today libya
tomorrow wall st

to our friends
chapter eight

invisible committee
1. A History of Fifteen Years.

2. Pulling Free from the Attraction of the Local.


4. Taking Care of Our Power.
On July 3, 2011, in response to the eviction of the Maddalena, tens of thousands of persons converged in several columns on the construction site, occupied by the police and the army. That day, in the Susa Valley, there was a real battle. A somewhat adventurous carabiniere was even captured and disarmed by some demonstrators in the boschi, the woods. From the hairdresser to the grandmother, nearly everybody had equipped themselves with a gas mask. Those too old to go out cheered us on from the doorways of their houses, with words like “Ammazzateli!”—“Kill them!” In the end, the occupation forces were not dislodged from their nook. And the next day, the newspapers repeated the police’s lies in unison: “Maalox and ammonia: the Black Bloc guerilla,” and so forth. As a riposte to this propaganda via slander, a press conference was called. The movement’s response included this: “Well, all right, if attacking the construction site makes you a Black Bloc, then we’re all Black Blocs!” Ten years earlier, almost day for day, the servile press had served up the same explanation for the battle of Genoa: the Black Bloc, an entity of indeterminate origin, had managed to infiltrate the demonstration and wreak bloody havoc on the city, all by itself. The public discourse pitted the demonstration’s organizers, who defended the theory that the said Black Bloc was actually composed of plainclothes policemen, against those who saw them as a terrorist organization based in a foreign country. The least one can say is that the policing rhetoric has stayed exactly what it was, while the real movement has covered some ground.

From our party’s perspective, a strategic reading of the past fifteen years must start with the anti-globalization movement, the last worldwide offensive organized against capital. It makes little difference whether we date its inception from the Amsterdam demonstration against the Maastricht Treaty in 1997, the Geneva riots in May 1998 against the WTO, the London Carnival Against Capital in June 1999 or the one in Seattle in November of the same year. Nor does it matter much whether one considers that it survived the Genoa climax and was still alive in 2007 at Heiligendam or at Toronto in June 2010. What is certain is that at the end of the 1990s there emerged a planetary movement of critique targeting multinationals and global organs of gov-
ernment (IMF, World Bank, European Union, G8, NATO, etc.). The
global counterrevolution that cited September 11 as its justification
should be understood as a political response to the anti-globalization
movement. After Genoa, the crack that was visible in the very
framework of “Western societies” had to be covered over by every
available means. Logically, in the autumn of 2008, the “crisis” eman-
ated from the very heart of the capitalist order, from the privileged
target of the “anti-globalization” critique. The fact is that counterrev-
olution, however massive it may be, only has the power to freeze the
contradictions, not eradicate them. Just as logically, what returned at
that juncture was what had been brutally repressed for seven years.
A Greek comrade summed it up in this way: “In December 2008, it
was Genoa on the scale of a whole country and lasting for a month.”
The contradictions had been ripening under the ice.

Historically, the anti-globalization movement will remain as the first
attack of the planetary petty bourgeoisie against capital—a touching
and ineffectual one, like a premonition of its coming proletariza-
tion. There’s not a single historical occupation of the petty bourgeoi-
sie—doctor, journalist, lawyer, artist, or teacher—that hasn’t been
changed into an activist version: street medic, alternative reporter
for Indymedia, legal team, or specialist in solidarity economics. The
evanescent nature of the anti-globilization movement, volatile down
to its counter-summit riots, where a club raised in the air was enough
to excite a crowd like a flock of sparrows, has to do with the floating
character of the petty bourgeoisie itself, with its historical indecision,
its political nullity, as a non-class of the space between two classes.
The paucity of reality of the one explains the paucity of resistance
of the other. The winter winds of counterrevolution were enough to
quell the movement, in a few seasons.

If the soul of the anti-globalization movement was its critique of the
global apparatus of government, we can say that the “crisis” expro-
priated the custodians of that critique: the militants and activists.
What was obvious to the limited circles of politicized creatures is
now flagrantly evident to everyone. Since the autumn of 2008, never
has it made more sense, and such a widely-shared sense, to smash
banks, but precisely for that reason, so little sense to do it in a small
group of professional rioters. Since 2008, it’s as if the anti-globaliza-
tion movement has dissolved into reality. It has disappeared, precisely because it has been realized. Everything that constituted its basic vocabulary has entered the public domain, so to speak. Who still doubts the impudent “dictatorship of finance,” the political function of the restructurings ordered by the IMF, the devastation of the environment by capitalist rapacity, the insane arrogance of the nuclear lobby, the reign of the most brazen lies and blatant corruption of the rulers? Who is not flabbergasted by the unilateral consecration of neoliberalism as the remedy for its own failure? We need to remember how the convictions forming common opinion today were restricted to militant circles ten years ago.

