

To Seize the Moment, Still

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Winter 2019

“There remains (for all those who do not maintain that ‘people are complicit and resigned’) the hypothesis of autonomous intervention in struggles – or in the fairly extensive acts of rebellion – that arise spontaneously. If we are looking for a clear expression of the kind of society the exploited are fighting for (as one subtle theoretician claimed in the face of a recent wave of strikes), we might as well stay at home. [...] But who said that when workers come out into the streets on strike, the economy cannot be criticised elsewhere? To say what the enemy does not expect and be where they are not waiting for us. That is the new poetry.” - At Daggers Drawn with the Existent, its Defenders and its False Critics, 2001

While the militant entomologists continue in their dusty offices to dissect the composition of the heterogeneous movement of the yellow vests – not intersectional, proletarian, progressive or mute enough, depending on the taste – most of the anti-authoritarians ended up plunging into the battle, including those dragging their feet. Certainly while telling themselves and rightly so, that after all a social movement is nothing else than what each person makes of it. In the same way that before the Christmas holidays the school pupils entered the dance, or that demonstrations on Sundays started happening with women in yellow vests to put the spotlight on patriarchy, without mentioning the small troops of syndicalists who here or there try to reconquer ground by organising their own block. For a lot of people, in the end the question pertains to the classical mechanisms of politics, by adding rage to the anger, a tag to a slogan, in a contest of claims and presence tied to a quantitative vision of struggle. Inside such a framework it isn't surprising that the vultures prowl who smell the possibility of a bit of power after two months of movement and veiled appeals from the state (by trying to organise steward teams and approved routes, by passing from the television studios to future electoral lists, by trying to monopolize the existing assemblies).

The fact remains that this movement is not just a sequence of riotous Saturdays or deliberative assemblies. And if many focus on these moments in terms of a contribution so as “*not to leave the terrain open for reactionaries*”, it must be clear that from the beginning we are also witnessing a multiplication of direct actions on weekdays, from which the autonomous and diffuse character has the advantage to make them less controllable and to allow a continuity in case of a return to normality. They first started from the occupations of roundabouts, mostly blockades close to home and in small groups (toll booths, commercial or industrial zones), thereafter bit by bit through sabotage according to the imagination of each. Why limit oneself to a ritual day of

confrontations when one can also on any night destroy everything that oppresses us? And who knows, why wouldn't these aimed attacks fuel each other by multiplying on one hand in good ideas and on the other in a subversive game of *to each its own*? Is a social movement of this type – open and unpredictable – not fertile grounds for such a game, everyone from their own bases? Just to, for example, contribute to identifying the enemy, to deepen the revolt, to undermine its recuperators, to enhance our projects, or simply to seize the moment to carry through what we normally have more difficulty in achieving?

If we are interested in the effects of contagion then take for example the media, from which everyone can experience the role of mouthpiece of power. The 26th of December during the evening in La Chevrolière, south of Nantes, the blockade of a printing centre of the Sipa group stopped the distribution of 180,000 copies of *Ouest-France* (editions of Vendée and Loire-Atlantique), of *Presse Océan* and of *Courrier de l'Ouest* (edition of Deux-Sèvres), all already printed. The night of the 11th of January in Anzin (Nord), the printing centre of *La Voix du Nord* is blocked, preventing the distribution of 20,000 newspapers in the Valenciennes region. The same night yellow vests in Auxerre surrounded the printing centre of the Centre France group, blocking the distribution of thousands of copies of *Journal du Centre* (Nevers) and *République du Centre* (Orléans), and delaying the distribution of *L'Yvonne Républicaine* (Auxerre). The same happened, but with less success because the cops cleared the barricades of flaming pallets in time, on the 4th of January in Houdemont (near to Nancy) at the printing centre of the Ebra group (*Est Républicain*, *Le Républicain Lorrain* and *Vosges Matin*) and the 10th of January in L'Isle d'Espagnac (near to Angoulême) attempting to block the distribution of the *Charente Libre* newspaper. And let it be clear, each time it took only some dozens of determined and well-informed persons to shut up the regional propaganda for a moment. This didn't stop the virtual distribution of newspapers, but we'll come back to that.

On another level; in the big cities that are since some weeks the theatre of regular clashes (Paris, Toulouse, Caen, Bordeaux, Montpellier, Nantes, Besançon, Rouen, Perpignan) or less regular (Dijon, Epinal, Nîmes, Saint-Nazaire, Lyon, Lille, Marseille, Le Mans), besides the street furniture, the banks are typically a preferred target. Including where the store fronts weren't used to this sport: in Saint-Nazaire on the 5th of January, besides an abundantly stoned police station and the burned entrance gate to the prefecture, the dozen of banks in the town centre were systematically trashed. In Epinal on the 5th of January, besides barricades and an overturned police car, two big banks were devastated. In Nîmes on the 12th of January, besides the second attempt at burning the tax centre and the destruction of six surveillance cameras, a dozen of banks in the city centre were consistently trashed. Even in Marseille, although not known for this kind of riotous confrontations, there is almost not a single bank left in the small city centre with its windows intact, while half of the businesses at La Canebière [central shopping street] were looted, trashed or had some kind of trouble at their shop window.

