

Protest to the Anarchists of the Present and Future Concerning the Capitulations of 1980

Jean-Claude
Lutanie

Translated by
Rachel Valinsky



Introduction

Lutanie's **Protest to the Anarchists of the Present and Future Concerning the Capitulations of 1980**, was self-published and anonymously circulated in 1981. Disseminated on stolen paper, it bore only the signature: "Uncontrolled." It was not until 2011 that this important text was recirculated and properly attributed in a second edition published by the Paris-based Éditions Lutanie, a press founded by the author's son and daughter.

Lutanie (1951-2006) was writing on the heels of the publication of Italian Situationist Gianfranco Sanguinetti's **On Terrorism and the State** (1979), which had been made available in French in 1980. Sanguinetti was a key collaborator and friend of Guy Debord's from 1968 on, and an instrumental figure in the establishment of the Italian section of the SI. In 1975, he publishes **Real Report on the Last Chance to Save Capitalism in Italy** under the name of Censor, an aristocratic, conservative alter-ego. Lutanie's **Protest** demonstrates, in part, a close reading of these two texts, and systematically challenges the insidious leakage of the so-called "spectacle" into theory. **Protest** subversively underscores the transformation of 1968's utopian revolutionary promises and of Situationist ideologies into a reality mired in empty rhetoric and theoretical contradictions, particularly with regards to the question of armed struggle and terrorism.

Lutanie aimed straight for the main players of his time, subversive figures like Guy Debord and others surrounding him in the Situationist movement. Debord never discovered the name of the pamphlet's author, but found himself deeply implicated within it. Indeed, the title references Debord and Alice Becker-Ho's 1979 translation from Spanish to French of the pamphlet **Protestation devant les libertaires du présent et du futur sur les capitulations de 1937**, written during the Spanish Civil War by a Spanish Republican. Debord would write to Jaap Klosterman in July 1981: "I am asking Gérard to send you a very shady little book (**Protestation ... sur les capitulations de 1980**), which I think should be read very attentively." Lutanie troublingly turned Debord and Becker-Ho's initiative against itself in a swift **détournement** that gave the Situationists a taste of their own medicine by staging a dialectical engagement and critique of their writings and activities.

This extract from the first English translation of Lutanie's text is timely. One cannot help read it against the backdrop of Paris' recent terrorist attacks, which unfolded — eerily — as I worked through the final stages of the translation in New York on November 13, 2015. One window open onto the news of an "attack in progress," another onto this exposé of a moment when terrorism itself, as a term and as a socio-political reality, referred to another set of issues: the virulent spread of internal militancy against European states. Here is a document of a complex political climate, one in which Lutanie always remained an independent figure, and in which he was, nonetheless, deeply invested. It is a provocative ruling and important contribution by a little-known mind on the unresolved questions of militantism and armed struggle, theory and praxis, terrorism and state control, as well as a biting analysis of a time from which our present moment undoubtedly proceeds.

—Rachel Valinsky

As long as we haven't been able to abolish a single cause of human desperation, we do not have the right to try to suppress the means by which man tries to clean himself of desperation.

—Antonin Artaud, "General Security: The Liquidation of Opium"¹

The old revolutionary Theory excessively counted on the predictable kindness of methods of oppression; "the displeasure of repression" leads it today to long for Greece—nostalgia for a "moment when power and changes in power were first debated and understood."² Theory seeks to "pitilessly chase away" direct action of the critique of this world.

We have seen too much of those elite troupes that, after having accomplished some valiant exploit, are still here to parade around with their decorations, before then turning against the cause they had defended.

We live in an era where everything is damaged—actions, desires, dreams—and where Theory, to appeal to the brute, insults the defeated and flatters what repels us.

This constant need to overbid on the ferocious and the absurd suffices to establish that we are going through a real crisis of judgment, itself of course related to the crisis of communication.

Instead of recapturing all the elements of anguish and pain spread out in the universe, and sending them back, armored, in our enemy's face, these elements are carefully separated, purged, and dispersed in fanciful connections; fits of anger shrivel and sour; nothing goes straight to the internal malaise in all that exists, anymore.

When war and play are opposed, we can no longer move towards anything lightheartedly. The social war is a total war where everything we set aside comes back to slap us right in the face.

What has not been surpassed has rotted; but this decay reaches a degree that really asks to be exceeded.

From the old signs of negation become falsifiers, which



have been gasifying the atmosphere for many years, we can already draw the conclusion that a new era will emerge.

