

The pamphlet, *The Coming Insurrection* has been attracting attention. A discussion of some of its key points is useful in considering the differences between “insurrectional anarchism” and “class-struggle anarchism.”



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“THE COMING INSURRECTION”?

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&

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- A REVIEW -

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unemployment, as can be seen from the organising drives in America during the 1930s starting over 4 years into the Great Depression. Unions in the UK have not recovered from the mass unemployment of the early 1980s recession.

They point to the Paris Commune to show “the unique attraction of the power of fire” (55), apparently forgetting that the burning of Paris was a product of *defeat*. Similarly, they point to Genoa in 2001 as a positive example while failing to note that the movement was kicked off the streets by the state. (127) Is “harassing passersby in the street” *really* the same as “playing cat and mouse with riot police”? (38) Is it *really* above reproach and a sign of leftism if you do note the difference? Tellingly, the book seems to confuse Sergei Eisenstein’s film with the actual revolution, proclaiming that “Winter Palaces still exist but they have been relegated to assaults by tourists rather than revolutionary hordes” (131) Yes, it is a cliché that “Nothing appears less likely than an insurrection, but nothing is more necessary” (96). The Russian Revolution broke out shortly after Lenin proclaimed that he would not live to see it. Yet a riot does not equal an insurrection and the book provides no real clue as to how to go from a riot to (social) revolution beyond the vaguest of rhetoric.

Rest assured though: “The impasse of the present, everywhere in evidence, is everywhere denied.” (28) That someone may not be convinced of the evidence does not seem to be entertained. Over all it just feels like wishful thinking, but written in a stylish French way and full of striking expressions.

Taken from: <http://anarchism.pageabode.com/anarcho/the-coming-insurrection-review>

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Yet, who can deny that “[e]very wildcat strike is a commune; every building occupied collectively and on a clear basis is a commune. The action committees of 1968 were communes”? (102) Or deny that such organs of working class power have general assemblies (or sections), discuss and make decisions, federate and mandate delegates for the co-ordination of their struggles, and so on? To denounce organisation while urging the creation of new organisations is not that convincing, no matter the lovely expressions used.

Is “fucking it all up” (112) *really* a revolutionary strategy? No, it is just a cry of nihilistic alienation at a system which appears to be beyond influence, beyond change. Denouncing everything and postulating the most radical of spontaneous jolts based on pan-destruction and ruins may sound extremely revolutionary but it just shows that they have no real awareness of how to transform society or how a free world could function. In the end, this rhetoric is more often than not a disguise for reformist practice (at best) or inaction (at worse). And this is reflected in the book, with wishful thinking about global insurrection sitting side by side with tending your allotment, fiddling welfare and studying the finer points of plankton cultivation.

Revolution does not mean destruction. It means taking over and transformation, constructive change. It means recognising where we are now and developing strategies to get to a freer society while recognising, and preparing for, the difficulties social movements (never mind a social revolution) will face. Kropotkin (correctly) argued (in **“The Conquest of Bread”** and elsewhere) that a social revolution would face economic disruption and would need to face those challenges. The centralisation and industrialisation of production has continued apace since those days, so it is really not sufficient to glibly suggest “[w]e must start today, in preparation for the days when we’ll need more than just a symbolic portion of our nourishment and care” (107) as provided by allotments and such like. Yes, “a blockade is only as effective as the insurgent’s capacity to supply themselves and to communicate, as effective as the self-organisation of the different communes” (125) but the aim must be to spread out the struggle and ensure what can be restarted can be done so quickly (something difficult to do if you’ve destroyed key parts of the social infrastructure). Ironically, it proclaims mainstream environmentalism as a means of ensuring “Voluntary austerity” (77) while, at the same time, urging us to acquire “skills to provide, over time, for one’s own basic subsistence... it seems pointless to wait any longer.” (125) Basic subsistence sounds remarkably austere...

