

Against Democracy

Coordination of Anarchist Groups

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Foreword

The bound pile of pages you hold in your hands is a small contribution from the United Anarchist Groups to the fight against democracy, which is the most widespread contemporary form of political domination (as the primary and most sophisticated expression of the State), constituting an authoritarian, buck-passing, submissive mentality, and the ideal legal framework for the development of the capitalist economy, which is the source of exploitation and poverty.

It is for these reasons, and faced with the disquieting demands for more and better democracy from many sectors that have in recent years increasingly begun to engage in protest and disobedience – demands that almost always end up subsuming real and radical struggles – that for a few years now we have been conducting a campaign against this dominating and domesticating monstrosity referred to as democracy. These texts, written by us, are part of that campaign. With them, we hope to make our modest contribution to the enormous task of fighting the State, capitalism and all forms of authority for a new world without domination or submission – for Anarchy.

Rebellious greetings, and we hope you find our small contribution useful.

United Anarchist Groups

Spring 2013

introduction:

Why attack democracy?

Democracy justifies itself based on certain principles that are no less false for having been repeated a thousand times as truths, and its justification is so internalized that even its opponents believe in its principles. Considering how ingrained and immobile the idea of this system's fundamental goodness is in the people's thinking, change seems impossible; nobody seems to be suggesting any other organizational forms these days, or even other ways of life.

We daughters of democracy have been told that this is the best of all regimes; our parents and grandmothers lived under a system where coercion and repression were more direct, and now that it has taken on a softer form, we are expected to accept it from birth. Why is it that we are going to be a poorer generation than the previous ones, without there even having been a war in between? The blame lies with the irreparable transformations imposed by their system.

The system claims to be based on "free association," but it is not in fact free, since from birth we are forced to be part of this regime and have no possibility of choosing any other way of life. We do not "freely associate" with the educational institutions, since other ways of learning are prohibited. And there's no "free association" involved at work, because we don't control what we produce, decide our own working hours, or have the unfettered right to organize with our co-workers.

Universal suffrage, a concept that has been exalted throughout history as a great victory by ever broader segments of the population, in fact brings itself into question conceptually upon closer examination: it's always been said that the vote is free, but in fact the choice is limited, because consciousness is not free, but subject to the propaganda of the ruling regime and the culture promoted by the groups that are in power. It is also freedom-denying insofar as it reduces us to merely giving our two cents, yes or no, or saying which party we think should rule us,

which denies us the possibility of developing other possible ways of living together. And why is the ballot secret? Is there no true freedom of speech?

In democracy we leave the defense of our interests, the satisfaction of our needs, and the organization of human relations and life in the hands of others. It is assumed that by voting we choose those who we think will best represent our interests, but that doesn't fit with reality: The political parties in fact only represent their own interests, according to the rules they themselves establish, seeking to rise to the heights of political and economic power so as to maintain their dominance and influence over the rest of society.

Criticism of politicians is now almost universal; people have no more confidence in their justice. The popularity of such criticism is only proof of their personal and collective failure to resolve conflicts, and of how unconvincing their act really is. The intent of the Law is clearly economic in nature, bringing in money for the state, whether with fines, labor reforms, or just the economic organization of society itself, while at the same time it represses the people, cutting back the freedoms it was supposedly there to defend (association, press, assembly...) while spreading ever more broadly the threat of imprisonment (such as the most recent highway code, etc.).

This is how we go from being human beings to being "citizens" (or consumers, or users, or customers, depending on the sphere of life we happen to be in), and have certain rights and obligations imposed on us in accordance with that label, thus reducing us to political commodities.

The fundamentalism of democracy is not only imposed within the territories where it dominates; since capitalism needs to expand to survive, it has to force itself into every corner of the planet, everywhere imposing democracy, which is the best breeding ground for its development. Military campaigns are undertaken unhesitatingly against any territories where capitalism hasn't yet firmly taken root, demonizing the local customs and culture to curry favor with the attacking country's population. Thus they impose their way of life by force, both inside and outside their borders, while selling a false idea of freedom. No regime in history has ever had so many means of repression and social control available to it.

Policies are made based on the needs of the market; in democracy, our "choice," expressed through the vote, makes little difference, as the same types of political measures are implemented whether the left or right wing is in power.

At the present historical moment, the political leaders do not have opposing interests, in spite of their labels; every one of them must promote a State structure that fosters the growth of Capital, and implement policies based on the needs of the market rather than on the needs of the people. Indeed, in many cases the politicians themselves are the direct beneficiaries of these policies, as they themselves are part of the corporate class.

We all watched silently as the government pumped millions of Euros into the banks while most people were out of work or facing eviction. We've become accustomed to hearing news about corruption directly linking economics to politics. With no mincing of words and not even a trace of the usual deceit, Emilio Botin has said that "starting at a certain level of power, the relationship between business and politics is much more direct than people think it is; they're only a phone call away from one another, from cell phone to cell phone, without even any secretaries involved." Democracy is not based on the common interest; when the laws are drafted, business interests rule.

For these reasons we conclude that democracy does not mean government by the people for the people; it is merely the masquerade show cloaking the dictatorship of capital.

IF WE BELIEVE THAT DEMOCRACY IS FREEDOM WE'LL ALWAYS BE SLAVES
TEAR THE MASK OFF THE GREAT LIE! CREATE ANARCHY.

Democracy: an historical overview.

Democracy is too vague and general a word, whose meaning often depends only on what the mouth that happens to be uttering it has eaten by the end of the month (if it has eaten anything at all). Paradise for a few, an aspiration for many, and a hell for many more, what does seem clear about democracy is that it is a form of government, and also a way in which State Power is expressed.

Though there are many forms of democracy, both now and throughout history, it has a particular creation story and historical process. All the forms of democracy share a common philosophy and certain common roots. At the risk of seeming unoriginal, we will now go through a brief historical review to take a look at the origins of this very subtle form of domination that nevertheless brutally subjugates us every day.

Democracy is based, in principle, on the adoption of a particular collective process for making decisions, electing governments and regulating societies. This is nothing new. Since prehistoric times there have been councils, local gatherings and assemblies in human tribes to decide matters of concern to their constituents. Even in the most archaic times of monarchy, the king couldn't just casually make decisions without at least consulting with some kind of counsel (whether military, wise men, family chiefs or clan chiefs, etc.) and always had to have some respect for tradition. What caused the change from one form of decision-making to another, besides the hardly trivial appearance and progressive institutionalization of Authority, was the degree of systematization and organization of that authority.

The emergence of democracy: Ancient Greece

Democracy appeared for the first time in the 5th century, in the Greek region of Attica. After the fall of the monarchy for unclear reasons at the hands of a popular revolt, a new form of regulation and government was imposed in Athenian society. Since these Athenian men (we say "men" deliberately, since the new regime was organized exclusively by and for native-born, free, property owning males) were convinced that the old monarchical or aristocratic forms were not to their liking, they implemented a new form of government, derived both from ancient communal traditions and from the reform of existing institutions, expanding the powers of certain bodies and limiting those of others. Thus a judiciary was formed, with rotating membership; more importance was given to community assemblies; the number of rulers increased, and their powers and the duration of their mandate was limited; their power was balanced by that of the observers and judges to attempt to reduce capricious injustices, etc. The basic ideas behind this system are still in place today, though they've degenerated significantly.

But before we proceed to explain the workings of democracy and its evolution up to the present day, we must make an obligatory but important etymological remark, accompanied by a historical clarification without which the concept of democracy and its emergence in ancient Greece cannot be fully understood, and at even greater risk of seeming unoriginal, we must now analyze the word "democracy" and its meaning.

Breaking a few myths and many historical and linguistic falsifications, the word “democracy” does not in fact come from only two words (demos, supposedly meaning “people” and kratos, supposedly meaning “power” or “rule,” giving rise to the term “rule by the people”). The word democracy in fact derives from three words: demiurgi, or craftsmen, geomori, or farmers, and kratos, or “State” (in ancient Greek – not “power,” a meaning it came to acquire later in the classical period for political reasons, to justify the social order in place at the time). From the merger of the first two words, demiurgi and geomori, the new word “demos” was formed, a word invented in the classical era, and thus a neologism, which did not exist when this socio-political order was first created. So from a fusion of words referring to craftsmen and farmers the word for “the people” was formed, to justify the new state apparatus and prop up the social order it imposed. Clearly, then, “the people” only refers to the craftsmen, merchants and farmers, and the new regime was made for their benefit. Anyone who wasn’t part of these classes wasn’t included in “the people.” So in fact democracy doesn’t mean “rule by the people,” but “craftsmen’s and farmers’ State.”

In the late 5th century, these two social classes initiated a rebellion against the Attican monarchy, and, in a tumultuous and hazy era, by a process that is hard to discern and for causes that are not very well known, overthrew it to establish the new model. But we should make another clarification. Athenian society in the run-up to the establishment of democracy consisted of three classes or social strata: on top of the pyramid there were the Eupatridae, comprised of the nobles, which was the class the monarch was from. Then came the Demiurgi – these were the artisans and merchants (but not just ordinary artisans; rather they were the master craftsmen and owners of the workshops, who owned slaves and employed wage-workers, the managers of production and trade in the service of the Eupatridae). Then came the Geomori or farmers, i.e., the landowning, slave-owning farmers. These three classes constituted the ranks of free men, and they were in turn subdivided according to rank, wealth and social position. After these, at the lowest level of the pyramid, were the Metoikos, who were the sons of an Athenian father and a foreign mother (who were generally the employees or assistants of the demiurgi and geomori); they were free men, but did not have the same rights as free Athenians. The slaves were lower still. And apart from them all were the women, who were not even considered “persons,” much less “citizens.”

It is with these characteristics and in this context that democracy was born. At first its form was crude; then, almost a century after its founding, Pericles further improved it (and from that “improvement” emerged a new type of regime called tyranny, the first dictatorial state). The functioning of democracy was relatively simple. All Athenians who had reached the age of majority (free, property-owning males) met in the “agora” or public square, as the representatives of their families (women, children and slaves), and there they would choose a limited number of magistrates to serve a two-year term of office. Each of these magistrates had a specific function. Some would be judges, others would be governors, others would oversee the government, others would be functionaries, etc. At these assemblies in the agora, which were held relatively regularly, the property-owners would outline the general direction to be taken by the politics and policy of the city, and the governors would be in charge of putting their decisions into practice; they had a good amount of flexibility, but had to stick to whatever the assemblies decided. Most of the time they functioned by simple referendum, or by choosing from among the proposals put forth by the magistrates or the committees elected to handle some specific matter. The referendums were fairly general, leaving the application of decisions, procedures and timing in the hands of the government. What the governors couldn’t do was ride roughshod over the assemblies’

decisions, or act too far outside the (quite broad) guidelines set out for them. Of course, plots, conspiracies and manipulations were around many centuries before democracy, and such ordinary political methods as those could certainly be applied under democracy as well, to justify just about anything. If any doubt or disagreement were to arise, then recourse would be taken to ancient tradition, oracles, and priests (which amounted more or less to the same thing) to “clear up” the uncertainty.

It should be pointed out that the magistrates, elected for annual or biannual periods, were not paid positions, so only certain people could hold them (after all, who could afford to neglect their activities or their business for one or two years to serve the nation without breaking the bank?).

This social “paradise,” built on the bloody backs of slaves and women, was limited only to the fair city of Athens. In the year 435, Pericles’ heyday, it was the largest city in the known world, with just over one hundred thousand inhabitants (which would make this aberrant regime far more workable than it could be in entire countries with tens or hundreds of millions). For the rest there was only vassalage, as Athens was a commercial and military empire which subjugated its neighbors and defeated all its rival regional empires in long-lasting and bitter wars (with its southern neighbors, the Lacedaemonians – known to posterity as the Spartans – or its more distant Eastern neighbors, the Persians). Over time Athens ruled over a real commercial, political and military empire, organized into leagues and federations in which it imposed its hegemony, an empire that stretched, even without the need for the customary military invasions, all the way from Turkey to Girona and from Slovenia to Tunisia.

The gradually increasing growth of authority and the increasingly brutal solidification of power led to successive tyrannies, dictatorial state forms given political justification and organized within formally prescribed legal and political limits (unlike the old regime of the Egyptian pharaohs, for example, which was justified by religion and held unlimited power), and to harsh empires such as that of Alexander the Great, whose successors would eventually force the glory of Greece to succumb to its Western neighbors with the longer swords: Rome, which also had its glamorous start with a democracy, in imitation of the Greeks (though one that was even more authoritarian and corrupt), but then got quite a bit out of hand.

The madness continues: from the Middle Ages to the English Revolution

Since history is not linear but apparently cyclical, and is full of “progress” and “setbacks,” it seems that the epic saga of democracy suffered two tough setbacks that turned its ship back toward more dictatorial ports. The first was Pericles’ degradation of democracy, and finally the coup de grace dealt to it by Alexander, who was as fond of travel and conquest as he was despotic. With democracy buried in the graveyard of politics, a clique of Latin men, with a republic that could just as reasonably be considered to have been democratic, appeared on the scene in the Mediterranean region and conquered much of the empire of Alexander, who lived fast and died young. The powerful Roman republic, which expanded militarily far beyond where Athens had gone, never kept all the democracy just for itself; it imposed local governors on everyone else, while requiring them to respect its style of government. Shortly thereafter, in a plot twist that could have come from the script of Star Wars, the Republic became an Empire, for the centuries of centuries, with a legacy so durable that even after it collapsed as the result of its internal decadence and the invasion of barbarian tribes, it simply broke down into a mosaic of despotic kingdoms, ruled by a hodgepodge of Roman law and Germanic customary law.

