BLACKOUT

CONTROVERSY ABOUT MEANING AND EFFICIENCY OF SABOTAGE

FRANCE, SPRING 2023

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Preamble

March 2023

Between February and March 2020, all over the world, heads of state made solemn and grave announcements in order to prepare their populations for what appeared to be a new era : one of war against the virus. We are at war, claimed Macron bluntly, as he was declaring the state of public health emergency, deploying his armed men to make sure everyone stayed locked up at home. In this moment of widespread fear and generalized obedience, a catastrophist atmosphere prevailed in the streets. In France, the mass movements that had etched the political landscape of the previous years disappeared suddenly, caught between prohibitions, self-control and fear of the disease. Some activists promised war as soon as all of this was over, others called for a sense of responsibility and proposed instead to move the struggle to the virtual world of screens, which became the main place of the new pseudo-social life. Others, or the very same ones, were feeling depressed, drowning their feeling of powerlessness in drugs.

Nonetheless, after a few days of shock, a new wave of radical opposition started taking shape. Some practices, which had been theorized and carried out until then only by a handful of anarchist companions, started to proliferate. Informal organization in small action groups and offensive actions on infrastructures were spreading, in the midst of the lockdown. These means of organi-

zation seemed all the more relevant, since any public opposition was forbidden : to be where you are least expected to be; to attack and disappear; to move around effortlessly, off the radars and far from screens. Those who were prepared for it had a considerable advantage in this situation. Additionally, the targets chosen for sabotage, particularly antennas and fiber optic bundles, formulated a direct response to the process of technological restructuring driven by states in the name of the emergency : 5G network deployment; transfer of many services to the virtual world; medical monitoring and profiling of populations; movement limitations and tracking through QR codes, sanitary passes and smartphone applications.

Within a couple months, the sabotage of telecommunication infrastructures had almost become a daily event in France, as well as in other European countries. Simultaneously, a debate sprang up within anarchist and radical ecological publications, in particular about the meaning and efficiency of these acts. How could we undermine technological control ? Could we provoke a tipping point within this situation? What scenarios did these sabotages open up ? How could we consider efficiency, organization and ethics altogether?

We propose here five texts that were published between May 2020 and March 2021 in the French speaking context, presenting a dialogue around issues that seem highly topical to us. These texts are not all of the same nature and carry perspectives that are sometimes pretty divergent, while sharing a core belief in the need for destructive direct action against infrastructures of the techno-industrial society. The first text, “Should we destroy 5G antennas ?”, openly criticizes the choice of targeting this type of infrastructure, based on several strategic considerations. We don’t share this criticism, which we find extremely reductive, but we’ve chosen to publish it because this view is symptomatic of an almost technical vision of efficiency. The other texts address this issue in a more complex manner. The second one, published on the Internet anonymously, is a call to come after the “critical pieces of this system” in order to hit it hard. The three following texts, published in anarchist news-

papers and brochures, are successive responses that shed a light on the concept of efficiency; the tension between ethics and strategy; and the meaning of offensive action in general, as well as in this particular context.

Three years later, the lockdown seems like a distant bad memory. But we know that after such an experience at a global scale, states will be able to pull out this card whenever they deem it necessary, for some war or another. These three past years have brought up new crises, which have justified new accelerations towards technoscience. In France, in the name of the war in Ukraine, global warming and the energy crisis, the state has invested hundreds of millions of euros in the nuclear and military industries, as well as in the renewal of its industrial sector through a move towards an all-electric and robotic world.

Given this, several opposition movements, often of ecological tendency, have sprung up, among which the questions of the meaning and efficiency of Action are debated, sometimes with completely different approaches. In France, the initiatives proposed by the Soulèvements de la Terre ("Earth's Uprisings" : French ecologist movement), sometimes citizenist, sometimes aggressive, were seeking to touch upon the political-mediatic field, that is to say the field of sensationalism. In this approach, direct action is a tactic subject to a double strategic criterion of centralization : it is subject to the central direction of the movement, while it also focuses on visually usable targets in order to engage in a power struggle with the superficial layers of power (the government, the public opinion). The strategy is also based on a series of objectives to achieve : the results of an action are predetermined and the goals are partial (to make the state back off of specific projects and to propose more ecological uses of specific territories). However, this movement provides paths to action, which was no longer obvious these days.

Simultaneously, another proposal continues to take shape, one whose strategy is to reach the infrastructural field, which means the deep layers of power. The power of the war-research-industry complex isn't unboltable, since it relies on diffuse infrastructures.

To understand, identify and destroy key infrastructures is also to start considering radical change as possible once again. Although less spectacular, this way of acting holds a triple advantage : it is less seizable by repressive forces; it can concretely stop, even temporarily, the techno-industrial machinery; and it prevents the encroachment of any central direction, since it results from the work of a multitude of small, spread out and autonomous groups.

Nowadays, the situation has evolved, but the problems brought up by the following texts remain unresolved, maybe even more so now, and without obvious answers : what are the links between direct action and social or ecological movements? What strategies emerge when we separate or combine anarchist, ecologist and techno-critical perspectives? How do these strategies integrate a now-decisive element : the war in Europe, which will guide and harden the grip of states on their populations.

As the world is heading towards artificialization, devastation and plunder, we believe that radical opposition must provide opportunities, deepen its criticism, sharpen its tools. We have chosen to gather some writings that could have remained scattered, but that, together, raise unresolved questions, while making visible different currents, different positions within the forces that undertake direct action. We hope that the following thoughts will contribute to feed this debate, including beyond borders.

Should We Destroy 5G Antennas ?

vert-resistance.org, May 2020

Other articles have already explained the issues raised by the 5G : emblem of a world in which everything is controlled, in which everything goes faster, and above all, in which we destroy everything faster. Yes, the 5G, like many other technologies, is harmful for nature as well as for society. True. However, does this justify attacking 5G antennas? Don't expect long moral considerations here, there is nothing immoral in the destruction of a machine that destroys the living. We're gonna talk strategy : is it strategically interesting to attack 5G antennas?

A target designed to lose

Do we really think that the destruction of antennas will halt the spread of the 5G network? We have the feeling that it won't be the case. As ecologists, we are so used to losing that we make up strategies without imagining one second that we could win. It's true that 5G antennas can be easily approached by anyone with a bit of good will. Similarly, there seems to be little difficulty in attacking them. Finally, the effect is immediate : where there used to be a diffusion of the 5G, there is no more diffusion of the 5G. So why won't it stop the 5G? Because antennas are bad targets.

The problem with 5G antennas

First, antennas are very numerous : in July 2018, the Senate's di-

gital studies group organized hearings with representatives of Orange (French ex-national telecom company)[1]. The latter declared that to switch to this band with national coverage, they would have to adapt 25 000 antennas and to install 5 000 new ones. However, in reality, the numbers are probably far superior. Thus, we would have to destroy an important part of this fleet to have any effect. Suffice to say that we are well off. On top of that, we would have to destroy these antennas before they get replaced.

Then comes our second problem : these antennas are very easy to replace. Most of the time, it is a metal pole associated with a plastic case churned out from production lines. So it is a matter of a couple days of work, at most, to replace a damaged antenna. The staff of any telecom operator being more numerous than the total amount of people within the ecological movement, even if activists were continuously destroying antennas, they would probably never be able to do it faster than the replacement rate of these antennas.

Maybe you were hoping that the losses could be so important that the project would be abandoned. I have bad news for you. The European Commission estimates that the revenues generated by the upgrade to the 5G could be equivalent to 225 billion euros in 2025[2] worldwide, creating 2.4 billion new jobs in Europe and generating more than 113 billion euros of profits in 2025. True or not, these estimates clarify something : states are prepared to invest.

70 antennas have been destroyed so far[3], these losses won't even be accounted for by telecom operators. If we wish to seriously attack the 5G system, we will have to review our choice of target.

How to choose a target?

We've already discussed this matter in great lengths in another article. There is a magical tool for the selection of targets, the

1. https://www.senat.fr/salle-de-presse/communiques-de-presse/presse/cp20180719.html
2. https://app.brief.eco/article/2019-04-10-767-le-passage-a-la-5g
3. https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2020/04/20/les-destructions-d-antennes-telephoniques-5g-augmentent-en-europe_6037222_4408996.html

CARVER matrix[4] which was popularized by the special forces of the American army during the Vietnam war. It is a system for the identification and categorization of specific targets in order to use resources efficiently for offensive actions. Let's try to apply the criteria of the CARVER matrix to the 5G antennas.

Criteria	Description	Score
Criticality	Does the system suffer from the loss of an element ?	1
Accessibility	Is the target easily accessible ?	4
Repairability	Is the target easy to replace ?	1
Vulnerability	Is the target easy to destroy ?	5
Effect	Will there be collateral damage ?	4

For a better selection of targets in the ecological movement

As is often the case, among the targets chosen by the ecological movement, the problem lies in the criticality and repairability of targets : the loss of an element won't affect, or will affect very little, the system and it will be very easy to replace.

Since ecologists have little offensive capability, they should focus instead on highly critical targets that are difficult to replace, in order to concentrate their strengths on the enemy's weak points. We have previously discussed the critical infrastructures of the electrical grid, as well as the criticality of the production of rubber. We don't know enough about the inner workings of the 5G to be able to identify its critical infrastructures, but we have no doubt that motivated activists would be able to do so.

