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The State of Revolution

2011

Burn Shit

November 26, 2011

It seems the whole world is teetering on the edge of a wonderful oblivion. Stable authoritarian regimes have been toppled by their restive subjects, a tyrant beaten and dragged through the streets by a band of armed insurgents. Egyptians are now back on the streets and in the squares, reinvigorating what seemed like a revolution betrayed by hangers-on from the ancien regime. Across the world, resistance against austerity drives and finance capital is mounting, and in England a police shooting led to three nights of sustained rioting, looting and arson that spread across the country via Blackberry. European capital's wet-dream of a single-currency trading bloc is on its deathbed as Greeks defend themselves against EU-IMF gangsters with strikes, occupations and molotovs. Italy and Spain will soon follow suit.

Today there is no unified struggle against systems of oppression because there is no unified system of oppression. Never has this been more evident than now. Rather than conceiving of the world in terms of an oppressing 'top' and an oppressed 'bottom', what we have is a whole series of scattered *and* interconnected power relations that transcend narrow ideologi-

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cal boundaries. Similarly, resistance is both diffused and connected. There is a burgeoning multitudinous opposition that takes a variety of forms. The days of the counter-hegemonic opposition; party, union, leadership and vanguard are over, as they have been subsumed into a growing collage of movements; extra-parliamentary, de-centralised, autonomous and heterogenous. Opposition and revolt is now a constellation of spontaneous, uncontrollable eruptions that work outside the old structures. There is no one movement constrained by a single abstract ideological purism, unified identity, posturing leadership, or the dogmas of a totalising universal system. The occupiers from New York to Cairo, the *banlieusards*, the rioters in London and Damascus, the squatters, Abahlali baseMhondolo, the MEND, the EZLN: With no common identity, manifesto, flag, banner or over-arching representative body, no mediator, rather a plurality of identities and (often antagonistic) subjectivities, they form a matrix of agonistic forces united in their refusal of the status quo – a multitude in constant flux.

It's about time we dropped all the teleological 'our day will come' bullshit. Anarchism never quite divorced itself from Marxism. It's still hanging on to Enlightenment baggage and waiting for that one cataclysmic event that'll usher in a utopian epoch – the end of antagonisms, the end of history. Many still see history as a history of class struggles that will eventually culminate in a kind of Hegelian Grand Synthesis. We must ditch the millenarianism and embrace revolution as a never-ending *process* rather than an end. We have to stop waiting for Godot. Anarchists have always been better at fusing means with ends, theory with practice, but some still mourn the passing of the blue-collar worker, the urban-industrial proletariat, the unionised producers on the factory-line as the only true agents of social change. Some cling to a syndicalist vision of 'one big union' and organising for The General Strike like a life-buoy. It's not that we should 'abandon class' or deny the existence of class relations, but we should realise class as one

part of an aggregate of oppressive power relations, not flowing down a neat line from bourgeois institutions to proletarian masses, but emanating from a number of directions, reproducing itself *through us* as subjects. We should stop defining ourselves in relation to the means of production. This crude economism is of no use to us. Bourgeois/Proletarian is not a clear-cut binary, it's exalted status as the *primary* oppression and the Source of all other oppressions masks a far more deeply ingrained and disturbing network of power relations that reproduce themselves through each individual as the products of power. We do not deny the exploitation of employees by employers, nor the uneven distribution of power and wealth, but we see these as elements of multiple sequences of domination that go beyond the reductive categories of 'worker' and 'employer'. In the panoptical society, we all have a cop inside us. Power is not some external entity working against us, but something which we internalise and reproduce.

2011 has seen various struggles escalate all over the world. The insurrections and occupations are playing with new forms, affirming new possibilities and realising their own powers and potentials. Infinite, irreducible subjectivities, continually changing and *becoming*, negating and affirming, destroying and creating without institution, without unitary theory or binding abstract truth, acting autonomously-*within*-solidarity.