External shocks figure large in the book, as “the suspension of normality... liberate[s] potentialities for self-organisation unthinkable in other circumstances.” (119) That our struggle as a class within capitalism may create such potentialities is not the focus. Liberation, if it comes, will come as a result of external forces. Yet this is just the old Marxist focus on capitalist economic breakdown as the motivator for socialism (which raises the question, if socialism *is* so wonderful why does it need even *more* misery to make people want it?). This is applied to history, as the “revolutionary workers’ movement understood it well, and took advantage of the crises of the bourgeois economy to gather strength.” (119) Except economic crisis has usually resulted in a massive weakening of labour’s power. It is harder to strike facing mass

pid. What of the people dependent on said train-line and electricity? Unlike a strike, such infrastructure cannot be easily repaired once destroyed.

This is a recurring theme, ultra-revolutionary rhetoric (with the occasional suggestion which will keep the Interior Minister happy for selective quotes) and a remarkably reformist and quietist practice. The book does present the vision of dropping-out and tending your allotment. It urges us to organise “apprenticeship, and for multiple, massive experiments” including “understand plankton biology” and “soil composition; study the way plants interact.” (107) Comments like understanding “plankton biology” do provoke thoughts of a sophisticated satire. We also discover that the commune “needs money” and that they will “have their black markets. They are plenty of hustles” (103). Yet people fiddling welfare are *less* likely to cause trouble simply to avoid the state taking too great an interest in their goings on.

The collective direct action of the Argentine *piqueteros* they also point to on the same page is the opposite of hustling the system. That they cannot see this suggests they favour doing *something* (“to no longer wait is... to enter into the logic of insurrection” (96)) but this seems more like action for actions sake, with the hope that something positive will come from it. As a comrade once said in reply to an animal rights activist’s proclamation that “thought without action means nothing”, action without thought means Bar-L (the prison said activist was in at the time).

There is a central paradox of the work. They demonise organisations and milieus while promoting their own. They proclaim that we must “[f]lee all milieus. Each and every milieu is oriented towards the neutralisation of some truth” as they “are the old people’s homes where all revolutionary desires traditionally go to die.” (100) Their solution? “Form communes” (101) And their communes are, what, exactly? Yet another milieu, surely? No, apparently, because the commune only “degenerates into a milieu the moment it loses contact with the truth on which it is founded.” (102) Which is nice and vague, as well as sounding deep...

As for organisations, they “aren’t needed when people organise themselves.” (122) So organisations are not needed until people need them... And yet their communes do sound like organisations for they “come into being when people find each other, get on with each other, and decide on a common path... Why shouldn’t communes proliferate everywhere? In every factory, every street, every village, every school. At long last, the reign of the base committees!” (101) Yet we are also informed that an “assembly is not a place for decisions but for *talk*” and that decisions “are vital only in emergency situations, where the exercise of democracy is already compromised.” (122) So general assemblies are out, until the very next page when the book points to the example of “the sections of the Paris Commune during the French Revolution”! (123-4) They seem aware of this obvious contradiction, noting that we must seek “to set aside the fantasy of a General Assembly and replace it with an *assembly of presences*.” (123) What that actually means and how they differ are left to the reader, as is how “we must commit ourselves to their co-ordination” (127) while the traditional libertarian means of co-ordination, the mandated delegate, is dismissed out of hand (“people with mandates are by definition hindered” (123)).

“THE COMING INSURRECTION”?

INSURRECTIONAL ANARCHISM VS. CLASS-STRUGGLE ANARCHISM

BY WAYNE PRICE

There has been a spurt of interest in a small radical book titled “The Coming Insurrection” (“TCI”), with authorship attributed to the “Invisible Committee” (IC). It was originally published in France in 2007. That country’s police cited it as evidence in a trial of “the Tarnac 9,” radicals who were accused of planning sabotage. The French Interior Minister called it a “manual for terrorism” (quoted on p. 5). A U.S. edition got an unlikely boost by the far-right TV talk show clown Glen Beck. He has repeatedly identified it as a manual for a take-over of the U.S. by the left, by which he means everyone from the mildest liberal Democrats leftward. “*This [is a] dangerous leftist book... You should read it to know what is coming and be ready when it does*” (Beck, 2009). The interest of many on the left has been piqued; Michael Moore is reported to have read it.

