Targets That Do Not Exist Anywhere Else

a counter-proposal to Targets That Exist Everywhere & another critique of the militarisation of the anarchist attack

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Who would've thought? You would like to finally achieve something, would like to finally kick off the social revolution with your own actions. So you go out at night, alone, in pairs or with a whole gang of accomplices... and when you wake up the next morning, you realize that once again it was only the big shot's or yuppie neighbor's car that you've messed with, and that the visible traces of the deed have already been swept up by the city's cleaning service. Maybe you even meet the neighbor himself, who greets you joyfully from the open second or third convertible before he sets off to buy a new, fancier car. Well, it is perhaps less frequent that the big shot neighbor's car gets got and if so, then it nevertheless usually gives substantially more cause for satisfaction, because the city council cleaning up a charred car wreck is nevertheless somewhat more overtaxed and even the richest elites nevertheless are a bit annoyed – yes, sometimes even a bit fearful – that someone

set fire to her car. Most of the time it is rather the cars of some big corporations that are globally or locally involved in gentrification, prison construction, war, camps, border and the deportation industry and sometimes also in the expansion of the smart, technological prison in which we all find ourselves. And of course my heart also leaps for joy whenever I spy a burned out, flattened, painted or otherwise demolished vehicle of this kind on the side of the road, even when I read about it in an anarchist newspaper/brochure from a place near or far, and sometimes even when I learn of such an event in the not-yet-entirely-irrelevant expanses of the Internet. And yet: when I hear the proposal to "cross the threshold from symbolic resistance to material damage to the enemy infrastructure" and this expression of will is backed up in this context by listing arson attacks mainly against vehicles of corresponding companies as examples of a practical expression of this proposal (to be found in the brochure *Targets That Exist Everywhere – a strategic proposal for building a common front against the profiteers of war and repression*), then considerable doubts creep over me as to what extent the declared goal can be achieved in this way at all.

In fact, I have often wondered to what extent certain recurring targets of attack – and these certainly include the company vehicles of the various firms that are identified as existing everywhere – do not rather contribute to ritualizing the attacks on domination, i.e. above all, to make them a symbolic act that – while perhaps expressing a certain anger, opposition, etc. in a relatively irreconcilable way – is far from causing material damage of any significance and so also becomes, to a certain extent, calculable, predictable, offsetable. This does not mean that such an attack has no value. It can restore one's agency or, perhaps just another name for it, one's dignity, it can encourage others, it can intimidate, unsettle and make the right people think. It can make both the oppressed and the rulers realize that acts of aggression are always possible, no matter how controlled and ordered a particular space may be, and it can be an act of satisfaction, of revenge. All of this has its value, all of

this can even ignite or incite a gigantic potential in certain situations that can result in uprisings and revolts, even if this can very rarely be predicted. And yet, a burning van belonging to a prison construction company, a logistics company, a car dealership, a technology company, etc., however much it may be a symbol of certain struggles, is only rarely more than that, is only rarely capable of disrupting processes so significantly, of hitting the infrastructure so violently, that it would or even could create a moment of departure worth mentioning, that the logistics of rule would be disrupted decisively enough, production sites would come to a standstill, construction sites would stop running, and supplies to the front lines of war and repression would fail to arrive. This much realism is necessary if one does not want to lose oneself in a self-referential, ideologized and ritualized practice.

Where is the creativity in identifying worthwhile targets, one wonders, flipping through the pages of the *Targets That Exist Everywhere* brochure? The answer seems to be provided by an otherwise unremarkable note at the beginning of the proposal: "It should not be enough for us [...] to search each time anew for suitable solidarity actions, but we propose to collect information about the enemies of freedom and to disseminate it in such a way that they become known everywhere." But why shouldn't we always reconsider where to start our attacks? Simply attacking more and more of the same targets, with the same methods, seems to me to be a quantitative argument that also ignores the fact that this is – even if the authors of the brochure seem to overlook this – a strategy that has been reproduced persistently and relatively comprehensively over the past decades, which would be difficult to increase quantitatively anyway and which, moreover, has not really led to the collapse of domination as of yet. The fact that companies avoid certain regions because they are attacked there may seem like a success at first glance (and it is, just not in an absolute sense), but it also means that these companies set up their locations elsewhere, where they remain relatively

