BRING OUT YOUR DEAD

Introduction to the debate between *Theorie Communiste* and Gilles Dauvé

> "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living… The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot take its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped away all superstition about the past. The former revolutions required recollections of the past in order to smother their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead."[1]
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> If this was true when Marx wrote this passage, when one could only speak of communism in the future tense, it is all the more so of today, now that anarchists and communists can speak of their own "histories", indeed seem to speak of little else. Marxism itself is now a tradition of dead generations, and even latter-day situationists seem to have difficulty in "leaving the twentieth century."[2]

We write this not from any special infatuation with the present, or any resultant desire to bring communist theory "up-to-date". The twenty-first century — just as much as the previous one — is formed by the contradiction between labour and capital, the separation between work and "life", and the domination of everything by the abstract forms of value. It is therefore just as worth leaving as its predecessor. Yet the "twentieth century" familiar to the situationists, its contours of class relations, its temporality of progress, and its post-capitalist horizons, is obviously behind us. We've become bored with theories of novelty — with post-modernism, post-Fordism, and each new product of the academy — not so much because they fail to capture an essential continuity, but because the capitalist restructuring of the 1970s and 80s *is no longer novel*.

In this preliminary issue of *Endnotes* we have assembled a series of texts (basically an exchange between two communist groups in France) all concerned with the history of revolutions in the twentieth century. As the texts make clear, the history of these revolutions is a history of failure, either because they were crushed by capitalist counter-revolution or because their "victories" took the form of counter-revolutions themselves — setting up social systems which, in their reliance on monetary exchange and wage-labour, failed to transcend capitalism. Yet the latter was not simply a "betrayal"; any more than the former was the result of "strategic errors" or missing "historical conditions." When we address the question of these failures we cannot resort to "what if" counterfactuals — blaming the defeat of revolutionary movements on everything (leaders, forms of organisations, wrong ideas, unripe conditions) other than the movements themselves in their determinate content. It is the nature of this content which is at issue in the exchange which follows.

In publishing such "historical" texts we have no wish to encourage an interest in history per se, nor to revive an interest in the history of revolutions or of the workers' movement. We hope that in considering the content of the struggles of the last century we will help to undermine the illusion that this is somehow "our" past, something to be protected or preserved. Marx's dictum reminds us of the need to shed the dead weight of tradition. We would go so far as to say that with the exception of the recognition of the historical break that separates us from them, that we have nothing to learn from the failures of past revolutions — no need to replay them to discover their "errors" or distil their "truths" — for it would in any case be impossible to repeat them. In drawing the balance of this history, in taking it to be over, we are drawing a line that foregrounds the struggles of our own time.

The two parties to the exchange we are publishing, *Troploin* and *Théorie Communiste*, both emerged from a tendency in the early 1970s that, on the basis of new characteristics of the class struggle, critically appropriated the historical ultra-left in both its German / Dutch (council communist) and Italian (Bordigist) varieties as well the more recent work of the Situationist International and *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Before we can introduce the texts themselves we must therefore introduce this common background.

FROM THE REFUSAL OF WORK TO "COMMUNISATION"

When Guy Debord wrote "never work" on the wall of a left-bank alleyway in 1954, the slogan, appropriated from Rimbaud3, was still heavily indebted to surrealism and its avant-garde progeny. That is to say, it evoked at least in part a romanticised vision of late nineteenth century bohemia — a world of déclassé artists and intellectuals who had become caught between the traditional relations of patronage and the new cultural marketplace in which they were obliged to vend their wares. The bohemians' negative attitude towards work had been both a revolt against, and an expression of, this polarized condition: caught between an aristocratic disdain for the "professional", and a petit-bourgeois resentment of all other social classes, they came to see all work, their own included, as debased. This posture of refusal was rendered political by the surrealists, who transformed the nihilistic gestures of Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and the dadaists, into the revolutionary call for a "war on work".4 Yet for the surrealists, along with other unorthodox revolutionaries (e.g. Lafargue, elements of the IWW, as well as the young Marx), the abolition of work was postponed to a utopian horizon on the other side of a revolution defined in its immediacy by the socialist programme of the *liberation* of work — the triumph of the workers' movement and the elevation of the working class to the position of a new ruling class. The goal of the abolition of work would thus paradoxically be achieved through first removing all of work's limits (e.g. the capitalist as a parasite upon labour, the relations of production as a fetter to production) — thereby extending the condition of work to everyone ("those who don't work shall not eat") and rewarding labour with its rightful share of the value it produces (through various schemes of labour-accounting).

