Our epoch is marked by the return of the poor to their initial ferocity...

In our times, people who affirm revolutionary demands pass for dreamers.

But the human being is made of the same material that his dreams are made from.

We are revolutionaries.

'Os Cangaceiros' means 'Everything is possible', 'We are at war', 'Nothing is true, everything is permitted'...

Our program is very old:
to live without dead time.

We propose to make it known through scandal; there are no other means worthy of such a program.

Our existence itself is already a scandal...

OS CANGACEIROS

A CRIME CALLED FREEDOM

OS CANGACEIROS:
A CRIME CALLED FREEDOM

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ON THE COVER:
Prisoners rioting at Bois d'Arcy prison.
The banner hanging from the roof reads,
"They are trying to kill us."

A CRIME CALLED FREEDOM

THE WRITINGS OF OS CANGACEIROS

VOLUME ONE

TRANSLATED BY WOLFI LANDSTREICHER

EBERHARDT PRESS

Map of French prisons referred to in the text.

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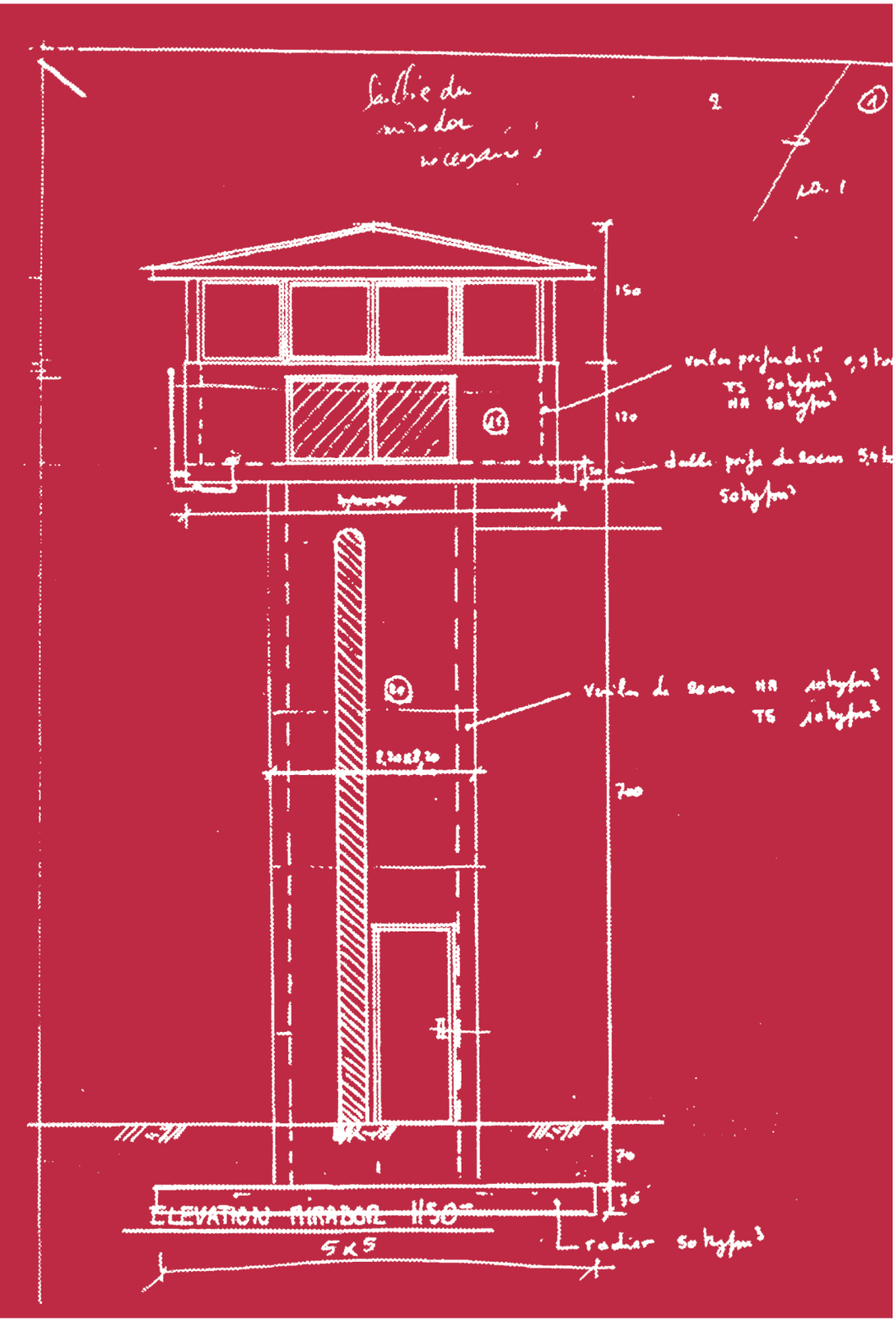
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Foreword

The book you are reading is a labor of love. I first saw a few translations of writings by the French group Os Cangaceiros about fifteen years ago. They were intriguing and I wanted to know more. It was clear that this was not another militant group of specialists in armed struggle. They had nothing but contempt for the self-sacrificial ideology and practice of militancy promoted by such groups. Several years later, I learned that Os Cangaceiros was a group comprised of delinquents who were caught up in the spirit of the French insurrection of 1968 – an insurrection that was not just a "student revolt", as the media has tried to portray it*, but that encompassed the whole of French society. The group came together in Nice in 1968. Taking the well-known graffiti "Never work, ever!" to heart, they began creating their lives in opposition to

**For example, in articles contrasting it with the recent uprisings in the impoverished French suburbs.*

the entire world based on work and thus constantly risked prison. They traveled all over Europe, participating in revolts throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. By the mid-1980s, their experiences with the judicial and prison systems led them to focus attacks there. Most of the material here relates to their anti-prison activity. I find the ideas they express particularly interesting, because they combine the best aspects of a non-dogmatic (and non-workerist) class analysis with a critique of civilization that is not at all primitivist, forming a fierce theoretical weapon for use in the social war against the ruling order.

Unfortunately, very few of the writings of Os Cangaceiros have been translated from French into English. Of these few translations, some seem rough, and others are mere excerpts, sometimes out of sequence. I do not know French, so I was pleased when some Italian comrades published *Un Crimine Chiamato Libertà*, a book which brings together a number of the texts relating to Os Cangaceiros' anti-prison activity. In that book, it was mentioned that various anarchists had translated other material from Os Cangaceiros into Italian. I asked the Italian comrades to send me this material as well. The book you hold in your hands consists of all the texts that

the self-amnesties of political people with one or two provisional releases have not done this to challenge an injustice, but to protect and defend their independence and their prerogative to decide on the freedom of others.

The dry administrative decision to release Naccachen did not fail to openly oppose the more elementary hope of prisoners: that of getting out. Their rage mounted. Their mobilization before the quick treatment of the Naccachen affair directly represented a reaction without frills against an obvious dirty trick: only for us, no freedom in sight.

CHRONOLOGY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF A STRUGGLE AGAINST FRENCH PRISONS

1. This is only an extract from an exhaustive dossier, of greater workmanship, that will be distributed soon to a wider public.

