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VIVA LA REVOLUCION?
F ~~A~~ CK THE REVOLUTION!

To Guy Fawkes, and to V

A state? What is that? ... It is a lie! ... whatever it sayeth it lieth; and whatever it hath it hath stolen.... 'it is I who am the regulating finger of God' - thus roareth the monster...The state, ... where the slow suicide of all - is called 'life'. Just see these superfluous ones! They steal the works of the inventors and the treasures of the wise... - and everything becometh sickness and trouble unto them! ... Sick are they always: they vomit their bile and call it a newspaper. ... badly they all smell to me, these idolaters. My brethren, will ye suffocate in the fumes of their maws and appetites! Better break the windows and jump into the open air!¹

Friedrich Nietzsche

A single spark can start a prairie fire.

Traditional Chinese
(well before Mao)

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During the World Cup, shortly before I left England for Brazil, a Woolworth's cashier asked me if I wanted to buy an England flag. I did not. 'Go on, two for 99p', she insisted. I declined politely. 'Not even for your bike?' I considered buying them along with a lighter and burning them on the pavement outside, but we were minutes away from Chelsea stadium and I was afraid of being lynched by outraged halfwits on the North End Road. Riding home on my non-partisan bicycle, I saw St. George's cross everywhere, on front doors, flapping from car windows, hanging from pushchairs. It sent me into a spiral of despair, until I consoled myself with a daydream about the Angel of Death passing over West London and smiting the firstborn of each house marked with a red cross.

Whilst the state is a useful fiction when it comes to organising football matches, I'm not really into football, and I'm not sure the state does me any good at all. The last thing the British state did for me was fell the last climbable trees on my shithole of a housing estate, three massive plum trees chipped with their nearly ripe fruit, replaced by portacabins to match the high density buildings, crack whores and sirens.

What are borders but lines drawn in blood? Our state is apparently democratic, but this doesn't mean it is any better behaved. The Second Gulf War was fought on a shaky pretext, without the clear support of the citizens of the European democracies involved, and despite coalition attacks causing 100,000 deaths, mostly women and children, there is no consensus that Iraq is better off as a result.² Democracies practiced apartheid and slavery, and upheld sexist laws until a gang of brick-throwing, bomb-making Suffragette arsonists overthrew what was considered the natural order, succeeding where 50 years of peaceful protest had failed; today Emmeline Pankhurst's statue stands next to the Houses of Parliament. Sadly, the state has become more skilled at dealing with rioters without meeting their demands.

What about this democracy? It was invented in 594BC, when a peasant protest against the original Draconian law threatened to grow into a civil war. Solon of Athens introduced a legal system applying not just to plebs but to nobles as well, along with graded taxes and public elections. The new laws were not the best laws, Solon noted, but the best laws people would accept. There are no best laws; there is no foolproof political philosophy. There are just too many fools, so law is always a compromise.

Solon made another great contribution to western culture. The father of democracy was also the father of the Greek pederastic tradition. Strange as it may seem, Plato, Heraclites, Diogenes, and most

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other Greek sages would take on a teenage boy to educate, and between lectures he would snuggle up behind him and knob him between the thighs. When the boy grew up, he would continue Solon's fine tradition with some other lad. Philosophers wrote love poetry to their toy-boys, and Plato described how culture, true spirituality, peace, and love for humanity begin with the love of a beautiful young man.³

The Reverend is far too much of a cultural relativist to impose his robust heterosexuality upon long dead philosophers, and besides, many ancient civilisations practiced pederasty, and there are modern anarchists with a lively interest in it: 'democracy is cancerous, and bureaus are its cancer,' as one noted.⁴ The point is that democracy, which we think of as an enlightened system geared towards our needs, comes from a cultural milieu utterly alien to us, and from a philosopher who would be lynched if he practiced his philosophy in modern Britain. We owe a great deal to these pederasts, but remember that their philosophy goes hand in hairy hand with the idealisation of men. The culture was seriously paternalistic, as it was in China, where both pederasts and eunuchs were influential courtiers. In ancient Greece, women did not come between men discussing philosophy and matters of the republic, and nor did they vote. History has been the story of great men ever since, with women barely mentioned until very recently. Our philosophical traditions inherited an excess of order, and the republic developed some very weird power relations, where the buggers at the top teach their charges to take it lying down like everyone else, and that they are privileged to be part of the ideal system. Paternalistic, pederastic democracy has been cultivating bureaus and writing laws for two and a half thousand years, but has it created freedom, or nurtured happiness? Can you feel the warm scratch of a Greek beard on your neck?

I never signed the social contract. More British young people vote on the X-Factor talent show on TV than in general elections, and who can blame them?⁵ People we never meet, and probably wouldn't like, regulate our behaviour, and use our tax money to act against our wishes. Why should an acid-head pay the state to harass their dealer? Why should a pacifist fund Dick Cheney and Dick Turpin and a bunch of other dicks to wave pistols and demand your money or your life? Henry David Thoreau was no dick. He wrote *Civil Disobedience* whilst in prison for tax evasion, arguing that if one in ten men obeyed their moral obligation and refused to bankroll slavery, the state would either collapse under the weight of internees or change its policy. The state was forced to abandon slavery, and Thoreau's ideas filtered down to Gandhi, who hopped in and out of prison good-naturedly until the fall of the Raj.

