

ANTIMILITARIST NOTES



the infidels', 'the conquest of territory', etc. The soldier is therefore in possession of a vast outfit of ideologies or value models, which he acts out when he uses weapons. When he shoots he feels, according to the circumstances, defender of the homeland, builder of the social order, destroyer of the infidels, engineer of social territory, etc. The more his role corresponds to that of the crude executioner, the more he is at the mercy of the fabricators of ideology and capitalist rule, the more the weapons he bears become blind instruments of oppression and death. Even if he were to lay them down they would still be objects within a general framework that qualifies them as instruments of death.

Now, if the project is different, if the aim of the action is different, the significance of the weapon changes. As a means, it can never be absolved of its limitations as an object with which it is possible to procure damage and destruction with a certain ease (which is what distinguishes the object 'weapon' from other objects many of which can also become such when necessary). We are not trying to say that the end – liberation, the revolution, anarchy or whatever other liberatory, egalitarian dream – justifies the means, but it can transform weapons into different 'objects in action'. And this different object in action also comes to be a part of the antimilitarist struggle, even although to all effects it remains a weapon.

In a project of liberation, behind the weapon lies the desire to free ourselves from our rulers and make them pay for the damage they are responsible for. There is class hatred, that of the exploited against the exploiters, there is the concrete material difference of those who continually suffer offence to their dignity and want to wipe out those responsible.

That is all radically different to any ideological chatter about order and defence of the homeland.

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This is so. Armies have always been armed, and have created a particular form of hierarchical organisation with a fixed, rigid level of command precisely because the use of weapons is – or at least is believed to be – rigid and must obey precise rules. The same goes for the mentality. The ‘armed’ individual feels different, more aggressive, and (apparently) more easily overcomes the frustrations that everyone has in them, so ends up becoming overbearing and cowardly at the same time.

But militarism cannot, even in its own opinion, make an ‘optimal’ use of weapons. It must insert their possible use within the political and social context of an unstable equilibrium, both nationally and internationally. At the present time a purely ‘militaristic’ use of arms would be inconceivable. That leads those who carry weapons, as well as their bosses and the arms producers, to developing an ideology of defence with which to cover not only their use but also their production and perfectionment in the negative sense.

When antimilitarists limit themselves to simple declarations of principle, weapons remain something symbolic, i.e. they remain the abstract symbols of destruction and death. On the contrary, if antimilitarism were to go forward concretely and open up the road to liberation in the material sense, then it would not be able to limit itself to a symbolic refusal of arms, but would have to go into the problem more deeply.

In fact weapons, being objects, are considered differently according to the point of view they are being looked at from. That goes for anything, and weapons are no exception. This is not a relativist conception, it is a simple materialist principle. Arms as inert objects do not exist. What do exist are arms in action, i.e. that are used (or waiting to be used) in a given perspective. That is so for all things if we think about it. We tend to imagine things cut off from their historical and material context, as though they were something abstract. But if that were so they would become meaningless, reduced to the impotence we would like to reduce them to in the case of weapons. In fact things are always ‘things in action’. Behind the thing there is always the individual, the individual who acts, plans, uses means to attain ends.

There is no such thing as an abstract weapon (taken as an isolated object), therefore. What do exist are weapons that the army uses in its projects for action. These are given a specific investiture as instruments for the ‘defence of the homeland’, ‘maintaining order’, ‘the destruction of

I don't want these words—fruit of a gut refusal to do military service, deepened and enriched with the critique and practice from the movement of total objection that was a force in Italian anarchism at the time—to disappear into oblivion. Surely they are more than mere sheets of paper among the many clogging up the anteroom of the paper shredder. And the protagonists? What has become of them? Would they say the same today decades later, and be ready to pay the consequences: years of prison or a life on the run? Or were their discourses forged with the fire of youth, arrogant in the ugly face of the warmongering State avid for their bodies and minds to dull and indoctrinate, train as insensate killers in uniform prepared also to be killed or maimed themselves? Does it matter, does it detract from the power that the words still hold? Still today military service is a plague in many parts of the world, and our hatred of armies, killing machines, prevents us from becoming indifferent to the plight of millions of young people all over the world should we just stop to think of them for a moment, all the more so as new tanks are beginning to trundle and populations are egging on thousands of enthusiastic youth (killers or corpses?) in staged photo shoots. In the advanced democracies there are other ways of filling uniforms, now enlightened assassins 'on a mission of peace'. Marketing techniques have far surpassed the macho man flexing his muscles as he sets off to see the world: even gay pride is old hat, the State wants to sweep up the misfits, the 'snowflakes', and all the gender letters of the alphabet in its all-inclusive massacres. Meanwhile global State terror has not abated as on a daily basis hundreds of men, women, children and babies, 'respectable citizens', prisoners, refugees, continue to be bombed out of existence or end up maimed and agonising thanks to armies, an assortment of human beings in uniform with arsenals of deadly weapons at their disposal.