This apparent contradiction between means and ends, evinced in the surrealists' troubled relationship with the French Communist Party, was typical of revolutionary theories throughout the ascendant period of the workers' movement. From anarcho-syndicalists to Stalinists, the broad swathe of this movement put their hopes for the overcoming of capitalism and class society in general in the rising power of the working class within capitalism. At a certain point this workers' power was expected to seize the means of production, ushering in a "period of transition" to communism or anarchism, a period which would witness not the abolition of the situation of the working class, but its generalisation. Thus the final end of the elimination of class society coexisted with a whole gamut of revolutionary means which were premised on its perpetuation.

The Situationist International (SI) inherited the surrealists' opposition between the concrete political means of the liberation of work and the utopian end of its abolition. Their principle achievement was to transpose it from an external opposition mediated by the transition of the socialist programme into an internal one that propelled their conception of revolutionary activity. This latter consisted of a radical rethinking of the liberation of work, along lines which emphasised the refusal of any separation between revolutionary action and the total transformation of life — an idea expressed implicitly in their original project of "creating situations". The importance of this development should not be underestimated, for the "critique of separation" here implied a negation of any temporal hiatus between means and ends (thus of any period of transition), as well as a refusal of any synchronic mediations — insisting on universal (direct democratic) participation in revolutionary action. Yet in spite of this ability to rethink the space and time of revolution, the SI's transcendence of the opposition between the liberation and abolition of work would ultimately consist in collapsing its two poles into one another, into an immediate contradictory unity, transposing the opposition between means and ends into one between *form* and *content*.

After their encounter with the neo-councilist group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* at the beginning of the sixties, the SI wholeheartedly adopted the revolutionary programme of council communism, lauding the council — the apparatus through which workers would self-manage their own production and, together with other councils, grasp the entirety of social power — as the "finally achieved form" of the proletarian revolution. From then on all the potential and all the limits of the SI were contained in the tension between their call to "abolish work" and their central slogan, "all power to the workers' councils." On the one hand the *content* of the revolution was to involve a radical questioning of work itself (and not merely its organisation), with the goal of overcoming the separation between work and leisure; yet on the other hand the *form* of this revolution was to be workers taking over their workplaces and running them democratically.5

What prevented the SI from overcoming this contradiction was that the polarities of content and form were both rooted in an affirmation of the workers' movement and the liberation of work. For although the SI appropriated from the young Marx (and the sociological inquiries of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*) a preoccupation with the alienation of labour, they nonetheless saw the critique of this alienation as made possible by the technological prosperity of modern capitalism (the "leisure society" potentials of automation) and the battalions of the workers' movement who were capable of both compelling (in their day to day struggles) and appropriating (in their revolutionary councils) these technical advances. It was thus on the basis of an existing workers' power at the points of production that they saw the abolition of work as becoming possible, both from a technical and organisational standpoint. In transposing the techniques of the cyberneticians and the gestures of the bohemian anti-artist into the trusted, calloused hands of the organised working class, the situationists were able to imagine the abolition of work as the *direct* result of its liberation; that is, to imagine the overcoming of alienation as a result of an immediate technical-creative restructuring of the workplace by the workers themselves.