From the perspective of revolutionary-libertarian socialism (class-struggle anarchism), I believe that many things are wrong with this pamphlet. But it is right on some very big things. That is a major part of its attraction, despite its opaque style (the authors have studied French radical philosophy and it shows). The IC members say that, on a world scale, our society is morally rotten and structurally in the deepest of crises. They denounce this society in every way and oppose all reformist programs for trying to improve it at the margins. They say that a total change is necessary and that this can only be achieved through some sort of revolution. Their goals are the right goals: a classless, stateless, ecologically-balanced, decentralized, and self-managed world. These views are well outside the usual range of acceptable

political conversation. Unfortunately, I believe that the tactics and strategy which they propose are mistaken and unlikely to achieve their correct goals.

In “Black Flame,” Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt review the history of the mainstream of the anarchist movement - of what is often referred to as anarchist-communism. They describe two main strategies within the broad anarchist tradition. “*The first strategy, insurrectionist anarchism, argues that reforms are illusory and organised mass movements are incompatible with anarchism, and emphasizes armed action - propaganda by the deed - against the ruling class and its institutions as the primary means of evoking a spontaneous revolutionary upsurge*” (2009; p. 123). Historically a minority trend in anarchism; this is probably what most people think of as “anarchism.”

“*The second strategy - what we refer to, for lack of a better term, as mass anarchism... stresses the view that only mass movement can create a revolutionary change in society, that such movements are typically built through struggles around immediate issues and reforms (...) and that anarchists must participate in such movements to radicalise and transform them into levers of revolutionary change*” (same; p. 134). I prefer to call this second strategy by the more widely used term, “class-struggle anarchism.” (This is a discussion of broad political trends. Individual anarchists are not so sharply divided into “insurrectionists” or “class-struggle” types. Whatever their labels, their activities are likely to overlap with each other.)

Terms may be confusing. By “insurrection,” most people mean a revolutionary uprising by the mass of people to overturn the ruling class and smash its state. By this definition, it is the class-struggle anarchists who are working for an insurrection. On the other hand, the so-called insurrectionists are not clearly for an insurrection - a popular uprising - but are mainly interested in rebellious activities being carried out by themselves, a revolutionary minority. As we shall see, “TCI” is especially ambiguous about wanting a popular insurrection. However, I will stick with the usual political labels.

Actually the unnamed authors of this book do not explicitly identify with “anarchism,” which they mention negatively. They prefer the label of “communism.” Very likely they have been influenced by autonomous trends derived from Marxism, although they do not identify with “Marxism” either. I think that is safe to include them in the tradition of “insurrectionist anarchism.” Their advocacy of decentralization is typically anarchist rather than Marxist. In any case, by now there has been so much overlap and interaction between anarchism and libertarian trends in Marxism, that it is not possible (or relevant) to draw a sharp line between them.

★ Opposition to Working Class Organisations

According to “The Coming Insurrection,” the unions are the immediate enemy. “*The first obstacle every social movement faces, long before the police proper, are the unions...*” (p. 121). This view blurs distinctions among (1) the workers, who are misdirected by the unions but who get definite benefits from them; (2) the

“**The Coming Insurrection**” is firmly part of that world. While I would like to think fellow workers crossing my picket lines was really an expression of their (unconscious) contempt for reformism, a more realistic assessment would suggest 30 years of ruling-class victories (neo-liberalism) have eroded even basic levels of class consciousness. While things are somewhat different in France, reading “**The Coming Insurrection**” on my way to work made me wonder at times whether it was an elaborate hoax or satire. One thing is true; it does not describe the world as I know it. While this may be a reflection on me, I doubt it. I’m not sure that many people would recognise the world it describes.

But perhaps I’m just past it, as the text proclaims there “remains scarcely any doubt that youth will be the first to savagely confront power.” (17) Still, my age does allow me to remember that “I AM WHAT I AM” is not “marketing’s latest offering to the world,” the “final stage” in its development (29) but a hit-single from the early 80s and, half a century before, Popeye’s catchphrase. To proclaim this as “a *military* campaign, a war cry directed against everything that exists *between* being” (32) seems to be clutching at straws, seeking meaning in the meaningless. Not the best way to start a book on the current crisis we face.

Still, good points are often made, just as the striking and imaginative turn of phrase we come to expect of social protest in France is exercised. They note that work under capitalism is based on both exploitation and participation (45), something all too often glossed over. On ecology, it correctly notes that capitalists “hired our parents to destroy this world, and now they’d like to put us to work rebuilding it, and - to add insult to injury - at a profit” (75-6) So bits and pieces, rarely developed, are of interest, but over-all the work is lacking in real analysis and strategy.