2. You will surely be happy, dear Madame, dear Sir, to learn exclusively that the walls of some structures are not as solid as they seem. Our association tested a very simple procedure at the launching of the construction sites: sugar, in the proportion of 1 to 1000 (i.e., 2 pounds per ton of cement), hinders the hardening of the cement, so that when it dries, it becomes crumbly.

appeared in *Un Crimine Chiamato Libertà* (except the bibliography) and a few other texts that I felt would fit here. Some of the texts from the Italian already existed in English in rough and sometimes incomplete form. I used both the rough English and the Italian translations for the English versions printed herein. In addition to the material from *Un Crimine…*, I have included the "Editorial Notes from *Os Cangaceiros* #2" as translated from the Italian version that appeared in *Anarchismo* as "Francia. Os Cangaceiros". This text gives some idea of social changes that happened in France in the late 1970s and early 1980s that explain why prison became a greater risk for the underclass at that time. I also included two texts that had already appeared in English, "Nothing Human Is Achieved in the Grip of Fear" and "Industrial Domestication". The latter text helps to clarify some of the ideas already present in the anti-prison texts by examining the rise of industrialism, pointing out the prison-like quality of the first factories, which were designed for the domestication of the poor. I did some editing on these two texts to make them read more smoothly and fit the style of the others more closely. The endnotes that are signed *WL* are notes that I added. The rest of the notes were already in one of the

other versions of the text. I have translated some writings by people in Os Cangaceiros about millenarian revolts as well. These will appear in a separate volume, also published by Eberhardt Press.

I didn't translate these texts merely for the joy of seeing writings that have inspired me printed in English. I hope they will provoke discussion aimed at creating an anti-political practice of struggle against prison and the society that creates it, a practice that goes beyond the current charity and social welfare-style practice of prison support to genuine revolutionary solidarity. This would be the greatest joy.

Wolfi Landstreicher
November 2005

for an average of about forty prisoners from a total of 48,000. In passing, we salute the sixty escape prisoners who recently thumbed their noses at the guards.

3. We cite as an example the stairways reserved exclusively for prison guards.

4. Along with access control that allows surveillance over the smallest movement, there are also electronic motion detectors in the main passageways. Put in operation during the night, they can tell immediately if anyone goes past them, making an alarm go off. On the outside, the path of the round is watched over by surveillance cameras and – along with the height of the wall (over twenty feet) and the observation towers – there is also a so-called detection grid that sets off the alarms the moment it is touched, automatically activating surveillance cameras in the sector.

5. Decorative cement projections fixed to overhangs on the roof.

6. In practice, the resistance of certain materials and devices can vary according to the sectors in which they are placed.

7. Contrary to what they would like us to believe, the little judges who have protested against

2. See the essay "Industrialism and Domestication" that first appeared in the October 1977 *Fifth Estate* and is now available in John Zerzan's book, *Elements of Refusal*.

A DOSSIER AGAINST THE "PROJECT OF 13,000 PLACES"

1. The judicial administration must really be short of imagination to think of such a trifle. More prisons will be built, more people will be locked up! You can even find this banality in the mouths of prison wardens. Overcrowding involves a frightening promiscuity that is added to the usual reasons for revolt. "Rationally" subdividing prisoners, the judicial administration pretends – as it doesn't miss a chance to trumpet everywhere – to do wholesome work, but in this case the operation complies with considerations for keeping order more than with any humanitarian inclinations. The vacant spaces are destined to find their tenants, now and in the future. It's as if the administration demanded over-sized accommodations in order to cope with future overcrowding.

2. The repugnant demagogy about this consists in boring us with the so-called lax conditions of imprisonment that favor repeated escapes. Unfortunately, the reality is something else entirely. The escape rate is 0.08 percent per year,

Introduction to *Un Crimine Chiamato Libertà*

For some time now, a renewed interest in everything that relates to prison and the living conditions inside it has been spreading within the so-called movement. Bulletins, websites, committees, actions and initiatives of struggle flourish. Beyond motives that are more contingent (judiciary investigations and arrests) and political (often, due to the lack of any projectuality through which to experiment with understandings and find accomplices, all that remains for comrades to share is the misfortune of prison, reducing differences to zero), the main reason why the anti-prison critique rouses such sincere attention is quite simple, almost a banality: it is easier and easier for anyone to get locked up within the walls of a prison. And not only due to a generalized repressive response that the state might make to the radicalization and growth of social struggles, since this is the outcome of the same social, economic and technological progress

that manifests itself under this disquieting paradox: we could all end up in prison again because we all already live in a prison. Nobody excluded.

We could all end up in prison. The triumph of this society of money has caused the living conditions of millions of people to deteriorate. This throws them into a situation of precariousness where only worsening conditions await them. It destroys certainties capable of giving any measure of meaning to existence on this earth. It undoes every social link that is not economic. It arouses desperation, anxiety and rage. If in the past the coldness of an empty heart was partially compensated by the torpor of a full belly, today such an illusion can no longer be put forward. Growing emotional and material poverty have isolated the individual in the corner to which the process of social reproduction confines him. In such a situation it is no accident if more and more people demand to participate in the only existing community, that of capital, in the only way that is conceivable to do so, that of commodity consumption. The siren of advertising never sleeps, and it invites everyone to consume more, more and more. And one can easily imagine what happens when those who

strike. Most French proletarians recognize themselves in what these three men did.

3. Secret service agents and fascists in government pay bombed railroad stations and other public places, slaughtering large numbers of people in an effort to sow confusion about the real social insurgency then going on in Italy. Unfortunately, some so-called revolutionaries added to this confusion by attributing to fascists or government agents any attack against the ruling institutions that did not conform to their ideological preferences. – *WL*

INDUSTRY AS THE ORIGIN OF MODERN DOMESTICATION

1. The millenarian movements, which were active in Europe from the 13th through the 17th century, tried to realize a Golden Age or state of grace in this life. They grew out of a messianic Christianity that saw all temporal authority – church and state – as the antichrist and a hindrance to the arrival of the millennium, the thousand-year rule of Christ on earth. Its adherents flaunted economic, sexual, religious and civic taboos, using a wide variety of means, some of them violent, to achieve their utopia. See Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, an exciting and accurate, yet conservative, view of the period.

3. We have since learned of a flyer that also clearly favors the revolt, made by "Prisoners of Democracy" and reproduced in the third issue of their publication.

4. French television station. – *WL*

NOTHING HUMAN IS ACHIEVED IN THE GRIP OF FEAR

1. During these summers, cops and reactionary vigilantes killed a large number of young proletarians. By ignoring these murders or merely slapping their perpetrators on the wrists, the state gave these scum its seal of approval. – *WL*

2. During a trial, Khalki (who had been released from prison just three weeks earlier) went to a courtroom where friends were on trial in order to free them. They took the judge, some court officials and the jury hostage. Then they demanded that TV cameras be brought into the courtroom so that they could talk publicly about cops, prisons, "justice", about their innocence in the trial, about their lives that had been interrupted by several periods of imprisonment (they had been in prison for two years awaiting trial), etc…. They surrendered after two days in exchange for a promise from the state that Khalki would be deported to a country of his choice. The state broke this promise even after Khalki's long hunger

are nothing and possess nothing are incited without interruption to *have* with the aim of *appearing*: they stretch out their hands, tread on people's toes, have no regard for anyone.

As if this were not enough, the institutional ambition of forestalling every possible way of escape from a world that is sold to us as "the best possible" has led to the criminalization of any behavior other than that of blind acceptance and defense of the social order (with all its rules, laws and morals). In its presumption of regulating and codifying every impulse and every human passion to safeguard the peace of the marketplaces and streets, the law has expanded the field of illegality considerably, creating many new crimes, and thus new criminals, new future prisoners. This is what has provoked the need for more police, more judges, and more prisons in a notorious vicious circle that feeds upon itself. It is now sufficient to merely breathe without orders to incur the risk of being locked up inside four walls.