In this sense the SI's theory represents the last sincere gesture of faith in a revolutionary conception of self-management integral to the programme of the liberation of work. But its critique of work would be taken up and transformed by those who sought to theorise the new struggles that emerged when this programme had entered into irreversible crisis in the 1970s. The latter would understand this critique as rooted not in an affirmation of the workers' movement, but in new forms of struggles which coincided with its decomposition. However, in the writings of *Invariance, La Vielle Taupe, Mouvement Communiste* and others, the attempt to overcome the central contradiction of the SI would first be expressed in a critique of "formalism", the privileging of form over content, within the ideology of council communism.

THE CRITIQUE OF COUNCILISM

Contrary to the instructions of the SI, the workers who took part in the mass strike of May '68 in France did not seize the means of production, form councils, or try to run the factories under workers' control.6 In the vast majority of occupied workplaces workers were content to leave all the organisation in the hands of their union delegates, and the latter often had trouble in convincing workers to show up to the occupation assemblies to vote for the continuation of the strike.7 In the most important class struggles of the ensuing years, most notably those in Italy, the council form, consistently the epitome of proletarian radicalism in the foregoing cycle (Germany '19, Italy '21, Spain '36, Hungary '56), was absent. Yet these years paradoxically saw a rise in the ideology of councilism, as the perception of an increasingly unruly working class and the decreasing viability of the old organisations seemed to suggest that the only thing missing was the form most adequate to spontaneous and non-hierarchical struggles. In this context groups like Informations Correspondance Ouvrieres (ICO) in France, Solidarity in England, Root and Branch in the US, and to some extent the *operaisti* current in Italy, managed to revive an interest in the German/Dutch Left through blaming the old enemies of councilism — all the left parties and unions, all the "bureaucrats" in the language of the SI — for the failure of each new insurgency.

It would not take long for this perspective to be challenged, and this challenge would initially take the form of a revival of the *other* left-communist tradition. Under the intellectual leadership of Amadeo Bordiga, the Italian Left had long criticised council communism (which in "Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder" Lenin lumped together with the Italian Left) for its championing of form over content, and its uncritical conception of democracy.8 It is this position, filtered through the influence of the dissident Bordigist journal *Invariance*, which underlies Gilles Dauvé's critique of council communism in "Leninism and the Ultraleft", one of the foundational texts of the tendency we are describing.9 Dauvé accuses council communism of formalism on two counts: their approach to the question of organisation sees the form of organisation as the decisive factor (an "inverted Leninism"), and their conception of post-revolutionary society transforms the form (the councils) into the content of socialism, through depicting the latter as fundamentally a question of management. For Dauvé, as for Bordiga, this was a false question, for capitalism is not a mode of management but a mode of production, in which "managers" of any sort (capitalists, bureaucrats, or even workers) are merely the functionaries through which the law of value is articulated. As Pierre Nashua (*La Vielle Taupe*) and Carsten Juhl (*Invariance*) would also later argue, such a preoccupation with form over content effectively replaces the communist goal of the destruction of the economy with a mere opposition to its management by the bourgeoisie.10

CRITIQUE OF WORK REDUX

In itself this critique of council communism could only lead to reworking the canonical theses of the Italian Left, either through an immanent critique (*a la Invariance*) or by developing a sort of Italo-Germanic hybrid (*a la Mouvement Communiste*). What provided the impetus for a new conception of revolution and communism (as *communisation*) was not simply an understanding of the content of communism derived from a close reading of Marx and Bordiga, but also the influence of a whole wave of class struggles of the late sixties and early seventies which would give a new meaning to "the refusal of work" as a specific content of the revolution.