This was a great step backwards from the point of view of democracy, which didn't get a new start until several centuries after the fall of the Roman Republic, the last formal democracy of Antiquity. Specifically, fifteen centuries after. In the 14th century, various city-states formed in northern Italy, as the result of commerce and decomposition due to wars and other dirty tricks played by larger kingdoms. In these city-states, an incipient commercial bourgeoisie, which in spite of the distance was the heir to the geomori and demiurgi of nearly two thousand years prior, came to establish a new regime inspired by the democracy of yesteryear, with forms borrowed from the communal councils of the medieval tradition, and above all, with the most powerful Reasons of State. Jean Bodin and Niccolo Machiavelli wrote two separate and important treatises on the organization of the State, as new forms of democracy, based on merit and money, were being imposed in some cities, where the government was establishing communal assemblies with representation provided by elected potentates making decisions on behalf of the people (and here already we're getting all too close to the way things are today).

And from that silt, swept down by the storm of empires and the early absolutist States, came the democratic mud of the first parliament worthy of the name, and history's first modern republic. After a bloodbath ending in civil war, the United Kingdom of Great Britain (which still didn't include Northern Ireland) gave its king – named Charles at the time – a ticket to the former royal dungeons. And while Charles was enjoying those last moments when he could still feel the weight of the head on his shoulders, a fanatical Puritan “gentleman” named Cromwell imposed the first and only English republic in 1649, after a year of civil war in which he not eliminated not only the monarchists, but also several other political factions advocating what scholars have called “proto-communism.”

The first parliamentary democracy in the history of mankind was cultivated in blood and gore, and established a system of census suffrage to elect the hundred-odd members of the House of Commons (so called because they were not nobles anymore but members of the gentry, i.e., the commercial and farming bourgeoisie), which in turn would elect the government, which would then choose the “president” of the nation. This would come to be the inspiration and immediate historical predecessor of the French Revolution, giving the bourgeoisie, whose position was close to State power but formally separated from it, the clout needed to demand its role within the State. The State, in turn, accommodated more or less naturally to the new set-up, which mostly came about as the result of its own decisions.

The stupidity only lasted exactly four years, since without even allowing time for a second legislature to form, Cromwell staged a coup and named himself Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England. There then followed six years of dictatorship, in which Cromwell accumulated all the powers that the king had previously held (except that, like the Bolsheviks a few centuries later, he had the decency to refrain from using that title, but picked another more appropriate one), in order, paradoxically, to save democracy from itself. So much corruption...

The example didn't take, for the time being, and the English island was soon back to its old ways, with the Netherlands giving it a democratic restoration in the form of a dynasty, in the old style, i.e.: “because I'm better than you and have a bigger navy.” A new king, from the dynasty of Orange, put a definitive end to England's democratic adventure and its consequences, and he set his sights on a small island off the coast England, just to the left on the map. Ireland certainly didn't like the way that ended up going. If you're interested in learning more about the dynasty and the Order of Orange, go ask around in Derry.

It's funny how certain processes seem to repeat themselves again and again in history, and how the middle classes tend to do the upper classes' dirty work until they finally get fed up and demand their share of the spoils. And of course they demand that share quite democratically, so that the businessmen end up in power instead of the military. The middle class is always so altruistic... but things change and become more complex, and only a hundred years later, the young overseas colonies followed the example of their big brother England, establishing a democracy that was quite similar, and also ended up becoming a world power. Little wonder that the colonies copied the same philosophy. Little wonder that after the restoration hundreds of Republicans were exiled to America.

The madness hardens: from the young USA to the French revolution

The colonial process in North America was designed by the English state, but its execution was "outsourced." The colonial process was privatized, and the Crown only took the fame and the taxes. But in those 13 colonies east of the great lakes, it was the settlers who "ruled the roost." They decided on their own forms of government, justice and social organization, swearing allegiance and paying their taxes on time every year to England, which only minimally interfered in the process. The fact that in the collective imagination America was seen as a land of freedom, where one could escape from tyranny (and where many Cromwellians and "proto-communists" found refuge) encouraged the creation of new ways of living and gave rise to some experimentation. The recently developed ideas of political liberalism found a good audience there. Derived from the English brand of Protestantism lite (Republican, quasi-socialistic, and suspicious of state authority), they welcomed the early theoretical outlines of a liberalism that was anti-state but pro-private property.

Tired of more than a century of colonization in which they had not only been doing the dirty work of exterminating the native peoples, but had been paying extortionate taxes too, the colonies finally got fed up and rebelled, led by a pack of rich landowners with hare-brained ideas (they were distrustful of government, couldn't stand banks, and hated monarchy, but advocated private property as the result of individual effort and free trade). After six years of war, the United States of America (the 13 colonies turned into the thirteen states of a Union in the form of a federal government that ended up comprising fifty states) declared their independence and organized the first modern democracy in history.

And so a presidential republic with the form of a federation and a very liberal constitution was born. What started as a kind of direct census-suffrage democracy ended up degenerating into a system of representation (as it must, especially when the so-called direct democracy is supposed to be set up in places with hundreds of thousands or millions of people). At first there were no political parties, and open lists of representatives (congressmen) and Senators were elected from among a handful of white, male, of a certain age, and propertied (since the position was unpaid) candidates, based on votes cast by an electorate of identical composition. The inspiration was drawn from Classical Greece and the Puritan Revolution. The Constitution was very liberal, and placed many limitations on the authorities, of whom its framers were suspicious. But the republic was a presidential system, and although the underdogs were given substantial leeway, Power, though dispersed in various institutions, was too; everything was tied up tight. The middle class of property-owning farmers and merchants, who'd done the dirty work for the English crown made up of nobles and military brass, was in power again, and just as altruistic as ever. But this

time it wouldn't just be one little island; they would expand and expand, increasingly restricting what freedom existed, already so limited and spurious.

Though the U.S. led the way, another great bloodbath soon came about, also inspired by political liberalism and theories about the social contract, but this time in a "continental European" version (which usually just means France, and sometimes Germany), to put this rebirth of democracy in its proper place – and like the new Olympics, which recycle the spirit of the old but are hardly the same, they brought a certain value system to power. In a process that began at that time and would last a century, the bourgeoisie dethroned the nobility, and they dropped like dominoes – it was a process of the rebirth of the State (sometimes even without the consent of the managers of that apparatus, and sometimes plotted entirely by them). And so it was that after killing a lot of people and going through various models of democracy and types of government (from the parliamentary monarchy of the Girondins to the republic of Jacobin terror), they at last firmly enthroned the idealistic concept everyone has in mind when talking abstractly about democracy, at least of the parliamentary type. In short, they ended up with a government elected by male census suffrage (though, all told, they did have a period of universal male suffrage), ruled by a middle class of merchants and industrialists (for some fifty years by this point they could no longer have been referred to simply as craftsmen), complaining about how they'd done the nobility's dirty work for years. That little adventure ended with Napoleon's coup d'état and the birth of another new empire. So much corruption...

Though the story has its variations, the democratic process is always the same. The State gives in and the middle classes take over (by force or with consent, as was the case of the other countries of Europe and England in the 18th century) to establish total government by economy. Because if there's one thing that really differentiates democracy – especially the liberal variant – from other historical forms of government it is that it seeks to encompass each and every aspect of life. Its tendency is to regulate everything, legislate everything, and adopt standards of an economic nature for that purpose; so democracy makes capitalism possible, and capitalism can thus become autonomous, becoming a key factor where before it had been "simply" a means of production, created by and in the service of the State.

Democracy does not offer freedom; at best it offers the degraded possibility of its exercise. And it is always an oppressive possibility, crushing the freedom of the process, quite often "anarchistic" (such as revolts against monarchy, tyranny or dictatorship, though not always just that), which gave rise to it.

With the advent of liberal democracy, this would come to be reinforced even further, with democratic oppression reaching unimaginable heights, perfecting the machine of state domination, and mainly state-capitalist domination, to an intolerable degree.

The madness triumphs: today's liberal democracies

Stepping between the puddles from the last rainfall, down a rarely travelled sidewalk, comes a slick crook strumming a guitar and reciting an old song by Los Suaves. The "rain" was a series of rebellions against the nobility, the "rarely travelled sidewalk" is political liberalism, and the "slick crook" is that bourgeoisie that often plays the marginalized second-fiddle to Power but is so necessary to the development of high state policy. In the nineteenth century, witnessing the unstoppable rise of the commercial class and its capitalist economy (which, driven by the bourgeoisie, went from being a "simple" mode of large-scale production, designed by the English

State in the service of its militarism, to being a global system for the production and reproduction of commodities and commodified social relations), many European states came to accept the corresponding new way of life, on the basis of parliamentary democracy coupled with an industrialized economy, tending towards a relatively free market. The nobility and the state apparatus of the United Kingdom (Great Britain, and by this point Northern Ireland as well) and a still (legally) disunited Germany made their pact with the gentry and together imposed the new society. The nobility of other countries, including France, especially the Eastern European kingdoms, were more stubborn and recalcitrant, and had to be made to yield to the march of progress and of two revolutionary waves brought about by the people, but directed (as they almost always are) by the bourgeoisie, in the name of the most jingoistic nationalism and the free market... oh yes – and in the name of democracy.

It was a perfect combination, and it spread like wildfire. The nineteenth century came to be known as the century of liberal revolutions. But this term does not exactly describe rebellious masses running lecherous kings out of their palaces with gunfire (which only occurred in less than a dozen countries), rather it refers to the fact that once it acquired political power, however it acquired it (by revolution, elections, by piggybacking, by invasion, by state reform, etc.), liberalism imposed its economy, its political model and its new way of life by blood and fire, a way of life that for the first time in human history would be truly totalitarian, because it would extend itself by any means necessary to every single layer of society. Thus was the new project of domination designed, and there then arose the contemporary liberal-bourgeois and democratic State, which would spread itself homogeneously everywhere, drowning in suffering all other remnant cultures, languages, and still-extant ancestral ways of life. The State then centralized, based on an unprecedented cultural, linguistic, religious and economic imposition. The new model was the France of the 19th century: one centralized nation-state; one democratic and bourgeois political power structure; one free market economy (wherever possible); one culture, that of the Parisian bourgeoisie; one value system, that of competitiveness and private property, considered sacred; one education system, which imposed one language, Parisian French (annihilator of dozens of others like Corsican, Lorraine, Breton, Basque, Occitan, Catalan, Massilian, etc. – the list goes on and on). Anyone caught resisting would be sent to the scaffold. The case of the Kingdom of Spain is also a paradoxical one, with its pronunciamientos, three civil wars, colonial rebellions, two Carlist wars and one cantonalist war, a language that was imposed everywhere (Castilian) – and here's a revealing fact: in a hundred years the number of people killed by the liberal State amounted to a quarter of the number that the Inquisition killed in five hundred years – just a quarter. A similar course of events was to come to pass in Italy, with Garibaldi carrying out unification via massacre, and the imposition of industrial capitalism, parliamentary democracy, and the Tuscan-Florentine version of the language.

So let's take a look at the balance sheet for parliamentary democracy and its little brother capitalism: tens of thousands dead, traditions and customs destroyed, municipal councils disbanded, communal lands fenced in, parcelled off and privatized, and the natural environment ravaged by industrialization. It wasn't until the seventeenth century, when capitalism arose, promoted by the state as a means of conducting the large-scale production required to meet military needs, that Felipe II finally had half of what is today Zaragoza province deforested (causing the aberration known as the Monegros desert, where today's youth attend so many summer music festivals) to build his famous Armada, which couldn't make it across a canal on a rainy day.

So, after all these bloodbaths, with the ascent of capitalism in full swing, in a world where democracy is expanding and becoming globalized, we now arrive in the 20th century, the century of the greatest social inequality in the history of this strange species we call “human” (in “The Matrix” they say we’re not really like mammals, but more like a virus, since we devastate everything around us, and when there’s nothing left we go elsewhere, these days to outer space). We had two world wars fought for commercial interests and political ambition – that is, for Power pure and simple – which crowned our great disaster, and definitively cemented the world order. After World War II, a perverse system was constructed on the basis of a false political and ideological confrontation between two irreconcilable enemies, which at bottom were simply economic competitors. Indeed, both defined themselves as democratic (one parliamentary and the other popular) and both were capitalist (one free market and the other state-capitalist). But nothing in life lasts forever, as Heraclitus the Obscure once said, and this new order also had to die; so at the end of the twentieth century one of those two blocs – and we all know which – collapsed, losing out to the competition. The liberal-democratic paradigm triumphed in spite of its minor socialist setback. Meanwhile, of course, the blood of the exploited and oppressed continued to water the wastelands of despair. Some were simply killed off; others were first betrayed and then killed off; but all were ultimately defeated by Authority. One by one, the dreams of freedom of thousands of individuals, which surged forth from nothingness to reach up even to the greatest heights of poverty, were dashed to pieces. That’s what happens when you put your trust in authority (whether aristocratic, bourgeois, proletarian, monarchical or republican, capitalist or communist, democratic or dictatorial) instead of relying on yourself and on the passion for freedom.

Such is the history of democracy, a history that has brought nothing but hardship and misery in the guise of supposed freedom and well-being, with which we’ve been sold up the river. One of the most recent and obvious cases: the kingdom of Spain. *Libertad, libertad, sin ira libertad* [Freedom, freedom, freedom without anger], they sang, at the end of a dictatorship imposed in 1936 by the Church and the Bankers, and propped up for the long haul (actively or passively) by the world powers, a dictatorship that only ended because the dictator died of old age in his little bed. Radicals of every stripe, liberals, Christians, communists, rightist Democrats, all gave us a social contract, which the king calls idyllic; a fascistic parliamentary democracy (not much worse than others, but certainly more grotesque and with less fashion sense – a purely Iberian product), which has led us to right back to the very same place we were at when liberal democracy first arrived on Iberian shores (see what the worshipers of progress make of that observation). But there is one slight difference: the desire for resistance and freedom is conspicuous in its absence, and instead we now have the fashionable form of good-citizen protest that demands that the state behave properly, allowing us to consume without restraint, and have more “freedoms.” Does anyone still not realize that the State in general, and democracy in particular, are not the solution but part of the problem?