4. https://www.vert-resistance.org/strategies/arreter-de-perdre-nos-luttes/ (sic).

A Couple Thoughts about Offensive Actions on Relay Antennas

Published on attaque.no-blogs, July 2020

This text is intended to be read by those who support and/or practice offensive action. It is meant to be a global reflection about the selection of targets. It does not claim to bring new ideas or incredible solutions, but tries instead to make a small point on the subject and even dare to look a bit further.

Small cuts

To see a multiplication of the practice of burning down antennas or fiber optic cables (and besides, of offensive actions in general) has delighted me deeply. Now that the expansion seems to have reduced a little, I think it might be interesting for us to start thinking with composure again. Offensive actions on relay antennas are nothing new, we have been seeing them regularly for many years. If we've seen the rate increase in the last few years (at least in France), the sharp rise in the past couple months has been very impressive. However, what can we take from this? Individual experiences for

sure. New complicities, I guess. But above all new possibilities, I hope. These cuts in the fabric of the network are so irregular and spread out (except for several coordinated offensive actions in Paris and Grenoble, but I'll come back to this later) that they are fixed within a couple hours, or a couple days at most. Because the weak spot of these antennas is also their strong point. They are vulnerable, even for small groups of people who are moderately equipped, but also easily replaceable. The effect is immediate (the phone works or the phone doesn't work). Yet in the overwhelming majority of cases, the network has such a tight mesh that another antenna directly takes over the relay (which is where its name comes from) and we don't see any difference in services. Despite all the hard work that has been put into it, what do 50 antennas represent compared to the 30 000 spread out over the entire territory? Defeatist? I don't think so.

A different perspective

We can take things differently. The fact that the entire territory (and indeed a majority of the world) is covered by them doesn't mean that there is nothing to be done, but that we can attack anywhere. Whether it is to learn to interact and move discreetly in an area where we spend a lot of time, or a bit further to muddy the waters while pondering on the different ways to move oneself over longer distances anonymously.

Similarly, we can take a look at our movement (to simplify, I put into this category all of those whose desire for liberty pushes them towards offensive action without mediation) and what I believe to be its greatest weakness : the total lack of organization at a medium/large scale. Let's look at it another way. The fact that there is no centralized decision-making group, nor chief, the fact that we are dispersed, or that we disagree on a number of ideas, is maybe our best tool against repression. It is much harder for our enemies to understand who wants what, who says what, and of course who does what (even I am confused sometimes)! If I'm arrested, I won't be able to denounce people I've never seen.

So let's keep our healthy distrust towards anything that comes

close to authority, but without preventing ourselves from thinking about the ways in which we could organize ourselves more broadly : calls for offensive action campaigns; exchanges of knowledge and practices on paper; writings about the debates that exist among us; informal meetings (with great thought given to security); small reflection groups instead of large assemblies; facilitating the meeting of a contact representing other people rather than a more numerous process; …

Coming back to the antennas, if the idea that offensive actions can be reproduced and shared if they are simple and understandable remains a sweet dream (or an ideology in some cases[1]), these targets still seem interesting to us. This is because they are easily accessible physically (they are isolated, with little to no protection) and thus easier to get started with, to bring along some companions, to learn to recognize some territories, to share techniques and to break the myth that attacking is a matter of over-trained and over-equipped specialists. Therefore, we really need these targets in order to go beyond them.

To go beyond

About the possibilities : Either in Paris during the lockdown[2] or in Grenoble a couple days later[3], the step seems to have been taken, moving beyond targets with low strategical value (since easily replaceable) towards multiple targets that, once coordinated, considerably increase the efficiency of an offensive action. Whether it's the 100 000 people deprived of internet and phone services in Paris, or in Grenoble where we learned that an additional antenna would have shut down the metropolis' entire network[4]. Not that the recipe is anything new, but I find it exciting that we allow ourselves to think it, to do it, to coordinate ourselves, to hit simultaneously, and to disappear. It is a step forward, from what can be considered as

(1) https://attaque.noblogs.org/post/2019/03/17/brochure-abandonner-les-fantasmes-de-la-politique/
(2) https://attaque.noblogs.org/post/2020/05/05/ivry-et-vitry-val-de-marne-des-cables-dorangecoupes-et-fini-le-teletravail/
(3) https://attaque.noblogs.org/post/2020/05/19/metropole-de-grenoble-attaques-coordonnees-dantennes-relais/
(4) https://www.lepostillon.org/Antenne-je-ne-boirai-plus-de-ton-reseau.html

low intensity conflict to what could become an open conflict. Given the way things are going, with on one side an all-technological over-controlled system and on the other, the increasingly intense destruction of what we still dared to call nature not so long ago, I sincerely believe that we don't have time anymore. No time to hope that another social movement will become uncontrollable if we break enough windows; nor to hope that with small examples of diffused sabotage, a mass of increasingly servile people will become an angry mob. To me, not to have time anymore doesn't mean to rush behind every emergency (climatic or social), nor to follow the increasingly rapid flux of the net, to be "present" in order to spread "counter-information". No. It means planning meaningful operations, to dare think in terms of strategy. With our own temporality and not that of power. Especially since the system has gone through a "crisis". Without pretending to be a prophet, it seems obvious to me that there will be more of them, which we should take advantage of. Maybe we can already draw some questions/conclusions from what happened.

To know where to go during a lockdown, with whom. To remember who opened their door and who closed it shut. If you should have accumulated offensive material before the stores closed. If you had forgotten something. If you had means of moving around while avoiding controls. To which point you know how to organize yourself without your phone, without internet if the net is shut down (for a short or longer period of time, …).

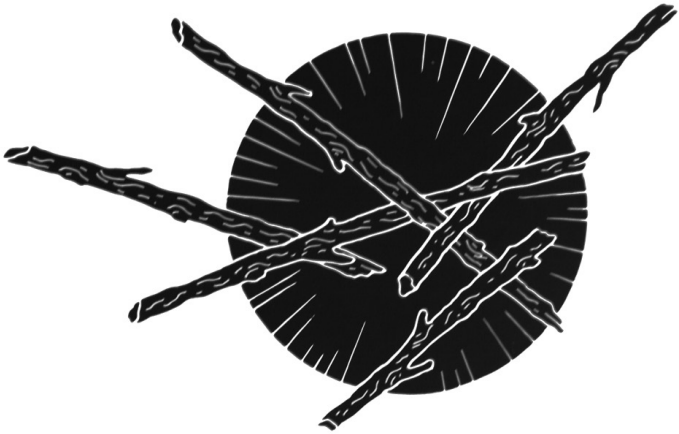
The choice of target

Either for the fiber or telecom networks, there are nodes that we could study. It also seems important to me to underline that any infrastructure that is essential to the techno-industrial system is currently fed by the production of electricity. If a target seems too complex, why not attack it upstream, where there is less surveillance? A couple of electric transformers rendered useless can plunge a big city in total darkness and disconnection (with everything it implies, at a time when all of the infrastructures and the overwhelming majority of our interactions are conceived in terms

of interconnected system and flux).

What if I was sufficiently prepared to go even further? What if I had the information that, at a given time, the place where I'm standing will be left in the dark, without any surveillance system, without any internet connection, what could I do then? What preparation would be required? Let's be honest : we are very few. For this reason, we might need to focus on the critical pieces of this system if we want to hit it hard.

My goal here isn't to say that we should exclusively target the hubs of power and that any other kind of offensive action is useless or isn't worth our time. On the contrary. Any offensive action is good in itself. But we need to know exactly what we expect from it. What it brings and what it doesn't. Its effects and its limits. What it produces and the possibilities it opens up. This seems to be truly necessary nowadays. Especially if we want to become dangerous, if we want to become wild once again.



Assaulting the Existent

Avis de Tempête, Augustt 2020

The circulation of several texts that publicly defend recent offensive actions on relay antennas during the lockdown, while trying to push reflections a bit further, has motivated me to bring my own contribution. It seems important to me that this type of ongoing discussion about action be developed in writing, beyond this and that offensive action or solidarity in the context of repression. The goal is to embrace a broader horizon in which we could confront and deepen our individual perspectives. So here is another contribution to feed this reflection, sent to several anarchist non-virtual publications that could publish it.

Action in small numbers

"We could choose not to do anything, and that is the most beautiful reason to act", stated a small pamphlet dating from the end of the previous millennia. This apparent paradox suggests that everything often begins with a refusal in this world of submission, resignation and organized passivity. Indeed, the starting point for subversive action towards an exaggerated practice of freedom rests above all on individuals. Not on mysterious social forces submitted to implacable historical mechanisms, nor on some organized avant-

garde that could push the weight of the masses forward, but on this little ingredient which will always escape the statistics of large numbers.