We all live in prison already. In the course of the last few years, the physical structure of the prison has been moved farther and farther from our eyes – into those outskirts where its gloomy presence doesn't end up darkening the gaudy windows of the municipal

center, but fits in perfectly with the squalor of those outskirts. At the same time, its shadow has started to weigh down more and more over all of us without leaving us alone for a moment. The merit, if it can be called this, is in the introduction of new technologies that have allowed an unimaginable leap forward in the sphere of social control. As with every other technological innovation, the technologies of surveillance, which were tested in prison in order to keep the most riotous prisoners at bay, have found a civil application. After all, security inside the prisons begins with security outside the walls. This explains the startling number of videocameras found in every corner of our cities (and even inside buses and trains), the obligatory routes we are forced to take for our movements, the magnetic detectors that inspect us at the exits of many businesses, the identification codes that replace our individuality, the innumerable prohibitions that it is necessary to respect as well as the variegated crowd of guardians put in place to safeguard the world; in short, all of these things that plague our existence. Thanks to the new identification cards, we will not have to be arrested any more in order to supply our fingerprints. Since we are all potential criminals, we are all treated as such. Step by

in 1976 after long experience in the QHS. He was imprisoned again with a five-year sentence for receipt of stolen goods, with an additional six years for breaking parole. He probably won't be able to leave until 1990. Bauer fought against the QHS, where he met Jacques Mesrine [a well-known French bank robber, who the authorities couldn't manage to keep locked up. In his later days he explicitly fought against the state and the prison system. Since they couldn't keep him caged, the French authorities shot him down – *WL*]. This was something the prison administration couldn't forgive.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOME ACTIONS CARRIED OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRISON REVOLTS

1. Only the radio show *Parloir Libre* on "*Fréquence Montmartre*" has distinguished itself from all these falsifiers by honestly reporting the events and treating the despicable *VSD* wastepaper article as it deserved.

2. Of course, we are not talking here about workers who the state sends to prison in order to break a strike (like the miners in Britain). In France, it never occurs to proletarians to call themselves "political prisoners". Only members of political sects and other militants are shameless enough to define themselves in this way.

If they want a prisoner locked up for nine months, they sentence him to a year.

3. In the big cities of France, poor neighborhoods tend to be comprised of horrendous projects built in the suburban outskirts of the cities, in an attempt to make the poor invisible in the city centers. – *WL*

4. Since in France, the judges who receive demands for provisional liberty from prisoners awaiting trial must respond in five days in order to prevent the prisoner from being released, a collective action of this sort can clog up the system, leading to the release of some of the prisoners. However in this instance the judges got together to guarantee that didn't happen.

5. Two former French Ministers of Justice.

6. Special attention should be given to the unbearable situation of condemned prisoners who have been locked up in solitary confinement, or those like Knobelpiess who are still there, those who the prison administration particularly harasses in order to make them pay a high price for never having submitted to the prison regime. We cite the case of Charlie Bauer, sentenced to twenty years inside in 1962 for burglary. He was released on parole

step, the entire society is becoming a huge open-air prison from which it is impossible to escape. Aside from realizing the worst totalitarian nightmare — the one that doesn't even need to send armored cars or patrols of soldiers into the streets because it has partially replaced them with tiny, less visible technological prostheses — all this obscures the difference that exists between those who find themselves behind and those who find themselves beyond the bars. Obscures it to such an extent that the very notion of freedom becomes merely a nebulous gradation and, on the other hand, submission to coercion becomes precise, scientific, concrete and above all normal.

As a contribution to the struggle against the prison society, we have decided to publish this collection of texts that the group Os Cangaceiros distributed in France. This activity of theirs – that lasted from approximately 1984 to the early 1990s – was important, because it managed not to limit itself to expressing a merely theoretical critique of the existent, but maintained and spread a consequent practical critique.

Named after the Brazilian outlaws who robbed rich property holders while ridiculing the police in the late 19th century, Os Cangaceiros

was born and developed in a sphere that starts from social delinquency and flows directly into revolutionary action. (We recall that France is the homeland of the various Mandrins, Lacenaires, Mesrines…) They were authors of a self-named magazine of which only three issues were published. These were rich in analyses and documentation about the violence of the French periphery and the strikes unleashed to resist the industrial restructuring that was then going on, as well as about uprisings that occurred in other countries like Spain, Great Britain or South Africa. They published flyers and manifestos that stood out due to the unusual positions they took – we recall the one in defense of soccer hooligans, after the Heysel tragedy occurred in 1985. They were also the authors of two books, a broad anthology of writings about millenarianism and a diary about a fatal disease that struck one of them[1]. And they published a dossier on the new prisons that were being built on French soil.

After observing that "Delinquency at the beginning of the 1970s expressed a desire for freedom, a wild turn, a game of bands" and how this "criminal freedom" was brought to an end in the very early 1980s as a result of extremely hard police repression and the blackmail imposed by the "reign of necessity",

Endnotes

INTRODUCTION TO *UN CRIMINE CHIAMATO LIBERTÀ*

1. This book is available in English with the title *N'Drea: One Woman's Fight to Die Her Own Way* from Eberhardt Press. – *WL*