By the early 1970s journalists and sociologists began to speak of a "revolt against work" afflicting an entire new generation of workers in traditional industries, with rapidly rising rates of absenteeism and sabotage, as well as a widespread disregard for the authority of the union. Commentators variously blamed: the feeling of expendability and insecurity brought about by automation; the increasing assertiveness of traditionally oppressed minorities; the influence of an anti-authoritarian counter-culture; the power and sense of entitlement afforded by the prolonged post-war boom and its hard-won "social wage". Whatever the reason for these developments, what seemed to characterize the new struggles was a breakdown in the traditional forms through which workers sought to gain control over the labour process, leaving only the expression of an apparent desire to work less. For many of those who had been influenced by the SI, this new proletarian "assault" was characterized by a "refusal of work" shorn of the techno-utopian and bohemian-artistic elements which the SI had never been able to abandon. Groups like *Négation* and *Intervention Communiste* argued that it was not only the power of the union which was being undermined in these struggles, but the entire Marxist and Anarchist programme of the liberation of work and the triumph of "workers' power". Far from liberating their work, bringing it under their own control, and using it to seize control of society through self-managing their workplaces, in the French May and the subsequent "creeping May" in Italy, the "critique of work" took the form of hundreds of thousands of workers deserting their workplaces. Rather than an indication that struggles hadn't gone far enough, the absence of workers' councils during this period was thus understood as an expression of a rupture with what would come to be known as "the old workers' movement."

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNISATION

Just as it had been influential in spreading the above-mentioned critique of councilism, the dissident Bordigist journal *Invariance* was an important forerunner of critical reflection on the history and function of the workers' movement. For *Invariance* the old workers' movement was integral to a development of capitalism from a stage of merely "formal" to one of "real domination." The workers' failures were necessary since it was capital that constituted their organizing principle:

> "The example of the German, and above all, of the Russian revolutions, shows that the proletariat was fully capable of destroying a social order which presented an obstacle to the development of the productive forces, and thus to the development of capital, but that at the moment that it became a matter of establishing a different community, it remained a prisoner of the logic of the rationality of the development of those productive forces, and confined itself within the problem of managing them."[11]

Thus a question that for Bordiga had been one of theoretical and organisational error came for Camatte to define the historic function of the workers' movement within capitalism. The self-liberation of the working class meant only the development of the productive forces, since the principle productive force was the working class itself. One did not need to follow Camatte into the wilderness[12] in order to agree with this estimation. After all, by the 1970s it was clear that in the East the workers' movement had been integral, at least at the beginning, to an unprecedented rise in the productive capacity of the socialist states; whilst in the West workers' struggles for better conditions had played a key role in bringing about the post-war boom and the resulting global expansion of the capitalist mode of production. Yet for many the crisis of the institutions of the workers' movement in the 1970s showed that this purely capitalist function was itself coming into crisis, and workers would be able to shed the burden of this history. For *Mouvement Communiste*, *Négation, Intervention Communiste,* and others the breakdown of the old workers' movement was something to be celebrated, not because the corrupt leadership of the workers' organisations would

no longer be able to restrain the autonomy of the masses, but because such a shift represented a transcendence of the historical function of the workers' movement, a transcendence that would mark the reemergence of the *communist movement*, the "real movement which abolishes the present state of things".13 And it did so in an immediate sense, for the riots and wildcat strikes of that decade were read by these writers as a total refusal of all the mediations of the workers' movement, not in favour of some other more "democratic" mediation like that of workers' councils, but in a way that posed the immediate production of communist relations as the only possible revolutionary horizon. Thus whereas communism had previously been seen as something that needed to be created *after* the revolution, the revolution was now seen as nothing other than the production of communism (abolishing wage labour and the state). The notion of a period of transition was jettisoned.14

In a recent text Dauvé sums up this estimation of the old workers' movement:

> "The workers' movement that existed in 1900, or still in 1936, was neither crushed by fascist repression nor bought off by transistors or fridges: it destroyed itself as a force of change because it aimed at preserving the proletarian condition, not superseding it. … The purpose of the old labour movement was to take over the *same* world and manage it in a new way: putting the idle to work, developing production, introducing workers' democracy (in principle, at least). Only a tiny minority, 'anarchist' as well as 'marxist', held that a different society meant the destruction of State, commodity and wage labour, although it rarely defined this as a process, rather as a programme to put into practice *after* the seizure of power…"15