Next to the self-organization and autonomy of individuals to attack here and now, there is also a lingering tune that regularly comes to nudge us, at least those who wish to thoroughly destroy the Existent : the insurrection that slams the door open for the experience of revolutionary transformation. The latter obviously isn't tied to any historical belief or messianic inevitability, but to an immediate necessity, that of demolishing the structures of domination, just as the social relations that are its pillars. Unfortunately, the mere multiplication of action groups will not suffice. We will never get over the extent of the horrors of authority and dispossession that surround and and move us, as we will never quench our thirst for destruction by our sole Action. Thus, insurrections can open up unprecedented possibilities to both deepen our destructive capabilities as well to create an upheaval of space-time, of life itself in all of its dimensions.

For example, if acting in small numbers doesn't necessarily mean to act in an isolated manner, and if our strength doesn't rely on the quantity but rather on the diffuse and uncontrollable character of our offensive actions, the question becomes not who knows who or some objective conditions, but instead how, while starting from oneself, to contribute, spread, precipitate or exacerbate the ongoing social war. It is clear to us that the positive can only come out of the negative, and not the opposite. This is where the famous question of projectuality comes in, which we can throw out the window, but that will ultimately invite itself back in by knocking on the front door, even when we least expect it. It is the one we give ourselves, with its own temporalities, with everything we do to make it a success, in terms of analysis, research, means, but also efforts and energy. Of course it isn't necessary to have these preoccupations in mind when we cross the threshold of Action. In fact, many people do without it, either because of their taste for spontaneity or their burning desire to simply strike blows at domination while reclaiming the feeling to be alive for a moment. Yet, besides these types of practices that do indeed make sense, whether through the multiplicity of daily

antagonisms or when they are projected a little further forward, we regularly bump into, in the depths of our own consciousness or during discussions with our relatives, a bottomless pit of questions : why should we go after this or that, when there is so much to be done and when domination can't be compartmentalized? Can we do better than scratch the surface of this ocean of oppression over and over again? How could we imagine destructive interventions that fully satisfy us while being a little beyond us? How can we dialogue within the negative with other still unknown accomplices (which opens up new questions, for instance about the criteria of the communication and reproducibility of our offensive actions)?

A profusion of cables?

Taking as an illustration the offensive actions against relay antennas and fiber optic cables which have multiplied over the past couple years, we could start by drawing some conclusions, knowing of course that any source of information on the matter is bound to be limited, both because of the reduced possibilities of research and the communication of the enemy (which underestimates their frequency and often obscures its real consequences, in case it might encourage someone).

First off, it seems to me that they have occurred in waves. Until the Yellow Vests movement at the end of 2018, they were generally isolated offensive actions, vengefully claimed during the summer of 2017 in Drôme, Ardèche and Puy-de-Dôme. They sometimes seized the opportunity to harm certain particular social relations, like in Meilleray on the evening of December 31st 2014; like in 2017 in the Morbihan fifteen minutes before the presidential debate; in 2018 in Saint-Rémy-lès-Chevreuse right before the quarterfinals of the Football World Cup; in Saint-Jean-du-Gard on July 14th (France's national day); or in Villeparisis on November 11th (Remembrance Day). In other European countries, like in Germany, Belgium and Italy, relay and television antennas occasionally burst into flames, sometimes in solidarity with incarcerated companions. Finally, there were few sabotages of fiber optic cables, but their potential

was quite impressive and inspiring.

Then, there were two new waves of sabotage of these types of infrastructures. The first one began at the end of 2018 during the Yellow Vests movement and intensified over the following months, including several arrests and convictions, but also some beautiful little clusters of consecutive offensive actions in a given area. The second wave occurred during and shortly after the 55 days of lockdown. Both of these waves included more than 50 antennas each – the first over eight months and the second over just two months, which means almost one per day. They included a diversity of sites (metropolises and villages, mountains and industrial zones); of targets (exterior machinery, adjoining outbuildings, cables running along a pylon); and of modes of operation (tires, pliers, bottles with fuel), which enables certain observations.

On the one hand, the movement of offensive actions against relay antennas diffused itself over the entire territory, while diversifying its motivations, as is demonstrated by the leaked words of some arrested people as well as a couple claims (against police surveillance; against multinationals; against technology; to preserve nature and health; etc). If we add to this the places where the sabotage of fiber optic cables occurred, their diversity also tell us something about the intended disruption : Amazon storage buildings; industrial and artisanal zones; highways; shopping centers; administrative districts; big international nodes linking several data centers together…

The technical consequences also varied greatly from one another : some smaller and isolated antennas serving villages took months to be fixed because the fire had weakened the structure of the pylons, while bigger mountaintop antennas took around 10 days to be put back into function. For instance, it was the case of one of the first antennas to be burnt down during the lockdown, in Salins-les-Bains (Jura). Two recently convicted people, who were sentenced to 3 and 4 years of jail for the one in Foncine-le-Haut, declared that they were inspired by the aforementioned offensive action in Salins-les-Bains. First because the companies had to bring to the mountaintop a special carrycot with an outreach of 50 me-

ters in order to be able to connect 8 new large coaxial cables which were burnt down along several dozen meters. Second because that region no longer had sufficient stocks (too many previous fires?) and these cables had to be provided by the neighboring regions. Isn't that a good example of the possible snowball effect from one region to another, when the coaxial cables of a certain dimension entirely burn down, from the bottom to the top (more than the exterior machinery or adjoining outbuilding, which are too standard and re-connectable without high technicality) ?

Conversely, it is also true that in the case of a beautiful sabotage, like the one that was coordinated in the metropolis of Grenoble last may, or the singular one that happened in Livry-Gargan in 2019 on the opening day of the Milipol Salon (a technical building, which covered 40 antennas in the north east of Seine-Saint-Denis, was burnt down), the companies gave everything they had to reconnect (fix would be too great of a word) the antennas within 48 hours, with a bit of craft. Thus, does a big isolated and concentrated sabotage allow them to bring back the connection quicker than in the case of several dispersed and regular offensive actions, since they focus their limited resources all at once? Finally, last technical aspect, we could also try to find out to which extent an antenna can take the relay of another one (which has been put out of service) by increasing its own power. If we analyze the hundred antennas that have been destroyed in the past two years, we can deduce that this doesn't seem to happen automatically. It seems to depend not only on its position in the chain of transmission (from large transmitter to small local relay, even if everything is part of a network, there are still some nodes), but also on the terrain and the concentration of the most important antennas (it is most obvious in the case of the relay of television).

But in the end, above the observations and experiences that could be made by anyone, if we don't want to consider the sabotage of these infrastructures from an essentially technical prism - as we believe they pertain to something else - what's the point of these considerations?

A qualitative question

When an individual, a group of individuals or several coordinated groups decide to take action, many questions – on top of the whys, the means and the types of self-organizations, which already isn't nothing – are immediately brought to light. These questions concern not only the objectives but also the criteria to determine. To stick with the framework discussed above, it is for instance possible to look for different types of specific relay (of cops; of the OTAN; of television; of the 5G network; of this or that company) or not; to move towards a multiplicity of targets that would be more easily available and diffuse, or to focus instead on one consequential target (a site that would comprise several antennas or an important one); just as it is possible, by widening our gaze, to go instead for cables and connecting nodes of the fiber optic, telephone exchanges, transformers or electrical lines, which can all partially cut internet and mobile communications in areas of varying size.

Likewise, while it is certainly possible to establish personal quantitative criteria – to affect a maximum amount of people, to create a disturbance that lasts as long as possible, etc. - the latter could be considerably expanded to other dimensions, where what matters could be for instance to accomplish a sabotage at a given moment despite the difficulties (ex: during the lockdown; at a given date tied to an event of domination or solidarity; during a given restructuring of domination; or in the midst of a specific struggle that we wish to support or curb). Conversely, what matters could also be to target a specific antenna because of the consequences it would have (on a particular industrial zone; port; arms factory; start up; laboratory; administration). Moreover, it could be to simply participate in an ongoing joyful destructive momentum that we hadn't planned out, but that motivates us (and in this case just like in the others, its simple and diffuse nature could also become a criterion). And so on.

In any case, it seems to me that there cannot exist any type of "efficiency" in terms of sabotage, due to its always partial nature

in the face of the immense task of destruction which remains to be accomplished. On top of that, it is a relationship between oneself and the world, a social relation that is not dissolved by or limited to a technical question. If we are to establish the criteria for each of our offensive actions ourselves, instead of being affected by an external quantified or objectified relation - which both reproduce a logic of measure that has its roots in the world of authority -, couldn't we simply consider that a sabotage is successful (or "efficient") if we are able to accomplish what we had planned while we gave ourselves the means to do it? That it is above all a matter of singularity, that it is a moment where we can touch upon Action, to this fleeting dimension of quality where we have finally taken on our own lives and the stars? A hundred antennas destroyed in two years certainly are not worth much in the face of the objectivity of the 29 900 ones left untouched. But each and every one of them has not only said a lot to those who have felt this dimension, but also to all of those whose services were shut down momentarily, as well as those whose relations of alienation and dispossession were affected by this destruction (what did it mean? - is another question that could be detailed elsewhere).

At a time where this last non-lockdown wave seems to be over, even if scattered sabotages have continued to happen since then and the uncontested arrival of the 5G will bring on new ones, I would simply like to conclude with these two questions : what if the coordinated and diffuse aspects of these offensive actions weren't opposed, but instead completed each other within an ongoing maelstrom as dispersed as uncontrollable? What would happen if the stocks of cables burned down?