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The illusion of impotence collapses if enough people push together, so what keeps us in line? Lawmakers, like Scientistics, set the rules of the game to favour interested parties, and they are aided by the third part of the unholy trinity, the media. The media massages opinion by hiding certain events and highlighting others, as demonstrated by Chomsky's comparison of the reporting of two atrocities. In the mid-70s, the Indonesian army massacred a third of the East Timorese population, and the Khmer Rouge's murdered similar numbers of Cambodians. From 1975-1979, *The New York Times* devoted 1175 column inches to the crimes of the communist Khmer Rouge, but only 70 inches to those of America's ally, the Indonesian government.⁶ Chomsky does not suggest a conspiracy. He argues that mass-media institutions, like all businesses, are more profitable if they sell what consumers are accustomed to.

Karl Popper had something to say about conspiracy theory. He made a splash in the history of science with an idea called falsificationism, stating, exactly as Newton had centuries before,¹⁷ that a scientific theory could never be proved, only disproved, and so it must always remain provisional. The success went to his head, and he began pontificating upon all manner of things, often without a shred of evidence. One of his speculations was that conspiracy theory was a delusion. Apparently, uncertainty has always been too much for us to cope with, so in the past we imagined supernatural agents behind the scenes, controlling our lives. When the spirits were chased away, secret government agents were invoked to replace them. This is a classic example of a Western philosopher shining a torch up his arse and shouting *Eureka!* A rationalist, with intellectual authority won by plagiarising a mystic, argues what he imagines should be true using the assumptions of his age, whilst ignoring evidence to the contrary. Popper's theory was already falsified, to use his own term, in Roman times ('et tu Bruté?'), and again decisively during his own lifetime with Watergate.

'I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant,' said Tricky Dickie, but does it matter what a politician says? A large proportion of voters believed that the USSR was part of NATO at the time,⁸ and a recent poll reveals that the average American thinks that his country spends 24 percent of the GNP on foreign aid, which is over 24 times more than it does.⁹ This is the average, so for every clued up American you know, there is another who is even more clueless. Nixon

¹ 'We are to look upon propositions collected by general induction from phenomena as accurately or very nearly true... till such time as other phenomena occur.' - Newton

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was forced to resign, eventually, but the government didn't collapse, it just morphed a little. This monster has a life of its own, with laws for claws and bureaus for brains, and neither the citizens nor the establishment can control it. It runs amok through the loveless spaces between us, in a society where few know their neighbours, or care for the concerns of other classes. Sometimes we notice that something stinks and scrape away a Nixon-shaped ulcer, but it soon grows back, and the monster lurches on.¹

There are conspiracies afoot, but they are small, and they are not coordinated not by evil agents, not reptilians nor the Illuminati, but by a kind of group thought-form born of individual self-interest. There is disinformation, of course, but piss-information is far more sinister. Media networks direct millions of brains towards some Hollywood tart's outrageous dress, or to stories about how someone stabbed a lawyer, or a celebrity divorce. Who cares? This is not **news**; we already know about stabbings and plunging necklines. It is chewing gum for the brain, occupying space and time whilst providing nothing nutritious. TV sound-bytes are too short to convey any news that is actually new, or any idea with which the viewer is not already familiar. Good for relaxation, perhaps, but can this offal produce well-rounded thoughts?

What good is democracy when our imaginations are stunted? For everyone who turns off the box and opens his eyes, there are thousands plugged in to a constant drip of soporific nothings, and all votes carry the same weight. We call this dream freedom - freedom of information, freedom of media, free elections. If we woke up, we would tear down the flimsy cage of stupidity and cynicism around us, but we are dozing. In our dream, the sky will fall in on us without the tower over our heads, so we hand over more and more responsibility to politicians who restrict rather than protect freedoms, to medics who milk rather than maintain our bodies, and we sink deeper into the nightmare of impotence. We sleepwalk, slaves to roles prescribed for us, mindlessly acting out programs, like the victims of the Tokyo subway gas attacks who crawled from the metro to work on their hands and knees with streaming eyes and burning lungs.¹⁰

Conflicts around us reflect confusion in our heads. Collective desire forms a vacuum, and a human is sucked into the role. We love to dominate and be dominated, so we have institutionalised title and installed lords to rule us, and we delight in sordid reports when they fail to meet the standards we impose on them. Our sexual desires conjure

¹ Frankenstein's monster was written by the daughter of the founder of political anarchism.

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up porn-star genies with frantic rubbing; our angst generates serial killers, and our suicidal urges blossom into belligerent politicians and doomsday weapons. Our insecurities about ourselves create healthcare we have almost no say over, and our unwillingness to govern ourselves perpetuates the government.

