or less the same? By demanding explanations for sabotage actions of infrastructure, by distancing themselves *effectively* from any action that is not claimed as "anarchist", by seeing only the hand of Nazis, of conspiracy theorists – and why not, it was a classic of the last century: of foreign secret services – behind sabotage actions whose authors decide to remain in the shadows? They would end up rejecting any vision or desire that wishes and works for an *uncontrolled* multiplication of the sabotage of telecommunication, energy and logistic infrastructures. They would only accept and value the multiplication of sabotage actions if it's *subject to* ideological control. Does this mean defending freedom, or rather fearing it?

The fact that fascists, conspiracy theorists or even monks have attacked cell towers doesn't make it any less relevant to attack these structures, to encourage sabotage against them, to wish and work for the uncontrollable multiplication of these attacks. On the other hand, it could perhaps compel us to think more about why these actions can be suggested, why we really desire their diffusion, i.e. to reflect in order to enhance our perspectives. To desert the terrains where others are also active is not an option and to systematically stamp actions does not solve the question of the "same terrain." We have to look even further: to the perspective that we give to our action, to the ideas that we disseminate, to the methodologies that we suggest and to the projects that we elaborate.

Which freedom?

"*To unleash freedom is to accept the unexpected that disorder carries within it. It is to accept that freedom is not always sweet, but can also have a bloody face, and that we still want it. We do not want freedom emptied of risks, nor do we want to demand that freedom brings us its certificates of good conduct before welcoming it. That would not be freedom, it would be domestication camouflaged in libertarian clothes, the best ground for the seed of authority to start growing again.*" - *La forêt de l'agir*, April 2021

Which perspectives should be elaborated then? We could perhaps start here with those that we can understand but which inspire us the least. For example, the one that often slips between the lines but has difficulty in making itself explicit. The perspective that has as its main goal the existence and the qualitative and quantitative strengthening of the anarchist movement. A stronger, larger, better organized movement which would know how to face the obscure forces of fascism, the conspiracy theorist manipulations of genuine anger and the leftisms whose role seems to be to accompany capitalism and domination towards more sustainable, more technological, more equitable futures. A movement that dares to take itself as a point of reference and develops a capacity of diffusion, of attack and of relevance. A capacity that is sufficient to constitute a real force capable of weighing in on the public debate, of making the difference in local struggles and of chasing the Nazis out of the demonstrations.

There is a strong risk that the quantitative strengthening of the anarchist movement – even if difficult to imagine (after all, do we really think that anarchist ideas can be shared by masses of people today?) – will end up being satisfied with the *image* of such a strengthening. The mirror-effect easily provokes showing-off, quickly emptying the struggle to replace it by an image that is mistaken for reality. In the end, such a perspective generally aims above all on the strengthening of the *anarchist identity*, in order to be at daggers drawn... with the other inhabitants of the forest. This identity tends to have an inflated sense of self and to replace the quality of substance by the prominence of form. It ends up measuring itself in comparison to all other identities in the mirror of representation.

However, other paths are still possible. Although they are certainly a little more murky or dangerous. Paths that are not made for those who are too afraid of the mud or who can't stand working in the shadows. Paths at the end of which no guarantees exist, no recognition awaits us. Paths which do not take the mere existence and survival of anarchists as the alpha and omega of subversion or anarchy. This path climbs, digs and sneaks to derail the train of Progress and of the current society. We don't want to renounce the diffusion of our ideas (by various means) and underestimate the usefulness and necessity of anarchist criticism. But the path we're talking about aims above all at contributing to the upheaval of the situation, to the insurrectionary rupture, to the breakdown of what maintains the productive and social structures in place. This project, this projectuality, doesn't aim at the numerical growth of the anarchist movement, nor at reinforcing its popularity, but at precipitating conflictual situations towards a wider upheaval. Because working towards the uncontrolled multiplication of actions and towards an unanticipated disconnection could allow the emergence of freedom. Or better, it is one of the faces of the freedom that is setting sail today.

That some people whose intentions we don't share or others whose intentions we don't know at all are also active doesn't inspire us with paralysing fear, nor does it lead us to participate in an exhibitionist one-upmanship (a trap as old as the world, known and set by all the intelligence services of yesterday and today). Instead it motivates us to improve our suggestions, our projectuality and our ethics. Above all, to push further, with our means and modest capacities, the urgent demolition of the current society.

Anonymous
Poking Around...
Summer 2022