Ethics and Strategy
Against Programmatic Ecology

Des singes, pas des savants, September 2020

These pages are an answer to the texts "A Couple Thoughts about Offensive Actions on Relay Antennas" (abbreviated here as "Ct") published in July 2020 on the blog Attaque, and "Should We Destroy 5G Antennas?" (abbreviated "Sw") published in May 2020 on the blog Vert Résistance, as well as a contribution to the analysis of the situation.

When I read, with a certain pleasure, the text "Ct", I immediately agreed with the initiative. I share the feeling that we can, at this moment, "look a bit further". But reading this also left me with a strange aftertaste. I found out why while reading the other text "Sw", that I would describe as the official line of DGR (Deep Green Resistance) and which "Ct" seems to be a kind of version adapted to the French context.

1. Deep ecology is a branch of Anglo-Saxon environmentalism, which extends its criticism to society as a whole.
2. Ideology that plans the revolution and extends itself without ethical limits.

A tension is emerging between two ways of conceiving practical and direct opposition to the industrial world (I won't discuss here the branches which intend to oppose it by dialoguing with it) : the first, which revolves around catastrophist "deep ecology"[1] and is oriented towards programmatic and calculable logic, the other which, without excluding an "arythmetic of situations", nor the possibility of «thinking like a strategist», as the armed poet René Char once said, acts according to an ethic that each person and each group establishes in its own way. What I will call here strategical ethics, that is to say an anarchism capable of thinking both the ends and the means altogether, has little in common with programmatic ecology, as little as it has with Marxism-Leninism[2], or with any prophecy and plannification of the revolution. If "Sw" is a cold consideration of the lack of relevance of offensive actions on relay antennas, in the light of the strategic methods defined by DGR and relayed by VR (Vert Résistance), "Ct" is more nuanced. It describes itself as a "global reflection about the selection of targets" and interestingly identifies three important elements : the capacity of the telecom network to recover easily from isolated attacks; the potential of coordinated offensive actions; and the strategic interest of electrical infrastructures. I agree with the general idea, which sounds to me like an invitation not to enclose offensive actions within militant repetition, and to turn up the heat. But this text raises serious questions, and drops them pretty quickly. So I'll explore in my own way the three issues of repression, ideology and organization. I invite people and their groups to carefully reflect upon these questions, whether they stem from the ecologist or the anarchist branch. Incidentally, I wonder if Internet is the right place for this kind of debate. Not that, out of purism, we should never approach a computer keyboard, but rather that, pragmatically, establishing and publishing one's strategies on the net is a huge gift to a repression that documents itself mostly through the net and telephones.

Ah, another clarification : if I am criticizing the catastrophist thought, it doesn't mean that I am incapable of perceiving the effects of the industrial system on the world. I prefer to develop an attention to what surrounds me in my own way, and to consider my actions according to my own ethical coordinates, instead of using an old myth to think about the present and the future.

But before getting to the heart of the matter, let's recall some elements of context, just to understand one another.

1. Context

We have witnessed in recent years a reduction of the practice of occupation as well as an increase of the practice of offensive action, both in quality and in quantity. Obviously, this produced a reaction from power and the emergence of a repressive wave. Two elements seem important not to miss. The first is that, after trying to amalgamate offensive actions on relay antennas to the anti-vaccine and anti-semite conspiracy, (read the articles published in Le Monde during the lockdown), a police strategy emerges : at the beginning of June, shortly after the coordinated attacks in Paris and Grenoble, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, newly reshuffled, set up a new investigation unit with special responsibility for sabotages, dubbed Oracle. So there is a new player in the game. The second element not to forget is that we witnessed the emergence of lockdown activism during the months of March, April and May 2020. A large part of the political milieu of extreme-leftism and ecology effectively positioned itself in favor of the guidelines of medical policing (note that the two texts don't mention this). That militants thereby become the relay of the policies of power, especially in terms of medicine and technologies, doesn't surprise me; but they did so with such determination that I was stunned. What had become of the GJ ("Gilets Jaunes", Yellow Vests) and XR (Extinction Rebellion) movements that were pounding the pavement the previous year? Applauding on their balconies, or worst, in front of their screens.

The political milieu of extreme-leftism and ecology (for convenience, let's call it the extreme milieu) stayed at home so well that offensive actions, sabotages, direct actions, with a few rare attempts at protesting and holding street canteens, appeared as the last bastions of revolts in acts, in a time of authoritarian clenching. And not just among insiders : amalgamated, deplored or supported, the practice of burning down antennas became a societal phenomenon - some would even say that it was popularized. It is up to everyone to determine whether that's a good thing or not.

2. To play out in the open : about repression

The two texts "Ct" and "Sw" were published in the midst of the Covid crisis, and do not mention the resulting problems. To think

about offensive action out of context is precisely to overlook strategical elements.

For instance, about the targets, if there is something that can be taken as a given, it is that cops have understood the logic behind recent attacks : telecom, energy and… cops. Several senior officers have reported on it in the press. In order to continue the offensive on relay antennas, in particular, one needs to weigh the risk that they sometimes have a head start.

What will be the strategies of Oracle cops to try to halt the waves of sabotage? We'll soon find out, and this seems like a good time to emphasize the need for a culture of security. Clearly, the counter-terrorism prosecutors refuse for the moment to be in charge of investigations, but with new laws looming after the recent Islamist actions, we should expect a proliferation of cases, Italian-style, with charges of terrorism and criminal association, with the support of the European police and an arsenal of technological surveillance.

But beyond judicial and police repression, there is another more subtile repression that we will have to be wary of : partisans of lockdowns, based on a theory of privileges (according to the following logic : sabotage = not confined = healthy individuals = privileged = #stayhome), may well prove to be good police auxiliaries in current times. Will we witness denunciations for a lack of legitimacy to act? The idea that the reason of medicine could justify not to act, the idea therefore that the reason of medicine, just like the reason of state, is not a determining facet of power, might be the worst enemy that we have to face today, because it presents itself in terms of solidarity and equality. One hand in the pocket, the other on the smartphone. "We won't forget you", threatened the authors of a text addressed to those who braved the lockdown (published on several militant websites). A message to these champions of stupidity and self-policing : I won't forget you either.

People who have experienced the covid crisis as a totalitarian deployment politicized the questions of medicine and technology. But make no mistake : depoliticization of these questions was nevertheless very strong (as demonstrated by this other text published on Rebellyon this summer, which calls for reclaiming telecom tools in order to be a good online militant during a future lockdown). We are entering a new realm in which anyhing can be justified with medical reasons, and it is possible that repression found a new grip as well as a new internal enemy.

3. The ideology behind the target

It is good to note that the upsurge of attacks has focused on crucial elements of technological development, that it sees clearly the nature of power in current times. But "what do 50 antennas represent compared to the 30 000 spread out over the entire territory?" asks hastily "Ct". Beyond this quantitative (and underestimated) consideration, I think these 50 antennas represent a considerable awareness of the tools of power, since the criticism of technologies had become, in the extreme milieu as well as in the rest of society, practically inaudible, even suspect. It seems that the covid episode has laid bare the strategical nature of telecom technologies : what state could have succeeded in confining its entire population, if it hadn't first connected all of its citizens to another reality? To me, the text thus skips the qualitative aspect. Indeed, the serial attack of relay antennas holds a lot of meaning, doubled with a message : information technology can't be perceived as a means of rebelling oneself anymore. Instead, rebellion lies in its very destruction.

But be careful what you might forget if you focus too much, as both texts do, on the facet of power constituted by telecom and energy infrastructures. We could for instance forget the development of biotechnologies and the medicalization of all aspects of life, which are absent in the analyses of DGR. Isn't medicine the best Trojan horse for new technologies, including nuclear ones? What haven't we accepted in the name of "saving lives"? Criticism in acts of technology aims at a central aspect of our current times, but it must apprehend all facets of power. While being wary of the sacralized idea of the living, or its variants "nature" and the "wild world", as if there were an idea, a concept, a word, that contained everything that should be defended. A lot of struggles are just, but why should we want a just cause to take them on? Especially if this cause is ecology, which is about to become one of the main forms of government. Ecology, from its origin, (whether the invention of the word by a 19th-century eugenicist or its political rise in the 1970s) isn't the love of little flowers : it is an ideology of management, sometimes in a will to exploit the living, sometimes to preserve it.

To move from a "low intensity conflict" to an "open conflict", suggests "Ct". Alright, but let's explain why first. To defend nature? To

avoid the collapse that will surely come, or that is already here? Even if the text stands out from primary catastrophism, it still has its feet stuck in the mud of ecology. However, if it was the cocoon in which today's forces facing technological power once grew, it will also be their grave. Stuck in a systemic, cybernetic and catastrophist vision, prisoner of defensive attitudes and the sacralization of the living, ecology will drag them down.

To move towards more open conflict, yes, though with clearer perspectives. A natural reserve, whether a PNR (Regional Natural Park) or a ZAD (Zone-to-Defend), can provide a shelter and be defended, but I'm not fighting to protect an ecosystem, nor for social equality. I am fighting to experience the fact that this fucking world isn't immutable, that the mega-machine isn't indestructible, that the Leviathan isn't an all-mighty God, and that it isn't a God at all. And I don't need no good worker, no good peasant, no good savage.
Even so, it doesn't mean I don't believe in anything. I am quite capable of coming up with some strategies and organizing my actions, as well as observing their effects, sometimes even beyond what I expected.

