

# Rabble-rousers

“I was never able to bow down in front of a head of state or a political party, take part in the majority, lie in the newspapers, flog lascivious Rage, caress the slimy skin of Intrigue, pay homage to cross-eyed Partiality. I despise those who are numbly ambitious who tend to give both their hands to the worker, and comb their hair like him, dress like him and believe themselves obliged to talk the same foul language of the markets. Let’s remember, above all, that the people do not love forced smiles, that they do not ask for them, while on the other hand there are those who insist on offering them. Once again, the most sinister comedians and more vile courtesans are those who smooth the hair of the masses.”

*Ernest Cœurderoy*

One of the more grim collateral effects of the “turn” undertaken by a part of the anarchist movement over the last

few years – leaving behind the absolute rejection of the existent in favour of a more pragmatic and realistic possibilism – was on other fronts mirrored by an allergy towards any kind of social struggle. In many cases it was sufficient to just mention the words *social struggle* in order to upset and irritate quite a few comrades, who nowadays immediately link it to citizenist begging in search of popular consensus, which is increasingly willing to compromise.

As if the intervention into social struggles could be conceived only by hiding ones own rebellious thoughts in order to show off one that is more pleasing and reformist, as if the search of accomplices in such a context would necessarily materialize in the most embarrassing groveling for alliances.

This misunderstanding was unfortunately not created casually, but it is the direct result of delegation and of a real obsession – that of conquering the “masses”, masses that are lacking singular desires and sensible only to collective desires. Once the question of how to spread one’s own ideas and one’s own methods was put aside – considered too exclusive and elitary – opting to concentrate on the necessity to attract the biggest number of sympathies, the “solution” cannot be other than the renunciation of one’s own utopian tension, the abandonment of any exaggerated idea of freedom.

Thus realism erupted on the movement, substituting excess with moderation. From the stabbing of politics we witnessed the passage to flattery, while the false critics of the existent are no longer seen as enemies with whom to come to daggers drawn, but partners with whom to confront oneself with and on occasion install a profitable relationship. Just to give an example of this parable, if years

ago there were the first critiques of the Tav (high velocity train line) because it was not able, as promised, to increase the circulation of goods, today we have arrived to seeing the Muos opposed by complaining about the withdrawal of certain permits and appealing to the respect of the european parliamentary norms...

What has been the result of these strategic stunts? That by dint of seeing waved around “social struggles” to justify political opportunism, by dint of seeing anarchism (in theory just as in practice) put on the side more by comrades than by the judiciary system, many anarchist have turned to the conviction that it is better to stay away from such struggles, to blow them off or to condemn them without hesitation. This refers to a prejudice that has played a certain role in the development of a dark, identitarian nihilism closed in itself. On one hand, the denial of one self in order to be able to be among others; and on the other hand the a priori refusal of others to not lose ourselves. Either the merry politics of the common cause or the sad passion of self isolation? It comes down to a drastic alternative that we refuse being subjected to and that we urgently see the need of breaking.

No, social struggle in itself is not a Circe that is able to bewitch comrades, to transform them in political animals to then lock them up in the barns of citizenism. If this has taken place it is not due to the intrinsic perversity of social struggle and its dynamics, but rather given by the operative choices given by certain comrades and for which they are the only ones responsible for. A social struggle is nothing but a conflict, whose nature, content and stakes, so to say, concerns everyone indistinctly. It is not a polit-

ical struggle whose only outcome is within institutional context.

It is not a private conflict whose reasons and necessity are understandable only to few. The struggle against a huge operation, a military base, a dump... is social exactly because it focuses on a project whose harmfulness menaces everyone. A social struggle is such because it is susceptible to widening, to generalizing. Nothing more. There are therefore no reasons to oppose it or dismiss it. If anything there are more reasons to be interested in it.

There are different ways to take part of a social struggle. It is an ideological and optical distortion to think that a quantitative participation is a fundamental and distinctive characteristic of social struggles. It is not so. For example, many people demonstrate for the abolition of life sentences, and as many as they are, they are leading a strictly political campaign. Their head count does not at all make the nature of their protest a social one, their goal inevitably concerning very few people and whose outcome cannot be but of legal nature. On the other hand, when even few individuals attack the building sites of the High Velocity, still just as an example, they are leading *in their own way* a social struggle.

It has no importance how many they are, they are raising a question that touches everyone and through their action they suggest to everyone a possibility of intervention as well as influencing directly the course of events. Keeping to examples, those who argue that today's mass struggles in Val Susa have not had their origins also from the individual sabotages some fifteen years ago are lying completely, and aware of doing so.

It goes without saying that a radical transformation cannot be the work of a few subversives. No coup d'état or counter coup d'état can ever get rid of authority. No action, as much as it can be well calibrated and daring, will manage alone to subvert the existent (as much as a permanent assembly could succeed). The revolutionary tempest needs everything, of practice just and ideas, of individual acts and social movements, and within its vortex, anyone is free to follow their own aptitudes and inclinations. This said, it should be obvious that any lit match is searching for the powder keg.