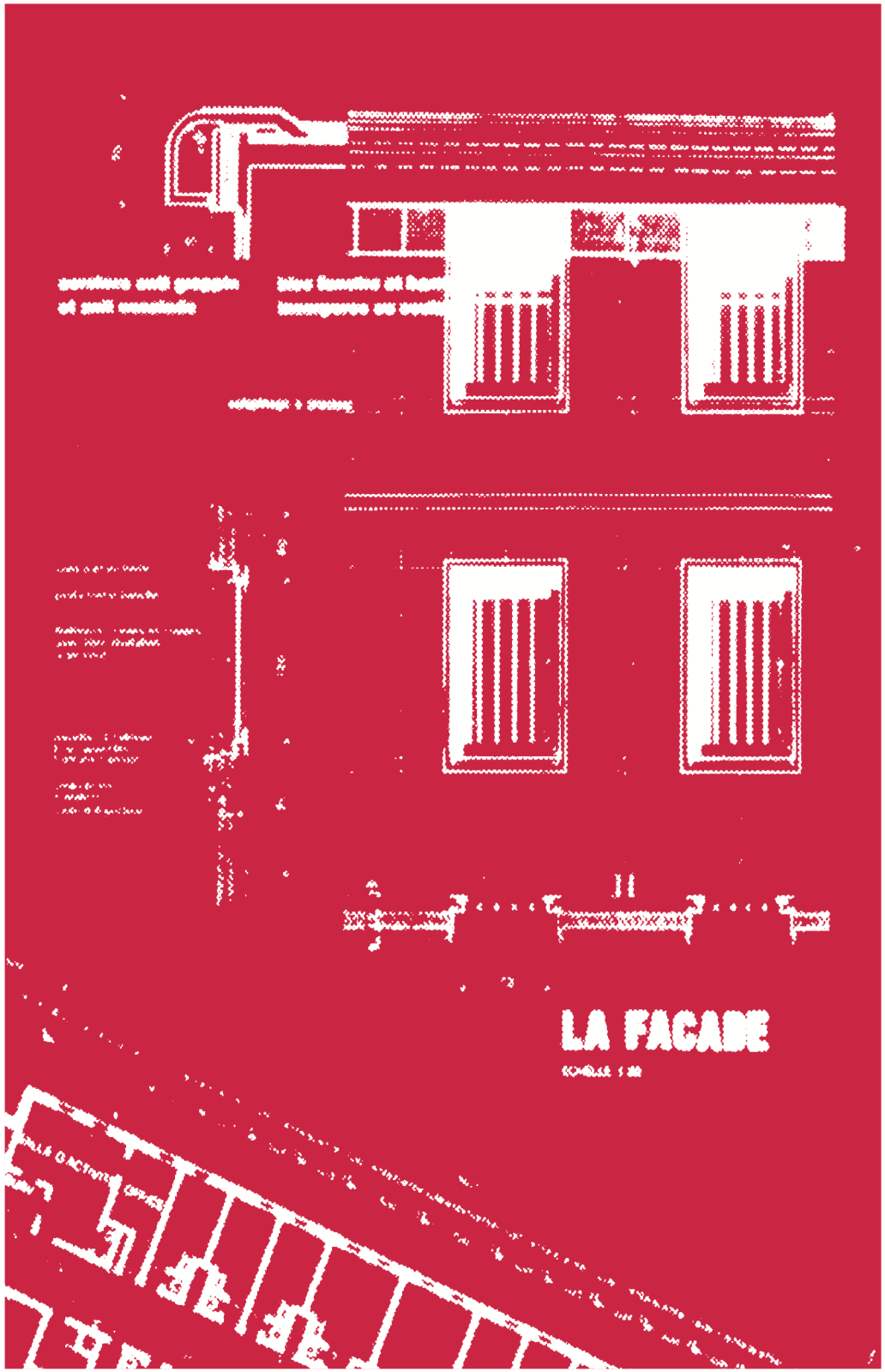
EDITORIAL NOTES FROM *OS CANGACEIROS* #2

1. This is a reference to murders carried out by police and vigilante shop owners against thieves and other usually petty criminals that occurred in France at that time. It is talked about a bit more in "Nothing Human Is Achieved in the Grip of Fear" (see page 99). – *WL*

FREEDOM IS THE CRIME THAT CONTAINS ALL OTHER CRIMES

1. Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale: an autonomous special division (used in riots, seizures, …) subordinate to the Ministry.

2. Another clever con: sentence reductions are actually increases in the sentences of those who stand up for themselves. Judges calculate sentences in terms of potential concessions.



to Os Cangaceiros, all that remained was to take note of the "end of an epoch" of thoughtlessness and to prepare for the advent of an epoch of desperation marked by the return of the "dangerous class" to the most uncontrolled rage. "We talk constantly about violence; it is our element (and we could even say) our daily destiny. Violence is first of all the conditions imposed on us, the police defense of them and, unfortunately more rarely, that which we throw back in their faces." More gravediggers of the old world than builders of the new one, closer to the poor and their explosions of violence than to a working class that is ideologically assigned a redemptive historical mission, Os Cangaceiros have endeavored to give voice and reason to the refusal of all the conditions of existence, even when this refusal might assume especially ferocious forms, with an awareness that certainly couldn't come from any political militancy, towards which they have always exhibited the greatest contempt, but rather from a genuine dimension of life outside the law, claimed with pride.

In short, these were social outlaws, some of whom had already been convicted of common crimes, all perpetually at risk of being given hospitality in homeland prisons. With

such a premise, it is needless to say that prisons found declared enemies, while prisoners found loyal accomplices, in Os Cangaceiros. The revolts that broke out in May 1985 in several French prisons provided them with the occasion for demonstrating this. A month later, in June, Os Cangaceiros claimed the act of sabotage against some installations of the National Association of the French Railroad in Châtelet-en-Brie, the burning of the tracks of the Nantes-Paris rail line with tires and straw, and the blockade of the Paris-Brussels trains, the carriages of which were covered with graffiti in favor of prisoners' struggles. As often happens in these cases, also due to the simplicity of the methods used, the idea made headway and started to spread throughout the country. Within a very few weeks, the railroad became the main target for actions of solidarity with the prisoners; aim was also taken at printing works where some newspapers were printed, at the metro, at the cars of some state functionaries, at a company that exploited penitentiary labor, at cars of *Tour de France*… Many of these actions remained anonymous or were claimed by other groups (such as the Support Group of the Imprisoned Rebels, the Friends of Rebellious Prisoners, the Railroad Hooligans, the Support Committee for the Prisoners, *Los Bandoleros*…).

on the other hand, is the generalization of this revolt, inside and outside the walls.

Don't think that it was easy for us to obtain these plans and this technical documentation. However, we considered it proper to fraudulently appropriate the means necessary for the present mailing at the expense of Telecom and the Postal Service. It is rather interesting that various services made available to modern firms, intended to promote the smooth functioning of society, can be diverted with a diametrically opposed aim. We hope that public curiosity takes care of the rest. Only the force of communication can break down the prison walls[2].

We haven't ruled out making the effort of communicating with you by phone in order to learn what your reactions to receiving this mailing have been and possibly discussing the reasons for it.

Dear Madame, dear Sir, we ask you to accept the expression of our highest regards.

OS CANGACEIROS

one could hope that it reaches those interested through their neighbors, relatives and friends.

Our initiative may surprise you. It might be that people who are subjected to a high level of electronic surveillance, who are left to the arbitrary abuse of guard crews in cages of steel and cement and who still rebel more and more frequently, are not alone in their rage. Although not all prisoners are outcasts or rebels, any poor wretch who has no intention of adapting himself to the dehumanizing mechanisms of this society and, with greater reason, anyone who rebels against it, sooner or later risks prison in one way or another. We are among these people.

In recent years, European prisons have become places where social dissent is expressed. This society has succeeded so well in creating emptiness and silence everywhere, that paradoxically it is within those walls that the aspiration for freedom is still able to make itself heard, in the west as in the east.

The structure in XXXX is an early presentation of the "Project of 13,000 Places". This Project has the precise aim of breaking the movement of insubordination that is going through the prisons of this country since the mutiny of 1985. It is not at all a humanization of the prison regime as the liars in the state's service claim. Our aim,

The national press, prey to panic, ran for cover, evoking the specter of terrorism and denouncing the mysterious group that was supposed to have been behind all these actions. For their part, Os Cangaceiros contemptuously rejected every connection between themselves and a "terrorism" (a term that they will use without the least trace of embarrassment to indicate the violence of various political armed groups, something so much stranger if one considers that they professed themselves to be enemies of the language of the state) in which they saw nothing but the continuation of politics by other means, a typical expression of *gauchiste* impotence. Their violence was of a very different nature since, as they explained, "Our tools of action are those that any proletarian uses: sabotage and vandalism. We don't do symbolic actions; we create disorder, as workers in struggle commonly know how to do when they blockade roads and railroads, sabotage materials, television transmitters, etc…" Nothing to do with the armed struggle fetishism so dear to the militants of various combatant organizations.

Four years later in 1989, Os Cangaceiros took a further step forward in the battle against the prison institution. From active solidarity with prisoners, they would go on to direct struggles

against the construction of new incarceration facilities. This time, the so-called "Program of the 13,000" would provide them with the opportunity. This was an ambitious project that the government launched to completely reorganize the French penitentiary system. A project that foresaw the closing of the oldest and least adequate institution, the restructuring of others and the construction of new, more modern prisons. All under the banner of absolute security to be obtained through massive employment of new technologies capable of constantly controlling the prisoner in each of his movements in a discreet and aseptic way. The declared aim was to create 13,000 new "spaces" for prisoners (from which the program derives its name) in order to alleviate overcrowding; the real one was to put the screws to those locked up inside the prisons and to support the mania for justice that was spreading in broad sectors of society.