There is a tension within the history of ecology that dates back almost to its beginnings, which passes between government perspectives and radical experiences. It is clear that the first have led us to the age of green capitalism and experts. But the remaining question is : does radical ecology truly exist? My answer is no and no again, and here are my two reasons why.

First because deep ecology only borrows the same concepts, the same ways of ordering one's ideas, as the old ecology of experts. Reading sad masterpieces like DGR's program (which can be found on the website Vert Résistance), it appears that this is yet another remake of the Meadows report[3], with its reasoning based on algorithms, systems, collapses and long-term forecasting. It is a matter of steering the struggles against the industry, the urgency justifying to sweep away all ethical considerations. Quantified acts, not sensible acts. I see, except for the tone, nothing radical in it, only a continuity of our world of experts.

3. Growth report elaborated in 1972 by mathematicians for big industry bosses, taken up by the militants of the time, thus becoming the birth certificate of ecology in the 1970s.

Second, since ecology is an ideology (ideas and words that offer or impose themselves, to order one's gaze and action on reality), it can't be radical. The only property of an ideology is to justify itself. As soon as it ceases to do so, it begins to dissolve, and all it can do from there is to mutate or disappear.

There is no radicality but in the analysis and action in a situation thought up in a singular and autonomous way, as well as in the path by which we free ourselves from the ideologies that hold on to us.

4. The ghost of organization

"Our movement […] and its greatest weakness : the total lack of organization at a medium/large scale." "The fact that there is no centralized decision-making group, nor chief, the fact that we are dispersed, or that we disagree on a number of ideas, is maybe our best tool against repression." "So let's keep our healthy distrust towards anything that comes close to authority, but without preventing ourselves from thinking about the ways in which we could organize ourselves more broadly." (citations from "Ct") The text evokes the informal method, considering it as a guarantor of security, while calling for more organization. Here is a tension dealt with hastily. The advantages of coordination are obvious, but it remains to be seen whether this invitation has taken note of the refusals to form organizations that have been formulated within social and environmental movements for years. In case of doubt, here's a little reminder.

Informality isn't simply a security device, it isn't the opposite of an organization. It can very well be an organization where power is hidden. Getting rid of leaders does not rid us of watchwords, nor does thinking in small groups mean thinking freely. The problem of form and size are secondary, it is the quality of relations that matters, of our analytical ability, of everyone's inclination towards criticism and self-criticism, which allows a group not to become an organization, even an informal one. It is a conscious refusal, a choice, and not the ones we make by default, but those shaped by communising, partisan or micropolitical experiences. Those political forms in which the goals prevail over the doubts and choice of means, even when no one remembers what once served as goals. The fundamental question that arises for me is : can we organize

ourselves without hierarchy, can we act within an organization, without losing both our ends and our liberty to choose the means?

When you think about it, organizing and acting are two diametrically opposed activities. Acting consists of disrupting situations, while organizing consists of ordering it. Not to have an organization is not a tactical choice (to avoid repression) : it is an ethical choice. Likewise, expanding our capacities for action is not motivated by a tactical choice (to achieve efficiency), it is the result of a slow process, born from a culture of action and security. Otherwise, we formulate watchwords, we put forward some means, we create trends, we peddle myths, we multiply injunctions : we plow the land where militantism and followership will grow back like weeds. An example? A new myth already prevails among the stories of coordinated attacks : the blackout. But since no one has ever seen it, we can solely notice this myth through a subtile pattern : "an additional antenna would have shut down the metropolis' entire network" ("Ct"), "next time the lights go out, they might never turn on again" (another text about power outages). This "we were so close", like a simple technical note, is actually the new version of the revolutionaries' "next time will be the right one". It is nothing but the myth of the New Dawn, revisited with barbecue sauce.
Myths are instruments of power, they replace thinking. We should fight them relentlessly. And there are other ways to feed our imagination without selling dreams.

I think it is possible to organize offensive action without letting go of the liberty to choose our means and to question our pursued ends. The essential condition lies in our ability to bring into existence a political culture of doubt, reflection, critical thought and training, because it is only under those conditions that an organization can avoid becoming an autonomous being, that people can continue to question it, modify it or destroy it if deemed necessary. Let's keep in mind that organizations actually tend to mystify and self-justify themselves, to survive by sacrificing a part of its proponents.

"Any offensive action is good in itself. But we need to know exactly what we expect from it. What it brings and what it doesn't. Its effects and its limits. What it produces and the possibilities it opens up" ("Ct"). Damned planning strategy! Attacking isn't a job, nor a production process. We won't know its results, and even after, they

can remain pretty obscure : this will be a good moment to start our analysis, which is not separate from our actions. Every direct action disrupts the situation, even in an infinitely small way, but trying to control this disruption, on top of being surprisingly naive, means trying to establish a program. Which will quickly require an authority to enforce it. Which will rely on an ideology to legitimize itself. And here we are back in the swamp.

The paradox is that advocates of catastrophist thinking such as DGR do not seem to have incorporated what the only relevant catastrophist has taught us : Gunter Anders underlined, a century ago, how nuclear technologies potentially render any revolution impossible, since it would depend on nuclear technicians to dismantle the plants. What this means for me isn't that nothing is possible, but that in the nuclear age, the idea of efficiency in our revolts is in crisis. Without surrendering, we must take note of this problem if we don't want to follow the fate of the environmental movement, which has depoliticized and invisibilized the nuclear issue by moving the whole idea of catastrophe to its climatic aspects. Ecology, unable to think the end of the atom, has naturalized the nuclear threat as a climatic threat.

Maybe one day we'll succeed in destroying the atom's entire industry, both civil and military. Yet, nobody knows how today. We can only explore ways. Programs and efficient visions of action won't help us.

What lies behind these problems is our relation to time. The myth of disaster, as well as the one of revolution from which it is born, requires thinking about the present in terms of a future that is already ideologically fixed. Offensive action should be organized according to a planned future. But there exists another way of conceiving time and action : I think of offensive action as investigation, acting in the present to disrupt it, veering off the immovable or ready made conception of time, revealing the reality of this world. The only strategy that makes sense to me is the one that consists in the analysis of each situation, each upheaval, by the very people who are acting.

The telecom and energy industries are indeed strategical targets. They allow for the experimentation of some perspectives of blackout, and beyond them, the disruption of the myth of a society with indestructible networks, "resilient" as we say nowadays. Yet our

strategy should not shrink down to this. We shouldn't be blinded by this dynamic : antennas and nodes of fiber optic are not the only possible targets against the telecom industry; some are subtle (every little fiber optic cable is a potential target) and others are more ambitious. There must be something down here that commands these new 5G satellites ?!

In theory, there isn't "something that should be done". In current times, it's not sufficient to look out the window or read good books to know how this world functions. We are monkeys that don't understand how their cages were built. Offensive action is an investigation, a means of knowing this world, as well as its criticism in acts. And every person, every group, must first come up with its own path, play its own game, determine its rhythm, define its strategy, to avoid the two pitfalls of followership and instituted organization.

I don't serve ecology, nor any ideology. Not even anarchism or nihilism. If offensive action is a policy, a productive job, or if it ultimately only aims at stirring up tongues, justifying an ideology, establishing a program, let it go back to the militancy it comes from. But if offensive action is an investigation in acts, if it follows its own path and determines its own strategy, then it may well be that no prophet nor oracle will be able to easily grasp it.

Beyond Immediacy

Anarchist aspirations against the disaster(s) in progress

Sans détour, March 2021

Reading once again some outdated anarchist texts, I am often under the impression that companions from a century ago had much clearer ideas than we do about the world they were fighting for and the path to take in order to one day achieve that freedom so ardently desired. Today we live in a dark and sick time, which gives us very little hope for the future. Any speculation about a possible revolutionary disruption of the Existent has to face "realism", which leaves little space for ideals and utopia. Nevertheless, if we choose to dedicate our lives (or a large part of them) to the struggle, why not try to go further than immediate Action, if only with our imagination? Why not try to think about what one means – and not just in theory – by the "revolution" and wonder what would be the necessary steps for such a process? Or should we definitely declare dead the very possibility of a radical change in the course of things? Should we admit (to ourselves) that our struggles and actions only serve to provide meaning and joy to our own existences, to prevent

ourselves from falling into depression, resignation, boredom or despair?

I do not wish to deny the existential dimension of our struggles, which is essential and without which, I am deeply convinced, no change is possible. However, in certain moments of optimism – for example, in the context of an unexpected encounter or an uplifting news item, a street movement of a certain magnitude or the multiplication of several and varied offensive actions – I tell myself that we are not alone in wishing for this upheaval. In our daily observation of the horrors that keep the world afloat, we tend to forget that a tension towards liberty continues to live far beyond those who know and cherish anarchist ideas. So why not think, as we did at the time, about what would imply a revolutionary upheaval, why not talk about it, why not look to the future, without false hopes or beautiful illusions, but also without cynicism nor disillusionment?

