

Prisoners of a Single World

Gruppo Anarchico Insurrezionalista “E. Malatesta”

“The fact is that the state would not be so pernicious if those who wanted to were able to ignore it and live their lives in their own way together with those with whom they get along. But it has invaded every function of social life, standing over all the activities of our lives and we are even prevented from defending ourselves when we are attacked.

“It is necessary to submit to it or bring it down.”

— Errico Malatesta

If we were not deeply dissatisfied with this world, we would not write on this paper and you would not read this article. It is therefore useless to waste further words to confirm our aversion to Power and its manifestations. Rather, what seems useful to us is the attempt to determine whether a revolt that is not openly and resolutely against the state and power is possible.

The question should not seem odd. In fact, there are those who see in the struggle against the state nothing but a further confirmation of the extent to which it has penetrated into us, managing to determine our actions — even if only in the negative. With its

Gruppo Anarchico Insurrezionalista “E. Malatesta”
Prisoners of a Single World

transl. *Canenero* n. 37, November 1st, 1996

atabularasa.org

cumbersome presence, the state would distract us from that which should be our true objective: living life our way. If we think of taking down the state, of obstructing it, of fighting it, we don't have the time to reflect on what we want to do ourselves. Rather than trying to realize our dreams here and now, we follow the state wherever it goes, becoming its shadow and putting off the realization of our projects to infinity. In a frenzy to be antagonist, to be against, we end up no longer being protagonist, in favor of something. Thus, if we want to be ourselves, we should cease to oppose ourselves to the state and start to consider it not with hostility, but with indifference. Rather than giving ourselves to trying to destroy its world — the world of authority — it is better to build our own, that of freedom. It is necessary to stop thinking about the enemy, what it does, where it is found, what to do to strike it, and dedicate ourselves to ourselves, to our “daily life”, to our relationships, to our spaces that need to expand and improve more and more. Otherwise, we will never do anything but follow the inclinations of power.

The anarchist movement today is full of this sort of reasoning, the continual search for justifications disguised as theoretical analyses that excuse one's absolute inaction. There are those who want to do nothing because they are skeptical, those who do not want to impose anything on anyone, those who consider power too strong for them and those who don't want to follow its rhythms and times; every one of these excuses is good. But these anarchists, do they have a dream capable of setting their hearts aflame?

In order to clear the field of these miserable excuses, it is worth the effort to remember a few things. There are not two worlds, ours and theirs, and even if, to be absurd, they did exist, how could they be made to co-exist? There is a single world, the world of authority and money, of exploitation and obedience: the world in which we are all forced to live. It is impossible to pretend that we are outside. This is why we cannot allow ourselves to be indifferent, this is why we cannot manage to ignore it. If we oppose ourselves to the state,

if we are always quick to seize the occasion to attack it, it is not because we are indirectly molded by it, it is not because we have sacrificed our desires on the altar of revolution, but because our desires cannot be realized as long as the state exists, as long as any Power exists. The revolution does not distract us from our dreams, but rather is the only possibility that allows the conditions for their realization. We want to overturn this world as quickly as possible here and now, because here and now there are only barracks, courts, banks, concrete, supermarkets, prisons. Here and now there is only exploitation, while freedom, as we understand it, does not really exist.

This does not mean that we give up on creating spaces of our own in which to experiment with the relationships that we prefer. It only means that these spaces, these relationships, do not represent the complete freedom that we desire for ourselves and for everyone. They are a step, but not the final one, much less the definitive one. A freedom that ends on the threshold of our occupied house, of our “free” commune, is not enough, it does not satisfy us. Such freedom is illusory, because it frees only as long as we stay at home and don’t leave the confines that are imposed on us. If we don’t consider the necessity of attacking the state (and there is much that we could say about this concept of “attack”), then, by definition, we can only do what it allows us to do at its convenience, forever, limiting ourselves to surviving in the little “happy isle” that we will build ourselves. Keeping our distance from the state means conserving life, confronting it means living.

Our capitulation is implicit in indifference toward the state. It is as if we were admitting that the state is stronger, is invincible, is beyond contestation, one might as well lay down one’s arms and consider cultivating one’s kitchen garden. Is it possible to call this revolt? It seems to us rather to be a completely inner attitude, circumscribed by a kind of diffidence, incompatibility with and disinterest in that which surrounds us. But resignation remains implicit in such an attitude. Contemptuous resignation if you will, but res-

ignation nonetheless.

It is like throwing punches that are limited to warding off blows without ever trying to bring the adversary that one hates down. But our adversary does not give us any respite. We cannot merely leave the ring and go on making a laughing-stock of it. It is necessary to bring our adversary down; dodging and expressing our disappointment in it is not sufficient.