unbothered. This has only moderately harmed power itself, even in the regions that were originally avoided. It is not my intention to minimize the successes of this strategy(s), only to object that such a strategy takes the place of the actual goal it is intended to achieve. Although, for example, DB Schenker trucks repeatedly go up in flames, the company continues to successfully transport armaments and other products. If only more of these trucks would burn, some people might revel and wait for others to join the campaign. Another might go out and look at the freight tracks as they run all over Europe, try out here and there what effect fire has on signaling systems and switches, think of ways to block tracks, cut cables, etc., while someone else might figure out how to identify the group's deliveries that are relevant to the arms industry and then specifically make them harmless. A third person who lives in a region where DB Schenker has its trucks serviced, on the other hand, might have figured out how to sabotage that one factory gate so that the trucks can't drive out of the workshop parking lot again for a day after they've been serviced. Superglue in the lock might have accomplished what butyric acid in building ventilation might have done elsewhere: shut down production site and workshops for an hour, a day or more.

Naturally, these are only a few, very roughly elaborated ideas that I can and will present here, but I think that one thing should become clear: the creative potential of a few individuals, who work towards a common goal and do not commit themselves to a methodology determined in advance and according to some 'radical' criteria, can have a much more effective influence than the call of those "blatant" super arsonists, measured according to the same criteria, who desperately hope that more and more people will imitate a method practiced by them and elevated to an ideal, because it alone is effective in their terms.[1] Of course, there is noth-

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[1] I would like to note here that it is not my intention to devalue spectacular arsons or other spectacular – or let's rather say tremendous – attacks, and

masses join it, one finally falls into an vanguardist position, from which a large part of one's energy is wasted on telling others what they should do and, if they do not do this – or not in the required way – denying them the seriousness of their anarchist ideas. Because you have decided to bang your head against the wall, to give up your own individuality, the uniqueness of your own context and possibly also the fun of a life lived against domination, and henceforth to follow a boring, uniform organization ("Unity" is one of the slogans of the Direct Action Cells, along with "organization" and "war".) There is nothing left to suggest to oneself but that others do the same, that is, also turn their backs on their individuality and the unique contexts in which they move, and henceforth wave the flag of the Direct Action Cells.

But what possibilities does that really open up? Are we – and who is this *we* anyway – really stronger just because we unite under one flag? I have already stated that I do not think that the anarchist attack makes strategic gains by narrowing its focus to targets that exist everywhere. It is not difficult to guess what I may think of fighting united under one flag, indeed under any flag at all. I do not think it is a coincidence that this concrete proposal also follows the example of authoritarian communist organizations. And this is ultimately the only value (or rather for me it is not a value) that this proposal is able to create: unity. But what do anarchists get out of uniformity, loyalty to a flag, grimness and devotion to duty? Correct: nothing. Rather, it is the surrender of the anarchist project. Because the anarchist attack cannot be militarized!

ing wrong with collecting knowledge, communicating knowledge about supply chains, weak points, methods and more. But it's not like you always have to write a communiqué for that... Even without such communiqués, inspiration can be drawn from the attacks against the infrastructure of domination documented in both anarchist newspapers and on various blogs on the internet; indeed, even without communiqués, attacks and struggles relate to each other in what they choose as their target, how and when they are carried out, etc., etc.