Critique of contemporary democracy

A review of the history of the concept of democracy

When we talk about democracy, the idyllic world of classical Greece appears in the mind’s eye: bearded intellectual men chatting civilly under the Mediterranean sun, wrapped in white togas.

But of course this kind of thinking is far from the truth. The vast majority of people living in the cradle of democracy lived in slavery, and the women were entirely excluded from the decision making process as well. There, at the grand source of the democratic idea, only property-owning males ruled, and their power extended over all their property, including their families and slaves (sound familiar?). The owners treated each other as free and equal men, and each commanded and obeyed in turn. The polis was no unnatural aberration; it was the culmination of the social organization in place that allowed free men (and we emphasize that free men meant propertied men) to live the good life.

But even this notion of a harmonious society has long disappeared with the passage of time, and has nothing to do with today's democracy. What we are suffering under today is the result of a specific historical evolution that began with the creation of the modern State, which came into being in the context of a particular time and place and within a particular set of ideological paradigms. In the sixteenth century Hobbes, Locke and a handful of other characters appeared, who elaborated the theory of the social contract; shockingly, it is still around even today. Civil society, which the Greek polis eventually turned into, still occurs only among free men (property-owners), but there has now appeared a new entity, the State, where free men were no longer equal to one another. The State is an artificial creation, supposedly intended to address the age-old phenomenon of primordial conflict, since of course the natural condition of man is obviously the struggle of all against all, where "man is like a wolf to man" (please note the sarcasm). Thus a vertical organization was imposed: one sovereign authority over the masses of citizen-vassals. The new paradigm of what "society" means rose up as a counterweight against nature, which was characterized as a violent and oppressive force that preceded that great and civilized phenomenon: politics. Thus, the triumph of society was the creation of the modern State, which is simply the domestication of nature with everything that that entails.

Then the bourgeois revolutions followed one after another: the English Revolution, the independence of the United States, the French Revolution... The construction of the State as we know it is the fruit of a particular history, and we should not pretend to understand it without considering the specific material and ideological development involved. The modern State appears in connection with the Nation-State, with the division of powers to provide checks and balances, and with a string of inalienable rights and obligations. With the passing of the years, the succession of wars and revolutions, and the consolidation of the welfare state in the face of the Soviet threat, nothing has changed about the substance or meaning of the modern State. Beyond a relative extension of the limits of the State's mission in the Welfare State context, or the alleged participation of citizens in the formal functioning of the democratic State, the only real purpose of all these variants of the modern State is to continually try to maintain an artificial order built against and on top of nature and the citizen-vassals, doing a balancing act to keep up with the changing circumstances and exigencies of history.

The institutionalization of the modern State, and in particular its democratic form, led to the birth of "citizenship." Individuals would thus cease to be individuals, and become part of a superior reality – the State – which would provide them with security by preserving a handful of their natural and inalienable rights, and neutralizing tendencies that are harmful to the community. From this assumption three key issues arise: first of all, what tendencies are to be considered harmful to the community, and who decides that? Secondly, what measures will be used to neutralize these harmful tendencies? And thirdly, these supposed rights, which emanate from some authority superior to the individual him or herself, only hold up when authority recognizes them

and deigns to grant them. The State defines what tendencies are harmful to the community, grants the rights and guarantees them, decides what is a right and what is not, and the State imposes or revokes such rights, if necessary by force, because the State has the monopoly on force.

Opposition to democracy.

We survive under a system of domination. What we mean when we say this is that our lives are subject to and conditioned by a multitude of power relations arising from enormous, profound structures that can be summarized as class, gender and race. These axes of inequality have tangible bases.

These bases are material in nature, obviously, and if we think back to the free men of the Greek polis, i.e., the property-owners and their slaves, and then look at all the people today who work but still have their lives constrained by worries about where they're going to sleep and what they're going to eat, we can perhaps find some common ground. In these times, when economic crisis seems to be all anyone's talking about, it's important to examine at the relationship between economics and politics. We see democracy as the political facade of the economic system called capitalism. We consider them to be two component parts of the same machine, working together in a kind of symbiosis to ensure the continuity of the status quo. The State caters to the financial needs of the big companies and banks as needed, and hands out subsidies and aid only insofar as they are indispensable to maintain the stability of the economic system and protect social peace.

There are also legal, that is, ideological bases for this: if we look back at any declaration of rights (and if we do so it is not to grant them the slightest validity, but because they are explicit manifestations of the ideas and intentions of Power) we see that not only do they regulate what supposedly falls within the public domain, such as political rights or the right to private property, but assert control over all other spheres as well, including the so-called private sphere. From the platform of the State, all relations are prescribed and (de)limited: political, economic and personal.

These ideological bases perpetuate inequality, and all of us, vassals of the State, relate to each other on that foundation: they prescribe, define and justify patterns of social conduct. Democratic thinking is what tells you what to do and what not to do, and how you should do it. The State always meddles in everything, at any time and situation, and democratic thinking is its guarantor. We think what the State and its tools of control (school, the media, pressure from peers, family and relatives) allow us to think. It is assumed that in a Democratic State we are free to think what we want, but our imagination is trapped by the imposition of a reality that is very concrete, and intimidated by fears of marginalization or shame. Moreover, even if we do manage to think something we aren't supposed to think, the State has still more threatening tools to use if we ever try to do something about it: direct repression, in all its forms (police, prisons, psychiatrists, juvenile detention centers, and all the other institutions set up to protect society from such harmful tendencies).

But in its contemporary forms, the modern State is no longer just against and over individuals; it is lodged within those individuals as well. Its power is now more subtle, less visible, and therefore more dangerous. The State is not a structure located entirely outside of us; it is neither an abstract entity nor a reality tangible only in terms of material conditions or political institutions; it is a reality that seeks to encompass everything, and whose order is present in (almost) everything – a totalitarian reality in the crudest and most literal sense of the term. We have to

be conscious of it, challenge the State in all its forms and at all times, dismantle it, destroy it... we have to dare to imagine new ways of living and fighting against this reality that restricts us.

Majority Rule

This is perhaps the solidest of the myths on which democracy is built: the majority, that abstract entity with unquestionable authority that no one challenges or distrusts; the pagan god that democracy invokes when it commits its crimes.

But does the quantifiable majority of the population really even count in the parliamentary democratic system? We can look at a few examples to help clear up this question; amongst them is the Spanish constitution, that “unquestionable” paradigm of democratic legitimacy that everyone drools over, from the most orthodox leftists to the most recalcitrant ultra-rightists.

From a review of the official data, during the constitutional referendum of 1978, out of a registered population of 36.8 million inhabitants only a total of 15.7 million expressed their agreement with this “magna carta”: that is, 40%. Thus, the quantitative majority, i.e., 21 million people, did not agree, either because they abstained, voted against it, or had no right to express their opinion. It is thus clear that this constitution was voted in by a minority of the population of the Spanish state, to which democracy has attributed sufficient value to consider it “representative of the general will.”

So, obviously, neither the majority of the population, nor even the majority of the electorate (let alone the generations of people to come, who hadn't even been born yet at the time of this consultation, or those were already alive who may well have changed their minds, seeing what's happened) actually gave the nod to this constitution. It is thus a fallacy that the constitution must infallibly be obeyed and respected because it is the expression of the will of the majority; in any case it is obeyed because it is forcibly imposed and defended (and they don't take its enforcement lightly, either) by the State security forces, the judiciary and the prison system, among others. Identical cases could be cited in regard to general elections, municipal elections, etc., because in a democracy it is in fact always a minority of the “electorate” that decides which party will be next to rule the country, and how much parliamentary representation they'll get. Because that's another thing: we don't even elect the government or these people who flaunt its power; we just choose the list presented by our particular party, and then that party, elected by the largest minority of the electorate, will get into parliament along with the other parties (elected by even smaller majority-minorities) and from among all its representatives in parliament, they will elect the president of the government (and he or she will then form the cabinet). This is clearly a democratic oligarchy.

However, our opposition to this setup (supplemented in another section below, where we examine the operation of the electoral law) shouldn't be taken to mean that we'd accept democratic rules in some other conditions; indeed, we are against the tyranny of the minority over the majority (real or fictitious) as much as we are against the tyranny of the majority over the minority. There are several reasons for this, one being the fact that we are for the recognition of all interests, be they majority, minority or individual: the law of majority rule does not necessarily mean that the majority is right, and history can find many examples of that. Another reason is that we refuse to be objectified as percentages, on the basis of which our “rights” can be given to us or taken away: we want neither rights nor duties – at most we might talk about the needs,

desires, interests, etc., we may have, but not about permissions or obligations imposed upon us or granted to us. We aren't willing to talk about the interests of the greater number, but about the number of interests. We defend the collective, certainly – but also individual freedom.

Faced with the indissoluble bond between democracy and deceit, we have chosen to fight the democratic discourse (and practice) from the position of an anarchist ethics, framed within the struggle against all authority, whether democratic (parliamentary, participatory, popular and/or direct), dictatorial, or otherwise.

Rights

Rights are concessions granted by an established power structure, i.e., that which the power structure permits those it subjugates to do. Duties are impositions by that same power structure, i.e., what it obligates people to do. Rights and duties thus function as a binomial, as counterparts to one another. Given that the two pillars of democracy are majority rule and the rights of the people, we can make several observations.

One is that people do not have rights; rather they have vital needs. To confuse rights with needs is a serious error originating in authoritarian thinking. People need to eat, breathe, have shelter, sleep, take pleasure, ... and if these needs are not met they may suffer deficiencies and diseases. Nobody can grant us the right to life (at most we can be given life or have our lives taken away) except in authoritarian and/or domesticated forms of life.

Another observation is that those who have rights have to have duties; as pointed out above, this is axiomatic. Every right implies that someone else recognizes that you have it, and that someone will require you to have duties in exchange.

Another observation is that in order to have rights you must be a vassal (under a king), a citizen (under the rule of law, or a republic) or subject of a democracy. Those who suffer under dictatorships also have “rights”; so do children in schools, prisoners in jail, animals, “minorities,” etc.

Another observation then emerges from the previous ones, namely that in order to have rights you must be governed, and thus domesticated and oppressed; in other words, those who have to be given rights are not really free.

These observations lead us to conclude that whoever wants to be free must fight for freedom, and furthermore cannot claim to have rights, since freedom is not something that can be granted to you. Rights necessarily prefigure authoritarianism.

Electoral law

“When the multitudes exercise authority, they are crueler than the worst tyrant.” – Plato.

In this text we will attempt an analysis of the two primary laws that influence and regulate the Spanish electoral system, provided under that umbrella (sometimes so open and sometimes so closed, whichever happens to be convenient) that we call the Constitution.

The first of these Laws is called the Political Parties Law (Organic Law no. 6/2002 of June 27), which repealed Law 54/1978 of December 4, a pre-constitutional law which, paradoxically, was much less restrictive about the right to passive suffrage, even at a time when the role of armed

struggle was most deeply rooted in the revolutionary politics of the period some refer to as the transition.

The current Political Parties Law was drafted with the use of vague concepts with a heavy moral weight, granting the judge broad discretion and power to legislate by his own jurisprudence; such is one consequence of the enforcement of laws with no objective content placed in the legal system through the subjective filter of an “interpreter of the law.” The problem is compounded due to the special nature of the Spanish judiciary, because, as everyone is aware, the high courts of Spain (Supreme Court and Constitutional Court) are little more than branch offices of the two major parties.

We will focus, therefore, on the controversial article 9 of the Political Parties Law, which is devoted to redundant lists of the kinds of activities that can render a political party illegal. We will be examining various aspects of this Law, starting with the clause stating that the kinds of activities that render a party illegal must be performed repeatedly and deliberately. With these words the legislators seek to legitimize these legal provisions by giving them an air of exceptionality, though the reality is entirely different, since repeatedly engaging in political activities is fundamental to developing a mature political position; otherwise it would be quite hollow. Thus, in the explanation of the grounds for the Law, it is stated: “This is obviously not intended to prohibit the advocacy of any ideas or doctrines, even if they fall outside of or even call into question the constitutional framework. [...] The law does not punish isolated behavior but the accumulation of actions that unequivocally demonstrate a track record of the breakdown of democracy and offenses against constitutional values and the democratic method.” In other words, positions that call constitutional standards into question are permissible on the condition that there are sufficient guarantees in place to ensure they will not prosper. Any political position that goes beyond the constitution will be declared illegal, unless, of course, their political objectives are secondary and degraded. In other words, dissolution is the only possibility.

Paragraph a) of article 9.3 cites the following as a typical activity: “Giving express or tacit political support to terrorism, legitimating terrorist actions to achieve political objectives outside peaceful and democratic channels, or excusing and minimizing their significance and the corresponding violation of fundamental rights.” What does it mean to give tacit support? Either you support something effectively (albeit in a veiled way- that’s what evidence with probative value is for) or you don’t really support it at all. The use of this term is intended to provide judges with a tool that can be used to ban a political party for having any kind of political connections: if they have the same purpose (e.g., independence), effective support can simply be inferred, whether or not the two groups share the same methodology.

Paragraph b) of the same article makes it illegal to “back violent action with programs and initiatives aimed at encouraging a culture of confrontation and civil unrest linked to terrorist activity.” Is it even possible to really practice politics without confrontation? It goes without saying who benefits from such an insubstantial conception of politics. As for links with terrorist activity, we have seen how easily those can be created.