No attempt is made to synthesis the proclamation that work has developed to the level “that they have almost reduced to zero the quantity of living labour necessary in the manufacture of any product” by means of, amongst others, “outsourcing” and rising productivity. (46) Work is still being done, just in *other* countries. As for raising productivity, they seem to forget they denounced that as the cause of “[s]ickness, fatigue, depression” so making France “the land of anxiety pills... the paradise of anti-depressants, the Mecca of neurosis.” (33) Still, we are “living the paradox of a society of workers without work” (46) so are we getting stressed being over-worked to produce things we don’t really need. Yet is this that new? Much labour under capitalism has been wasteful, related purely to the needs of the profit system, rather than meeting human needs. Similarly, the “flexible, undifferentiated workforce” hardly produces “the worker who is no longer a worker, who no longer has a *trade*” (the temp) (48) but rather the 19th century wage-slave returned. Is there a quantitative difference to suggest a new era and so radically new tactics and strategies?

Destruction is a theme of the book. Thus a “day will come when” Paris and “its horrible concretion of power will lie in majestic ruins, but it will be at the end of a process that will be far more advanced everywhere else.” (132) It talks about “sabotaging the social machine” and ponder “[h]ow can a TGV line or an electrical network be rendered useless?” (112) That sort of irresponsible rhetoric will, undoubtedly, be quoted by the Interior Minister but that does not stop it being stu-

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This is the English translation of the principle piece of evidence in an anti-terrorism case in France. Nine people were arrested in 2008, mostly in the village of Tarnac, under the charge of sabotaging overhead electrical lines on the French railways. With only little circumstantial evidence available, the French Interior Minister has associated them with a ultra-left insurrectionary movement and singled out this book as a “manual for terrorism.” It is not that, but is it a manual for revolution?

There is something I like to call “Daily-Mail-Land”, in which “political correctness” has gone mad, an Englishman’s castle has been squatted by gay asylum seekers in burqas claiming benefits from “our” apparently “generous” benefits system while, simultaneously, stealing “our” jobs and all the while New Labour and their caviar quaffing and champaign guzzling public sector workers have organised legions of dole scroungers to stealth-tax “middle” England and ban them flying the “racist” English flag. Suffice to say, any relation to reality is purely co-incidental.

The left has its own version of this: “Situ-Autonomist-Land.” Here, we are always just moments from social revolution. The masses are not only alienated and exploited, they consciously *know* it and act on that knowledge. Workers are just dying to go on strike and if they don’t then it’s the union-bureaucrats holding them back. If they cross picket lines, it is because the Labour movement is too moderate and they are simply showing their contempt for safe reforms. Every development, no matter how apparently bad, is really (when looked closely enough) a good sign and an expression of proletarian consciousness. Again, reality is a passing acquaintance.

unions themselves as organisations which are created by the workers; and (3) the union officialdom, which is an agent of the capitalist class within the workers’ organisations. In other words, the workers and unions and bureaucrats are seen as one bloc, which is exactly how they are seen by the bureaucrats (and their reformist supporters).

Belonging to unions generally gives workers higher wages and better working conditions. This is something the Invisible Committee ignores and would not care about anyway. We might expect the IC to at least care that striking workers can shut down society as can no other section of society - but they do not care about this either. “...*Strikes have usually traded the prospect of revolution for a return to normalcy*” (p. 107). “Usually,” yes, except for the unusual times when strikes have been part of revolutions. Instead of organising among workers, the IC advises its readers to find “hustles” and ways to scam the system outside of paid work. “*The important thing is to cultivate and spread this necessary disposition towards fraud...*” (p. 104).

At one point it was common on the far-left to deride the unions as solely agents of the capitalists. Supposedly the unions’ only function was to control the workers in the interests of the capitalist class. This view has been disproven by history. The bosses turn on the unions when times get tough - as they have since the end of the post-WWII boom (around 1970). The capitalists now oppose the power of unions, force givebacks and cuts in contracts, and fight tooth and nail against the establishment of new unions. U.S. unions have gone from 33% of the private workforce to about 6%. Clearly, the capitalist class believes that - on balance - it is better for them to do without unions. The capitalists find the labour bureaucracy to be useful to them, but - on balance - the capitalists have concluded that unions bring more benefits to the workers than to the bourgeoisie. And they are right.