Many pawns with fire in their loins lose patience with the king sooner or later, but shouting at policemen, vandalising McDonalds, and disrupting the Archbishop's speeches is not satisfying for long. Periodic ejaculations of anger grow tiresome, and the rebel either gives up or becomes organised into factions to march with likeminded people, but whose mind is it? He must tow the revolutionary line, otherwise he is the fracture in the front, the weak link in the chain. He must affirm the manifesto, cheer speeches about twinning Jenin with Tower Hamlets, and imbibe the lawless grammar of leftist pamphlets. This can become a form of slavery as thorough as thoughtless obedience. Real freedom is when you can either obey or disobey without compulsion.

Besides, when did a revolution ever succeed? Despite its high ideals, revolutionary spirit it is no match for the ambitions of the Napoleons and Stalins which fill the power vacuum. For even our most beloved T-shirt heroes, uprisings sometimes seem little more than theatres to live out their fantasies. As Che Guevara wrote:

Crazy with fury I will stain my rifle red while slaughtering any enemy that falls in my hands! My nostrils dilate while savoring the acrid odor of gunpowder and blood. With the deaths of my enemies I prepare my being for the sacred fight and join the triumphant proletariat with a bestial howl!¹

Che lived his dream. When Castro gave him a government post, he had thousands executed before abandoning Cuba to stir up revolution in the Congo.¹² The problem goes deeper than politics. It is not the particular party in power which binds us, but our habit of devolving power over ourselves, and our love of lording it over others. You can't fix the situation by removing the heads, just as you can't free caged chickens by removing their heads. All you get is a lot of blood spilt and running around in circles.

What is truly revolutionary is self-mastery. The revolution is a life lived honestly. Gandhi stood against the British because of his sense of dignity, not ambition. His campaign of civil disobedience was not dogmatic, and he opposed oppression wherever he found it, even in the treatment of women and the low castes in his own beloved Hindu culture. Subversion begins at home. Ninja saboteurs tiptoe down familiar corridors, strangling the wind out of dozing opinions, turning

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the guards of morality against each other, slipping serrated doubts into gaps in the armour. They are both civil and disobedient. As Foucault put it, 'one must put "in play", show up, transform, and reverse the systems which quietly order us about'.¹³ And the illusion of impotence dissolves.

St. George, your flag is being profaned and a monster is running amok, pursuing us through the cramped corridors of a teetering tower. Tension is rising as inequality climbs within and between countries. The whole rotten structure is ready to collapse with a gust of wind, and wind speeds are increasing. New Orleans descended into anarchy immediately after Hurricane Katrina, when the boundaries keeping the poor poor were swept away. If the law breaks down on a national or international level, with a world war, a pandemic, or a zombie jamboree, it'll be 'so long, Solon' and his band of merry buggers. Anarchy is only three meals away, and this not the books and bongs anarchy of the Church of Nem but the bricks and bombs anarchy polemical politicians keep harping on about.

The chaotic pulse of free life beats weakly in our world, but it beats still, and the great tower is swaying. Prepare to jump for cover. And when the noise passes and the dust settles, the imaginatively defiant will emerge from their autonomous zones, and walk upright through the ruins, through the gore of the monster and the teeth of his slaves, to watch a new order arising organically from of the rubble.

A single spark can start a prairie fire. But a brighter spark lights a lantern.

Ω

Confuzion begins with a name. We define our allies as our countrymen, our class, or all 'right-thinking' people, and our enemies as evildoers or fools, but nothing is intrinsically evil, not condoms in the Vatican, not Eichmann nor Zyklon-B gas, not the Vietnamese nor the bourgeoisie, neither drugs nor insomnia, robbers, bombers, big honkers, or anything else we would like to be rid of. Not even policemen are evil; some of them are quite amiable. They can be annoying, and are fundamentally dangerous, of course, but the same can be said for mosquitoes and malaria. As we will hear in the following sermon, the unpleasantness of the mosquito protects us from ourselves, and limits the damage our lifeless systems cause.

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- 1 Nietzsche pp. 30-31
- 2 *Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey* - Les Roberts et al. in *The Lancet* 2004; 364:1857-1864
- 3 *Phaedrus* - Plato (Athens 360BC)
- 4 *Naked Lunch* - William Burroughs p. 111
- 5 Exhibition at the British Library
- 6 *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* - directed by Mark Achbar & Peter Wintonick (1992)
- 7 *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* - Newton (A. Motte trans.) (London, 1729).
- 8 *The Wisdom of Crowds* - James Surowieki (London, 2004), p. 266
- 9 *Boston Globe*, December 31
- 10 *Underground* - Murakami Haruki
- 11 *Motorcycle Dairies* - Che Guvera
- 12 Quoted in *Che Guvera: A Biography* - Daniel James.
- 13 *A Conversation with Michel Foucault* - John Simon in *Partisan Review*, 38 (1971), pp. 192-201