Os Cangaceiros considered taking up the challenge launched by the French government and, starting in April 1989, began a long campaign of sabotage at the construction sites of the prisons that were being built, along with thefts of blueprints of the buildings at the expense of the Municipalities and the devastation of the offices of public labor firms

that it would have been able to provoke in an age when everything that appears on the media stage is dictated by the spectacle of the moment. Obviously, we figure that we will enter on this stage as enemies.

Letter Attached to the Dispatch of the Plans

Beginning of November 1990

Dear madam, dear sir,

Of course, you are aware that a prison building is being put into action not far from your home, in the territory of the XXXX municipality.

Starting today, we are putting some plans for the project into circulation, along with some information on the general operation and its security apparatus. We passionately hope that this might help prisoners who plan an escape. In particular, we think of those who find themselves in solitary confinement and who, being badly oriented in the prison area, are thus hindered considerably in their plans for escape[1]. This is why we invite you to distribute this documentation as far as possible around you, first of all making more photocopies. Thus,

✵ ✵

At the beginning of July, with the aim of assuring our activity all the publicity it deserves, we procured a list of 10,000 addresses on adhesive labels in a fraudulent manner at the expense of Téladresse, a commercial service of France Telecom. At the Post Office's expense, by reproducing postmarks from various postage meters, we intend to go ahead with a massive mailing of some copies of plans surrounded by samples of dossiers in our possession. We will do this in the following cities: Aix-en-Provence, Alençon, Argentan, Arles, Arras, Auxerre, Bapaume, Beaucaire, Joux-la-Ville, Laon, Lille, Marseille, Montpellier, Neuvic-sur-Isle, Paris, Périgueux, Salon-de-Provence, Tarascon, Villeneuve-les-Maguelonne and not forgetting some mailings addressed specifically to the judiciary administration as well as to the principle directors of the enterprises involved.

✵ ✵

At the beginning of November, we began to circulate an exhaustive dossier about prisons. Bringing the existence of this dossier to the awareness of all, we gambled on the curiosity and interest

that had obtained the contracts. Among the many actions spread throughout the national territory – that, despite being censored by the national press in this instance, were able to inspire other lovers of freedom – we want to recall the lessons taught to the architect Christian Demonchy, who was responsible for the construction of various prisons, on the public path. After more than a year of sabotage, Os Cangaceiros obtained 10,000 addresses of residents in the vicinity of future prisons to whom they sent extracts of a voluminous dossier containing dates and information (fruit of their "visits" in the locales of enterprises involved in the foul affair) about the institutions of punishment that were being built.

In November 1990, the complete dossier, *Treize mille belles* (Thirteen Thousand Escapes) finally came out. Its distribution provoked thousands of polemics and the ire of the French government, following the publication of various excerpts in newspapers of national circulation. Among other things, the dossier contains accurate technical documentation about the many prisons under construction or in the process of being restructured, with general outlines; information about materials used; fixtures; controls of access, doors and locks; electric and hydraulic systems; sanitation; roofing; and

external installations. And, above all, there are detailed little maps of every building and its particulars.

The police, who had already begun to intensify their efforts to neutralize Os Cangaceiros in the summer of 1987, perhaps causing in this way the interruption of the group's "public" activity, carried out searches in French subversive circles. It seems that the mere possession of *Treize mille belles* was sufficient to bring one under investigation, and even the editors of the journal *Mordicus*, who had dared to publish some excerpts from the dossier, had their legal troubles. In any case, it turns out that no one has ever been tried and condemned for the actions attributed to Os Cangaceiros, who vanished into nothing in the early 1990s.

In this booklet, we have collected some of the texts appearing in the second number of their magazine, published in November 1985, about the French prisoners' revolt of May 1985 and the actions of solidarity with them that developed in the following months. Then we have added other texts from the dossier *Treize mille belles*, among them the chronology of actions carried out against the "Program of the 13,000" between 1989 and 1990 along with the letters that Os Cangaceiros sent to their "victims" claiming the actions, the introduction to

✵ ✵

CHRONOLOGY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF A STRUGGLE AGAINST FRENCH PRISONS

Toward the middle of April in Laon, it was time for the control panel of the central office of the ORSA cement company to be destroyed, just when ORSA cement mixers were traveling here and there, delivering cement to building sites.

September 17, 1990
Addressee: ORSA CEMENT
02000 Laon
Subject: Our journey through your premises in the middle of April 1990

You in your beautiful central office of a cement company – You content.
You building Laon prison – We pissed off.
We destroying computerized control panel – You pissed off.
We preferring you pissed off – We content.

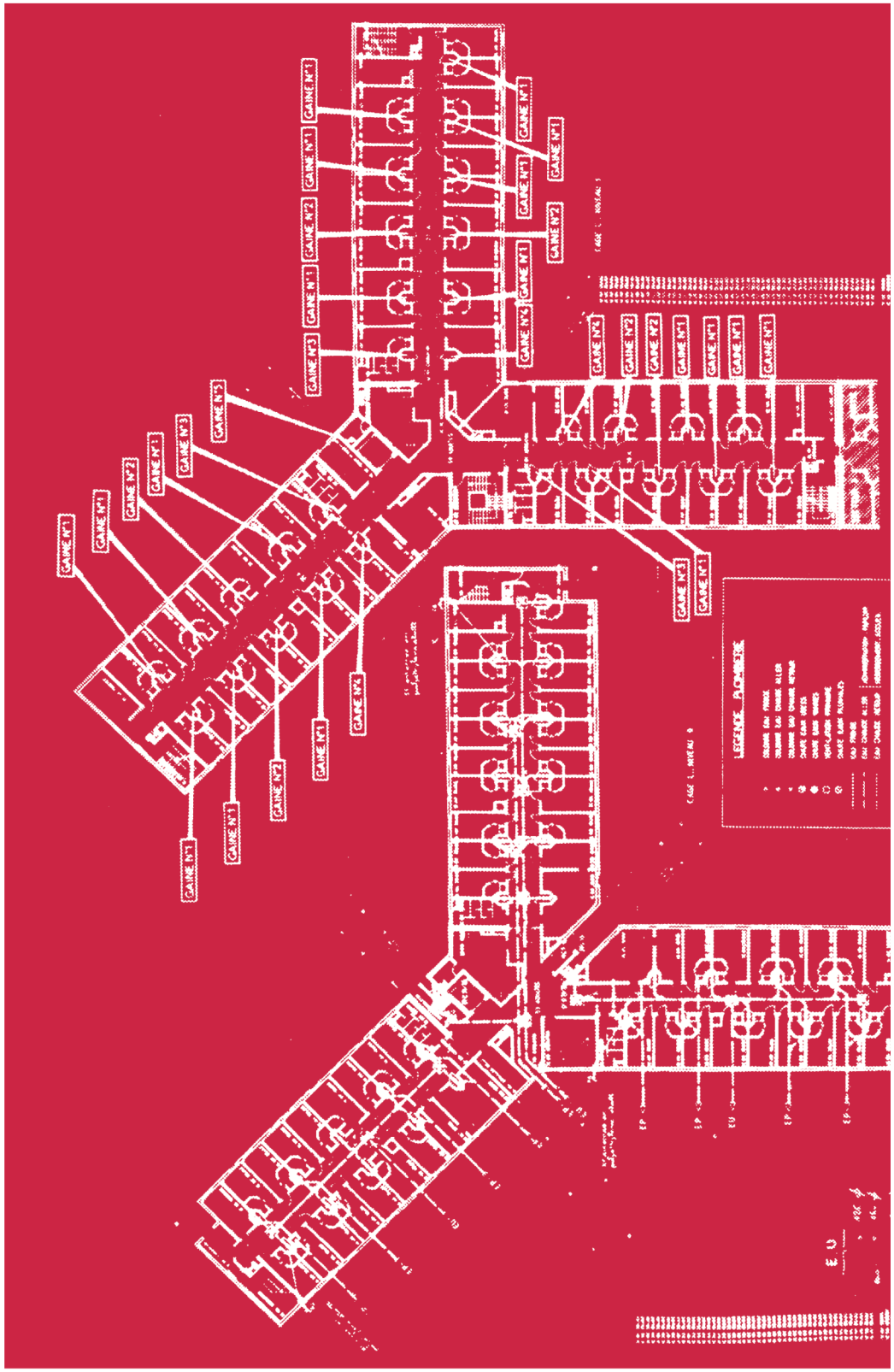
We are well aware that your participation is carried out in the "delivery of workshops key in hand". The deprivation of freedom is effectively joined with the exploitation of prisoners' labor. We know that this is the least of your worries, all the more so because we have been able to directly ascertain your disgusting diligence at work. If you are willing to remain bent over your drawing tables until Sunday evening, we have no doubt that you are also working wearing gas masks. Unfortunately, the CS gas that we introduced into your premises is only a tiny taste of what is administered in a massive dose to any prisoner who rebels.