JW, February 2022

ANARCHIST DESERTERS

Giuseppe Coniglio, Orazio Valastro, Giuseppe Scarso

DURING MY specifically antimilitarist activity I have become aware that the term “antimilitarism” is used in many ways that are not always clear. Many misunderstandings arise from the fact that “antimilitarism” is often considered synonymous with “pacifism”. It should be stated clearly that although pacifists – in the usual meaning given to the term, intended as individual advocate of nonviolence – can generally consider themselves “antimilitarists”, it is not in fact true that antimilitarists are “pacifists”. I believe that in order to explain its considerable subversive potential, antimilitarism must clearly show how the pacifist movement actually exercises a function of integration with modern democratic institutions.

First, we must get rid of the question of nonviolence, an idea of clearly religious origin. The distinction between violence and nonviolence is ambiguous and profoundly contradictory. The ethical justification for a violent form of struggle is to be found in class divisions, in the oppression and exploitation to which all the exploited, including anarchists, are

subjected daily. The recent hunger strike that we total objectors carried out in protest against the obligation to wear army uniform, in my opinion is only valid at a tactical level, given the impracticability of other forms of struggle in an environment such as a military prison. It is certainly not with hunger strikes or more or less delegitimising forms of struggle that the existence of the army, military technology or military tribunals will be questioned.

Nor do I agree with proposals such as campaigns for the abolition of military service. The main reason for this is that a simple abolition of forced conscription would essentially be in the interest of the process of restructuring that is taking place within the armed forces.

The core of the military structure today is in the form of “special corps”, whereas most conscripts do not carry out any bellicose activity (over half of conscripted soldiers are not involved in operational activities). The defence minister Zanone has already announced that there will be a reduction of 20,000 units in

sector of intervention that one had managed to ‘define’ with difficulty, and wanting to defend the gains democratically conceded to us today.

Basically, anyone who really struggles against war (but also against the bosses’ peace), against legalized murder and exploitation, cannot find it inconvenient to see a military base being blown up. It is false to attribute all the responsibility for a probable development of repression to certain specific interventions, whereas it is the very sectorialisation of struggles that favour the latter.

The repressive action of the State should of course find us ready to defend ourselves by exploiting occasions given to us indirectly, but that can’t make us close up in a defensive attitude. If one directs one’s energy exclusively at defending specific struggles and projects one often falls prey to some not very nice considerations that preclude all roads of attack. One finds oneself giving an image of oneself and of anarchism that wants to disturb power as little as possible.

We don’t want to reject or deny the importance of analyses and counter-information concerning the military problem. But we maintain that it is indispensable not to find ourselves struggling against military service or against the military structure alone, moreover with ambiguous attitudes based on compromise and renunciation. The antimilitarist struggle is not a specific struggle, it can contribute to the development of revolutionary practice which, in the reality of the social clash, forms the insurrectional project as a whole.

THE REFUSAL OF ARMS

Alfredo M. Bonanno

THE ‘REFUSAL’ OF ARMS IS IMPLICIT in antimilitarism. But this concept is taken for granted and is hardly ever gone into in any depth.

Being precise objects, weapons are certainly the fundamental instruments that not only the army as an organisation (which would not make sense if it were unarmed), but also the military mentality (which has derived a series of authoritarian deformations from the use of weapons) is based on.

of the educational value of total refusal. It is necessary to prepare and spread this refusal in practice, not restrict the problem to those about to be called up or who, once they have been, can no longer decide.