Against such a programmatic approach, groups like *Mouvement Communiste*, *Négation,* and *La Guerre Sociale* advocated a conception of revolution as the immediate destruction of capitalist relations of production, or "communisation". As we shall see, the understanding of communisation differed between different groups, but it essentially meant the application of communist measures *within* the revolution — as the condition of its survival and its principle weapon against capital. Any "period of transition" was seen as inherently counter-revolutionary, not just in so far as it entailed an alternative power structure which would resist "withering away" (c.f. anarchist critiques of "the dictatorship of the proletariat"), nor simply because it always seemed to leave unchallenged fundamental aspects of the relations of production, but because the very basis of workers' power on which such a transition was to be erected was now seen to be fundamentally alien to the struggles themselves. Workers' power was just the other side of the power of capital, the power of reproducing workers as workers; henceforth the only available revolutionary perspective would be the abolition of this reciprocal relation.16

COMMUNISATION AND CYCLES OF STRUGGLE: *TROPLOIN* AND *THÉORIE COMMUNISTE*

The milieu in which the idea of communisation emerged was never very unified, and the divisions only grew as time went on. Some ended up abandoning whatever was left of the councilist rejection of the party and returned to what remained of the legacy of the Italian Left, congregating around atavistic sects such as the International Communist Current (ICC). Many others took the questioning of the old workers' movement and the ideal of workers' councils to require a questioning of the revolutionary potential of the working class. In its most extreme form with the journal *Invariance* this led to an abandoning of "the theory of the proletariat", replacing it by a purely normative demand to "leave this world", a world in which the community of capital has, through real domination, supplanted the human community. Yet even among those who didn't go as far, there was an abiding sense that as long as struggles remained attached to the workplace they could only express themselves as a defence of the condition of the working class. In spite of their different approaches, *Mouvement Communiste*, *La Guerre Sociale, Négation,* and their descendants ended up affirming the workplace revolts of the 1970s, and the growth of struggles around reproduction with which they coincided, to the extent that they seemed to escape the constraints of class identity, freeing the "class for-itself" from the "class in-itself", and thus revealing the potential for communisation as the realisation of the true human community. A few people associated with this tendency (notably Pierre Guillaume and Dominique Blanc) would take the critique of anti-fascism (shared to some extent by all of those who defended the communisation thesis) to an extreme and become entangled in the "Faurisson Affair" of the late-1970s.17 Another tendency, represented by *Théorie Communiste* (hereafter TC), attempted to historicise the communisation thesis itself, understanding it in terms of changes in class relations which were in the process of undermining the

institutions of the workers' movement and working class identity in general. They would go on to conceptualise this change as a fundamental restructuring of the capitalist mode of production in accordance with the termination of one cycle of struggle and the emergence, via a successful counter-revolution, of a new cycle. The distinguishing feature of this new cycle for TC is that it carries within it the potential for communisation as the limit of a class contradiction newly situated at the level of reproduction (see the afterword for a clarification of TC's theory in this respect).18

Whilst TC developed their theory of the restructuring at the end of the 1970s, others would follow suit in the 1980s and 90s, and the group *Troploin* (consisting principally of Gilles Dauvé and Karl Nesic) has recently attempted something of that order in "Wither the World" and "In for a Storm". The difference between these conceptions is marked, not least because the latter seems to have been at least partly developed in opposition to the former. The exchange between *Théorie Communiste* and *Troploin* we are publishing here took place in the last ten years, and underlying the assessment of the revolutionary history of the twentieth century to be found in these texts, are different conceptions of capitalist restructuring and opposed interpretations of the current period.

The first text, *When Insurrections Die,* is based on an earlier introduction by Gilles Dauvé to a collection of articles from the Italian Left journal *Bilan* on the Spanish Civil War. In this text Dauvé is concerned to show how the wave of proletarian revolts in the first half of the twentieth century were crushed by the vicissitudes of war and ideology. Thus in Russia the revolution is sacrificed to the civil war, and destroyed by the consolidation of Bolshevik power; in Italy and Germany the workers are betrayed by unions and parties, by the lie of democracy; and in Spain it is again the march to war (to the tune of anti-fascism) which seals the fate of the whole cycle, trapping the proletarian revolution between two bourgeois fronts.

