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Ecstasy. Empire. Immanence

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[1] Ecstasy. The Political Updating of the Multitude.

July 20, 2001. Genoa. Second day of demonstrations. Around noon, over 15,000 activists from southern and western Europe set out from the athletic training stadium Carlini for training with the Tute Bianche. A short run by bio-political activists, which is stopped an hour later by a CS gas bombardment by the police. Everything for ten, twenty meters all around is covered in a white fog. Bio-political counterattack. Beyond that, armored vehicles. Everyone without a gas mask storms back. Back? There is nothing there. No side street. No green area. No space. A meter-high railway embankment to the left. One house wall after another on the right. In between, the tenacious magnitude of thousands of demonstrators. Tute Bianche in training, shortly before mass panic.

Since the mid-90s, the Tute Bianche have been practicing the deployment of operaist concepts in their theoretical praxis: multitude, real subsumption of societies under capital, the valuation of the whole of life, of communication, of knowledge, of affects, etc. If it is true that with the labor battles and confrontations of the 60s and 70s the factory diffused into society,

and all society became the factory; if it is true that the feminist perspective of counting non-paid work as part of social productivity became true historically at an expanded level; if it is true that the relation of capital eats more and more productively through bodies, setting the value of the knowledge of working processes, the ability to cooperate, and self-organization, affects and subcultures, and compelling subjects to become entrepreneurs of their own marginalized and fragmented existences, then it is time to invent a bio-political activism in the midst of this subsumption, which is in keeping with the times. This means that political practices must run through the entire networked sociality that late capitalism produces, exploits and controls. That is the multitude. Unbelievably kitschy. Yet charming. Something like militant heterogeneity. In fact, one could say: the rediscovered patchwork of minorities that is aware of its potential for the modernization and innovation of the circumstances. The militant is taken as being productive and positive. That is the school of capitalism itself, and Tute Bianche and other activists do not want to step back behind its curriculum. The subjectivity permanently mobilized to self-entrepreneurship (Do something! Develop, express, prove yourself! Save yourself!) should not progress to negation, to a break, to a refusal to work, to a grab-your-guns, or to the second between the throw and the hit, but rather primarily to the activism of dissident self-organization.

In Genoa, thousands of European activists joined the praxis of the Tute Bianche, because they have developed relatively strong military concepts of anti-capitalist activity since the mid-90s, which are not economic, but instead intervene in the entire social field: *autoriduzione* in public traffic, actions against deportation prisons, in labor conflicts, etc. Attempts are made here to overcome the subcultural coding of the militancy of the 70s and

80s and the small group-based identity politics of anger, to avoid the symmetrical confrontation with state violence, and to develop an openly communicated concept of limited provocation, which is still interesting, even though it did not work in Genoa. Just like Pink & Silver, the network of the People's Global Action, or the activists of migrant self-organization, the Tute Bianche articulate a promise. The promise of the political. The quiet reappearance of options. The political of the situation is in the a-subjective. It is not individual subjects that become more clever. Even if that were the case, it would not be sufficient. It is a coming together. The production of a concatenation. And this simultaneously at different levels. Beyond the endeavor to carry on politically, things are moving, away from solidarity internationalism, away from an anti-racism that functions as a renewed identity politics for an autonomous left, away from the notion of support and advocacy, away from the lofty authenticity of the streetfighter.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, it is not People's Global Action, Pink & Silver, Indymedia, The Voice or the bordercamp groups that have become echo chambers for this renewed feeling of the political, but rather Attac. Its momentary strength is an effect of the situation, an expression of the diffuse potentiality of new internationalist practices. The formation of an extra-parliamentary social democracy slows down this situation, charges it with left-wing Keynesianism, blocks the political with state-oriented regulation policies and concentrating on the deceleration of the financial markets. In comparison with Attac's sedation of the political, the Tute Bianche are ecstasy.

[2] Empire. The Possibility of Non-Multitude.

Three months later. New York. Bad timing. Since September 11, 2001 a process of negative politicization, subtractive politicization, is becoming visible, in which the social developments for emancipatory change are being hermetically sealed. This turns a bizarre spotlight on the optimism of the operaist theory of Empire. Its messianic analysis of the possible future of immaterial workers and a migrating multitude skips too lightly over the political situation of post-fordist subjects that vote for Schill, FPOe or Forza Italia. It gives too little weight to the dynamic of transformation, with which fordism ended up in a crisis in formerly colonized states, without ever having become established.