We do not greet you miserable pen pushers.

OS CANGACEIROS

the dossier and the letter that accompanied its mailing.

With no intention whatsoever of putting forth a new militant position, we hope that reading these texts can furnish ideas for reflection about possible and practical anti-political prospects for a struggle against the prison institution that is impossible to conceive apart from a struggle against the society that hosts it.



mares of the state. You believed that you acted in complete neutrality, protected by your art. We thought otherwise.

In case your head is elsewhere, notice that of your associate who had the privilege of getting information first hand.

OS CANGACEIROS

* *

On February 21 in Vincennes, we sprayed a CS gas concentrate into the premises of the ASTRON firm, causing a temporary stop of activity. This research office delivers prison workshops key in hand.

Paris, March 2, 2003
to the ASTRON firm
rue Charles Pathe
Vincennes
Subject: Gassing

Slaves,

Thus the great city-planning project of the end of the century is planned: the "Program of 13,000 Places"!

recognize your competence for locking up delinquents. It is easy to pass from the towers of the 13th district to the prison cell.

Pig, seeing your snout up close, we were able to observe on your weary face how much you busy yourself with your projects.

Earlier you built walls; now you keep close to them.

OS CANGACEIROS

Paris, March 1, 1990
Noelle JANET
rue de Citeaux
75012 Paris
Subject: Supplemental information

Sad clone,

We have noticed your collaboration with Demonchy. His misadventure of February 23, 1990 has probably left you perplexed. Two-headed gangs like yours proliferate thanks to state subsidies. All contribute in their own way to an architecture of imprisonment, so convenient to the police-based city planning of our times. Some are dedicated to devastating space according to the imperatives of real estate speculation. Others, like yourself, have thought it profitable to give form to the Orwellian night-

Chronology

May 5, 1985: In Fleury-Mérogis, the prisoners of the D4 wing riot and wreck the whole wing.

May 6: Again in Fleury, 300 people from D1 wing refuse to return from their hour of exercise; sixty of them set fire to the infirmary.

May 7: In Bois d'Arcy, about fifteen juvenile detainees (inmates under 18 years old, usually held in separate blocks or prisons) climb onto the roof, remaining there until May 9, supported and supplied by their fellow prisoners.

May 8: In Lille, ten or so prisoners climb onto the roof. In Bastia, inmates refuse to eat prison food in solidarity with the other prisons. (The "refusal of prison food" is not exactly the same as a hunger strike, though this may be one way of carrying it out.)

May 9: In Fresnes, 400 people climb onto the roofs and clash with cops, who kill one prisoner. In Compiegne, about ten prisoners climb onto the roofs following those of the morning "shift". At Bonne Nouvelle in Rouen, about

fifty juvenile prisoners climb onto the roofs while other prisoners wreck their cells; after apparent negotiations, about thirty climbed back on the roof in solidarity with Fresnes.

May 10: From the 9th through the 10th, some prisoners went up on the roofs in Douai. There was a brief clash with the CRS (French riot police). In Amiens, about fifty prisoners climb on the roofs. In Nice, about sixty prisoners on the roofs join together with about twenty juvenile prisoners during a clash with the cops. In Beziers, 130 prisoners take three prison guards and one male nurse hostage for several hours.

May 11: In Evreux, Saintes and Coutances, prisoners climb onto the roofs and clash with cops. The same thing happens the following day in St. Brieuc.

May 19: Prisoners wreck Montpellier prison entirely (arson and destruction) and clash with cops. Outside, the crowd, consisting of prisoners' relatives and friends, attack the cops from behind.

Moreover, numerous disturbances break out in various prisons, with the destruction of cells and attempts at arson (in Rennes, Angers, Metz, etc.) as well as collective refusal of prison food (Lyons, men and women in Fleury, Ajaccio, Auxerres, St. Malo, Avignon, Chambery, etc.).

and for the prison in Mauzac as part of the Bad-inter program. Now this colorless person works at the Janet-Demonchy Studio on the design of prisons of the North region in the framework of the Chalandon program. Shortly thereafter, we informed other designers responsible for the project by post about how much such activity can cost, so that now they can no longer pretend to ignore it.

Paris, February 27, 1990
Mr. DEMONCHY Christian
c/o L'Imprevu
rue d Citeaux, 75012 Paris
Subject: Ambush

Have you recovered from your wounds, architect? Have you guessed why it happened?

Shamelessly, without a single scruple, inch-by-inch, you have designed the cells in which even the handicapped will be locked up. Inside the walls that you design, people who are worth much more than you are will be beaten regularly. It was about time that you had a taste of what thousands of prisoners will have to suffer to a much greater degree.

Of course, architect, your corporation is no less infamous. Seeing the habitations you construct for normal city dwellers, one can

without encountering the smallest obstacle.

In addition, reading your dossier, as tedious as it was, proved to be extremely instructive. Allow us to note that you lack discretion. Did the fact that you work for the state give you security and a sense of impunity that you thought nothing could disturb? Nothing, in fact, except our intervention.

Your customers will probably be amazed to discover the ease with which one can get by you to gather confidential information.

Rest assured that we will know how to make good use of everything that was not destroyed.

OS CONGACEIROS

Copies to: Mr. Eladari René, director of project "13,000"; GTM Agency of St. Gely du Fesc; SOGEA Limousin, Limoges CX

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On February 23 in Paris, the architect Christian Demonchy fell into an ambush along the path that he habitually takes to go to work. Two of us thoroughly pummeled him before the eyes of passers-by. Among other things, he is already responsible for a Club Mediterranean in Morocco

There are many suicides during this time. Rebels in Douai and Evreux are given heavy sentences on the pretext of damages committed.

June 17: A barricade is set on fire on the Nantes-Paris railroad line near Nantes in solidarity with the prison revolts.

June 20: Sabotage of the TGV (high speed train) railroad line's installations in the south of Paris.

June 27: A barricade is set on fire on the Toulouse-Paris railroad line near Toulouse.