A century ago, in the middle of an era that may be even darker than today – the world had just come out of its first butchery – revolutionary ideas were still widely diffused. Errico Malatesta wrote: "Once the monarchical authorities have been defeated, once the police forces have been destroyed, once the army has been dissolved, we will not recognize any new government, and in particular if it is a central government claiming to lead and regulate the movement. We will encourage the workers to take possession of the land, the factories, the railways, the ships, in short, of all the means of production, abandoning forever useless and harmful activities and temporarily those which are superfluous, by concentrating a maximum of our forces in the production of food and other basic necessities. We would push for the collection and economy of all existing products and for the organization of local consumption and exchange between neighboring and distant localities, in accordance with the requirements of justice and necessity, as well as the needs of the movement. We would deal with the occupancy of empty or sparsely inhabited housing, so that no one remains without shelter […]. We would hurry to destroy the banks, the titles of property and all that represents and guarantees the power of the State and capitalist privilege; we would try to create a state of things that

would render impossible the reconstitution of a bourgeois society."

This was, very schematically, what the revolution was about and what role anarchists would have played in it, according to the untiring Neapolitan subversive. A rather clear conception, despite the enormous obstacles that such a process would involve, which was widely shared by a large part of the companions of the time. Obviously, just like today, the movement was filled with a multitude of discussions, debates and conflicts. There were for instance those who, like Malatesta himself, were partisans of the constitution of a unitary and federative anarchist organization – with a formal structure, a common agenda, commissions, etc. – and those who advocated for the free association of people based on affinity, outside of any fixed structure, with individual initiatives and diffuse propaganda, without any kind of centralization. There were anarchists who were in favor of an alliance with political parties (socialist, communist, republican) in order to overthrow the monarchy, and others who fiercely rejected these «common fronts» with authoritarians and reformists. There were those who promoted armed strikes and the occupation of factories, while others were invested in "libertarian education", and others still rushed to attack representatives and structures of domination without waiting for the masses. Nevertheless, despite these enormous differences of vision and method, I do not think I am mistaken if I affirm that most of them shared, in general, a conception of the revolutionary process similar to that described in the quote above. Armed insurrection of the population; destruction of the Church and the State; expropriation of the bourgeoisie and collectivization of land, the means of production and the product of their labor; and abolition of private property would be the stages through which the proletarians would manage to reclaim their lives, finally freeing themselves from the yoke of the exploiters. These were not just fine words, and the companions of the time were hardly naive or delusional men and women. They were aware of the enormous price that such a process required and many of them fell in their effort to disrupt the existent.

A century after Malatesta's article, what can be learned from such an anarchist conception of the revolution? Although today we rarely (or never) hear anarchists discuss "how we should do the revolution", I am under the impression that a certain number of companions continue to have in mind, implicitly and in broad terms, the steps mentioned (among others) by Malatesta. The idea of a series of uprisings by proletarians leading to a final battle against the forces of domination and the reclaiming of the means of productions is still very present in the minds of a number of radical people. But things have changed since Malatesta's time, and they continue to change so quickly that our understanding of the world always seems to be inadequate in the face of reality.

Anarchy can only be anti-industrial

If a century ago, industrial society – with its mines, oil wells, factories and railways – had already started to spread its tentacles in some parts of the world, we have reached today such a level of dispossession and disaster that we are forced to take a look retrospectively and put into question the very foundations of anarchism. We have moved too far from the great hopes that progress once created, including among the enemies of domination. Malatesta himself wrote that "production, if done by everyone to the benefit of all, and thanks to the help of mechanics and chemistry, can increase indefinitely". A large part of revolutionaries were convinced that techno-scientific development, under the control of the workers and carried out for the benefit of the latter, would have constituted a kind of panacea capable of putting an end to the arduous tasks of humanity. According to this vision, the powerful technologies of capitalist society (trains, planes, cars, industrial machines, etc.) could continue to be manufactured in a society without class or hierarchy. It would «only» require that the control of the means of production passes from the hand of the boss to that of the «proletarians». The two most important revolutionary attempts in Europe, in Russia and in Spain – despite their differences in terms of circumstances and relations between authoritarians and anti-autho-

ritarians – also showed how this handover constituted, in fact, the establishment of a new hierarchy, the maintenance of the division of labor, specialization and alienation. Even under the libertarian banners of the CNT in Spain, the exploitation of workers continued to exist and refusals, strikes and conflicts multiplied in the factories. Already at that time, while industrialization was still recent (the twenties or thirties of the twentieth century), no libertarian reclaiming of the industrial world was possible, at least on a large scale. Keeping the factories in place meant keeping the operation alive, but few revolutionaries seemed to be fully aware of it.

Now let us think for a moment about the life of a large part of our contemporaries. If we look at everything that lies behind every gesture, every activity of the «modern man», we find a scenario of death and devastation on a large scale. Where does our food and clothing come from? From immense surfaces of monoculture controlled by the agro-industry, flooded with pesticides and chemical fertilizers hewed by machines dependent on petroleum or, more and more, by robots. How do we move about? With machines built by slaves all over the world, functioning thanks to petroleum or nuclear energy. And what can we say about computers, smartphones and the Internet's entire infrastructure? About the technologies and pills with which we heal ourselves? No matter our starting point, we always get to expropriated, devastated and poisoned land spread over the five continents; to huge copper, gold, lithium and rare earth mines, and so forth, with their tailing ponds of cyanide and mercury; to millions of tonnes of hydrocarbons extracted from the earth's belly and released into the atmosphere as CO_2; to nuclear power plants; to forests cut down to the ground; to exorbitant amounts of chemical, electronic and radioactive waste that accumulate everywhere. Living species are disappearing at a dizzying pace, fresh water sources are drastically decreasing, the climate is warming up.

Separating the «ecological question» from the «social question» truly makes no sense and can only serve the interests of merchants and politicians. It is obvious that humans, like other species, suffer

the consequences of industrial exploitation. Everywhere, the devastation of the earth is accompanied by disasters, famines and endless wars for the control of raw materials. The rhythm of destruction provoked by industrial domination is accelerating every second, every minute that goes by. It is the very logic of accumulation and profit that requires the constant reduction of costs, increasing the speed and quantity of production and diversifying supply. The tentacles of the machine now extend to every corner of the planet, and above : from the peaks of the Andes to the bottom of the oceans; from the Amazonian forest to Sahel; from the Earth's subsoil to space, where we now send tens of thousands of satellites and where we also look for raw materials to exploit.

In a world where everything is becoming artificial, where every human individual is transformed into the inner workings of a machine that no one can fully control, in a world where loss of meaning and despair are transformed into stupefaction, cynicism and blind violence… we go back to the original question : what kind of revolution is possible and desirable? If it seems inevitable to me that we will end up with ever more frequent violent confrontations between exploited and exploiters, between military forces protecting a privileged population against multitudes of starving, intoxicated, enslaved humans… (besides, isn't it already the case for the millions of inhabitants of what is laconically called the «third world», who are forced to move about?), as well as real wars of survival between the poor, what possibilities of radical transformation of the existent could be opened and in which direction should we push as anarchists?

First, an observation seems inevitable to me today : the problem is not only who owns the means of production and the product of their labor, but the existence and the very nature of these means of production and these products. The expropriation and self-management of the existent, of the industrial machinery in which we are all immersed, are certainly not desirable objectives, and they would actually be impossible to attain. Let's take petroleum as an example, this indispensable resource concentrated in a fairly small number of regions, without which the world as it is conceived today

would stop : how could the extraction and international distribution of this resource be self-managed by the workers? How could it do without a rigidly hierarchical and militarized organization?

No possibility of liberation is conceivable without stopping the machinery of death, without its desertion and destruction. Although such a conclusion may seem absurd and insane to a large part of the population, I am deeply convinced that this is the only way out and that this is where our efforts should go. This obligatory path for those who aspire to freedom, or simply for those who are determined to prevent the definitive extermination of life by the industrial world, nevertheless implies a long and tortuous path, and I think we can no longer avoid the enormity of the obstacles and issues that lie on this path.

A painful rupture

It wouldn't be absurd to compare a large portion of humanity to a terminally ill patient, whose survival depends on its connections to some electrical wiring. In a file of the Swiss Military Review devoted to the hypothesis of the blackout, this is clearly shown from the assessment of the degree of interdependence between the infrastructures considered as "critical". The concept of "criticality" shows the ability of system components to diffuse possible disturbances : "In a system called "under-critical", an external perturbation will only produce localized and minor damage, since the components of the system are only loosely interlinked, if they are at all. Conversely, in a system called "over-critical", a perturbation, even the smallest one, will affect large parts of the system, causing significant damage, even destroying some components. The greater the criticality, the greater the probability that snowball effects will spread from one system to another, or from a critical infrastructure to another. Thus, in the context of a blackout, a society with less interdependency between its different critical sectors will be less affected than a highly interdependent society like that of the so-called developed countries. The damages will be significantly more important in the case of a highly connected society." Among the

aforementioned “critical infrastructures”, those in charge of supplying electricity play an essential role. An extended interruption in a state’s supply of electricity would halt information and telecommunication systems; banking and financial services; the transportation of goods; as well as the supply of drinkable water; wastewater treatment; and hospital services. According to this study, an interruption in the supply of electricity during only eight days would indeed generate a snowball effect that could provoke the terminal collapse of society. Obviously, the mega-machine would crumple, but probably with a large number of human lives, due to their lack of autonomy, especially in terms of water, food and healthcare.