The reality experienced by soldiers cannot be ignored, be it only in order to avoid committing gross errors in evaluation. We know how the attempts to organise a 'soldiers' movement' based on the claim to put an end to military service ended up. One didn't bear in mind the profound inequality of soldiers' rights compared to those of 'civil' life. Struggles only had the appearance of antagonism, whereas in actual fact they came to be part of the democratic transformation of the army in course. The marginal importance of the services contingents, their complete lack of qualification, the discomfort and physical impositions they have to submit to during twelve months service, are the conditions that push towards claims for an improved situation or towards insubordination.

We are not interested in struggles that lend themselves to the democratic recuperation of the military structure. On the contrary, we maintain and support sabotage and desertion, the damaging of plants and quite simply the abandoning of the barracks. And all that should be developed before alienation and rage find an outlet in resignation or the affairs of barrack-room life.

By insisting seeing refusal of the military through conscientious objection one aims at safeguarding relations with some of the pacified, legalistic components of the peace movement as a whole. The same if one limits oneself to seeing total objection as an exclusively 'preventive' struggle against the barracks that can only be realized by the politicized components of the movement. In this way the antimilitarist struggle comes to be seen as a struggle exclusively aimed against military service, cutting itself off from the rest of reality and uniting with all the political forces that struggle generically against arms, death and war.

Behind this position there is the will to subtract oneself from all the problems one doesn't want to face and prefers to simply denounce. Not by chance an appeal has been made to this kind of 'antimilitarism' to publicly condemn actions that were considered too 'threatening'. When various NATO bases in Europe were attacked, the actions were denounced because they were considered a threat for those struggling against antimilitarism and a danger for the gains already conquered.

Such a reaction was a result of wanting to safeguard a specific

the conscription contingent within the next few years. The political parties are also asking for a decrease in the conscription period (from the present 12 months to 6-10). Military service will probably soon disappear altogether.

Revolutionary antimilitarism moves in other fields. It pays attention to possible advantages the counterpart may gain from the development of a certain kind of antimilitarist struggle. It does not make proposals that are partial and easily instrumentable by parties and political organisms. It refuses both the religious idea of nonviolence and an abstract and vague humanitarianism. It does not make declarations of principle against armies – either obligatory or professional – and against armaments.

Anarchist antimilitarism struggles against the army because it considers it one of the many manifestations of class dominion, it tries to avoid the mistake of separating theory from practice because one and the other are tightly linked and interdependent. It is an antimilitarism that acts in unison with the fast transformation of productive reality and the military machinery. An antimilitarism which is aware that today the

military apparatus is a part of the vast network of social control, a military-civil network. It is an antimilitarism that advocates an attack against the military structures spread over the social territory, an attack based on forms of action that are easy to realise and can be reproduced.

Giuseppe Coniglio publicly tore up his call up card, explaining his antimilitarist convictions which led him to total objection to doing national service he was later arrested and taken to Palermo military prison.



INSUBORDINATION NOW

WE MUST DESERT THE ARMY to unmask its true nature, questioning the State's legitimacy and refusing to become accomplices and instruments of repression and the choice of death.

The army is one of the clearest manifestations of what is known as the State, instrument of coercion and social violence which represses in the name of the social order desired and supported by the bosses.

The Italian army is an example of this reality. It served for the forced unification of the peninsula under the Savoy monarchy and to control popular insurrections (elimination of banditry, the Milan massacre of 1898). From the beginning it unleashed its repressive nature, forgetting its claimed duty as "defender of the sacred frontiers" and beginning its colonial invasions (Eritrea, Libya) and the interventionist politics of the first world war. After the second world war, the greatest and most atrocious legalized genocide, armies have been used to enforce coups d'etats (Greece 1967), to restore "order" (Czechoslovakia, 1968; Poland 1970/81), or as arm of political blackmail (Italy, 1964;

France 1968). Today therefore the existence of obligatory military service does not have the aim, as they try to make us believe, of an efficient defense of the "Nation" but maintains a purely political direction. This direction was clarified in the Atlantic Pact, signed in '49 as the NATO, through which the Americans had occasion to concentrate their strength in Italy and the rest of Europe in defence of the capitalist structures of the member countries of the alliance, leaving the Italian army with the legalised task of repression within the country of any form of class struggle, any revolutionary action by the exploited and any ideology which denies authority as a social system.