June 30: On the night between June 30 and July 1, the printing of the Paris daily papers is paralyzed by sabotage of the IPLO print shop near Nantes. "We decided to impose a half day's silence on the national press in honor of the rebellious jailbirds…" The action is also dedicated to all the dead prisoners who were "suicided". "All these papers are well known for their hostility to the recent movement of revolt in the prisons."

July 1: Sabotage of the railroad installations on the Nimes-Tarascon line.

Each of these actions cause prolonged interruptions of railway traffic and hours of delay for the daily trains. The demands were always the same:

A reduction of punishment
for all condemned prisoners.

The release of all prisoners awaiting trial.

The definitive stopping of all deportation measures against immigrants.

The cancellation of sanctions for all the rebels.

July 2: The Paris-Brussels TEE train is stopped near Compiegne; the four demands are spray-painted on it. Windows are smashed, and copies of the pamphlet "Freedom Is the Crime…" [see page 75] are thrown through them.

July 5: Sabotage on the Paris-Le Havre line. Four people are arrested in Rouen two days later and imprisoned for three months in relation to this action.

July 8: From the 7th to the 8th, prisoners in Chaumont climb onto the roofs, demonstrating their anxiety in the face of the forthcoming presidential amnesty of July 14 (Bastille Day) that promises to be particularly meager. There are conflicts with the cops. Four of the rebels receive heavy sentences.

July 9: An anonymous act of sabotage is carried out against the Paris-Strasbourg line which passes near Chaumont.

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CHRONOLOGY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF A STRUGGLE AGAINST FRENCH PRISONS

On the night between February 11 and 12, on the outskirts of Bordeaux, it was the FORCLUM establishment's turn to be seriously damaged by fire. One should know that this company is responsible for providing anti-escape security for the entire west region. This is the company that supplies the prisons with alarms and security cameras, and guarantees the installation of the fortification of control.

Lyons, March 29, 1990
Soc. FORCLUM
rue Victor Billon
33000 Le Bouscat
Subject: Sacking

Sirs,

Our visit to your establishment between February 11 and 12 1990 requires some consideration from our side.

We had the opportunity of observing how your company, which brags about operating in the field of prison security, is nonetheless curiously incapable of watching its own back. In fact, we only had to push one of the windows of your offices in order to get in and operate there

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On January 25, 1990, we indulged in irreparable forays against the electronic panel of the cement company in Salon-de-Provence. BETONS DE FRANCE [Cement of France] supplies the building sites of the south region. What's more, two cement mixers were cleaned with acid.

February 5, 1990
Attention:
BETONS DE FRANCE
Quartier St. Jean, Salon-de-Provence, 13300
Subject: Destruction

Sirs,

With this letter we reconfirm for you the terms of our visit of Thursday, January 25 of this year. Your cement has a foul odor, that of cells. You believed that you would be able to pour it in complete tranquility, in order to bury future prisoners in the prison of Salon-de-Provence. But the market of the "13,000 places", which was supposed to guarantee your prosperity, does not, in any case, guarantee your safety.

Our passage has demonstrated this.

Once again, sir, you had the expression of our most devastating feelings.

OS CANGACEIROS

July 12: In the early morning, two Paris subway lines are blocked for several hours after heavy objects are thrown on them in solidarity with the Rouen 4 and the rebels of Chaumont; the four demands are once again publicized.

July 13: In Lyons, two official cars are set on fire in solidarity with the city's prisoners. Even before the details of the concession are known, various disturbances resume in various prisons (Fleury, Loos-les Lille, Toul, etc.).

July 14: At St. Paul prison in Lyons, about twenty prisoners of the "psychiatric" unit rebel, destroying and burning. The pathetic presidential amnesty is announced: a one to two month reduction of short-term sentences. The JAP [Judges for the Application of Penalties] will expand their workload: 3000-4000 prisoners will get out in the next few days. Numerous disturbances will accompany the news in the country's prisons.

July 15: During the night between the 14th and the 15th, tires of the convoy that accompanies the *Tour de France* are slashed (immobilizing about one hundred vehicles) in solidarity with the condemned rebels. In Toulouse, a business that employs prisoners is destroyed by fire.

August 18: In Lille, dozens of prisoners climb onto the roofs.

August 18: In Lyons, the ROP print shop for Parisian daily newspapers is wrecked. Publication and distribution are seriously effected. Once again the aim is to castigate the papers for their lies and hostility toward the rebels. The text, "The Truth About Some Actions" [see page 87] is left on the premises. To report once again, during disturbances in Guadalupa, the escape of about thirty prisoners from the Pointe-à-Pitre prisoner following a revolt.

profit to be made that would move business forward, what did it matter to you that you were working on the construction of a prison?! Was it only a building site, inert materials!?

We are among those who risk ending up in one of these lifeless places someday. To pigs and profligates of your kind, be careful!!!

You will have to tell your insurance company that it was not an accident but an act of arson.

OS CANGACEIROS

Copies to: Spie-Batgnolles, the judiciary administration, your insurance company.

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On November 25, we took interest in the SCBTP in Pontoise, which is to blame for carrying out most of the work on the Osny prison, as sub-contractors for the account of Spie Batignolles. Their van and track warehouse went up in smoke.

Paris, March 1, 1990
Soc. Coutainvillaise de Bâtiment
et Travaux Publics
Subject: Destruction

Sirs,

On the night of November 25, 1989, you suddenly had a sinister fire that was not at all accidental, contrary to what you tried to make everyone believe. Well, yes, what bad luck! Your company's motor vehicles were located at the building site of the future prison in Pontoise. Consequently, they were destroyed, thanks to our diligence.

Perhaps you thought that if you didn't play a primary role, you would have nothing to fear while working up there. Or more simply, you never even thought that there might be anything to fear and no one took the trouble to warn you. In any case, you didn't have many scruples. From the moment that there was a good

Editorial Notes from *Os Cangaceiros #2*

The function of unions in
the impending class conflict.

The poor in their struggle for
the most elementary survival.

The destruction of domination
as the main aim of the oppressed.

Violence and amazement.

For an early detection of
the emerging conditions of subversion.

Slip the moorings!

Our epoch is marked by the return of the poor to the initial ferocity. A positive break with the previous period. The workers' movement, dominated by reformist and stalinist ideas and organized by bureaucratic mechanisms, had managed to civilize the proposals of the poor almost everywhere (the Popular Front was the most important

moment of this process). The integration of the old workers' movement into civil society is thoroughly completed by now.

In the 1970s, workers in revolt never pushed themselves beyond the limits of the system. Their struggles continually surpassed union orders but nonetheless almost always remained in line with union mechanisms themselves. The unions were thus able to maneuver and pacify with sufficient force to finally win this war of attrition. The boundless demands that rebelling workers then put forward seem to have ebbed for the time being. The greater portion of the most important conflicts of the last few years, within the enterprises, were mainly defensive, carried out against the effects of recent industrial modernization.

In the 1970s, unions could not allow themselves to openly disavow the excesses of rebelling workers without risk. In the 1980s, they cannot allow themselves to uphold them. In Poland, in 1981, the leadership of "Solidarnosc" ended up denouncing the wildcat strike movement and disavowing the endless demands of the workers in the name of the national interest. In Great Britain, the TUC (the miners' union) used every means to prevent attempts at practical solidarity with the striking miners, organizing their isolation in this way and managing in

Paris, March 2, 1990
Mr. ELADARI René
Director of project "13,000"
c/o Prison Administration
rue St. Honoré, Paris
Subject: Information

CHRONOLOGY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF A STRUGGLE AGAINST FRENCH PRISONS

Sir,

We have the pleasure of making you receive a copy of the letter that we took measures to send to the GTM company.