Dauvé doesn't address the later struggles of the 60s and 70s, but it is obvious that judgements from this period, as to e.g. the nature of the workers' movement as a whole, inform his assessment of what was "missing" in this earlier defeated wave of struggles. In their critique of *When Insurrections Die,* TC attack what they consider to be Dauvé's "normative" perspective, in which actual revolutions are counter-posed to what they *could* and *should* have been — to a never-completely-spelled-out formula of a genuine communist revolution. TC broadly agree with Dauvé's conception of revolution (i.e. communisation) but criticise Dauvé for ahistorically imposing it on previous revolutionary struggles as the measure of their success and failure (and thus of failing to account for the historical emergence of the communisation thesis itself). According to TC it follows that the only explanation that Dauvé is capable of giving for the failure of past revolutions is the ultimately tautological one that they didn't go far enough — "the proletarian revolutions failed because the proletarians failed to make the revolution."19 In contrast they argue that their own theory is able to give a robust account of the whole cycle of revolution, counter-revolution and restructuring, in which revolutions can be shown to have contained their own counter-revolutions within them as the intrinsic limit of the cycles they emerge from and bring to term.20

In the subsequent three texts in the exchange (two by *Troploin* and one by TC) a number of controversies are explored, including the role of "humanism" in *Troploin*'s conception of communisation, and the role of "determinism" in that of TC. Yet for us the most interesting aspect of this exchange, the reason we are publishing it here, is that it constitutes the most frank attempt we have come across to assess the legacy of 20th century revolutionary movements in terms of a conception of communism as neither an ideal or a programme, but a movement immanent to the world of capital, that which abolishes capitalist social relations on the basis of premises currently in existence. It is in order to interrogate these premises, to return to the present — our starting point — that we seek to analyse their conditions of emergence in the foregoing cycles of struggle and revolution.

1. Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852 (MECW 11), pp. 103-106. All references to the works of Marx and Engels are to the Lawrence & Wishhart *Marx-Engels Collected Works* (MECW).
2. 'Now, The SI' (*IS* no. 9, 1964). Christopher Gray, *Leaving the Twentieth Century: the Incomplete Works of the Situationist International* (Rebel Press 1998).
3. 'We shall never work, oh waves of fire!' Arthur Rimbaud, *Qu'est-ce pour nous, mon cœur* (1872) in: *Œuvres complètes* (Renéville & Mouquet, 1954), p. 124.
4. *La Révolution Surréaliste* no. 4 (1925). In practice the surrealists' refusal of work was often restricted to artists, with denunciations of the influence of wage-labour on creativity and demands for public subsidies to pay for their living costs. Even the text co-written by Breton and Trotsky, *Towards a Free Revolutionary*

Art, seems to distinguish between two revolutionary regimes, one for artists/ intellectuals and one for workers: 'if, for a better development of the forces of material production, the revolution must build a socialist regime with centralized control, to develop intellectual creation an anarchist regime of individual liberty should from the first be established.' Thus one reason the surrealists neglected the contradiction between the liberation and abolition of labour may have been that they saw the former as a matter for others.