This target, certainly a usual suspect as a cog of capitalism, is also targeted with a certain imagination outside of the collective moments and far away from the metropolises, but always with the idea of sparing it the least possible. In Aulnoye-Aymeries (Nord) during the night of the 31st of December, the ATMs of 3 banks are shattered with a hammer. In Lodève (Hérault) during the night of 22nd of December, those of five banks are sabotaged with silicone. In Morlaàs and Pau (Pyrénées) on the 19th of December, the toll goes up to 15 ATMs sabotaged with expanding

foam. In Fougères (Ille-et-Vilaine) in the 8th of December, the ATMs of almost all banks were sabotaged with a mixture of silicone and glue.

Of course, there will always be those who without a formal letter of intent play along with police speculations. If these actions are isolated, or if they respond to each other without mediation. Outside of a movement, who knows if these anonymous acts of sabotage are not the acts of madmen, competitors or mafias? During a movement, who knows if they are not the acts of madmen, democrats or fascists? So what? As far as we are concerned, when the authors are unknown and don't specify their bad intentions, it is only the action that speaks, *with all the poetry it can hold*, the one that breaks with resignation and passivity. An anonymous action that speaks to everyone that shares it. To each one who recognize themselves directly.

At a time when domination is embodied in an endless amount of peripheral structures that can be found at each corner of a street or field, it is about time to finish off the Leninist myth of the taking of the Winter Palace, of the taking or destruction of a centre or heart of the state and capital. Even the too visible neo-Blanquists finally got it by aiming for a destitution of power from below instead of a conquest from above, weaving a web that stretches now from a part of the cultural and syndicalist left to whichever sheep in search of leaders and an efficient strategy. On the contrary when we neither want to direct the rebels nor control the revolt, the act of defending and encouraging the scattered attacks (which doesn't stand in the way of coordination) corresponds not only with a territorial organisation of domination in the form of fluxes, hubs and small interdependent units, but also allows to limit the potential for harm by authoritarians who are always more at ease in the quantitative and representation.

Besides, if the costly structures like speed cameras (more than 6,000 sabotaged in 2018, of which 500 burned since the 17th of November) leaves someone indifferent, why not look then to the elected to express what one thinks of the daily humiliation that they impose? Don't the powerful have addresses just like the speed cameras? In Talmont-Saint-Hilaire (Vendée) on the 6th of January for example the home of a LREM representative was walled in with some fifty concrete bricks during his sleep. While in Varennes-Vauzelles (Nièvre) on the 25th of December the mayor received his Christmas present twice over with cobblestones against his car and a bottle with acid in front of the window of his living room. Without mentioning the very fragile windows of their arrogance on all sides (offices shattered from the PS in Nancy the 23rd of December and in Lorient the 10th of January, from the LREM in Nantes on the 6th of December and in Beauvais the 8th of January, of *Génération Identitaire* in Paris on the 11th of January).

Besides, if the relentless destruction of tollbooths on the highways leaves someone indifferent, why not look then to the railroads? Like those sabotaged railway crossings (9 between Saint-Dié and Nancy the 28th of December, 6 around Bagnols-sur-Cèze the 29th of December, a fire in Dax the 9th of January), like those railway tracks barricaded (bars and tires in Saint-Louis in Alsace the 3rd of January, burning pallets in Vestric-et-Candiac in Gard the 13th of January) or like those signaling and electricity boxes next to the tracks burned (Castellas the 30th of November, Carcassonne the 16th of December, Montdragon and Lapalud in three spots the 20th of December, St-Clair-les-Roches the 24th of December, Bollène the 28th of December).

Or more, if the burning of tax offices leaves someone indifferent, why not look then to the social cops? Like that social security office in Ajaccio that had its entrance glued shut on the 2nd of January in the early hours by two yellow vests to block the workers from entering. Or like the

facade of the dole office that was burned at the same time as three offices from its consultants in Montluçon on the 25th of December.

There is a whole world to destroy with passion to dance a ballet without end nor beginning, and all these actions that start to waltz from one target to another, following the hostilities of each one during the whole week, are actually speaking to any one who is ready to hear them. And if not one of them speaks to the heart or one's own perspectives, would it be so absurd to contribute something *proper*? Like for example those comrades who turned to ashes a vehicle of surveillance technology *after* a Saturday riot (Besançon the 5th of January), or those who *elsewhere* caused serious damages on the construction site of a mega commercial centre called Steel (Saint-Etienne, the 31st of December).