The IC’s opposition to unions and, in fact, to the working class, is supported by a theory that there is no longer much of a working class. “...*Workers have become superfluous. Gains in productivity, ...mechanization, automated and digital production have so progressed that they have almost reduced to zero the quantity of living labour necessary to the manufacture of any product...*” (p. 46). This wild exaggeration leads to seeing work as mainly imposed by the capitalists in order to control the population, not primarily to exploit the workers and to accumulate surplus value.

Were this true, then we no longer live under capitalism. “...*Capital had to sacrifice itself as a wage relation in order to impose itself as a social relation*” (p. 91). In Marx’s opinion, capitalism is nothing but the capital/labour relationship (the “wage relation”); therefore this would be the end of capitalism, while still some sort of new oppression. Without a capitalist class which buys the workers’ labour power, there is no modern working class (no “proletariat”). Therefore, for “TCI” there is no longer a need to focus on working class struggles. (From my point of view, class struggles interact with non-class struggles, such as over gender, race, nationality, age, etc.).

★ Can Reforms be Won, While Rejecting Reformism?

According to the “Black Flame” authors, “...*insurrectionist anarchism is possibilist, in that it views reforms, however won, as futile...*” (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009; p. 124). But class-struggle, mass, anarchists think that impossibilism means standing apart from the rest of working people. It means looking down on them for their desires for good jobs, decent incomes and housing, an end to racial or sexual discrimination, other democratic rights, ending wars, and safety from ecological catastrophe.

“The Coming Insurrection” expresses contempt for such, limited, reform struggles. Of struggles for jobs, it says, “*Excuse us if we don’t give a fuck*” (p. 44). The danger of economic crisis and mass joblessness “...*moves us about as much as a Latin mass*” (p. 63).

They contemptuously reject those who warn of coming ecological and energy disasters. “...*This whole ‘catastrophe,’ which they so noisily inform us about... may concern us, but it doesn’t touch us*” (pp. 73-74). “*What makes the [ecological] crisis desirable is that in the crisis the environment ceases to be the environment*” (p. 81). Desirable?

By contrast, “...*mass anarchism is possibilist, believing that it is both possible and desirable to force concessions from the ruling classes...*” (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009; p. 124). We believe that reforms may be advocated as part of a revolutionary, non-reformist, strategy. My one qualification of this view is that these limited gains can only be won for a brief period of time. The economy will get worse - and other disasters will increase, such as the spread of nuclear weapons and global warming. As a result, reforms become harder and harder to win, harder to carry out, and harder to continue under the counter-attack from the right.

The issue is not whether some limited gains can be won for a time. They can, and the fight for them is necessary for building a revolutionary movement (as Schmidt and van der Walt write). But the issue is whether it is possible to win the kind of changes which are necessary to prevent eventual total disaster. It is not possible. (This important point is not made in “Black Flame.”)

★ Opposition to All Democratic Organisations

The Invisible Committee’s rejection of popular, mass, organisation is not limited to a rejection of unions. They say that they often “*cross paths with organisations - political, labour, humanitarian, community associations, etc...*” (p. 99) and find good people there. “*But the promise of the encounter can only be realized outside the organisation and, unavoidably, at odds with it*” (p. 100).

Similarly, they call to “*abolish general assemblies*” (p. 121). There is a long history of popular insurrections which have created neighbourhood assemblies, town councils, workplace committees, factory councils, soviets, shoras, and various forms of direct, face-to-face, forms of communal democracy. The IC members not

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other libertarian socialists had a major influence on this youth rebellion, especially including those of the insurrectionist trend.

Youth are the cutting edge of any revolution. But, while vitally important, by themselves alone they do not have the leverage of the working class. Unfortunately, Greek anarchists did not have the same influence among unionised workers as they did among college students. The big unions are still controlled by the Socialist Party, by the Communist Party, and even by Conservatives. Pressure by the workers forced the unions to engage in demonstrations and in limited, symbolic, mass strikes, but no more. Big sections of industry had wildcat strikes. Radicalised workers occupied the headquarters of the largest union to protest its lack of support to the rebellion. This was good, but more was needed.