According to the same domination-serving experts, this scenario isn’t science fiction at all. Electrical infrastructures are getting old and fragile, while “risk factors” are multiplying. Natural catastrophes (floods, snow, heat waves, ice storms, wind and solar storms, pandemics, etc.); network overloads; explosions or industrial accidents (even nuclear ones); technical and informatics problems; sabotages; terrorist and cyberattacks; or human mistakes are all potential triggers. Concerning the link between the risk of an eventual pandemic and the risk of a blackout, a text from 2018 claimed that : “a pandemic would greatly reduce the quantity of employees working in the electrical sector, as they could be sick or absent (either to care for their loved ones or because they would fear for their health). Under these conditions, the electrical network would be insufficiently supervised, a vulnerability factor that could lead to a blackout.”

Two years after, in the midst of the covid-19 crisis, this imaginary of the collapse was very present in people’s minds. States increased their calls for “resiliency”, asking us both to adapt ourselves to increasingly precarious conditions and, above all, not to try to change direction. And in a desperate attempt to pursue its march of progress, domination only takes measures that, paradoxically, further weaken its functioning. Teleworking, the 5G, the digital applied to all areas, only increase the level of criticality of each of the sys-

tem's components, since, as pointed out by the Swiss Military Review, "the risk of a blackout increases proportionally to the rise of hyper-connectivity".

The suicidal march of the techno-industry will take down parts of humanity with it, it is already the case. Should we act for the collapse before technology becomes omnipresent, every forest is cleared, wildlife is gone, before the air becomes unbreathable? The subversive people of the 21st century find themselves cruelly confronted to this issue. Given the level of interdependence between our sick species and its deadly creations, we are stuck between "security" – a nefarious destination – and the insecurity of a path of revolt and liberty. Today even more than yesterday, acts of rupture can imply heavy consequences. In the past couple years, we have heard several times the state's propaganda against sabotages of telecom infrastructures : "irresponsible" acts threatening human lives, in particular of older people who would be unable to call for help in case of need. It is the type of blackmail that states use and will continue to use in order to isolate and repress rebels, making them bear the weight of dispossession and generalized misery, the loss of autonomy, the social and ecological disaster provoked by this deadly system. Moreover, this same speech, used today against the perpetrators of sabotage actions, was used yesterday against the Yellow Vests blocking the roads, provoking heavy consequences on collective life. This speech could also be used in the event of a massive strike that would quickly cause shortages. Any radical offensive action against society's march forward, whether it is the expression of a handful of rebels or an insurgent mass, will carry its load of chaotic situations and sometimes major difficulties for the population. This was already true a century ago, and is even more so today, in a time when a large part of the population seems to be unable to live without its technological prothesis.

Furthermore, if we can't be held accountable for humanity's dispossession and loss of autonomy, and that this can't slow down our Action, as anarchists and revolutionaries we should fully assume our choices and acts. We haven't chosen to live in this world, but we

make decisions everyday that go one way or another. Thus, it is up to every individual and group to measure and evaluate the scope of its acts. Personally, I believe that although one may be disgusted with diffuse passivity, or worst with the masses' adhesion to the values of domination, no desirable change can come about from one's ability to hate categories as generic and unreal as "people" or "humanity".

This is the reason why I find certain speeches promoting "disaster" dangerous, awaiting the "collapse" with a kind of mystical faith. We shouldn't – as some of the promoters of order do – equate insurrections with deadly events (accidents, shortages, climatic events, etc.) which could disturb the course of normality. If in both cases we will witness big changes and dramatic consequences, the first would be a social phenomenon motivated by refusal and, possibly, a desire for change, which could contain the seeds of something radically different, the beginning of a process of transformation; while the second would include new, perhaps even harsher, conditions that - even if they could provoke the collapse of the techno-industrial system - would not automatically lead to a change in the social relations underlying this system. Said in a schematic and probably simplifying way, a "collapse" produced by a series of revolts and insurrections would open the door for new forms of solidarity as well as freer and more decentralized social organizations, while a "collapse" provoked by "external" factors would rather have the effect of creating panic, the need for security and competition for survival. Of course, in both cases, we would probably have one and the other, selfishness and solidarity, the rise of free as well as authoritarian forms of organization. But to think that ultimately all that matters is that the world as it is today collapses, whatever the cause, would ultimately be to consider as superfluous any effort for an revolutionary upheaval. All we should do then would be to act in order to accelerate and trigger this process of collapse, which in an almost mechanical way would also lead to a transformation of social relations. In the end, this vision leaves no room for ideas, individuals and subjectivity.

I don't believe that an apocalyptical collapse, as cinema and literature put forward, is desirable. My Action does not intend to cause millions of deaths, my struggle - our struggle - does not target human extinction but rather the death of a system, which is causing the extinction of thousands of species and which, if it is not stopped before, may eventually come to wipe us all from the surface of the earth. I don't see any other alternative : either go full speed towards a series of inevitable disasters (series that has already begun), or become aware of this situation, pull the emergency brakes and get off the train. Some events suggest that a rejection of the technological colonization of our lives has already begun to manifest itself and spread. Between March 2020 and March 2021, in the midst of an era of techno-political restructuring of society under the guise of public health emergency, 174 sabotage actions occurred in France - one every second day – targeting telecom infrastructures. It was unfortunately due to repression that we learned that people with pretty different ideas, perspectives and backgrounds perpetuated these offensive actions. And yet, the same concerns and a certain saturation with the high-tech and ultra-connected world was expressed in these acts.

In this context, a dialogue is being established between those who, starting from an anti-authoritarian base, share the perspective of direct action against the veins of domination. It seems important to me to take up the threads of this debate, which is not just about questions of "strategy", but also about the meaning and the objectives of subversive Action.

In a text called "A Couple Thoughts about Offensive Actions on Relay Antennas", first published on Indymedia Nantes, then republished in the anarchist journal Avis de Tempêtes, it was mentioned that we should "look a bit further" than "the cuts in the fabric of the network, [which] are fixed within a couple hours, or a couple days at most." The author(s) of the text, while emphasizing the relevance of relay antennas as diffuse and accessible targets,

propose to go further, to coordinate ourselves, to "focus on the critical pieces of this system if we want to hit it hard". Two offensive actions which occurred during the Great Lockdown between March and May 2020 are used as examples of this perspective : the sectioning of several fiber optic cables which occurred in the Paris region on May 5th 2020, causing an important rupture of telecommunications (ties cut between local and European data centers, more than 100 000 people left without phone and internet services, including several huge companies and police stations) as well as the coordinated offensive actions on three relay antennas around Grenoble on May 17 (hundreds of thousands of people left without internet, the radio and television for several days). The author(s) of the text also mention the importance of electrical infrastructures for the proper functioning of the techno-industrial system as well as the possibilities that a blackout would open up for subversive people. In this perspective, the need to "step forward, from what can be considered as low intensity conflict to what could become an open conflict" is dictated by the urgency of the evolution of the destructive bulldozer of society, which crushes nature and imposes its totalitarian control. Yet, the text also shows a certain pessimism regarding the possibilities of a generalized upheaval : "No time to hope that another social movement will become uncontrollable if we break enough windows; nor to hope that with small examples of diffused sabotage, a mass of increasingly servile people will become an angry mob."

At least two texts followed these "thoughts". The first, "Assaulting the Existent", sent to Avis de Tempêtes and published in the journal's edition of August 15th 2020; the second, "Ethics and Strategy", which is part of the brochure "Des singes, pas des savants. Récits et réflexions en temps de confinement", "written with many hands during the summer of 2020".

The first, although not a direct response to the text published on Indymedia, analyzes the proliferation of offensive actions against the structures of domination in a new light. While being moved by the same urgency, individually, to act without waiting against

this "world of submission, resignation and organized passivity", the author(s) consider that "the mere multiplication of offensive action groups" unfortunately cannot suffice to demolish the structures of domination and the social relations that are its pillars. Action in small numbers "doesn't necessarily mean to act in an isolated manner, and if our strength doesn't rely on the quantity but rather on its diffuse and uncontrollable character of our offensive actions, the question becomes [...] how, while starting from oneself, to contribute, spread, precipitate or exacerbate the ongoing social war." Analyzing the numerous attacks against telecom infrastructures, the author(s) criticize a vision of offensive actions centered around the idea of efficiency and explains how the latter could be analyzed in terms of not entirely quantitative criteria (ex: to affect the greatest amount of people, to create a disturbance that would last as long as possible), considering for instance the characteristics of the place and moment in which an offensive action took place, or the projects and specific companies impacted by the attack. Finally, according to this text, the quantitative measure must not take over the qualitative dimension of Action : "couldn't we simply consider that a sabotage is successful (or "efficient") if we are able to accomplish what we had planned while we gave ourselves the means to do it? That it is above all a matter of singularity, that it is a moment where we can touch upon Action, to this fleeting dimension of quality where we have finally taken on our own lives and the stars?"