“Without wanting to revive the myth that the general strike is the unshackling of insurrection, it is clear enough that the interruption of all social activity is still decisive. Subversive action must tend towards the paralysis of normality, no matter what originally caused the clash. If students continue to study, workers – those who remain of them – and office employees to work, the unemployed to worry about employment, then no change will be possible.” - At Daggers Drawn with the Existent, its Defenders and its False Critics, 2001

Finally, besides multiplying the objectives by being where we are not expected, another small suggestion starts to emerge here and there in the movement. One that could inspire those who want to take care of the pending social problem in a bit of a more radical manner. Even if blocked at the exit of the printing centres, the newspapers continue to spread the propaganda of power through the web, and similarly the banks are essentially not a window but a space fed by electricity where fluxes of digital data circulate through fibre optic cables. More generally, if certain structures of the state (from universities to police stations, from train yards to city halls and prefectures) and capital (from technological control labs to the military industry, from banks to commercial and industrial zones) are sometimes difficult to access, this isn't always true for the fluxes with which they are eagerly fed and that can be found in electricity transformers, connection boxes for fibre optic cables or cell towers. Thousands of dispersed structures, impossible to keep an eye on, and for which the functioning is necessary for the production and circulation of goods, but also for control and repression. It is thus maybe not surprising that a part of them have been damaged over the last two months of this movement.

In Montélimar shortly before Christmas, on the 22nd of December, some fifty yellow vests got organised to loot the trucks leaving the logistical hub of Amazon, and they also took care of building four barricades of trolleys from the neighbouring supermarket and putting them on fire, of arming themselves with stones taken from the walls running along the companies' premises, then they punctured the tires of the trucks and opened the trailers after tearing off the cables linking them with the cabins. But they also set fire to an electrical transformer in a nearby street, to interrupt the street lights and the supply of the commercial zone. Thus Orange [telecommunications company] had to replace almost 2 kilometres of underground fibre optic cables to restore the internet in the area, the fibre melted because of the combined effect of the burning of the barricades and electrical transformer.

In Bordeaux during a riot on the 8th of December that notably ravaged the tramway network of Keolis [public transport company], a big fire on the tracks of the tramway at the Cours d'Alsace et Lorraine [main street] melted one of the cables of the ground-level power supply, making necessary huge nightly works to restore the traffic as fast as possible (200,000 euros in damages).

In Caen where the riot on the 5th of January took place along 2 kilometres of a construction site of the tramway, providing the rebels with materials, the one of the 12th of January followed a similar route and certain rebels had the brilliant idea of not only burning the pylons along the tracks, but also of setting fire to the interiors of the ground-level metal sheaths covering the electricity supply, causing considerable damages.

To understand the vital importance of the electricity networks in terms of the destruction of a structure of the enemy, we could mention the example of the tollbooths of Bandol, in Var, of which the burning in the night of the 17th of December has not been the most relayed by the press, but of which the consequences for Vinci have been the most serious. Four months later the eight lanes are still closed because of the amount of repair works to be done. Besides the burning of the cabins of the tollbooths, the unknown persons also set fire to an underground gallery of the electricity network. As a consequence “multiple kilometres of cables have burned [and have to be replaced], according to the workers”, in the words of the local journalists to explain the durable effect of this sabotage.

Outside of the notorious Saturdays that don't seem to end despite the repression, merry night-birds have also started to identify the vital fluxes as an assured way of blocking the economy. In Saint-Vulbas on the 20th of December they dislodged the cabin of a hub of fibre optic cables from the industrial zone of Plaine de l'Ain (Pipa). Next they opened it with a crowbar in the middle of the night, before placing a tire and some newspapers in front of it and then pouring over it an inflammable liquid. Almost fifty companies have been left without internet connection directly due to this fire and indirectly some dozens more since the nodes are connected to each other.

In a similar way in Nièvre during the night of the 31st of December, “masked individuals moving in vehicles with their number plates concealed”, according to local journalists, have burned technical telephone boxes in six different districts (Guérigny, Pougues-les-Eaux, Fourchambault, Varennes-Vauzelles, Saint-Aubin-les-Forges, Murlin) causing serious telecommunication network cuts. Numerous businesses and companies have thus been left without internet.

In the same vein, several cell towers have burned over the last month: in Saint-Julien-des-Landes (Vendée) the 11th of December, in Bernis (Gard) the 23rd of December along the highway and in Casseuil (Gironde) the 24th of December. As said in the text published in this bulletin of the previous month concerning *non-consensual* contributions, “we don't think that it fits directly into a struggle stuck in the technological cages. So what?”

To seize the moment is above all a matter of autonomous ideas and perspectives, that should at minimum have been developed before such a social movement emerges. But it is also a matter of an open eye and an analysis of what surrounds us. Because our actions are never totally separated from the ongoing social war. Thus, unless one thinks it's not worth it, are there no possibilities in the subversive game for *each to their own* so that the attacks can multiply by nourishing each other? Certainly in a period like this one. *Un peu d'imagination, que diable...*

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Translated for The Local Kids, Issue 3
First appeared as *Saisir l'occasion, encore* in *Avis de tempêtes (Bulletin anarchiste pour la guerre sociale)*, Issue 13, January 2018

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