In Greece and everywhere else, there is no alternative to revolutionary-libertarian socialists sinking roots in the working class and their unions. We need to spread a revolutionary program and to organise against the reformist bureaucracies. Greek class-struggle anarchists have been trying to do this for some time. Whether they will succeed is the key question for whether the Greek revolution will win.

Revolutionary class-struggle anarchists agree with the insurrectionists’ rejection of capitalism and its state. They are our comrades, fighting the same enemy, for the same goals. But we do not agree with their analysis and strategy. Growing food in rural alternate communities is no replacement for a class-struggle approach; neither is having rebellions which are limited to isolated young people. What we need is not insurrectionism but revolution.

only reject any form of delegated federation of such assemblies but the popular assemblies themselves.

A mass struggle requires decisions about mass actions. But the IC especially rejects the idea of democratic decision-making through discussion and voting. Instead they have a mystical fantasy of individuals pooling information and then “...*the decision will occur to us rather than being made by us*” (p. 124). Such a fantasy is authoritarian, highly likely to be hijacked by cliques and charismatic leaders.

We class-struggle anarchists usually make a distinction between two types of organisation. There are the large, popular, organisations, such as unions, community groups, or (in revolutionary periods) workers’ and/or neighbourhood assemblies. These are heterogeneous, composed of people with many opinions. Then there are the narrower, politically-revolutionary, type of organisation, formed around a set of ideas and goals. These are formed by the minority of the population which has come to see the need for revolution and wishes to spread its ideas among the as-yet-unrevolutionary majority. They include both anarchist federations and Leninist parties - the anarchist groups are not “parties” because they do not aim to take power, either through elections or revolutions.

“The Coming Insurrection” rejects both mass and minority organisations. “*Organisations are obstacles to organising ourselves*” (p. 15). It does not see the need for a dual-organisational approach, because it does not see a problem in that only a minority is for revolution.

On the contrary, it insists, “*Everyone agrees. It’s about to explode*” (p. 9). “*The feeling of imminent collapse is everywhere so strong these days...*” (p. 105). Actually, everyone does not agree. Those who do are at least as likely to be for the far-right as for the far-left. Which is why Glen Beck promotes this book. However, in “TCI” there is no discussion of the dangers of the far-right, not to speak of out-and-out fascism. The closest it gets is “...*we expect a surge of police work being done by the population itself - everything from snitching to occasional participation in citizens’ militias*” (p. 115). But this is immediately followed by a discussion of police infiltration and provocation; the danger of attacks by armed right-wing “citizen militias” is dropped.

The crisis of our society will lead (is leading) to a decline in the moderate political middle and the growth of the extremes. In the U.S., conservative Republicans speak of the need for “Second Amendment remedies” if they cannot take power through elections. Posing as heirs to the U.S. Revolution, they speak of the possible need to violently overthrow bourgeois democracy, as the “founding fathers” overthrew the British monarchy.

To counter this, libertarian-socialist revolutionaries need to participate in large popular organisations such as unions and community groups. We need to organise ourselves, as part of the process of popular self-organisation. Instead of mass, democratic, self-organisation, “TCI” advocates “...*a diffuse, effective, guerrilla war that restores us to our ungovernability, our primordial unruliness... This same lack of discipline figures so prominently among the recognized military virtues of resistance fighters*” (pp. 110-111). The members of the Invisible Committee would do well to

read accounts of Makhno’s anarchist guerrilla army in 1918 Ukraine, or Durruti’s anarchist militia column during the Spanish revolution, or any other account of guerrilla warfare or underground resistance, before spreading such idiocy. There is no revolutionary process without democratic self-discipline and self-organisation.

★ What Does the IC Think is to be Done?