The State also imposes consensus of the army and its structure as instrument of repression on the young through the obligation of military service.

Before being called to military service I already had fairly clear ideas as to what the army and its real function within society is, conception which I developed through my anarchist militance. Then, finding myself like thousands of young people every

FROM CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION AGAINST MILITARY SERVICE TO INSURRECTIONALIST ANTIMILITARISM

RAISED FROM TIME TO TIME AS A FLAG of the antimilitarist movement, conscientious objection comes to be lived in opposition to the 'prison choice' as a means of avoiding repression.

This attitude is inconclusive, mainly because conscientious objection and alternative service are not practices aimed at subverting the military institution.

The legitimization of the conscientious objector is the logical consequence of struggles inspired by religious sentiment. At the root were the ethical values of a stupid pacifism that chases the dream of class collaboration between oppressors and oppressed. A chimera that could only come about within a social-democratic project where Christian peace becomes 'social peace' and the collaboration between exploited and exploiters serves the continuation of the physical and mental exploitation of the former. Conceded and regulated by the State, alternative service finds its place in the shadow of power. One refuses to touch weapons or play at war and carries out so-called 'antimilitarist service', i.e. civil service, instead, holding a brush instead of a gun in the corridors of a hospital instead of the barracks.

By totally refusing to do military service we are refusing the whole military logic along with the barracks, uniforms, authoritarianism, but not on the basis of concepts that are nothing to do with to us and would prevent us from using weapons when we consider it to be necessary.

The choice of total objection clearly requires knowledge and awareness of the military problem, something that most young people do not possess in that they only come into contact with the military reality with their experience in the barracks. For many it is during the first months of service that they clash with the basic expressions of militarism: military hierarchy, authority taken to the absurd, unconditional respect for orders, the systematic repression of any critical attitude.

It is important for comrades not to close themselves up in interventions for the converted, limiting themselves to simply speaking

of EXPLOITATION S. Pertini, stating that I had no intention of becoming a part of their GANG OF ASSASSINS or of donning the UNIFORM of DEATH.

Today I reaffirm my refusal to be a part of the army and accepting the consequences of my antimilitarist choice.

AGAINST WAR!
AGAINST ARMIES! AGAINST
ARMAMENTS! AGAINST
STATES! AGAINST PRISONS!
AGAINST THE
INSTALLATION OF THE
MISSILE BASE AT COMISO!

INSUBORDINATION,
TOTAL OBJECTION,
ANARCHY!

Giuseppe Scarso
Comiso, August 1st, 1982

"Pippo Scarso, anarchist comrade from Giarratana, Sicily, on receiving his ordinance to present himself at the 225 Battalion of F 'Arezzo', replied, in a letter to the Defence Minister and to the Head of the Armed Forces, S. Pertini (copies sent to all European anarchist papers for publication), 'as an anarchist and antimilitarist I do not intend to wear the uniform of blood and death... I believe that the exploited, the revolutionaries, must make known today as yesterday their complete aversion to the military civilism of armies by active insubordination, for a society of free and equal individuals.'"

He read the above statement in the main square of Comiso on August on the occasion of the meeting ending the anarchist conference held there this summer. He concluded his speech by tearing up his call up papers and now faces trial not only for desertion (12 months' sentence), but also for 'instigation to commit a crime'."



year faced with the hostile reality of life in the barracks, I have chosen to refuse the role of proletarian in uniform, to refuse the obligation of military service.

My act is directed towards underlining my critical attitude towards power and its repressive organisations, by denouncing the homicidal and destructive logic of the military structure and contributing to generalising the practice of desertion as struggle against the army, authoritarian appendix of the State.

In fact, the carabinieri, as branch of the army and the police, as armed structure of the State, are invested in first person with repressive action and used to strike every initiative put into act by the exploited in their attempt to reappropriate what has been taken from them, to heavily dissuade any rebellion against constituted order and to convince the rebels to return to their posts of exploitation in the factories, country and schools. These forces which defend exploitation and render it possible, often do not hesitate to assassinate the exploited in the streets and to terrorise with institutional violence:

Modena 1950 – demonstration against lockout – 6 workers killed by the forces of order.

Mussomelo 1954 – demonstration because of lack of drinking water – police shoot and kill three women and a man.