The criticism offered by the text "Ethics and Strategy" is consistent with, in some respects, the one presented in "Assaulting the Existent". The text compares the underlying vision of the text "A Couple Thoughts…" to the ecology of the group Deep Green Resistance. It goes after the "systemic, cybernetic and catastrophist" vision of ecology, "stuck in defensive attitudes and the sacralization of the living". The author(s) of "Ethics and Strategy" claim that : "I'm not fighting to protect an ecosystem, nor for social equality. I am fighting to experience the fact that this fucking world isn't immutable, that the mega-machine isn't indestructible, that the Leviathan isn't an all-mighty God". From there, any consideration based on objective efficiency criteria, any planning strategy is swept away : " The

only strategy that makes sense to me is the one that consists in the analysis of each situation, each upheaval, by the very people who are acting." Telecommunications and energy are considered by the author(s) as "strategical targets" since they allow for "the experimentation of some perspectives of blackout, and beyond them, the disruption of the myth of a society with indestructible networks […]. In theory, there isn't "something that should be done" […]. Offensive action is an investigation, a means of knowing this world, as well as its criticism in acts."

I share parts of the criticism raised by the last two texts summarized above. To believe that an offensive action group, or several groups, could definitely halt the exploitation, control and alienation machine by increasing the power or efficiency of their actions, at best (as noted by the text "Ethics and Strategy") falls under the old myth of the New Dawn, and is, at worst, a delirium of omnipotence that can easily trap us in a world of authority and military logics. This is the reason why I refuse any conception that opposes, on one side, a handful of illuminated revolutionaries, and evil power on the other, as if there were only a desert of passivity and resignation between the two camps. In its different forms, domination emerges from a complex set of social relations, and many conflicts run through these relations. As a companion wrote some years ago : "to remain prisoner of the ideology of victory means not understanding that an active minority, whatever it may be, can never really win, since this very victory would mean the defeat of any possibility of generalized liberty. If we want to talk about winning, it must first be perpetrated by masses in revolt, freely associated in new social creations, capable of giving birth to different and incredible vital formations, of a type that no imagination, even the most unbridled, can conceive from the repressive bark that oppresses and surrounds us today […]. The struggle has many nuances and a sole objective : to act in a way that it becomes as generalized as possible."

In my opinion, it has nothing to do with waiting for the masses to act, nor with this unfortunate idea which comes up regularly, that

"we shouldn't do anything that isn't understandable to the masses", which implies, if we follow the logic to the end, to lower our level of conflictuality until we reach the mud of claims and reformism. Besides, "masses in revolt", to use the terms cited above, exist only from an abstract and ideological point of view. I prefer to see a multitude of individuals who are following a path of struggle and, at best, of self-liberation, thus who are rebelling in some ways against being part of a mass.

But again, I don't think there is anything mechanical in insurrections and revolts. Although some conditions of social exclusion, exploitation and oppression may exasperate our spirits to the point of pushing some individuals to refuse to carry their chains or to endure suffering and humiliation anymore, I believe that it is first of all thanks to minority initiatives and the dissemination of revolutionary ideas that the conflict may deepen until it reaches a situation of genuine rupture. The refusal of a particular condition of oppression, for instance the imposition of the patriarchal order, of police, of wage exploitation or of an industrial nuisance, are starting points, but this refusal does not suffice to push a revolt above certain limits, beyond which recuperation would no longer be possible. I am convinced that it is the propagation of horizons of liberty, of radically different worlds, first forged within oneself, which can open up this possibility. This imaginary of liberty, of "us", - this infamous "active minority"- we need to cultivate them, to feed them. This does not only require theories and writings, but also and above all acts that target the causes of our dispossession and exploitation. Basically, this is what anarchists called, a long time ago, "propaganda by the deed".

Minority action is first an individual experience of a radically different qualitative dimension, opposed to the reproduction of everyday life, of the Work of mind-numbing labor, obedience and passivity. But the meaning of Action is not enclosed in this individual dimension. Although one or a series of offensive actions undertaken by a small minority of the population are not enough to radically change the course of things, every blow against the do-

minant order is part of a broader context, where it can carry other meanings and perspectives, showing the fragility of domination and opening up the realm of possibilities. In this sense, while it is true that any act of revolt or offensive action is important and holds meaning in itself, some of them – specifically targeting important nodes – have greater impacts on the flow of goods and data, allowing for the criticism in acts of this deadly normality to reach more people. If some targets require more research, more efforts, more imagination, more organization than others, it doesn't mean that these offensive actions are not "reproducible". To establish a hierarchy between actions is certainly a mistake to avoid at all costs, but the proposal to create some coordination between action groups in order to cause more serious damages, just like that of looking at the neuralgic nodes of the system, do not imply the sacrifice of an anti-authoritarian ethics in the name of efficiency. The question is rather : what do we expect from Action? In my opinion, it would be illusory and dangerous to consider minority Action as a magical key capable of halting domination. Small groups can slow down the pace of the bulldozer, but I don't think it will halt it completely. We shouldn't reduce domination to its technical apparatus, just like we shouldn't reduce the impact of offensive actions to the damages they cause nor underestimate the meanings they hold in a context that isn't quite pacified.

Here and now, but looking towards the future

Most likely, in the coming years, struggles against industrial nuisances will continue to intensify with the accumulation of social tensions; ecological and sanitary disasters; energy shortages; increased plunder; and devastation of territories. An anarchist criticism of techno-industry could then become audible. The horror generated by the exploitation of the living is becoming increasingly obvious to a lot of people. If we believe that there is only "a mass complicit with the system" around us, we are choosing to ignore the various and diverse refusals that are springing here and there. We could then start hoping for a cathartic catastrophe and narcissistically exalt our actions. Conversely, if we were to examine lucidly

the prison-world that surrounds us, we would perceive cracks in the walls that enclose us. Cracks that we could turn into breaches, in a struggle that wouldn't aim to reclaim the living, but instead to destroy it and to lay the foundations for a new life.

Thus, it is not a matter of waiting for the masses, convincing them of the validity of our ideas, acting gradually and avoiding to scare the honest workers. Nor is it about declaring a private war to power, despising "the people" and fetishizing offensive action either. We are anarchists and we act as such, from our ethical position, our analyses and our perspectives. In fact, our words, our acts, and maybe even our lives constitute a proposition, which differs greatly from an authoritarian project of revolution and society, as the Marxists see it with their programs. Formulating a proposal in acts does not mean posing as a guide for the struggle and even less imposing it, but to reveal a discourse and practices that contain a potential for rupture and transformation. At worst, this proposal will be neglected, ridiculed and misunderstood but we will have lived our lives in the beauty of our ideas, we will have burned from our own lights, we won't have lived in the shadow of a chapel. At best, who knows what will happen in the future? If I look back, ten or fifteen years ago, I couldn't have predicted many of the explosions of rage that took place, and I don't think it will stop, on the contrary.

Therefore, this text is an invitation to look forward towards the future, not to be scared to go beyond immediate Action, to think in terms of revolutionary proposals. To stop believing in the myth of the New Dawn, to stop believing in the myth of Progress... is probably getting rid of a big shackle. But that does not mean giving up on a project of radical transformation of the world. This upheaval can only be envisaged over a long period of time and I imagine it as a slow process of disintegration. What would happen if increasing numbers of sabotages of the vital infrastructures of society started to seriously disturb the interconnection of which the state and economy are dependent? If struggles against nuisances (extraction, energetic infrastructures and transportation projects, etc.) became autonomous and insurrectionary focal points? If states started to

lose control of certain parts of the territory? If parts of humanity started to destroy metropolises and transform spaces by subtracting them from the grip of the economy and power, creating new forms of activity, relationship and exchange? This could seem completely surreal today, but, to me, our efforts should be oriented in this direction. It is not a matter of writing programs, of drawing pre-established paths, but of daring to affirm our desires, even if we are a very small minority who wants to go in this direction. Perhaps it is precisely utopian aspirations that we need in order to struggle, to find once again the strength to fight against a dark reality that has killed any hope of possible change? A look towards what we want seems to be essential, today, in order to develop analyses capable of guiding our work of agitation and our Action. Without lulling ourselves into illusions of a brighter future, without lying to ourselves or to others, but by pursuing our desire for upheaval and transformation.

Bismuto

Between February and March 2020, all over the world, heads of state made solemn and grave announcements in order to prepare their populations for what appeared to be a new era : one of war against the virus. Within a couple months, the sabotage of telecommunication infrastructures had almost become a daily event in France, as well as in other European countries. Simultaneously, a debate sprang up within anarchist and radical ecological publications, in particular about the meaning and efficiency of these acts. How could we undermine technological control ? Could we provoke a tipping point within this situation? What scenarios did these sabotages open up ? How could we consider efficiency, organization and ethics altogether?

Nowadays, the situation has evolved, but the problems brought up by the following texts remain unresolved, maybe even more so now, and without obvious answers : what are the links between direct action and social or ecological movements? What strategies emerge when we separate or combine anarchist, ecologist and techno-critical perspectives? How do these strategies integrate a now-decisive element : the war in Europe, which will guide and harden the grip of states on their populations.