As opposed to what it is against, what does “The Coming Insurrection” advocate positively? It rejects organisation, but says, “*We have to get organised*” (p. 95). This will supposedly be done through “communes.” “Communes” are an expanded version of what has traditionally been called “affinity groups” or “collectives.” “*Communes come into being when people find each other, get on with each other, and decide on a common path...*” (p. 101). Communes will grow everywhere and take over everything. “*In every factory, every street, every village, every school... a multiplicity of communes... will displace the institutions of society: family, school, union, sports club, etc.*” (pp. 101-102). Communes will stay in touch with each other (I can hardly say “co-ordinate themselves”) by travelling members. To “TCI,” the revolution essentially is the spread and integration of communes. “*An insurrectional surge may be nothing more than a multiplication of communes...*” (p. 111).

The communes will do a number of things but central to the strategy is “sabotage.” This means “*...maximum damage... breaking the machines or hindering their functions... The technical infrastructure of the metropolis is vulnerable... and these can be attacked... How can... an electrical network be rendered useless? How can one find the weak points in computer networks, or scramble radio waves and fill screens with white noise? ...A certain use of fire ...’Fucking it all up’ will serve...*” (pp. 111-112). Roads will be blocked. Food and medicine and other goods would cease to circulate. (As already mentioned, the Invisible Committee does not seem interested in the power of the working class to shut down the capitalist economy through mass strikes.)

If carried out, the widespread use of technical destruction, as advocated in “The Coming Insurrection,” would cause great suffering. This does not seem to bother “TCI.” If anything, this seems to be the goal. After insurrectionists bring down capitalist society through sabotage and chaos, it will be followed by “communism,” or so they think. “*The interruption of the flow of commodities... liberate potentials for self-organisation...*” (p. 119). More likely, left-caused mass sabotage would result in widespread hatred of these “communists” who deliberately caused so much suffering. There would be a demand for a strong fascist state to provide “order.”

★ “Insurrection” without Revolution

While the French police have labelled the IC as “terrorists,” “TCI” does not advocate assassinating public officials nor exploding bombs in crowded places. In-

stead it advocates the destruction of property through widespread sabotage. But, if carried out, this would cause at least as much suffering - and possibly deaths - as any “terrorism.”

Their attitude toward violence is confusing. They declare, “*There is no such thing as a peaceful insurrection. Weapons are necessary...*” (p. 100). This is immediately followed by a call for rebels to have weapons - but not to use the weapons! “*An insurrection is more about taking up arms and maintaining an ‘armed presence’ than it is about armed struggle*” (same). In a revolutionary situation, they expect the army to be called out. Then the people could mingle with the army and win it over to the insurrection, without firing a shot! “*Against the army, the only victory is political... A massive crowd would be needed to challenge the army, invading its ranks and fraternizing with the soldiers*” (pp. 128 & 130). I do not dispute that the armed forces - sons and daughters of the working class - can and should be won over through “political” means. But there is likely to be a core of officers, “lifers,” and rightists who will need to be physically suppressed if they use force against the people.

Revolutionary class-struggle anarchists believe that the capitalist class must be overthrown and the state and other capitalist institutions need to be dismantled. They need to be replaced with federated councils. The IC does not believe this. With all their talk of “insurrection,” their view is closer to the gradualist-reformist view of peacefully replacing capitalism and the state through alternative institutions. “*Wherever the economy is blocked... it is important to invest as little as possible in overthrowing the authorities. They must be dismissed with the most scrupulous indifference and derision... Power is no longer concentrated in one point... Anyone who defeats it locally sends a planetary shock wave through the networks*” (p. 131).

The “Tarnac 9” were arrested in France and accused of planning to sabotage the overhead electric lines of the national railroad. They had been living in the small rural town of Tarnac, growing their own food, running a co-op and a store, and generally helping local people. Except for the - alleged - attempt to sabotage the trains they were simply following the non-violent, reformist, strategy of dropping out of the big cities and mainstream institutions to gradually build alternate institutions. There is nothing bad about such activities. But they are not a strategy for overthrowing the state, capitalism, and all other oppressions. Power really is concentrated and it is very strong. It will have to be confronted by the organised people - in a real insurrection. (For further discussion of the distinction between revolutionary, class-struggle, anarchism and gradualist, alternate-institution, strategies, see Price 2009.)

★ The Greek Insurrection

These are important and very practical issues. In 2008, rebellion broke out in Greece after a youth was shot by a cop (in the context of the beginning of the Great Recession). There was a virtual national insurrection among young people, from high schoolers, to college students, to young workers and unemployed. Anarchists and