We could continue our analysis of this legal corpus, but its absurdity is so blatant that all it takes is one reading. In short, and in light of its effective application in court, it seems that this law has reversed the burden of proof, to where the defendants are now responsible for proving their innocence, since wording like this makes it very hard to start from anything but a presumption of guilt, violating the allegedly sacred principle of *in dubio pro reo*.

Having briefly exposed the problems surrounding the right of passive suffrage, we will now focus on the operation of the electoral system as regulated by Organic Law 5/1985 of June 19 on the General Electoral System. It works through a system of electoral constituencies, linked under the Constitution (art. 68.2) to the various provinces. Each province has an initial minimum of two representatives (except Ceuta and Melilla, which have one each). The remaining representatives (there are a total of 350) are distributed among the provinces in relation to the size of their populations, in a supposedly proportional manner. This system of constituencies immediately presents certain contradictions between equal voting rights and equal voting power. For example, there are certain constituencies that are overrepresented (e.g. Soria, where one seat represents 46,796 inhabitants) and others that are underrepresented (as in the case of Madrid, where a single seat represents 173,762 inhabitants). The consequence of this arrangement is that a vote cast in one province may be worth up to four times a vote cast in another. It should be pointed out that the alleged justification for this distribution of constituencies by provinces is territorial representation, but in fact the principle of territorial representation is supposed to be handled by the Senate (art. 69.1 of the Constitution).

Having clarified the matter of geographical distribution, we can now explain the procedure by which seats are distributed in each electoral district based on the results of the ballot count: the d'Hondt law. This law provides for arranging from highest to lowest, in one column, the numbers of votes cast for each of the lists (discarding those which fail to obtain more than 3% of the votes and are thus automatically put out of the race for seats). Once they have been thus put in order, the number of votes obtained by each list is divided by 1, 2, 3, etc., up to the number of seats corresponding to each electoral district. The seats are then allocated to the candidates who have obtained the highest ratios in the table, following a decreasing order. To better explain this process, let's take a look at the example given in the Law itself, in article 163:

480,000 valid votes are cast in one electoral district, which elects eight representatives. Voting is divided between six party lists:

A (168,000 votes) B (104,000) C (72,000) D (64,000) E (40,000) F (32,000)

division 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

A 168,000 84,000 56,000 42,000 33,600 28,000 24,000 21,000

B 104,000 52,000 34,666 26,000 20,800 17,333 14,857 13,000

C 72,000 36,000 24,000 18,000 14,400 12,000 10,285 9,000

D 64,000 32,000 21,333 16,000 12,800 10,666 9,142 8,000

E 40,000 20,000 13,333 10,000 8,000 6,666 5,714 5,000

F 32,000 16,000 10,666 8,000 6,400 5,333 4,571 4,000

The first seat would be taken by party A, for having the highest number of votes (168,000 votes). After winning the seat, the next ratio is obtained by dividing by two and entering it into the second column. Thus, the second seat goes to party B, for having the next-highest number of votes (104,000). We then repeat the formula and divide that number by two to get the ratio assigned to the next party. The third seat goes once again to party A, because it has 84,000 votes, being the highest number of the quotients (above the 52,000 of party B and the 72,000 of party C, which has not yet obtained any representation, and has thus not been divided). The fourth seat then goes to party C, with its original vote count of 72,000, which is now the highest, but will have to be divided by two to obtain the next quotient. The result: party A gets four seats, party B gets two seats, and parties C and D get one seat each. But this distribution hardly corresponds to the actual percentage of votes obtained by each group: 35% for party A; 21.7% for B; 15% for

C; 13% for D; 8.3% for E; and 7% for F. Looking at this data it is clear that the majority parties are overrepresented to the detriment of the minority parties. And what is the official story used to justify this procedure? That it's a formula that allows the formation of majorities for smoother operation when forming a government, ensuring a certain amount of stability (or discretionary power?) within the executive branch, which would be harder to obtain if a government were to be formed with a broad coalition of parties.

With this brief overview of the electoral process we have tried to demonstrate the fallacy of the system of representation with which political power is sustained and legitimized. In so doing, we seek neither reform nor confrontation through democratic channels, as those channels themselves rest on principles of inequality and injustice, principles that are evident in their expression of a legal order imposed by authority, since there is no other possible way to sustain and legitimate this system besides obedience.

“Consider yourselves lucky, gentlemen, that your prejudices have taken root in the hearts of the people, for they are the best cops you've got. Knowing the powerlessness of the law – or rather, the powerlessness of force – you've made them the most robust of your protectors. But beware: all things must come to an end. What has been built by cunning and force can be destroyed by cunning and force.”

Alexandre Marius Jacob.

Tolerance, civility and democratic thought

Today more than ever, and especially in a democratic system, the old saying, that leaders ultimately have no more power than what is given them by public opinion, has particular relevance given that true power (in terms of numbers, capacity, and because it doesn't work to give orders if no one obeys) is in the hands of the governed, although they almost never really use it. It is for this reason that all forms of domination, of which the State is the most comprehensive – with democracy its most developed expression to date – must, in order to ensure their own survival, obtain the consent of those they dominate one way or another. The central role in “winning hearts and minds” is traditionally reserved for propaganda (“tell a lie once, and it's just a lie; tell it a thousand times and it becomes the truth,” said Goebbels, the infamous Nazi minister of propaganda).

In these times, under the system that currently subjugates us (or tries to), we suffer under a dictatorship of propaganda and image, imposed by what by now are classic structures of indoctrination (such as schooling and education systems, the family, workplace discipline, law, and the various sciences and medicine), by the mass media (business and propaganda at once), which by constantly bombarding us with values, morals, ideology, (mis)information, etc., constantly works to get us to take the side of the system. But, not content with having us take a position in their favor, domination seeks to make us participate in keeping our chains well-shined, and gives another turn of the screw added to the classic propaganda that all establishment structures use. Now it makes us faithful followers of its system, simultaneously driving forth and holding back our participation in it by creating a kind of democratic fanaticism, which in our globalized world has replaced all the old and near-obsolete patriotisms: citizenism.

With citizenism by means of the system's classic propaganda, a mentality is instilled that defends democracy – but not as a system, rather as a way of living in society; as a complex

of values that are considered respectable and desired by all. So, the good citizen, ensuring Order and the proper functioning of democracy, does not for example think that he or she is in fact upholding a system of relations based on subjugation and inequality (i.e., when a representative, senator or city councilman takes a chunk of our taxes and legislates all over our work, telling us what we can and can't do from some far-away office, or when a businessman exploits us for a handful of crumbs off the table). No, these good citizens simply think they are working to ensure a proper and harmonious coexistence for all. In other words, the guy on the corner can't just take a piss right there on the sidewalk, because it smells bad and is an uncivil thing to do; but the factories we are practically forced to work in just to get a wage we can survive on can go ahead and proudly dump the entire authorized amount of shit right into the rivers (likely that will be the amount above which they wouldn't be pretty to look at anymore, but generally it will just be however much the company wants to dump), and the infinite numbers of cars can go farting around the cities, grinding the ecosystem and our lungs to dust, and no one challenges it at all. If anything, we might file a democratic complaint with our local councilman, by filling out a pretty looking light-blue form (sometimes it might even be bilingual).

Civility, which comes with such coupled and duly "empowered" concepts as tolerance (tolerance of oppression, of course – but not of rebellion), and non-violence (the non-violence of discontents, that is, since no one complains about the existence of the Police, but at most will complain when some particular cop goes too far), is in fact an internalization mechanism for the system's propaganda, where people can get actively involved but only so long as the existing order is maintained, since an excess of political involvement can become dangerous, as it reflects something that domination fears: autonomous initiative (although it encourages that within certain parameters and to a certain extent: entrepreneurial initiatives, etc.)

Civic-minded individuals cease to be individuals and become citizens, regardless of their social status, how much they earn, where they live, etc.; though it just so happens that the higher people are on the social ladder the more "civic" they tend to be, and the more "social conscience" they develop (and whether that "conscience" isn't worth jack-shit or harmonizes perfectly with domination's designs doesn't really make much of a difference). The citizen is the paradigm of the new vassal, who collaborates in ensuring that everything will go smoothly, neutralizing with a police-like attitude (always trying to make sure everyone "gets along") any possible change to the Order of Things, or any rupture or dysfunction that might arise in "their" fine upstanding community.

Fundamentally, "citizens" are merely oversocialized beings, who defend the system tooth and nail out of the fear and insecurity it instills, terrified of their own possibilities and potential, terrified of taking charge of their own lives, anxiously in need of someone else to guide them, needing to have everything go the way it is supposed to, submitting utterly to artificiality. Citizens are fearful creatures, who abhor any explicit violence against this way of life because they do not dare exercise any themselves, and because they fear that another way of life might be possible; thus they end up becoming submissive followers of the subtle violence of the state (in fact good citizens will declaim against dictatorships, because with dictatorships the violence is more brutal and less camouflaged; their power is not disguised, but directly exercised, and that is their strength – whereas in democracies power is blurred so that it can be better and more comfortably exercised).

With the rise of citizenism, subversion has a new enemy. If before we had to fight the state, the laws, the police, capitalism, exploitation, the bosses; today with citizenism we are up against the

citizens themselves (sometimes literally and physically). Of course, this mechanism, serving the internalization of the propaganda system, this pseudo-participation in upholding Order, tends to crack in times of hardship when prospects don't look so bright anymore. And of course, even the most patriotic good citizen may start to reconsider things when they're looking at not being able to pay their bills at the end of the month. But most middle class people manage to retain their status, and generally it's the ones who've had a fall on the social ladder that get de-civilized (even though there are plenty "thankful bellies" and "boss's pets" out there, and they are often better at playing citizen than the big industrialists). In any case, if citizenism and propaganda both fail, there's always the glorious police force and their 100,000 brand-new rubber balls to keep right on spreading democracy.

Social control, the family and democracy

...The perceived autonomy of 'the political' in western societies is one of the key ideological dimensions of western modernity: we shouldn't see it as an objective fact, but as a way of depicting power relations that obscures their social foundations and the way they work in practice...

John Gledhill

It's not possible to analyze democracy without the full awareness that it is profoundly interwoven with a value system that reinforces the whole framework of domination. There is a moral legitimation for every power relationship, and a moral legitimation for power itself. There are ways of producing people who are willing to obey, trained to obey; people who never question and do whatever they're told. They are produced not in factories or workshops, but in modern families and schools, which finalize a socialization process that is based on submission, and the training of good, civic-minded, (self) silenced citizens.

If we take a closer look at any of the declarations of rights (again, not because we would concede them the slightest validity or legitimacy, but because we see them for what they are: more or less explicit manifestations of the ideas and intentions of Power), whether the Spanish Constitution, the European, or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we see that beyond their proclamations of rights within, say, the public sphere, such as political rights, or the right to private property (this one of course is the focus of just about all of the efforts of the State and its security forces), they also deal with rights that have exclusively to do with the domestic sphere. In other words, the State constructs, prescribes, and (de)limits not only political, but also economic and interpersonal rights. Included among human rights is the right to respect for one's privacy, marriage, and family life. The Spanish Constitution recognizes the right of all men and women to marry and create a family, and furthermore, in article 16.3, explicitly stipulates that "the family is the fundamental and natural elementary unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."

This point is key: changes in the definition of what is public and what is private – directly linked to changes in gender relations – can be based on considerations related to the needs of the State. The real reason for the legalization of gay marriage, for example, was on the one hand the need to contain a reality that was establishing itself outside of the normative prescriptions, and, secondly, to prevent the formation of realities where Democracy would have no influence,

and might thus be in some way threatened. It's about control, containing any "differences" within itself, and strengthening its image of inclusiveness and tolerance.

In most cases the State sees no immediate gain from the subjugation of interpersonal relationships, of women and children, or of families. Such acts make sense only in the context of a broader analysis of how power is constructed and consolidated: the well-ordered family serves as the foundation of the well-ordered State. And however much the boundaries between the domestic and the public spheres may fluctuate or shift, or however much what is legally and socially considered a "family" may vary, the fundamental concept remains. What's most important is that this natural and fundamental unit of society must remain just as natural and fundamental as it is, just as unquestionable, and just as productive of producers for State and Capital. Because in order to vindicate political power, the standard of reference must appear secure and stable, outside of all human constructs, simply part of the natural order of things. Thus the public/domestic binary system, the family, and the social process of gender relations are part of the very meaning of power. And thus to question or modify any aspect of them poses a threat to the entire system.

Either way, with the creation of the modern state via the French Revolution, there appeared the idea of education administered by the State for those cases where the family fails to do its job (certain people always end up coming out different, and there are always those strange families that don't quite fulfill the role assigned to them...). Until that time, education was reserved for the elites, and was administered by the Church. With the nationalization of church property in November 1789, education too was transferred to the State, and became a key tool of social control (in the same way as it was when it was in the hands of the Church, but in other directions). The primary objective of compulsory schooling was to form new men, republican citizens trained in the values of the new social order. Private education continued to exist for the elite, who formed the cadres of the new system of social organization. But all children were imbued with these new values and socialized to fit the new political ideas, and the new schooling even tried to integrate the various regions into a single national identity. The formation of the Liberal State was closely linked to the development of national education systems, as these legitimized and supported its deployment.

The role of school remains the same today. There is still private education for the elites – probably providing superior technical education, with greater depth and more specialization – and education for the masses, in the public schools. Whatever the case may be, school remains the funnel through which all children must pass; and of course, school also exists to provide parents a place to put their children while they're at work, a kind of cold storage warehouse provided so that the production of the system can continue uninterrupted and people can make ends meet. Options for education without schooling are severely limited, by economic needs on the one hand and by the State on the other, which imposes itself with heavy legal and social pressure and, above all, with the use of social workers. But it is also important to mention that alternatives do exist, and there are support networks among those who for whatever reason do not want their children to be subjected to schooling.