Terrorism and ambient passivity are two opposite poles but inseparable from the same lack.

We cannot abolish terrorism (in practice) without realizing passion.

The fundamental problem of a good psychology does not consist in asking oneself why there are so many individuals who sabotage, steal, and avenge us, but rather consists in asking oneself why more individuals aren't doing it.

We are lacking in acts, we are lacking in words, we are lacking in everything; the default of communication is the central question.

Only the "bacchanals of truth, where no one stays sober," are suited to make the diverse terrorisms of truth shut up, as well as other political doggeries.

Because, at last, what are we dying of? Of the default of communication, in the street, in ourselves, everywhere. Of not saying anything of what is lacking. Of the diverse illnesses that this engenders.

This is a book of harm. Despair is not the greatest of our mistakes.

Protest to the Anarchists of the Present and the Future Concerning the Capitulations of 1980

The solidarity of certain revolutionary groups has the ostentation of charity: it remains a deplorable spectacle. And what is more, ferocious suspicions slide in, raining over any enthusiasm with a cold shower. Accusations are exchanged. Disputes and invectives prevail over discussion. Distrust reigns.

—Zo D'Axa³

-1-

A small spring broke inside the music box. The melody is still the same, *but the music has changed.*

-2-

It is the winter of ideas. What remained of critique is now *frozen.*

-3-

Only a few drops of blood remain in the arteries of phthisical theories. There are odious and special snivelings, patented with the guarantee of a radical point of reference: Who is the Jew? Faurisson.⁴ Who are the terrorists? *Only* the mischievous States. Blissful atmosphere!

-4-

That which has not yet been superseded has rotted; and the trash cans pile up, alongside *unkempt promises of youth.*

-5-

It is to this less than honorable balance sheet, as much as to the enemy's own offensive, that one owes the latter's reinforcement.

-6-

There are still some people, however, whose own cowardice and miserliness provide arguments to support the contrary, and they would like others to believe that to be vile and cowardly is to be subtle and prudent; they generously attribute a kind of proletarian patience to what is, in fact, really a servile fearfulness.

-7-

In such a climate, one invariably notices the expansion of a peripheral layer of petty intellectual whoring.

-8-

*It's all in pieces, all coherence gone.*⁵

-9-

It's meaningless to wonder to what extent the Situationist teachings are, nowadays, theoretically admissible and practically applicable.

-10-

All attempts to reestablish the Situationist doctrine as a whole and in its original function as a theory of social revolution are, today, reactionary utopias.

-11-

However, for better or for worse, fundamental elements of this teaching retain their effectiveness after having changed their function and field of action.

-12-

The first step to in order to redress revolutionary critique consists in breaking with this Situationism that claims to monopolize revolutionary initiative and the trajectory of theory and practice.

-13-

Revolt against existing conditions is present everywhere. It does not yet have an explicit project or an organization, because, at this time, its space is still taken up by the old mystified and mendacious revolutionary politics. This politics has failed—and *has reversed itself into its repressive opposite*—because its practice was failing and transformed into lies. The revolutionary project can only be redone with excess; it needs a new maximalism that demands everything from the transformation of society.

-14-

"If arguing make us sweat, the proof of it will turn to redder drops." Shakespeare⁶

February 1981

1 Antonin Artaud, "General Security: The Liquidation of Opium," in **Artaud Anthology**, trans. L. Dejardin (San Francisco: City Lights, 1963). Originally published as "Sûreté générale. La liquidation de l'opium," in **La Révolution surréaliste** (January, 1925).

2 Guy Debord, **Society of the Spectacle**, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Zone Books: 1994). Originally published as **La Société du spectacle** (Buchet-Chastel, 1967).

3 Zo d'Axa, "A Road," trans. Mitch Abidor, accessed December 20, 2015, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/zo-daxa/1895/road.htm>. Originally published as "Une Route" in **La Revue Blanche** (First Quarter, 1895).

4 Robert Faurisson, a Franco-British professor, who generated great controversy over two letters published in *Le Monde* in 1978 and 1979, and others in **The Journal of Historical Review**, in which he denied the existence of Nazi gas chambers intended for the extermination of Jews.

5 Originally in English and in italics in author's text. Reference to John Donne's "An Anatomy of the World" (1611): "Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone," (line 213), <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/anatomy-world>, accessed January 7, 2016.

6 Shakespeare, **Julius Caesar** (1599), Act 5, Scene 1, lines 48-49.