5. The situationists were aware of this potential critique and tried to deflect it. In 'Preliminaries on Councils and Councilist Organisation' (*IS* no. 12, 1969) Riesel writes 'it is known that we have no inclination towards workerism of any form whatsoever', but goes on to describe how workers remain the 'central force' within the councils and the revolution. Where they get closest to questioning the affirmation of the proletariat, in the theory of 'generalized self-management', they are at their most incoherent – e.g.: 'only the proletariat, by negating itself, gives clear shape to the project of generalized self-management, because it bears the project within itself subjectively and objectively' (Vaneigem, 'Notice to the Civilized Concerning Generalised Self-Management' *ibid.*). If the proletariat bears the project of self-management 'within itself' then it follows that it must negate this project in 'negating itself'.
6. The SI would later reveal the extent of their self-delusion by retrospectively claiming that workers had been 'objectively at several moments only an hour away' from setting up councils during the May events. 'The Beginning of an Era' (*IS* no. 12, 1969).
7. Bruno Astarian, *Les grèves en France en mai-juin 1968*, (Echanges et Mouvement 2003).
8. e.g.: '[T]he formulae 'workers' control' and 'workers' management' are lacking in any content. … The 'content' [of socialism] won't be proletarian autonomy, control, and management of production, but the disappearance of the proletarian class; of the wage system; of exchange — even in its last surviving form as the exchange of money for labour-power; and, finally, the individual enterprise will disappear as well. There will be nothing to control and manage, and nobody to demand autonomy from.' Amadeo Bordiga, *The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism (1957)* (ICP, 1972).
9. First published in English in *Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement* (Black and Red, 1974).
10. Pierre Nashua (Pierre Guillaume), *Perspectives on Councils, Workers' Management and the German Left* (La Vielle Taupe 1974). Carsten Juhl, 'The German Revolution and the Spectre of the proletariat' (*Invariance* Series II no. 5, 1974).
11. Jacques Camatte, 'Proletariat and Revolution' (*Invariance* Series II no. 6, 1975).
12. Camatte, particularly through his influence on Fredy Perlman, would go on to become a principle inspiration for primitivist thought — see *This World We Must Leave: and Other Essays* (Autonomedia, 1995).
13. Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology* (MECW 5), p. 49.
14. The idea of a 'period of transition', found notably in the political writings of Marx and Engels, had been shared by almost every tendency of the workers' movement. During such a period workers were supposed to seize control of the political (Leninist) or economic (syndicalist) apparatuses and run them in their own interests. This corresponded to a generally held assumption that workers could run their workplaces better than their bosses, and thus that to take over production would equally be to develop it (resolving inefficiencies, irrationalities and injustices). In displacing the communist question (the practical question of the abolition of wage-labour, exchange, and the state) to after the transition, the immediate goal, the revolution, became a matter of overcoming certain 'bad' aspects of capitalism (inequality, the tyranny of a parasitical class, the 'anarchy' of the market, the 'irrationality' of 'unproductive' pursuits…) whilst preserving aspects of capitalist production in a more 'rational' and less 'unjust' form (equality of the wage and of the obligation to work, the entitlement to the full value of one's product after deductions for 'social costs'…).
15. Gilles Dauvé, 'Out of the Future' in *Eclipse and Reemergence of the Communist Movement* (1997) pp. 12-13.
16. It should be noted that something like a communisation thesis was arrived at independently by Alfredo Bonanno and other 'insurrectionary anarchists' in the 1980s. Yet they tended to understand it as a lesson to be applied to every particular struggle. As Debord says of anarchism in general, such an idealist and normative methodology 'abandons the historical terrain' in assuming that the adequate forms of practice have all been found (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Rebel Press, 1992), § 93 p.49). Like a broken clock, such anarchism is always *capable* of telling the right time, but only at a single instant, so that when the time finally comes it will make little difference that it is finally right.

17. Robert Faurisson is a bourgeois historian who attracted attention to himself in the late 70s by denying the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz (though not the Nazi's systematic mass murder of civilians). For this Faurisson was put on trial. For reasons only really known to himself, Pierre Guillaume became a prominent defender of Faurisson and managed to attract several affiliates of *La Vielle Taupe* and *La Guerre Sociale* (notably Dominique Blanc) to his cause. This created an internecine polemic within the Parisian ultra-left which lasted more than a decade.
18. Other groups which trace their descent from this (loosely defined) tendency in the 1970s: *La Banquise*, *L'Insecurité Sociale*, *Le Brise Glace*, *Le Voyou*, *Crise Communiste*, *Hic Salta*, *La Materielle*, *Temps Critiques*.
19. see below p. 207.
20. For a more detailed discussion of the differing assumptions at work in this exchange see the Afterword at the end of this issue.