The refusal of others can be an individual characteristic – according to us understandable and respectable – but it can certainly not be theorized, proposed or assumed as projectual trait. Insurrections have never been the accumulation of attacks carried out only by comrades. An insurrection is a social fact whose enormity raises without doubt the question of searching for possible accomplices. A search that can be initiated with very different means. Undoubtedly one of the ways is the one that leads to beat the streets of political consensus: to moderate one's aspirations, blend in the environment, give up on disproportions just to be accepted. Conform in order to rise to the occasion. Stop wearing black (it scares people away), stop swearing (it offends people), stop declaring such radical objectives (it pushes people away)... until we stop being anarchists, because people don't understand and don't want to understand anarchy. Supporting an occasional, circumstantial, situational anarchism to claim with pride on Thursdays (when we are amongst comrades) and to cunningly disguise on Saturday (when we are among workers, unemployed and housewives). Trying in every way to snatch the

trust of the people, entering in competition with various authoritarian rackets for the control of the “social movement” of turn... ending up being politicians just like many others.

Today this is what some are doing, in the clumsy attempt to justify the unjustifiable, they even manage to refer to experiences of the past that have nothing to do with their present. Like those who compare the anarchist anti-militarist struggle carried out in Comiso thirty years ago, with the present catho-comunist assistentialism. On one hand a deadly structure of domination to attack, attempting to involve as many exploited as possible through an anarchist methodology. On the other hand an elementary need to satisfy in order to gather consensus and authority, arriving to openly theorize the abandonment “of horizontal decision making” just to reach this goal. But all of this interested confusionism is not the only inevitable result of an attempt to involve others in one’s own conspiracies. There is no need to decide between the boredom of a soliloquy and the banality of propaganda.

Certainly a specific struggle puts forward partial demands. If we were to wait for the exploited to begin to refer to anarchy before we think them worthy of our attention, solitude could be our perpetual condition. But fighting starting from a partial demand does not mean in itself to become amplifiers of the dullest reformism. One can also start from partial demands to question the totality of existence. We can start by spreading hostility towards this world, instead of winning sympathies by repeating enlightened reproaches. It is obvious that those who are only interested in defending themselves against a toxic project are not interested in hearing about insurrection and an-

archy, but why would this be the reason to talk about republics and democracy?

Obviously not. Any struggle against a project of the state can easily do without the taking over of reasons and slogans of those who think that an other State is possible. The fact that these reasons and these slogans are more understandable, more “felt”, does not mean that they are the only ones that can be proposed. On the contrary, as far as we are concerned they should be avoided with determination, if we don’t want to contribute to the social reproduction. It is about making a choice: should we give precedence on a quantitative aspect or a qualitative one? In the first case we would turn to others giving broad space to the technical reasons that justify the opposition against a certain harmful project, likely accompanying it with all that rhetoric half way between citizenism (absence of controls and authorizations, waste of public funds) and sentimentalism (... think of the children). Other reasons, those not really digestible by common places, are put aside, shaded, silenced, until they are completely forgotten. In the second case, the opposite happens. The technical reasons are mentioned, but only as an addition. It does not make any sense to fight against technological society using its own weapons, by doing so one would lose their own speech in a dispute among specialist, in a technical competition among experts.

That a project of the state or capital *works* or not, it is certainly not on this that we can base our action. Much better to try to show how that specific project, in all its lethality, is not at all a contradiction, an aberration, a mistake of the society in which we live, but simply its inevitable consequence. This means, with all the limits imposed by

the partiality of the situation, to still carry forward one's own critique. Starting from a partial detail, but in order to put into question the totality of the existent.

Not to comply to a situation in order to participate in it, but trying to surpass it in order to make in precipitate. An autonomous intervention therefore is not at all an intervention that refuses *a priori* any contact with others, like the idiotic activist clichés say, it is rather an intervention that does not make out of the quantitative aspect its reference point. An intervention that leaves the door open, sometimes even wide open, but that not because of this opens shop and is available to shake everyone's hand.

Reaching others through reverberation rather than by contamination, and acting only with those who do not have political aims. Undermining the maneuvers of aspiring leaders, not assisting them with the noble intention of correcting them. Clearly marking the difference towards all politicians, instead of claiming their friendship. It is clear that only the political road can guarantee a certain immediate numeric "approval", the certainty of not being alone, beyond a flattering personal prestige. The other hypothesis – that which does not know what strategic calculation is – is an unknown, which can have results usually sadly predictable. But it is pointless to beat around the bush: if we approach others it is to discover accomplices, and not to be or recruit manpower.

Whatever is said, this is also *social struggle*.

[20/2/13]



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