At school, children learn such vitally important things for their future lives as how to shut up when required to listen silently and not complain, how to obey the teacher and the group, and how to limit their impulses and needs. If anyone finds it even halfway logical to make a 6 year old child spend more than 5 hours every day sitting at a desk instead of running, playing and exploring their limits, either they don't remember what it was like to be a kid and have to go to school, or they're a clear example of oversocialization. It's true that it may be somewhat useful

to learn to read or write, and that doing so may be pleasurable; but there are a thousand ways of learning, and that argument hardly accounts for the fact that in school what you mostly learn is to obey and abide by the values of democracy, i.e., obedience, resignation, how to have interpersonal relationships based on competition, leadership, and submission, and the suppression of your own potential and impulses and their replacement by whatever is socially accepted and demanded.

And for children who don't manage to adjust to school, there's always Ritalin, a medication derived from amphetamines and administered quite often to hyperactive cases (i.e., kids who disturb the class because they won't sit still). This is of course the same treatment given to adults, who are given drugs like Prozac if we are depressed or anxious, and disturb those around us because we fail to appear happy and content...

Specialization

Specialization is basically a model for the organization of agents (human or otherwise) within the production chain, made responsible for a particular segment in a given product's production line. Inevitably, these kinds of production lines don't have to be purely material; they can also involve sectors within the world of ideas. Such is the case for research and dissemination, which make up the preliminary and future stages of the product itself.

Clearly the objective pursued through specialization is to optimize economic processes by the division of labor. The philosophy behind all this is that the more sharply delimited the element in which the division of labor is organized, the more accurate and polished the execution, and therefore the more profitable the product.

But this process is hardly foreign to social structures; much to the contrary, it feeds them and is developed by them in a feedback loop that has a major influence on society and its organization. Obviously, we live in an eminently economic (capitalist) system, where most of the rules are intended to ensure the appropriate framework for its development, and to adapt said social structures to the economic system. It follows that politics and the economic system are intrinsically linked. And that, not without the help from government, they provide the necessary substrate for the development of the global system and its corresponding morphology.

So here we return to one of the basic facts of the existence of this whole entanglement: specialization. Look around: people are all working and growing in highly specific sectors. We have seen an increase in specialists, because among other things new fields are being opened very quickly, due mostly to the growth of technology. And so we see a new feedback loop: technology-specialization.

The development of technology is obviously accelerating. It is well known to all of us who live in this system that technological advancement is now occurring at a rapid pace; this excessive growth in technology can be explained by the growth (at similar rates) of specialized techniques. Such growth means the generation of new fields that have to be researched by new specialists, who in turn, thanks to their very specific expertise, manage to delve even deeper into their specialisms, generating even more specialized techniques that can be exploited by technological processes and made available on the capitalist market.

We've already discussed the way this relates to social structures and politics: economic needs drive the political system to legislate in a manner favorable to the formation of the proper substrate for its development. And, completing this bijection, the political system feeds off capitalism

in order to maintain such a social order as will ensure that the state of things will generally remain as they are, since that's the best guarantee of the continued power supremacy of that social stratum.

We are in a system where each of us handles only a very specific part of the productive fabric. And as that specialization increases it creates significant dependence, because without the contribution of so many specialists, we wouldn't be able to access all those products whose the urgent necessity is instilled in us by the marketing system. And people become more and more isolated, in order to dedicate vast amounts of their energy and vital resources to that little space in the wheel of production they've found a spot in; and at the same time they become more dependent, because they don't share all that time, effort and learning. This gives rise to social structures with a high degree of specialization/dependence everywhere within the system, thus creating the need for ruling classes, specialists in governing. They are the sediment specialization leaves on the democratic mentality, a mentality that would fall apart if no one were specialized in steering it. That sediment creates the need for comfort, blind faith, etc. – after all, specialization legitimates buck-passing. And that amputates, dismembers and dissects us as persons, making us useless as individuals, and our uselessness empowers a system that feeds off all that specialization/buck-passing/dependence, so as to get even fatter and advance with ever more strength and supremacy.

That's why we need self-management to oppose all this. A broad knowledge of the surrounding world is vitally necessary in order to make interconnections and conjectures about our specific specialisms based on that broad knowledge, rather than just looking from one specialism to another, which greatly limits our perspective and irreparably limits us as free beings. We know it's impossible to fathom the totality, or even the generality, but we want no part of the exclusive. Because we are far more than they condition us to be. Because life doesn't just boil down to helping to advance some entity called The System That Must Be Served. Because only by being aware of our natural limits can we break the ones that are artificially imposed by the capitalist democracy used by governments to stay in power for years and years.

If only we were able to put an end to the specialization and fragmentation as individuals all that entails... If only we were able to rise up against the established order, which reduces us to specific fields of inquiry, and keeps us from expanding our arms, our lungs and our minds... If we were capable of that... we'd start to notice all the things they haven't let us be. Then we'd be able to go forth in freedom and peace – until then, until we make it, we have to struggle.

The hidden faces of democracy

Every system of domination is set up to benefit those who are in power, so the way political life is organized will be limited to their terms, and it will try at all costs to structure the operation of the social system based on their interests; in other words, the primary objective of political life is above all to make the system beneficial for those in charge, both politically (by the effective imposition of their authority) and economically (control of resources, dependence of the population on the system's influence), seeking to increase their power and influence and sustain the system over time. Capitalism exists to make profit for the economic elites who run it, and the economic system under capitalism is organized to obtain the greatest benefit for those who have the most already, the big businessmen, because considering how the context of economic decisionmak-

ing is structured that's what's best for all the markets involved. The political system, democracy (that is, government by demagogues), is set up to control the population while maintaining and expanding its model of domination through democratic channels (when they even bother to lie) for the benefit of the bosses of politics – the professional demagogues. Their intention is to get people to do what they say, to get their orders followed; they want to make both the government regime and so-called “social discourse” to be structured on the basis of terms they decide, so that “politics” is done their way.

A distinction can thus be made between two power elites with complementary interests, one political and the other economic. Given a certain set of historical conditions, today the States with the greatest economic power are democracies, so the democratic system has proved the most favorable to the capitalistic development model, because it conducts its legislative activities based on the needs of business and facilitates the legitimation of the economic order, considering profit at the cost of exploiting your peers and nature not as one of the vilest crimes someone can commit, but as a right that only a select few out of many can access.

Operation of the economic system

Since the introduction of capitalism as an economic system and development model on the global level, the progress of the various States (the level of their development and competition with other potential powers...) has been guided by the need to bring in the greatest possible profits to strengthen their own economies. The greater the circulation of capital within a given nation, the higher the levels of power it achieves in the great economy of the global market. The logic that governs the development of a State is steady economic growth, i.e., where the goods and financial transactions that circulate or are conducted within its borders go up in value, whether or not they actually stay the same the whole time (housing, food, transportation, income, wages, loans...), responds to the suicidal dynamic of the capitalist model, where the most important thing is to get the greatest economic output from the objects being exploited, to produce the greatest amount possible, and to sell as much and as profitably as possible.

Banks, corporations, and governments are the protagonists in this power game; they each have their own specific constraints, and acknowledge no ethics other than the competitive market; they seek only to expand their influence as much as possible and extract the most profit possible from whatever they touch.

One example is the sale of arms and military resources. The only ones who never lose the wars are those who produce and sell what it takes to wage them.

Such respectable Spanish companies as Hispasat (which isn't only in TV and telephone service), Indra (under the euphemism of “new technologies and supplies”), IberEspacio, RYMSA, and CESCE (an insurance company that makes arms exports possible by guaranteeing payments, including them in the external debt of the buying country) dominate that business; they have an international presence, financed by the major banks and savings institutions (BBVA, Caja Madrid, BSCH, Barclays, Caja Castilla la Mancha, BBK, Caja San Fernando, Ibercaja, Banesto, Banco Sabadell, Banco Pastor, Deutsche Bank). They also get state support in the form of investments in R&D, among other more blatant contributions, such as direct inclusion in military budgets, since they share the same expansionist interests. But today's wars have more to do with the economic context, with the possession and exploitation of natural resources, than they do with territorial logic and the invasion of neighboring nations.

The rulers of the world find it quite convenient to support this controversial industry, that is, to collaborate in the production and sale of as many weapons as possible, even if they may fall into the hands of potential enemies – thus closing the circle so wars can continue to be generated indefinitely.

This business sector has never had to face a crisis. It's always profitable to invest in wars, destruction and death, especially when you have on your side the greatest military power that has ever existed (USA, NATO ...); some manufacture the weapons and others buy them – they keep putting in the coins and the machine keeps giving out the prizes. Not to mention that the companies that sponsored the massacres later get the contract to rebuild what the conflict destroyed, making war even more profitable and reinforcing the market system. To do this, the states and global organizations themselves grant them “special rights” to exploit people and resources in the region, contracts to rebuild industries, and other concessions to help them hoard more capital and democratize the infidels once the region has basically been rebuilt.

Another example is the limitless exploitation of natural resources, to try and get as much profit as possible out of the environment, whatever the impact, in keeping with the market logic that seeks only continual and unlimited growth regardless of consequences: i.e., the destruction of whole ecosystems and the depletion of resources to meet the raw materials needs of the various industries.

Or the unstoppable construction of power plants (petroleum, thermal, nuclear, hydroelectric, hydraulic fracturing ...) to satisfy the growing demands of incessant industry and seek an escape from the threatened energy crisis caused by the limitless use of oil to fuel industrial production, and the maintenance of the current economic model of infinite consumption, producing things only to use them up producing more, producing things to be bought, used and thrown away, in order to need to produce more to be able to buy more...

The rule of the market, protected by the laws of States (which support it and on which it is based), has usurped control over so-called “natural resources,” resources that in fact are the planet itself, and should be available to everyone. And it takes control over them in order to sell them at ever increasing prices to those who do not have them and are dependent on them.

These resources are mainly located in countries with destroyed economies (South America, Central America, Africa and Asia), impoverished during the development process of western markets, even though they are the ones that produce the most raw materials for the developed economies. The dynamic of the market is predatory; though it is obvious that energy resources are being exhausted, the energy industry for instance continues to increase production year after year – indeed, it is one of the industries that most devastates the natural environment to supply itself, modifying whole riverbeds (drying up entire regions that were once naturally irrigated), permanently emitting polluting gases (production never stops), and putting entire populations at risk from potentially irreversible accidents ... Active in this sector are companies such as Iberdrola, which manages various nuclear and thermal power plants throughout the nation, as well as being involved in the production and sale of natural gas, and has a presence in over 28 countries. It is controlled by the construction firm ACS (which is in turn controlled by Corporacion Financiera Alba), and its shareholders with voting rights, including BBK bank. Repsol YPF, meanwhile, is involved in the extraction, refining, transportation and sale of oil and gas. Its controlling company and primary shareholder is the very versatile construction company (roads, housing, government buildings...) Sacyr Vallehermoso (an affiliate of SCH bank), followed by La Caixa. This company is present in 30 countries and is considered one of the oil corporations with the

greatest international weight; it is also the largest private energy company in South America. It is one of the companies most responsible for the destruction of the Amazon – one of the most common causes of which is leaks in its pipelines – but it's also done plenty to contaminate the water and expel indigenous people from their lands in Peru, and to invade protected areas under government protection. Another of these companies is Endesa, which does business in electric power, telecommunications and new technologies – it is controlled by ENEL (an Italian company) and operates in 10 other countries. They are to blame for much of the destruction of the Chilean Patagonia. Then there's Gas Natural Fenosa, (owned by Repsol and La Caixa), which is involved in the gas and electricity business and has made plenty little faux-pas of the same type in Central and South America. This system puts the fate of the planet's resources in the hands of such "responsible" companies as these, with "ethical values" that include grabbing all they can and profiting off it. Each year industry pollutes more, since every year it produces more – what is really intended by such ecological measures as the Kyoto protocol is to allow them to continue polluting more and more, but just at a slower pace. Their real interest lies in ensuring the continued growth of big business, rather than preserving such conditions as might ensure the continued habitability of the planet (Greenpeace, Green Party... all invest in the stock market). Capitalism is unsustainable in every way.

Medicine, food, houses, clothes, entertainment, drugs, labor, sweatshop conditions... If there's money to be made, anything goes. All's fair in business, and every market has its context. The functioning of modern societies requires that everything be made into a business, that everything be recovered and absorbed into the market; everything has to be made into a commodity, so that it can generate value according to the terms imposed – a game where the winners are always the ones who have the most power and crush the weak.

Shared interests of the power elites

Governments, for their part, aside from ensuring their own interests, are also allied with other systems of domination in this context – the economic – guaranteeing their preeminence and ensuring mutual business profitability for themselves and their partners. It's only natural that what makes a state powerful is the movement of private capital established within its territory, since international competition is measured in such terms (aside from military power, allies, etc.) as can estimate the profitability of some particular model of government or other. This shows for whom the government really governs, and how the laws it imposes favor the various power elites (not just the economic) to which the rulers themselves belong, offering those who collaborate with them the ability to operate under the protection of the law, since they're the ones who make it.

