



***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.
3. Building a Force That Is Not an Organisation.
4. Taking Care of Our Power.

We would have liked to be brief. To forgo genealogies, etymologies, quotations. That a poem, a song, would suffice.

We wished it would be enough to write "revolution" on a wall for the street to catch fire.

But it was necessary to untangle the skein of the present, and in places to settle accounts with ancient falsehoods.

It was necessary to try and digest seven years of historical convulsions. And decipher a world in which confusion has blossomed on a tree of misunderstanding.

We've taken the time to write with the hope that others would take the time to read.

Writing is a vanity, unless it's for the friend. Including the friend one doesn't know yet.

In the coming years, we'll be wherever the fires are lit.

During the periods of respite, we're not that hard to find.

We'll continue the effort of clarification we've begun here.

There will be dates and places where we can mass our forces against logical targets.

There will be dates and places for meeting up and debating.

We don't know if the insurrection will have the look of a heroic assault, or if it will be a planetary fit of crying, a sudden expression of feeling after decades of anesthesia, misery, and stupidity.

Nothing guarantees that the fascist option won't be preferred to revolution.

We'll do what there is to be done.

Thinking, attacking, building—such is our fabulous agenda.

This text is the beginning of a plan.

See you soon,

Invisible Committee

October 2014

1

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 carabinieri 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 "Amazzateli!"—"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 guerrilla," 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” emanated from the very heart of the capitalist order, from the privileged target of the “anti-globalization” critique. The fact is that counterrevolution, 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 proletarianization. There’s not a single historical occupation of the petty bourgeoisie—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-globalization 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” expropriated 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-

ented towards attack or towards self-defense—and of an abundance of material means and places. These three dimensions are variously combined in time and space, giving rise to forms, dreams, forces, and histories that are always singular. But whenever one of these dimensions loses contact with the others and becomes independent of them, the movement has degenerated. It has degenerated into an armed vanguard, a sect of theoreticians, or an alternative enterprise. The Red Brigades, the Situationists, and the nightclubs—sorry, the “social centers”—of the Disobedients are standard formulas of failure as far as revolution goes. Ensuring an increase of power demands that every revolutionary force progress on each of these planes simultaneously. To remain stuck on the offensive plane is eventually to run out of cogent ideas and to make the abundance of means insipid. To stop moving theoretically is a sure way of being caught off guard by the movements of capital and of losing the ability to apprehend life as it’s lived where we are. To give up on constructing worlds with our hands is to resign oneself to a ghostly existence.

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.

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.

2

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

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The revolutionary tradition is stamped with voluntarism as if it were a congenital defect. Living strained towards the future, marching towards victory, is one of the few ways to endure a present whose horror one can't conceal from oneself. Cynicism is another option, the worst one, the most banal. A revolutionary force of this era will attend instead to the patient growth of its power. This question having long been pushed back, behind the antiquated theme of seizing power, we're relatively unprepared when the moment comes to address it. There's never a lack of bureaucrats who know exactly what they intend to do with the power of our movements, that is, how they intend to make it a means, a means to their end. But we don't usually concern ourselves with our power as such. We sense that it exists, we perceive its fluctuations, but we treat it with the same casualness we reserve for anything "existential." A certain illiteracy in the matter isn't incompatible with the bad texture of radical milieu: engaged as it is in a pathetic competition for miniscule shares of the political market, every little groupuscular enterprise foolishly believes that it will come out stronger for having weakened its rivals by slandering them. This is a mistake: one increases in power by combating an enemy, not by demeaning him. The cannibal himself is better than that: if he eats his enemy, it's because he esteems him enough to want to feed on his strength.

Not being able to draw from the revolutionary tradition on this point, we can appeal to comparative mythology. We know that in his study of Indo-European mythologies, Dumézil was led to his famous tripartition: "Beyond the priests, the warriors, and the producers, there were the corresponding hierarchized 'functions' of magical and juridical sovereignty, physical and mainly warlike strength, peaceful and fertile abundance." Let's leave aside the hierarchy between "functions" and speak of dimensions instead. We'll say this: every power in our sense has three dimensions—spirit, force, and richness. Its growth depends on keeping the three of them together. As a historical power, a revolutionary movement is that deployment of a spiritual expression—which may take a theoretical, literary, artistic, or metaphysical form—of a war-making capacity—which may be ori-

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 attention 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 organizations 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 anything encroaching on it, and figure out what makes it grow. They never 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 entitlement of everyone to initiative. They're both the precondition and the object of real sharing, and its gauge of subtlety. They're our protection 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 hostile, 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 frequent, 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 unilateral 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 interchangeable, 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 precipitous terrain between enemy things. Nothing is simple anymore, or is simple in a different way. Every commune creates a political territory 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 Soviet 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 reassuring 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.

3

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