Reggio Emilia 1960 – mass demonstration against the Tombroni government–5 dead. At the same time 4 dead in Palermo and one in Catania.

Avola 1968 – farm workers demonstrate – police kill two trade unionists.

Battipaglia 1969 – demonstration for work-police kill two workers.

Milan 1970 – demonstration one year after the State massacre and the murder of Pinelli – police kill Saverio Santarelli with a tear gas canister.

No less heavy is the use of the military in situations which are difficult to control:

Orgosolo 1969 – shepherds are chased from the fields by firing manœuvres; parachutists and carabinieri intervene, the village is encircled and "mopped up".

Rome 1969 – demonstration of 100,000 engineering workers, the Confindustria headquarters taken over by the military and surrounded by tanks.

I think these few examples will be enough to explain the true function of the Armed Forces.

If I am here today it is to

underline the repressive function of the State exercised against all those, who – like myself and many other comrades – desert the army and are struggling for a society without exploitation and without privilege.

So long as the State exists laws will exist which defend the dominant classes and their interests.

Orazio Valastro

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note: "*Orazio Valastro who has deserted the army and was already sentenced to five months' imprisonment in 1982 and to 8 months in February 1987. He risks spending most of the rest of his life till the age of 45 in prison.*

Let us rebel against the logic of the State that wants young people to commit suicide in the barracks and imprisons all those who rebel against this logic.

Against the militarisation and nuclearisation of the social territory.

For the liberation of Orazio Valastro and all the other antimilitarists in prison.

- Catania Antimilitarist Committee"

IN A SOCIETY DIVIDED INTO CLASSES, essentially constituted of consumer goods, centralization of production and private property, there exists a sophisticated apparatus for gauging and enacting social control. It developed alongside the affirmation of religious and political-economic authority, allowing them to exercise concretely and widen exploitation and domination. This controlling apparatus is modified and adapted to the emancipatory thrusts of the exploited and the projects of the so-called scientists' schemes of

exploitation, and in so doing transform themselves from militarization and defence to repressive processes and war. In fact at the present time we are witnessing an increase in military expenditure all over the world and research of the most homicidal projects of annihilation and death, the construction of nuclear missile bases and the continual threat of nuclear war.

Thus Comiso is the Italian pride of the most merciless and ruthless race in the construction of death projects, the strategic and military outpost of the actuation

of the repressive process and war-mongering of the Italian state and the NATO mercenaries.

We must oppose these projects and the apparatus which realizes them with all possible and practicable instruments. The armed apparatus of the state – the army in all its ramifications – assumes a primary role in protecting and maintaining exploitation, being the armed force which keeps humanity into classes, intervening violently to extinguish any attempt at liberation. The history of the proletariat is marked by these events. In 1945 Comiso knew, with its revolt against the war, the brutality and ruthlessness and determination of its nature.

Today as yesterday the army is nothing other than:

THE BOSSES' ARM OF
DEFENCE

A FASCIST GYMNASIUM

THE EDEN OF CUT-THROAT
GENERALS

THE ELECTRIC SHOCK OF
YOUTH

THE SCHOOL OF OBEDIENCE

THE SCHOOL OF
BRUTALIZATION

THE LIVING CORPSE OF
HUMANITY

A BAND OF ASSASSINS

Each year thousands of young twenty-year-olds find in their hands a blue postcard which 'obliges' them to go and serve the 'State' in one of its apparatuses of death, completely dislocating them from their environment and lives for a year or two, to be trooped in and trained to enslavement, authority, bound in the lowest human condition, the most shabby life in the barracks and the total subservience to the 'laws' of exploitation.

Military service is one of the State's arms for building 'model citizens' devoid of personality, individuality, and of their own way of thinking, against which it is necessary to rebel and refuse.

I am Giuseppe Scarso,
ANARCHIST
ANTIMILITARIST who, in the name of your military ordinance was to present himself on June 30th at the 225 BTG. 'Arezzo' to submit to servitude, enslavement, enclosure in your instruments of death called battalions of the army, REFUSE AND OBJECT to join your ranks.

On June 29th I sent a declaration of TOTAL OBJECTION to the battalion command, the minister of war L. Lagorio and to the supreme head of the FORCES OF DEATH and