Here on the Iberian peninsula there was an economic boom between 1970 and 1980 when the country was opened up to new markets after the dictatorship; there were more jobs, but at the same time workers' movements were regaining their strength throughout the nation, thus endangering big capital. Seeing the threat of adverse effects from the situation, it acquiesced to the welfare state, a formula used in the developed economies of Europe to achieve what is referred to as Social Peace. They had to make workers believe that they too were getting a share in the profits produced by the economic system, instead of seeking means of redress more harmful to the markets such as revolution. To do this, in their efforts to gain political influence, the unions sold out all the workers' demands, even the most "revolutionary," in exchange for social bene-

fits guaranteed by the state such as Social Security, pensions, unemployment insurance, social welfare schemes, etc. The great magnates thus were obliged to distribute a negligible fraction of their profits, in order to keep the workers from rebelling. In this way they managed to secure the consumer society by raising wages and giving a greater role to the unions, as the official conflict mediators, and making consumer goods previously only available to privileged minorities more accessible (such as new technologies, trips to the Caribbean, expensive cars, etc.).

As the 1990s approached, the working masses were more and more utterly domesticated, and the threat of labor conflicts faded. With all the terror generated by rising unemployment rates (the result of the decline from that previous period of prosperity, where the markets hit their peak), and their solidarity networks destroyed (replaced by the state), workers started to see their fellow workers as competitors in the labor market, and their goal became simply to keep their jobs, even at the cost of their dignity. After being sold out by the unions, the working class was divided and democratized. Thus began the era of neoliberalism (globalization, offshoring of industry, interdependence of capital, new technologies, etc.): the government no longer saw any reason to continue assuming the wasteful expenses of the welfare state – the workers no longer posed a threat, as the unions were playing their role quite well – and so “austerity” policies gradually began to be introduced (with cuts to health services, pensions, education, etc.). Year after year the various reforms in the labor market have followed a dynamic of reducing these concessions to the population for the benefit of big business (temp work, oppressive labor contracts, less job offers and more demand for jobs, making it cheaper to get workers, etc.), making the conditions of their exploitation ever more burdensome and reducing what once were called rights fought for and won.

The functioning of the capitalist model periodically goes through stages of crisis, in accordance with the various economic cycles: The Great Depression of 1929, the first oil crisis (1973-75), the second oil crisis (1980-82), the 1997 Asian Crisis, the Internet crisis of 2001 (the dot-com bubble), the Financial Crisis of 2008 (generated by the housing bubble and the mortgage collapse) – all caused because things themselves don't count, but only the value given them by the market. The market tends to become saturated, since everyone wants to produce as much as possible in order to sell as much as possible, until there comes a time when people can't buy any more and the markets take a plunge, dragging down whole economies due to their interdependence. While waiting for new markets to expand into and exhaust again, the recourse most often taken to get out of these crises is war, since wars rebuild markets. And as the system goes through the successive stages of boom, overproduction, crisis, stagnation and recovery until everything that can be sold has been consumed, recourse is progressively taken to privatization, budget cuts, reduction of employee dismissal costs, the offshoring of industries (to countries where operating conditions are more optimal for business), and other neoliberal policies.

The operation of this competitive economic model leads to the exhaustion of all existing resources; it can't afford to start reducing production in any industry in order to stop destroying the planet at an ever faster rate (in spite of surpluses and cost overruns) since that would run contrary to the dynamics of its functioning, and would likewise cause a drop in the Stock Market, which would then have to recover, in order to win back investors' trust by exhausting some new resource. Remember: you can't eat money, its value is imaginary, and it is not a resource given equally to all people since most fortunes are inherited or otherwise stolen – so the fact that the fate of humanity is being decided based on money and that it is an object of such intense desire is quite worrisome.

Based on the growth of the various economic cycles at play in the economy, the government decides on the economic policies that the whole population will have to undergo, in keeping with the speculative values handled on the Stock Market, those little numbers that scroll past at the bottom of the screen during the news that we common mortals have no ability to influence but nevertheless mark out our fate. The economic or employment policies that end up imposed on us are determined based on the profit or loss of the most influential companies, as shown in the IBEX 35, the primary reference index for the Spanish stock market, consisting of the 35 most powerful companies in the nation; as of April 2011 these businesses are as follows:

Abengoa, Arcelor Mittal, Abertis, Grupo ACS, Acerinox, Acciona, S Amadeus, BBVA, Bankinter, Bolsas y Mercados Españoles Criteria CaixaCorp Endesa Ebro Foods Enagás, FCC, Grupo Ferrovial, Gamesa, Gas Natural, Grifols, International Airlines Group, Iberdrola, Iberdrola Renovables, Indra, Inditex, Corporación MAPFRE, Obrascón Huarte Lain, Banco Popular, Red Eléctrica de España, Repsol, Banco de Sabadell, SCH Banco Santander Central Hispano, Sacyr Vallehermoso, Telefónica, Técnicas Reunidas and Tele5 Mediaset España Comunicación.

Government policies benefit the market, but what benefit do the various political groups draw from this relationship? The banks give out major loans to political parties to finance their election campaigns, and then forgive their debt; it is estimated that between all the parties in parliament there are about 144 million euros owed to the banks, and nevertheless, every time there's an election they keep getting new loans – why would the banks so blatantly support the political parties if in theory they're only interested in making money? The reason is that they can thus obtain greater influence in the decisions imposed by the politicians; most of the reforms put forth by the politicians benefit big capital, such as the most recent labor reform (2011), the reduction of employee dismissal costs, the new pension plan, the retirement age being increasingly moved back, new conditions for collective bargaining, the bailout of 2009 to revive the economy, with all those 30 billion euros given to the banks that they then just kept (and hardly revived the economy or anything), and other kinds of concessions, i.e., all those times they looked the other way...

The government gives them permission to enrich themselves at our expense and they in turn benefit the government. Indeed, they even have special regulatory categories made available to them like SIVAC (Variable Capital Investment Company), which offer big tax advantages to big capital, major corporate business types (who have never done a day of real work in their lives), where they pay less taxes since they move more money, thus allowing them to float more capital and grow the economy.

Another benefit they get from this arrangement is the presence in the corporate world of influential politicians, who get jobs as “advisors” with major companies, and don't even need to have the slightest idea about the things they're supposed to be advising on. These positions are rewards (with guaranteed million-dollar salaries just for filling the position, no need to do any actual work) given as payment for favors done during their time in the political system:

Felipe González at Gas Natural Fenosa,
José María Aznar at Endesa,
Manuel Marin at Iberdrola,
Virgilio Zapatero at Caja Madrid,
Eduardo Zaplana at Telefónica,
Luis Atienza at Red Eléctrica,
Rodolfo Martín Villa at Sogecable,

Braulio Medel at Unicaja and Iberdrola,
Javier de Paz at Telefonica and Mercasa,
Pio Cabanillas at Acciona,
Rodrigo Rato at Caja Madrid (Bankia),
Narcis Serra at Caixa Catalunya,
Jose Antonio Ardanza at Euskaltel,
Rafael Arias Salgado at Carrefour,
Joan Pique at Vueling,
Josu Jon Imaz at Petronor,
Miguel Barroso at La Sexta...

Some examples of the faces that hide behind big capital

The March family: This family clan got its riches from smuggling, the tobacco monopoly, and financing the Franco uprising (lucky for them the fascists won). Banca March is the family's private bank, one of the country's leading banking groups, which controls 34% of the shares of Corporacion Financiera Alba, and is involved as a major shareholder in many companies with a lot of pull in the markets (not just the national ones) like Acerinox, Prosegur, Indra, Carrefour or the ACS group, which invests in different economic sectors through other companies such as Abertis (highways and infrastructure), Hochtief (construction), and Iberdrola (energy), and owns plenty other spin-off companies (Dragados, Urbaser, Clece, Continental Auto, etc.), while also holding controlling interests in companies involved in the mass media, like the PRISA Group (in Spain) and the HAVAS Group (internationally).

The Santander Central Hispano Group (SCH): Since 1909, the Santander bank has been run by members of the Botín family [a name which, incidentally, translates to "plunder" -tr.] which in 1986 bought Bankinter, thus increasing their influence in the international markets. Later, after the Mario Conde scandal (at Banesto, where he was convicted of embezzling the bank's money), the Bank of Spain, which at the time was chaired by Luis Angel Rojo, ordered an audit of Banesto to sell it at public auction; that bank ended up owned by Santander after it got a loan from the self-same Bank of Spain for a bigger amount than it paid for Banesto – in other words, it was given to them for free. In 2005, as a reward for his favors, Luis Angel Rojo (after his time in office at the Bank of Spain) was given an appointment as the independent external advisor for Banco Santander (charging quite a chunk of change) without even being a shareholder in the group, which is supposed to be a requirement for getting appointed to that office – the same happened when he was given the position of advisor to Corporación Financiera Alba. He died in 2011, at long last... With the acquisition of Banesto, Banco Santander became a shareholder in Antena 3 TV station, which ended up controlled by the Planeta Group (thanks to financial support from La Caixa and Santander). In 1999, Santander merged with Central Hispano to form SCH, thus gaining control of a large number of banks, corporations, and mass media operations on the international level. In 2004, members of SCH's board of directors were external advisors at all kinds of corporations:

Union Fenosa, CEPSA, FAES Farma (do you remember the hoax perpetrated during the "swine flu" epidemic of 2009 in order to sell more drugs?), Inmobiliaria Urbis, Pescanova, IBM, Cortefiel, Indra (weapons), Corporación Financiera Alba, Campofrio, Mutua Madrileña Automobile, Telepizza, Grupo Televisa (the biggest television group in South America), Auna, SICAV, M & B Capital Advisers, Group Masaveu, Inditex, Grupo Matutes, Legal & General Group, Pearson Group, Glas Cymru, British Land, San Paolo IMI, Assicurazioni Generali and Shinsei Bank ...

The man that runs this monstrous economic apparatus is Emilio Botín, whose family members are scattered throughout tons of boards of directors; this abomination has influence in over a dozen countries (especially in South America). Botín and SCH's board of directors have often had charges brought against them in court, both at the Supreme Court (the trial wasn't even held), and the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (for tax offenses), but all their cases have simply been dismissed; they remain unpunished – could this perhaps have something to do with their high position in society, since SCH is one of the banks with the most weight in the international markets?

The PRISA Group: notably connected to SCH, its largest shareholder is currently the American corporation Liberty Acquisition Holdings (owners of the Fox channel in Spain and of major sports companies, and also involved in oil, real estate, corporate business... real sharks, veterans of the US stock markets), the Polanco family is the second-biggest owner of its stock. Executives from various banks have sat on PRISA's board of directors, such as Juan Luis Cebrian (Bankinter), Isabel Polanco Moreno (Banesto and SCH), Gregorio Marañón y Beltran de Lis (SCH), the Del Pino family (Banesto and SCH), though the presence of SCH has generally been predominant. In 2004 the main links between the PRISA and SCH boards of directors were:

Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA): The BBV was founded thanks to funding from the leading Basque economic oligarchy, the Neguri group of families (Ybarra, Zubiría, Muguruza, Lipperheide, Delclaux...), a business clan controlled by the most powerful families in the industrial landscape. In 1988 it merged with Argentaria bank, which quickly became aware of the scams being run in the accounts of BBV, and finally the President of Argentaria, Francisco González, who had shared the presidency of BBVA with Emilio Ybarra (from BBV), ended up all alone as president of the bank. But it wasn't like Ybarra had to go on unemployment or anything; he became chairman of Vocento group (also controlled by that same bank).

BBVA has a lot of weight internationally and is the main shareholder of Telefonica, which is another of the primary investors in the arms industry; it is even under close supervision now for non-compliance with European treaties on arms sales (sales are fine, but you can't go over their heads, since that hurts the markets). It controls the second biggest bank in Colombia and the biggest in Mexico, taking advantage of the permanent economic crisis in those countries, and was responsible among others for Argentina's rampant capital outflow and its infamous "corralito," which froze up the money in that country's banks. It was also investigated by the FBI for its links with drug traffickers (money laundering through the acquisition of Banco Ganadero, held by South American drug profiteers, who couldn't explain where they got all the money they had), by the Spanish Audiencia Nacional, and by the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (even though it's fairly typical behavior for banks, after all). It is well known that they have tax havens spread across 13 countries with tax policies more favorable to their interests, using different companies. The main shareholder of BBVA is Manuel Jove, a founding member of FADESA Inmobiliaria, which is involved among other things in the construction of tourist resorts in Morocco, was responsible for the largest suspension of payments to its workers in the history of the Spanish economy, and has also been accused of money laundering (who doesn't like getting a little more profit than they were supposed to get, after all?).

Vocento: Controls various different mass media: ABC, Inversión, El Correo, Qué!, Diario Vasco, El Diario Montañés, Diario La Verdad, Ideal, HOY, SUR, Diario la Rioja, La Voz, El Norte de Castilla, El Comercio, Finanzas.com, Colpisa, 10, alava7, teledonosti, bilbovisión, tve, Punto Radio... Together, PRISA and Vocento control over 50% of the mass media in the country; the latter

is controlled by BBVA, through the Ybarra family. Vocento and PRISA both have net operating losses of millions of dollars, so they need to partner with other companies and banks to continue operating as businesses; even though they're not profitable in terms of revenue, they are very productive when it comes to generating another type of commodity: public opinion. That's why they have come to be controlled by the leading business groups, which do not allow the broadcasting of any information that might be potentially damaging to them (so no one can speak ill of them or their friends); their interest in the mass media lies in its ability to form public opinion (market-compliant democratic values) and to convey advertisements, and they fund it more or less based on how much they sell.

In most cases, corporations function as enormous machines where the bosses are no more than interchangeable parts that can be replaced if they fail to perform. For this reason it would seem out of the ordinary that they are often owned by families...

People should know these things, but a lot of the information is entirely obscured since a company can be controlled with less than even 5% of its shares, and ownership of under 5% doesn't have to be reported to the stock market. There are also plenty intermediary and partner companies that sit on boards of directors, or are part of different companies operating under different names and indirectly controlled by large corporations.