The anti-globalization movement even saw its own arsenal of practices looted by “people.” The Puerta del Sol had its Legal Team, its Medical Team, its Info point, its hacktivists, and its camping tents, just like any counter-summit or “No Border” camp did in years past. What was introduced into the heart of the Spanish capital were forms of assembly, an organization into barrios and committees, and even ridiculous gestural codes that all came from the anti-globalization movement. Early in the morning of June 15, 2011, the campers, numbering in the thousands, tried to blockade the Catalonia parliament to prevent it from approving the “austerity plan,” just as the demonstrators stopped the different countries’ IMF representatives from entering the conference center a few years before. The book blocs of the English student movement of 2011 were the resumption in a “social movement” setting of a Tute Bianche practice in the counter-summits. On February 22, 2014 at Nantes, during the demonstration against the airport project, the riot practice of acting in small masked mobile groups was so generalized that to speak of a “Black Bloc” was no longer anything but a way of reducing what was new to the already-known, when it wasn’t just the language of the Minister of the Interior. In situations where the police only discern the action of “radical groups,” it’s not hard to see that they’re trying to conceal a general radicalization.

A friend wrote: “What is happiness? It’s the feeling that our power is increasing—that an obstacle is being overcome.”

To become revolutionary is to assign oneself a difficult, but immediate, happiness.
Thus, our party is everywhere, but it’s at a standstill. With the disappearance of the anti-globalization movement, the perspective of a movement as planetary as capital itself, and hence capable of doing battle with it, was lost as well. So the first question we are faced with is the following: how does a set of situated powers constitute a global force? How does a set of communes constitute a historical party? Or to put it differently: it was necessary at a certain point to abandon the ritual of counter-summits with its professional activists, its depressive puppetmasters, its predictable riots, its plenitude of slogans and its dearth of meanings, and attach ourselves to lived territories; we had to tear ourselves away from the abstraction of the global. The question at present is how do we tear ourselves away from the attraction of the local?

Traditionally, revolutionaries expect the unification of their party to come from the naming of the common enemy. It’s their incurable dialectical defect. “Dialectical logic,” said Foucault, “brings contradictory terms into play in a homogeneous context. I suggest replacing this dialectical logic with what I would call strategic logic. A logic of strategy doesn’t stress contradictory terms operating within a homogeneity that promises their resolution into a unity. The function of strategic logic is to establish the possible connections between disparate terms that remain disparate. The logic of strategy is the logic of connections between the heterogeneous and not the logic of the homogenization of the contradictory.”

No effective link between communes, between heterogeneous, situated powers will result from the designation of a common enemy. If, in the forty years they have debated, militants still have not decided whether the enemy is alienation, exploitation, capitalism, sexism, racism, civilization, or in fact what exists in its entirety, it’s because the question as it is formulated is basically vacuous. The enemy is not simply something that can be designated once we’ve detached ourselves from all our determinations, once we’ve transported ourselves to who knows what political or philosophical plane. From the standpoint of such a detachment, all cats are grey, the real is bathed...
constant of History; the war of all against all is not what comes when
the state is no longer there, but what the state skillfully organizes for
as long as it exists.

And yet, recognizing the forms that life spontaneously engenders
does not mean that we can rely on some kind of spontaneity to
maintain those forms and foster their growth, to bring about the
necessary metamorphoses. On the contrary, that requires a constant
attention and discipline. Not the reactive, cybernetic, punctual at-
tention that is shared by activists and the management vanguard,
who only swear by networks, fluidity, feedback, and horizontality,
who manage everything without understanding anything, from the
outside. Not the external, vaguely military discipline of the old or-
ganizations spawned by the workers’ movement, which have almost
all become appendices of the state, it should be said. The attention
and the discipline we have in mind is directed towards our power,
towards its condition, and its increase. They watch for signs of any-
thing encroaching on it, and figure out what makes it grow. They nev-
er mistake a letting-go—that bane of communes—for a letting-be.
They take care that everything isn’t mixed together on the pretext of
sharing everything. They’re not the prerogative of a few, but the enti-
tlement of everyone to initiative. They’re both the precondition
and the object of real sharing, and its gauge of subtlety. They’re our pro-
tection against the tyranny of the informal. They’re the very texture
of our party. In forty years of neoliberal counterrevolution, it’s first
of all this link between discipline and joy that’s been forgotten. It’s
now being rediscovered. True discipline isn’t focused on the external
signs of organization, but on the internal development of our power.

in the very strangeness that we’ve brought upon ourselves: all is hos-
tile, cold, indifferent. The militant can then sally forth against this
or against that, but it will always be against a form of emptiness,
a form of his own emptiness—powerlessness and windmills. For
anyone who starts from where they are, from the milieu they fre-
quent, the territory they inhabit, the frontline defines itself, based
on the matter at hand, the contact. Who is working for the dirtbags?
Who’s afraid of getting involved? Who will take risks for what they
believe in? How far will the opposing party allow itself to go? What
does it back away from? What does it rely upon? It’s not a unilater-
al decision but experience itself that outlines the response to these
questions, from situation to situation, from encounter to encounter.
Here the enemy is not that ectoplasm that is constituted by naming
it; the enemy is what presents itself, what imposes itself on all those
who aren’t attempting to shed what they are and where they are and
project themselves onto the abstract terrain of politics—that desert.
Although it only presents itself to those with enough life in them not
to instinctively flee from conflict.