Targets that exist everywhere... Well, sure, it's handy to torch a few vehicles of the technology multinationals and the profiteers of jail and war in your own neighborhood, where they stand around unguarded. And I certainly don't want to advocate not doing that. But when we talk about how we can move from symbolic attacks to a practice of inflicting material harm on our enemy, it seems to me that these ubiquitous targets pretty much embody the opposite: aren't they symbolic interventions? The difference between material damage and symbolic intervention, after all, is not usually the amount of damage caused. Even if there are exceptions, of course. Rather, the question is whether an attack succeeds in paralyzing authority for a while. And in this, the approach of targets existing everywhere must ultimately fail... at least if it is assumed that it will not be reproduced *en masse* – which experience shows beyond doubt. Because with the vehicles of a handful of companies, we are primarily targeting individual technicians in the logistics of these companies, who are also often only slightly restricted in

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certainly I too have a kind of fetish to intuitively exaggerate such attacks a little bit. My point is rather not to let this fetish, or more neutrally, this fascination, become an ideal, to step back and take a closer look at attacks here and there, forgetting neither that attacks that don't take this huge, spectacular form, can be very effective – for example, because they hit just the right spot to paralyze production in a very unspectacular way – nor the fact that not everyone is always able and not everyone is always willing to put as much at stake or as much effort as most of these more spectacular attacks require.

their mobility – because a replacement car can be found quickly today, at least if it needs to be. Even the few materials and tools stored in the vehicles can usually be replaced quickly. There may be exceptions here, of course, such as when elaborately equipped special vehicles are hit or construction equipment such as excavators, cranes, etc., where replacements cannot simply be ordered from the nearest car rental company but must first be brought in, but even though this equipment may also be widely available, we are already moving away from the ubiquitous targets here, at least in terms of approach, because it is precisely the non-omnipresence of these targets that is being exploited here. To be fair: the brochure *Targets That Exist Everywhere* does not lack such examples. For example, the attack on a crane at the construction site of the planned Amazon logistics center in Achim near Bremen is listed, as is the attack on the entire construction vehicle fleet of the Eurovia group in Limoges, as well as several other attacks on fleets of vehicles that are difficult to replace. And yet, it seems to be mainly a collection of individual vehicle arsons, precisely "targets existing everywhere" that the brochure presents and wants to suggest to us.

But what if the motto were reversed for once? How would it be if, instead of targets that exist everywhere, targets that exist nowhere else were brought into focus for once? Because domination penetrates the space neither evenly, nor uniformly. Each of its infrastructures has nodes that are of particular centrality, while some territories are more strongly marked by this infrastructure and others by that. Globally, for example, the high-tech metropolises, with their research, financial, armaments, and high-tech production infrastructures, can be distinguished from the more extractivist and agriculturally-exploited periphery. And even within the capitalist metropolitan regions, of which the "Everywhere Targets" seem to be primarily concerned, a closer look reveals quite different infrastructural emphases. While one region is characterized by lignite mining and the energy generated from it, elsewhere the high-tech computer industry sits above all,

and still elsewhere the biotechnology industry has pitched its tents, while the automotive industry and chemical corporations have for almost an entire century organized entire cities and regions according to their needs, port cities form important commercial metropolises, and sometimes individual military sites and even individual radio masts are of international (military) importance. In the midst of this network, very different and often unique points of attack can be identified, which are capable of inflicting much more material damage on domination than perhaps the arson of vehicles with the same logos on them over and over again. It may take some effort to identify them, sometimes they may be better protected (or sometimes perhaps worse) than the targets that exist everywhere, and one may be forced to give free rein to individual creativity in identifying and destroying these targets. Nonetheless, or precisely because of this, I think that these targets may provide the more interesting starting point in the struggle against domination. Not least because they are ultimately also based on a more precise analysis of how domination works than the abstract specter of global corporations, police forces, and armies that seem to be equally latent everywhere.

Finally, the pamphlet *Targets That Exist Everywhere* ends with a call for the formation of a "Network of Revolutionary Violence," another proposal to abandon any individuality of the anarchist attack and to gather humorlessly, grimly and with self-discipline under the banner of yet another revolutionary organization, the "Direct Action Cells." In other words, once again the proposal to militarize the anarchist attack.

It is difficult for me to recognize such proposals, especially when they are introduced so bluntly with quotes from authoritarian organizations – whose model they follow, after all – as anti–authoritarian at all. And I can't help but recognize in this proposal just that grimness which I also believe to recognize in the undoubtedly quantitative attempt of the targets existing everywhere. Because this proposal can only be successful if the