Conclusion

Since the global economic order is rooted in the capitalistic competitive market, the development of modern societies is based on unlimited profit, where everyone is out to take advantage of everyone else and profit-seeking is considered a socially acceptable value, even though it promotes exploitation and inequality. If we want to achieve change in that sense, we have to overcome that mentality, attacking not only the economic elites who benefit from this capitalist system, but also the consumer society that feeds it and the unidirectional development model it imposes.

In this life they have imposed on us, they'd like to have us believe that in order for things to go smoothly, for things to improve for us – for a few of us to be saved! (it is calculated that 80% of the world population goes hungry) – it is necessary for us to take on debt, take out mortgages, work for them, and buy all kinds of things from them; this is what we've been told since we were small is called "quality of life." And so with our limited aspirations we go on keeping the machine running; they've conned us into believing that the same rules apply to everyone in this game, but that's a lie because some have more than others do, and thus more power and impunity. Does anyone really believe that people make those kinds of fortunes by actually working? Isn't it more likely that in business you have to be "fortunate"? Regardless, people still accept this system, where the governed and exploited always lose.

They can keep their markets and their little numbers! Nobody needs a million complex systems, bringing various markets into relation with one another based on incomprehensible economic flows and the interests of abstract entities such as corporations and banks, in order to live. The world does not belong to them just because they tell us so. We can organize, and stop being dependent on their influence – although they now arrogate resources to themselves with the protection of the law, we can take them back because we are the ones who really need them, and nothing, not even the law, can justify that some don't have enough while others hoard and dominate. Life must be organized by the living, not by nonliving things like the stock market or

money. We can associate with one another, among equals, without depending on the impositions of others, and not even the law can stop that.

We can change our way of life, and go back to being human beings, rather than alienated entities living on the crumbs of the market; we know we can make whatever we need because we are the ones who make it now – all the work we do for Capital can be done instead for liberation. What do we really need? Of course, we need houses, food, clothing... but we don't need to pay for them. How can we live without money? Although it sounds crazy because they have made us believe that it is essential for life, our relationship with the world doesn't need to be organized by money; we can act on the basis of our true needs, rather than always scrambling to have more and more, and playing their game. Money is hardly what keeps us rational and prevents us from going around killing each other like crazy – quite the contrary; the fact that society is structured on the basis of property ownership is what generates competition and conflict situations; values such as cooperation, solidarity and mutual aid that have nothing to do with how the world is governed can nevertheless shape our lives and our relationships – and we can have a world where everyone is equal, where it would be impossible for anyone to impose on anyone else (since everyone would tell them to fuck off), where we would all help each other instead of stepping on each other's backs to climb the social ladder. There's no real reason for us to continue this suicidal life-dynamic, where we burn through our days in imposed cycles (work-idleness-sleep); we can create real alternatives to this situation, different self-managed projects that actively seek to collaborate with one another, so that we never have to use their filthy money or enter their dark temples of the commodity.

We wouldn't give a damn if all the markets crashed and ground to a halt – we don't need them to live; we'd have our own resources and we'd be the ones who'd be managing them, as decided amongst equals, without leaders, on the basis of what would best serve the interests of all, and not just the interests of those who happen at the time to be the most well-off.

Alternative democracies

1. the source of the fallacy.

The term “democracy” has over the last century acquired a meaning beyond its etymology or origin, which for the broad social base of western societies associates it with a political system considered morally positive, a representative system expressing the popular interest, and – as a political system that aspires to be the only system in the world, shared by the entire planet – as a universal system. The modern origins of this concept, and of its extension to all forms of the State and alternative opposition currents, are to be found in the political, economic and military hegemony of the United States, a State whose ideological basis is located precisely in a democratic revolution against the monarchical Old Regime (its War of Independence). This representative system, which together with the Napoleonic state configured the political and military structure of modern states, came to acquire an industrialist and liberal economic character after the American Civil War. Already in 1917 the American President Wilson addressed a congress of Detroit salesmen, saying that the United States' “democracy of business” had to lead a “struggle for the peaceful conquest of the world.”

Today the system of democratic values and ideology, the parliamentary state structure, and the industrial economy are spread throughout the globe; it is the prevailing government system

in most of the world's countries, with a few exceptions in the process of being converted into a military.

But democratic ideology is not just present behind the values that prop up States; It has leaked out into the entire social body and has come to be seen as well as the opposition, counterposition, or alternative to the current model.

After the Second World War and the US victory, which implied the end of European political-ideological systems, the liberal parliamentarianisms of the US and its ally (or satellite) nations started calling themselves The "Democracies" Of The "Free World." In turn, in light of this linguistic imposition – granting superior moral value to the capitalist political system – the nations of the "real socialist" state economic centralization bloc under the guardianship of Russia, antagonistic of course to the other bloc, also named themselves variously as "democratic republics." Even peripheral states, whose political systems could not even with all the make-up in the world disguise themselves as representative parliamentary systems, termed themselves "organic democracies."

This demagogic usage of the term democracy also ended up adopted by reformist thinkers and protest movements, which, particularly after the fall of the Berlin wall, were leaving behind the old revolutionary terms, aspirations and practices and, encouraged by the availability of speedy new propaganda tools (with the popularization of radio, film and television, low cost newspaper production), all rushing to conquer public opinion.

Activities to build consciousness and rational thinking among excluded social classes – a fundamental pillar of classical revolutionary activity from socialism to any of the humanist social emancipation currents – conducted by means of atheneums, social centers, libraries, free schools, workers' schools, cultural revolutions, etc. – aimed at creating a rich, full humanity able to emancipate itself and build a new society capable of total, free self-management (the only real substance the term "democracy" could possibly have), are now replaced by propaganda strategies that seek organizational commitment based on some kind of alternative or innovative concept of democracy, and underneath it all are always only about pushing for minor reforms within the Welfare State, if not the strengthening of the system of domination itself. And of course, they too have to make their own use of the word "democracy," as the only guarantee of acceptance in a media-dominated, consumerist society, deprived of culture and anchored in the consensus of a "social class" whose primary interest is now well-being, stability and security, both economically and psychologically.

In any case, for large sections of the population the term "democracy" always evokes an abstract aspiration to social justice and equity, a catchy slogan, which is successful almost every time at disguising the controlling nature of those who seek to govern.

2. New definitions from the Power structure.

The new parliamentary left, much given to political intrigues within the legalistic context in view of achieving higher levels of political power, seeks, like its opposition in the government, to cast and recast the term "democracy" to find the formula that best suits the popular mindset of the moment. Such is the case of the "anti-globalization" movement, and its prescriptions for the reform of democracy like the Tobin tax (named after the economist James Tobin from Princeton University in 1971), promoted by international pressure groups like Attac (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Citizen Action) that push for the regulation of financial transactions in order to slow economic globalization, maintain the national sovereignty of states, and reform institutions based on civil law and a more participatory democracy, without ever

challenging the capitalist production system and the State themselves. Its promoters, most of whom are well-known economists and policy makers, NGOs such as Oxfam (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), and members of the legal and academic system, work to support state power and technological power, with them as the technical managers.

This political trend that garnered so much attention at the anti-globalization summits in the late 90s, and was hyped by the media in order to conceal the confrontational, autonomous anti-capitalist movements that were emerging at the time, is now back again among the promoters of citizenist movements like 15M/Occupy Wall Street, for example through the citizenist platform Real Democracy Now. They petition the State for electoral reforms to benefit smaller political parties, and propose worn-out nonsense like “e-democracy” or “cyberdemocracy,” where citizens would be permanently in contact with politics through social networks, facilitating their participation in the institutions (and in turn putting political power in constant contact with each citizen). Social problems would be solved by enhanced telematic social control, through proposals like “smart” cities (that’s the marketing term) under universal video surveillance, and alternative energy systems in the hands of innovative private companies; in the acceptance of the law as a personal morality and ethics by propagating the ideology of citizenism; a “democratization” of the police forces that would both prevent physical abuse and ensure the effective enforcement of the law; and the total pacification of conflicts through mediation and delegation to a corps of social services professionals.

Another face of anti-globalization, or rather another proposal for an alternative democracy within the alter-globalist movement, is less related to the big economists and legal thinkers, and has the backing of major NGOs, religious charities and international institutions for the defense of human rights. Its main ambassador is the intellectual and well-positioned Hindu figure Vandana Shiva, who has roots in Western academia, and is a firm advocate of a mix between technology, science and environmentalism. This “alternative,” given plenty recognition by the international political establishment through the Nobel Prize and various awards from the United Nations, proposes, under the banner of “earth democracy” or “ecological democracy” (among other confusing terms), a return to economic localization, gender-related changes in political institutions in favor of women, and inclusive multicultural legislation, more stringent environmental laws under the supervision of NGOs, and national sovereignty based on regulated organic farming in contrast to the international markets and agribusiness corporations, and is particularly against the genetically engineered agriculture pushed by private corporations, without denying a positive value to biotechnology itself, as long as it is in the hands of independent scientists with altruistic values. She is an advocate of “ecofeminism,” a term created in the 70s that sees inherent democratic and ecologist attributes in women, and proposes institutions run by women as a guarantee of democracy, thus establishing in place of the patriarchy – the sole cause, according to these theories, of the evils of capitalism – a new matriarchy, which would ensure management based on justice and social welfare (since the values of care and reproduction that they associate with women, and that capitalism would take on when directed by this new social class, are already in a power struggle with the old patriarchal order of the traditional financial bourgeoisie).

At all times she defends what she calls “economic democracy,” i.e., a capitalist economic production system, but a local one, based on small farmers and cooperatives, and the strengthening of a supranational institution in charge of ensuring democratic legislation and thus guaranteeing

world peace and stability, proposing that the UN further develop its mechanisms of control and be no longer limited by the veto of the dominant countries.

This current has gained momentum in the World Social Forums, attracting much of the extra-parliamentary left, environmental and social-welfare associations and NGOs, and sectors of small-plot farmers or cooperative farm workers, as well as sectors within academia and public aid milieus who are dependent on state subsidies and are constantly fighting with governments about how those funds are managed.

On the other side of things, from sectors that currently hold political power, we have recently been hearing some new, “social democratic” proposals. Their alternatives for the achievement of what they call “true democracy,” which has still not yet been achieved (alternatives that are obviously located within a progressive and developmentalist ideology), would also come from new capitalist socio-economic models.

This system, which has been defined as a “mixed system,” contains elements of Marxist economic theory and the practice of real socialism in the Soviet Union, mixed with liberal capitalist ideology. This trend, which since the 50s has been known as the “third way,” or in Spain since the XXXV Federal Congress of the PSOE as the “new way,” is advocated by high political and economic spheres, and its main popularizers have included heads of state such as Tony Blair (UK), Bill Clinton (USA), Lula da Silva (Brazil), Michele Bachelet (Chile), Gerhard Schröder (Germany), and Zapatero (Spain)... With its proposals to move towards a limitless, deregulated, free and decentralized market, supported by planned and centralized state policies, they argue that States can effectively guarantee social welfare, since with their policies wealth (their concept of wealth, that is, i.e., greater comfort and consumption capacity) will soon overflow and be attained by all levels of society. Their proposed alternative to the current model is based on the observation that the economic system is now globalized and beyond the control of States – they see this as the cause of social inequalities. They are strong advocates of supranational institutions like a European Central Government, and the investment of public funds in developmentalist mega-infrastructure, which is today running major deficits, like the European high-speed rail project, the Kyoto-protocol sustainable energy investment plans, scientific and technological research and development programs, etc. Its biggest opponent in the reorganization (crisis) of the political-economic order is the neoconservative proposal of the New Right “liberal democracy,” trotted out by propagandists such as Pio Moa, Intereconomía [a right wing TV station –tr.] and think tanks (private economic research companies lobbying the government and the business class) such as Aznar’s FAES. They advocate a capitalism with no restrictive limits, in exclusively private hands, with no regulation by States, based on the “true liberty” of citizens in accordance with the social Darwinist concept of the survival of the fittest. They follow the assertions of ideologues like Milton Friedman, where corporations and the family are considered the pillars of moral and social welfare, and the free market constitutes the guarantee of economic progress in society.

The extreme fascist right, now merely residual but still latent, also adorns itself with the word “democracy,” coming up with new political formations such as “National Democracy,” or its heir in terms of program and strategy, the deceptive populist strategy of the Tea Party, which presents itself as a democratic alternative to bipartisanship; in Spain we see this in the “Union Progress and Democracy” party run by Rosa Díez, which is often found lurking around social movements.

3. Extra-Parliamentary Proposals.

But obviously, not all alternatives to today's democracy that use the term "democracy" come from sectors proposing a reformed capitalist system. Sectors of the intellectual left also adopt this term to make their essentially Marxist programs more digestible. So there have appeared such concepts as "participatory democracy," "social democracy," "socialism for the XXI century," etc.

Among anarchists or philo-anarchists too, there has arisen an interest in using the term "democracy" in order to bring a new anarchist discourse to the broad culturally-deprived social sectors. The concept of "direct democracy" was reworked in particular by Murray Bookchin back in the 1960s, bringing back both the popular communal tradition of town councils or traditional municipal bodies, and the tenets of classical nineteenth-century anarchism from the pens of authors like Proudhon or Bakunin, leading voices of civil resistance and non-violence such as Thoreau, and integrating them all into new participatory institutional political proposals. Bookchin defined his model as "libertarian municipalism," and it was developed within a current that also emerged in this period called "social ecology": a communalist ideology with origins in anarchism and environmentalism, which defines the natural social model of human beings as one of a community integrated with the natural environment, since nature is a decentralized, self-regulating natural order organized in networks, free of any authority.