Every declared commune calls a new geography into existence
around it, and sometimes even at a distance from it. Where there
had only been a uniform territory, a plain where everything was in-
terchangeable, in the greyness of generalized equivalence, it raises up
a chain of mountains, a whole variegated relief with passes, peaks,
incredible pathways between friendly things, and forbidding precip-
itous terrain between enemy things. Nothing is simple anymore, or
is simple in a different way. Every commune creates a political terri-

tory that extends out and ramifies as it grows. It is in this movement
that it marks out the paths leading to other communes, that it forms
the lines and links making up our party. Our strength won’t come
from our naming of the enemy, but from the effort made to enter one
another’s geography.

We’re the orphans of a time when the world was falsely divided into
agents and enemies of the capitalist bloc. With the collapse of the So-
viet illusion, every simple grid of geopolitical interpretation was lost.
No ideology enables us from afar to separate friends from enemies—
notwithstanding the desperate attempt to instate a newly reassur-
ing reading grid where Iran, China, Venezuela or Bashar al-Assad
look like heroes of the struggle against imperialism. Who could have determined from here the exact nature of the Libyan insurrection? Who can sort out, in the occupation of Taksim, what falls under the old Kemalism and what is due to the aspiration for a new world? And Maidan? What does one say about Maidan? One would have to go see. One would have to go make contact. And in the complexity of the movements, to discern the shared friends, the possible alliances, the necessary conflicts. According to a logic of strategy, and not of dialectics.

“From the start,” wrote our comrade Deleuze more than forty years ago, “we have to be more centralist than the centralists. Clearly, a revolutionary machine can’t be satisfied with local and limited struggles: it has to be super-centralized and super-desiring at the same time. The problem, then, concerns the nature of unification, which must function transversally, through multiplicity, not vertically and not in such a way that the multiplicity characterizing desire will be crushed.” As long as ties exist between us, the scatteredness, the fragmented cartography of our party is not a weakness, but rather a way of depriving the hostile forces of any decisive target. As a friend from Cairo put it in the summer of 2010: “I think that what may have saved what has happened in Egypt up to now is that there’s no leader of this revolution. That may be the most disconcerting thing for the police, for the state, for the government. There’s no head to cut off to make this thing stop. Like a virus constantly mutating to preserve its existence, it’s this way we’ve had of preserving the popular organization, without any hierarchy, completely horizontal, organic, and diffuse.” Moreover, what is not structured like a state, like an organization, can only be scattered and fragmentary, and discovers the very motive force of its expansion in this constellated form. It’s up to us to organize the encounters, the circulation, the understandings, the collusions between the local consistencies. The revolutionary task has partly become a task of translation. There is no Esperanto of revolt. It’s not up to the rebels to learn to speak anarchist; it’s up to the anarchists to become polyglot.

We are faced with this difficulty: how does one construct a force that is not an organization? Here again, the question must have been badly formulated since it received no satisfactory answer during a century of quarreling on the theme of “spontaneity or organization.” This false problem stems from a blindness, an inability to perceive the organizational forms implied by the term “spontaneous.” Every life, let alone every shared life, secretes ways of being, of speaking, of producing, of loving, of fighting, regularities therefore, customs, a language-forms. The thing is, we have learned not to see forms in what is alive. For us, a form is a statue, a structure, or a skeleton, and never a being that moves, eats, dances, sings, and riots. Real forms are immanent in life and can only be apprehended in motion. An Egyptian comrade gave us this account: “Cairo was never more alive than during the first Tahrir Square. Since nothing was functioning anymore, everyone took care of what was around them. People took charge of the garbage collecting, swept the walkways and sometimes even repainted them; they drew frescos on the walls and they looked after each other. Even the traffic had become miraculously fluid, since there were no more traffic controllers. What we suddenly realized is that we had been robbed of our simplest gestures, those that make the city ours and make it something we belong to. At Tahrir Square, people would arrive and spontaneously ask themselves What they could do to help. They would go to the kitchen, or to stretcher the wounded, work on banners or shields or slingshots, join discussions, make up songs. We realized that the state organization was actually the maximum disorganization, because it depended on negating the human ability to self-organize. At Tahrir, no one gave any orders. Obviously, if someone had got it in their heads to organize all that, it would have immediately turned into chaos.” One is reminded of the famous letter written by Courbet during the Commune: “Paris is a real paradise: no police, no nonsense, no abuse of any kind, no quarrels. Paris is cruising by itself, like something on wheels. If only we could stay like this forever. In a word, it’s a real enchantment.” From the collectivizations of Aragon in 1936 to the occupations of squares in recent years, personal accounts of the same enchantment are a