

Propaganda of the deed in the era of global social networks

While personal acts of defiance cannot replace collective struggle, the distinction between collective and individual tactics may be superficial and their interaction could provide the momentum a movement needs

Blade Runner

20 December 2024

Millions of us share the same pain and anger that likely drove the hand of Luigi Mangione, the assassin of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson. Many might wish this individual action inspires others to engage in defiant acts, and even lead to a mass uprising.

This era is marked by instant communication and global social networks. The spectacle of individual resistance can be amplified, shattering the illusion of invincibility that surrounds oppressors and leaving a lasting impact.

Privilege complicates this dynamic. But this defiant act can be seen as betrayal from within the owner class, and contributing to the social struggle. The key question is whether oppressed people feel that the action aligns with their interests and inspires them; whether the spectacle exposes their constraints and encourages them to challenge dominant relations.

We should be cautious about idolising individuals or portraying them as saviours. This is a tactic used by elites, linked to the systems that justify aristocracy and the competitive mentality. Hegemony has long relied on glorifying individuals as tools of oppression and control. However, individual acts of resistance offer hope for reclaiming agency in a world on self-destructive autopilot. They remind us of our power to push back against systemic oppression.

While personal acts of defiance cannot replace collective struggle, the distinction between collective and individual tactics may be superficial; their interaction could provide the momentum a movement needs. They can spark conversations upon which collective strategies can be built. They can be essential threads in the tapestry of resistance—expressions of rage born from pain and misery, erupting into a variety of tactics, aimed as much at widespread insurrection as at self-organised grassroots networks of solidarity and mutual aid.

Alfredo Bonanno, a prominent figure in insurrectionary anarchism, rejected elitist armed struggle, criticising armed vanguards for their detachment from the population. He argued that these groups replicated the hierarchical dynamics they sought to overthrow. Instead, Bonanno advocated for continuous and spontaneous acts of revolt rooted in collective self-organisation and local struggles, designed to disrupt systems and inspire further resistance. He emphasised

self-management and autonomy, rejecting imposed revolutionary paths in favour of collective empowerment.

Can hope alone motivate us to act? Or will it, once again, lead to a sense of delegation and apathy? The oppressed of this world—of which we are many—are already watching closely. Some of us will continue organising, writing, and discussing, as we always have. We believe in humanity's capacity for both the worst and the best, ever waiting for—sometimes creating—the sparks that ignite meaningful change, for more freedom and anarchy in our lives, today.

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