Libertarian municipalism, as a leading political theory of the cultural and experiential revolution of the 1970s (hippies, beatniks, back-to-the-landers, civil disobedience, etc.) tried to contribute a new vision to the anarchist movement and/or libertarian movement, contrasted to classical anarchism and marxism, asserting that the motor of revolution is not to be found exclusively in the workplace or the class struggle but in daily life and in social and cultural life, and that the management of the economy is not just a matter of trade unions and workers' associations but should be up to the whole community (self-management).

The model Bookchin proposed could be implemented immediately (the model doesn't take the repressive offensives of States into account, since this was a movement developed in an era of the Rule of Law) with communities or communes acting by consensus in popular assemblies – "direct democracy" – making decisions not only of an economic nature, but also political, cultural, or about conflict management, production, services, etc. Different communities or municipalities would join together in a confederation, and would come to form a power to parallel the state itself. According to these theories, this would inevitably result in a rupture between the nation state and the people without the need for any confrontation. This model would thus serve an educational function for the rest of the population, and the moment of revolutionary rupture would arise once large sectors of society have been organized in this way, constituting a de facto popular self-government, leaving the nation-state reduced to a bare minimum and finally disappearing. Without denying its theoretical and practical contribution, this theory, with its pacifist origins and its ambiguity about any social engagement beyond the educational, has now been taken up at present by certain sectors on the left that participate in government politics, particularly in local and municipal elections; it is part of the ideology of some green parties, and of the rising cooperatives movement of recent years, groups that even accept financial subsidies from the state and defend developmentalist technological proposals.

In his later years, Bookchin himself ended up moving away from the anarchist currents and defined himself instead as a communalist, dropping the issue of confrontation with the state entirely, and having running ideological arguments with individualistic and revolutionary sectors.

4. Historical parallels and desires for self-determination.

The term “direct democracy” is associated by many scholars with traditional forms of self-government or community decisionmaking, in some cases using a show of hands (the “dictatorship of the majority”) and in others making decisions by consensus. Originating in the Athenian agora, i.e., the assembly of non-slave males who decided on the questions arising in the Greek polis (“politics”), one can find several examples from medieval Europe that are still alive today, despite attacks by the various monarchies. In some municipalities of Castile, people still hold what are called Open Councils, or neighbors’ assemblies, where decisions are made in plenary sessions that are open to all residents who have registered to vote, to manage the communal land and the collective budget, and to set up collective projects (“hacenderas”), although currently this model is limited to a handful of towns with less than 100 inhabitants, and their decisions are subject to regional legislation. In the Basque Country, these councils are called the Batzarre (Assemblies).

In nineteenth century Switzerland there was a special interest in recovering these models from the medieval tradition; they were applied in the form of referendums in parliament and in the constitution itself, and since then participation in Swiss political life has retained a popular element. But today direct democracy only still exists in two Swiss cantons, where the people gather in the square or in the countryside once a year to decide on budgets, and approve laws and constitutional reforms. In Iceland the original tradition of the Althing, or “Assembly of Free Men,” created in the tenth century, continues to have influence even today, strengthening community feeling, and enabling the political and social upheaval experienced in recent years on the island.

In North Africa, tribal models that political analysts refer to as direct democracy are still maintained, kept alive in regions such as the Algerian Kabylia.

The aarsh (sovereign communities), self-governed through the thaymaath (village assemblies), organize with one another in what are called “coordinations” and remain the organizational basis for continuous labor insurrections against the state (particularly the insurrections of 2001 and 2004, or Black Spring). In the Arab world this model is known as the Jemaah or assembly.

In Libya since 1977 these were theoretically normalized as the official form of government, and called the Jamahiriya, based on what were called the “People’s Congresses,” though in practice state power was in the hands of the military apparatus headed by Muammar Gaddafi.

In the rest of Africa the name “traditional direct democracy” has often been used to refer to the Village Councils made up of the heads of families (in Equatorial Guinea these have been formalized since 1981, and the community is not allowed to elect its members; there, the repressive state apparatus is now based on these Councils). Interestingly in 1981 the first black mayor in all of France, Kofi Yamgnane, from Togo, imported this system to the small Brittany town of Saint-Coulitz, establishing what was called the Council of Elders, in order to revitalize what he saw as “participatory democracy.” Yamgnane would become the French Secretary of State.

The concept of direct democracy is also advocated and implemented by armed revolutionary movements in peripheral countries of the West, which have undergone an evolution of their organizations from Marxism-Leninism or Maoism 70s to the autonomist and assemblyist positions of the 90s and 2000s. To assemblyist forms drawn from old cultural traditions existing all over the world, such as the above examples from Europe and North Africa, its theorists have added the Western concept of “democracy” in order to garner international sympathy and obtain institutional recognition for the organizations that support them.

Beyond the programs implemented by their organizations and leaders, which most often just perpetuate various forms of Power, large sectors of the world population currently continue to

practice forms of assemblyist self-government and communal economic systems, in most cases in the midst of continuing armed conflicts that have lasted centuries.

Abdullah Ocallan, leader of the Workers Party of Kurdistan, took up the concept of direct democracy inspired by libertarian municipalism and social ecology for the whole Kurdish movement in a proclamation delivered in 2005. Ocallan Abdullah named his model “democratic confederalism” to bridge differences with Bookchin. His proposal seeks to avoid conflicts involving the territorial boundaries of nation-states or ethnic and religious differences, and thus to promise a model for peace and social equality in the Middle East, a social organization based on partial autonomous structures, such as councils of youth, women, the diaspora or migration, regional councils, etc., which would take on more and more social, cultural and political tasks until finally they would break the people’s dependence on States. The overall organization is called the Confederation of the Peoples of Kurdistan, and it has its own guerrilla military organization.

In Mexico, starting with the armed insurrection of 1994, the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) has opened the way for the creation of civil assembly structures, first called Aguascalientes, later called Caracoles, and then Councils of Good Government. The Zapatista theoreticians and spokespersons say they are fighting for “democracy and freedom,” through a model of equality and fairness not only for their communities but also for the entire country and as an example to the whole world and the universe (“the Intergalactic”), where political parties are marginalized and temporary representatives, elected by the people’s assembly, act according to the concept “Lead by Obeying.”

In using the terms “direct democracy” and “community democracy,” they say they are merely taking up a concept that already existed long before in their worldview: “Another word came from far away to name this new government; and that word gave the name ‘democracy’ to this road of ours, traveled since before words could walk.” (taken from an EZLN statement).

5. conclusion.

As we can see, the term “democracy” has very different meanings depending on where or in what social sector it is used. Perhaps it is such a broad and subjective term that it can’t really be abstractly defended or categorically despised (since the word is often draped over demands and conflicts that contain the dignity of the struggle against injustice and for freedom), but it must always be analyzed critically, because in most cases it is simply the mask used by Power, or some form of Power, to perpetuate itself.

And in such cases, we should have no moral qualms whatsoever about unmasking, attacking, and destroying it, to open the field to new definitions, which are always contained as such within the acts and realities of the self-management of the people, and the aspirations of individuals.

Alternatives to democracy

Human beings, because we are social animals, need other people to live and a place where we can be nourished, take shelter from the cold, and develop inwardly, since consciousness is a characteristic inherent in our species.

As anarchists, we are often asked how we would organize society with no political leaders and no state institutions. We cannot answer this in a closed-minded manner, since the very idea of organizing a society runs contrary to the anarchist ideal.

In other words, anarchism is not so much a political doctrine as it is a way of life based on three basic points: freedom, respect and responsibility. We are not afraid of the freedom of others; we do not believe that “man is a wolf to his fellow man,” as Hobbes said, nor that competition drives “humanity” to progress, causing everyone to make their best effort. We simply think that given equal conditions people are able to organize without anyone’s arbitration, and without being directed by anyone. This idea does not at all mean that we are all equal; we love differences, and no two beings are equal anywhere in the universe. We do not wish to homogenize anything, or to impose on anyone what their life should be, and simply do not want anyone to impose on us either.

Throughout history a variety of organizational models and historical experiences have reflected the Idea¹ quite well; but unfortunately the rule of money leaves ever less room for any form of life that fails to meet its criteria, and is able to subjugate, regulate, or even genetically modify (mutate) anything and everything that does not fit into the destructive vortex contained within what’s called “progress.”

Recent examples that have arisen in many places throughout Spain are those of the open council, or the communitarian forms of work that we have been seeing in many towns for harvesting crops, sharing pastures, or cleaning roads and ditches; there the common good is first and foremost, with horizontal relationships and camaraderie, subject to norms set by the people themselves for the smooth execution of their work.

Obviously we don’t believe that no problems will ever arise in these relationships, but the mechanisms to resolve them must be consistent with the people’s way of thinking. We have nothing but contempt for bourgeois justice, where a handful of well-paid professionals devote themselves to judging the rest of society based on codes that they create to uphold their own interests.

Conflict resolution must be an essential part of human relationships themselves, without delegating that responsibility to people outside the conflict. The conditions that are currently in place have led to the degeneration of relationships among people, making us competitive with one another, infantilizing us, and alienating us. In short, it’s never been so easy for us to be enslaved, so we have to remove all of the causes behind it, both physical and mental.

Social justice is a basic cornerstone of healthy relationships between individuals where there are neither exploiters nor exploited, nor profit extracted at the expense of others. Today the privileged classes tell us that the way of life they have created must be kept exactly as it is, because it is the best of all possible worlds; meanwhile they deliberately ignore how all that supposed prosperity is actually built, and the consequences that it entails for the planet and other groups of human beings: the systematic plundering of raw materials, the irreversible alteration of landscapes, the pollution of water, land and air, and the enormous masses of displaced, subjugated, and dead people left in the wake of the ruling classes’ much-vaunted “prosperity,” based on war and theft, and justified by a condescending moralism that decides what is good and what is going to be made good – since everything else is directly eliminated.

The individual is the root at the basis of the way free people, i.e., people with the capacity to make their own decisions, function amongst themselves. Each individual is free to do as they please as long as it doesn’t harm other individuals. Then come relationships with your group, or groups based around shared interests. Depending on the needs of each, or the magnitude of

¹The Idea is the term the historically used by anarchists to refer to their ethical principles.

the work that needs to be done, these groups can coordinate with others to meet their needs (to exchange products, hold festivals, do work, have experiences...), and thus always uphold the principles of individual and collective freedom.

We'll try to clarify things a bit more in the following sections:

Economy. Economics can be understood as the management of resources to satisfy needs. Since thousands of interpretations can exist, as many as there are persons in association with one another, we'll only look at a few ideas. On the one hand we want the abolition of private property, because it is the basic principle of inequality: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need"; "All is for all." These days, in a world that puts more value on what you have than what you are, these phrases may seem unreal. However, if you treat people with solidarity and respect, that's the best guarantee that you'll get a fair deal too, as most of us can observe from our friendships.

We also want to re-examine how the value of commodities is understood, and abolish the concept of economic profit, so things would start to have value as what they are. We want to see a society where we pool our efforts and the product of those efforts, without attempting to accumulate in view of some possible future speculation.

In other words, if one group of people has apples, another has melons, and the other has collected mushrooms, we would much rather see sharing amongst them all than exchange between them individually: everyone puts whatever they have on the table, and takes whatever they need. We want each community to have the highest possible degree of self-sufficiency, so that society can stop squandering energy and offshoring responsibility to all the other beings on this planet. All this is what we mean by the concept of SELF-MANAGEMENT.

Anyway, there are already plenty interesting writings out there about economic theories rooted in cooperation and responsibility,² so we'll leave it at that.

Justice. No jails, no policemen, no judges; every problem that arises we resolve amongst ourselves, with no passing the buck. Each situation and each person is unique, and we cannot create a universal law nor would we wish to do so. The universal bourgeois value system is a fallacy; states infantilize their citizens by appearing before them as a father punishing their bad behavior, and thereby perpetuate their social model. In communities where there is no State, it will be up to the community itself to decide how to settle each situation that arises, always seeking understanding and justice in the true sense of the word, seeking to resolve conflicts themselves, not take revenge or propagate fear.

Defense. As we do not believe in nations or borders, we see no reason for the existence of armies to defend or attack, and we hold that the disappearance of these historical aberrations is indispensable for freedom on earth. The abolition of the state-capital binary would not mean the disappearance of all violence from the world, but it would get rid of the kind of violence that States create in their desire to dominate, impose and rob others. The defense of free communities, which is always necessary when there are real threats, must once again come to be the responsibility of their members, doing away with sadism and humiliation and ceasing to perpetuate the figure of the warrior as specialist in violence. Self-defense is a basic part of the preservation of freedom.

²Texts [in Spanish] on self-managed economy can be found at ekintza.zuzena and alabarricadas.org.

Historical experience has shown how important it is to be prepared to confront the enemy, as undesirable as it may be to do so.³

Consciousness, spirituality...

The revolution begins within yourself, so we have to try to keep our minds constantly alert, and on par with our objectives. That is, if we want to live in a world where we can grow in freedom, we have to be consistent. We must not act in an authoritarian manner with others, and must avoid behaviors that reproduce the things we're fighting against.

It is of the utmost importance that we keep trying to improve ourselves every day, and rid ourselves of such deeply ingrained influences from society as egocentrism, consumerism, omnipotent rationalism, the worship of science as absolute truth, submission to the empire of technology and cyber-relationships; these are realities we have to confront. We have to try to re-establish simpler relations between ourselves and our environment, since it is obvious that in the current state of domination we live in, the total energy-dependence of almost all our actions makes us all the slaves/benefactors of the pillage of the planet in the name of human progress.

Notes:

³We recommend reading about the Spanish revolution of 1936 and the collectivist experiences that occurred across the country at that time, or the makhnovist revolution in the Ukraine, which created free communes, suppressed in blood and fire by the Bolsheviks.

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