As though it were sufficient to name the violence of Empire, only to return to the pathos of the communistic multitude, that fortunate heir to the development of productive force and bio-politics, who realizes the militant relation in the deterritorialization movement of capital. The beautiful and perhaps really so untenable kitsch of the militant greatness of the subject: *"The Vogelfrei is an angel or an intractable demon. And here, after so many attempts to transform the poor into proletarians and proletarians into a liberation army […], once again in postmodernity emerges in the blinding light of clear day the multitude, the common name of the poor. It comes out fully in the open because in postmodernity the subjugated has absorbed the exploited … "* (Hardt/Negri, Empire, 158)

The projects of gaining industrialization, of import substitution, of nation-state development dictates to fordism are transforming themselves like the real-socialist states in the direction of a capitalist empire. As in the north, in the gigantic poverty economies of the south, of shadow economy and home-working, in the mass misery of self-entrepreneurship on the street, a proto-communist multitude is only rarely visible, which has acquired the working means and the knowledge of cooperation productively.

Instead, the material basis for the connection becomes evident, which the neo-liberal self-entrepreneurship of the poor and the rich can enter into with racist, political-religious and ethnic ideologies.

On September 11, 2001, the discussion of a new internationalism was suddenly, completely unexpectedly over-determined, and as though someone had opened the door, the forms of expression of capitalist globalization became visible: the Empire and the possibility of the non-multitude.

[3] Immanence. The Question of Concatenation

Instead of closing oneself up in negative analyses of societization, one could attempt to imagine the simultaneity of subjugation and potential emancipation - on this side of leftist messianism and its promise of *the blinding light of clear day* - and leave dialectical and historical-philosophical perspectives farther behind than Negri and Hardt. The new day is not coming, because it has already dawned. For the multitude exists. It is the immanent potentiality, which is imaginable, more so than with Negri and Hardt, as the a-subjective potential difference to power.

Between the major segment blocks of race, class, gender and sex, in which power is located, there are transversal rifts. If one follows the trace of these rifts, the multiple overlappings of different power relations and the familiarity of desire and subjection become clear, in other words the way in which a non-subjectively thought desire desires the power arising in itself in a reterritorializing turn-around. The possibility of molecular gestures becomes evident at the horizon of these perspectives, gestures which produce a minoritary intensity in the reterritorialization movement.

While aesthetics of liberation too often tell of the beauty and clarity of the revolts, the rationality of the new human being and the regained pride of the subaltern, and thus of a complicity between the dominant morality and militancy, gestures become interesting, which - although they constitute the field of the political - cannot be doubled and represented as "political resistance" and "break with the circumstances". In the everyday sedimentations of power, they realize a desire, which could be called minoritary in the sense that it is not subsumed in the "what is, is cool". Perhaps one could call them moments of the singular crystallizations of resistiveness, which do not belong to any subject, even though they leave a dramatic marking in parts of the subject and the subsequent feeling of a consumed actuality - "so this is me".

What this involves is a conception that seeks to elude the register of subversion/affirmation and the logic of transgression and revolution; an evasion before the concept of the grand refusal, the soul of the revolts, the focal point of all revolutions, the pure law of the revolutionary; an evasion before the transgression strategies of shock, of provocation, of irony, etc., the effects of which would be most pessimistically described with a secondary transgression profit: "Everything remains the same as it was, but we had a good laugh"; an evasion before the concept of the political subject in favor of the political situation, in which the relativity of the social formation of power and desire and the simultaneity of the political, the economical, the psychical, and the sexual is kept in mind. Whether this leads to a change that is not subsumed in a modernization of the system is a question of the concatenation of various practices. In other words, it would be fatal to measure singular practices negatively against a gradient of resistance, because it colonizes their productivity in the question *of* revolution, *of*

subversion, *of* anti-normativity: "There is just as little a desire for power, for self-oppression or the oppression of others as there is a desire for revolution. Instead, revolution, oppression, power, etc. form current lines of a given concatenation." (Deleuze/Parnet, Dialoge, 143f.) You don't need to be sad, to be able to be militant. But you can.