Since you are the one responsible for the good progress and reliability of this project, we are sure that it will interest you to see the disappearance of a certain number of confidential documents removed from building sites in the south mentioned there.

Do not doubt that we will keep you well informed of our labors.

OS CANGACEIROS

you build, which you courteously left available to us. Our association has made a detailed study of them, the results of which will soon be made known to all.

For GTM, the expansion and modernization of the French prison system represents a lucrative market. What your expertise and technology reserves for thousands of individuals like ourselves is not merely imprisonment – which would already be too much – but, furthermore, the elimination of every possibility of mutiny or escape. You seem to think this result has already been gained, to the extent that it didn't even pass through your head that it might provoke a revolt in advance, or a series of undertakings of a different mark. You will realize that you are wrong.

The money that there is to gain in this project has gone so much to your head that it makes you forget every other connected consideration. So we were pleasantly surprised by your negligence: such confidential documents in such poorly protected premises! Perhaps the surprise may have been less pleasant for your clients from the judiciary administration.

The awful condition in which we left your offices as we left: this is the only future that we desire for your prison projects.

OS CANGACEIROS

the end to guarantee their defeat. In France, in December 1983-January 1984, in Talbot, the CGT and the CSL (general union and trade union, respectively) fought against striking immigrant workers, one of the unions internally, the other externally; the workers were defeated in isolation. In Spain, the attitude of the UGT (general union) and CC.OO. (trade union), particularly in recent times when they fought against the practice of self-organized assemblies, springs from the same redistribution of police functions. Everywhere, these workers' revolts were sold off in the name of the same principle. Earlier the unions appealed to the workers' interests in order to bring a strike to an end. Now they appeal to the interests of the company. In this period, the bureaucrats have reached the point where they can discuss what was beyond discussion for workers in the 1970s. Today these union apparatuses are involved, in a systematic way as managers, in meddling in the affairs of the companies. The reformist conception of "self-management" has entered into union practice that is now mainly dedicated to co-management. What wasn't yet obvious in 1968 has now become so.

The workers' movement defined itself in this way: it was about making a collective legal subject out of the mass of workers, a subject

that defended its interests in civil society. The struggles of the 1970s made this all collapse. At that time, the poor, who were still united in the factory by identical working conditions, could form a single force that expressed itself in the demand for an anti-hierarchical wage and in the refusal of work itself (absenteeism, slow-down of the rhythms of production, sabotage, etc.). Against this force, capitalism reacted like this: it reintroduced market forces as the only reference point and also undertook the complete reorganization of the exploitation of labor, increasing competition among the poor. Unions, based on wage hierarchy and the identification of the worker with his company, participate completely in the organization of this competition. In the same way, they have broken with the language of the old workers' movement, replacing it with the more empirical jargon of managers.

As one expert recently stated: "companies sometimes discover that they are facing negotiators who, surprisingly, speak the same 'economic language' they do." The main concern of the unions is simply to legally ratify, together with the bosses and the state, what has already been going on in practice for some time – for example, all the chatter about "work flexibility" or the Guaranteed Inter-occupational Minimum

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CHRONOLOGY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF A STRUGGLE AGAINST FRENCH PRISONS

On May 14, the branch office of the GTM in Saint-Gély-du-Fesc was appropriately damaged. All materials, offices and dossiers were methodically covered with acid and ammonia. We are sure that the total damage was fairly high. Besides we brought precious booty back from this expedition: detailed information about participants in this enterprise, prison plans for Villeneuve-les-Maguelonne, along with technical documentation on the security of the prisons[…]

Paris, February 28, 1990
Grands Travaux du Midi
St.-Gély-du-Fesc 34000
Subject: Destruction

Sirs,

Our journey into your premises dates back to several months ago – it was a beautiful Sunday, May 14 1989 – so we think it would be useful to rekindle your memory. Time passes so quickly – that same time that has been withheld from the walls of the prisons that you continue to build.

It's important for us to thank you for the abundant documentation about the prison construction sites of the South region where

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Paris, March 2, 1990
soc. Brugeaud
rue del Martyrs, Tulle
Subject: Destruction

Sirs,

Almost a year has passed since we seized the opportunity for entering your offices and taking away a detailed dossier about your participation in the construction of the Urzeche prison – you know, the one where prisoners will be used as guinea pigs for experimentation with "electronic bracelets" attached to the ankle for controlling their movements inside the walls!

A year is a long time. It could be that you have forgotten us. Let's take time to refresh your memory. Perhaps you hoped that your geographic isolation would be enough to guarantee yourselves a certain anonymity and to preserve the fine progress of the contract signed between you and Fougerolle?!

You were discovered, sinister builders! The addresses of your regional agencies and your banking contacts hold no more secrets for us.

Don't doubt it, we have consulted them with all the interest that they deserve.

OS CANGACEIROS

Wage. It is now openly admitted that unions, businessmen and the state all speak the same language (only a tiny minority of union activists still cling desperately to the language of the former workers' movement, the praises of which they continue to sing). The period is over in which workers could get anywhere in their struggles by placing themselves behind union cover, forcing their delegates to follow them in order to avoid open dissent.

For the first time, in France, strikers have been individually sentenced to pay compensation to scabs and not to their unions. It happened at the beginning of 1985 in the Delsey establishment near Calais. Then, it happened again in the transport industry where fifteen drivers, who were fired following the strike, were sentenced by the Arras court to pay 52,600 francs out of their own pockets to seven non-strikers brought together in the "Association for the Freedom to Work"!

Mediations, which have the task of integrating workers, have now gone through an entire cycle. It is now assumed that workers should follow the same logic as their union representatives and identify themselves completely with the operation of the company. In Great Britain, for example, the American and Japanese businesses that are being reintegrated into

the automobile and electronics sectors impose their conditions. Managers define the new rules for the management of work in close collaboration with the unions, entrusting them with imposing the rules on workers (in some cases, it is a stipulation in which the subordinate voluntarily gives up the right to strike!).

But this progress in the exploitation of labor has had to be accompanied by a conditioning of the labor force, as is done in Japan and South Korea. If factories over there are true barracks where work is militarized, it is still necessary to impose a religious cult on the workers. Need and terror are not sufficient to rally enthusiasm for work in wage laborers, even in Asia. Managers of Japanese enterprises, who act like genuine cult leaders, have understood this. The enemy cannot organize new forms of labor with nothing but a barracks regime. It responds to this problem by adding a religious or secular lie. This is what a dynamic entrepreneur in France was expressing when he declared, "business is lacking a creed".

Capitalists can freely impose the most draconian conditions on the poor insofar as the unique strength of workers in revolt was broken at the start of the 1980s, in the name of the crisis. It is a return to the principles of 19th century capitalism: seizing people through

though we weren't able to monitor our action, we still have the satisfaction of having caused the construction companies in charge to lose time and money and of thinking that certain walls aren't as solid as they seem.

In conjunction with this operation, we carried out some interventions in municipal halls, plundering the prison plans, which we stole easily under the pretext of wanting to examine the construction permits. Our aim is to make them available to all to make an expedient use of them. We are displeased that these thefts were not more numerous, considering the extreme importance of the matter.

On May 1 in Tulle, we were persuaded to consider the BRUGEAUD case. This Public Works enterprise, employed in the construction of the Neuvic-sur-Isle and Uzerche prisons, kindly furnished us with a part of the blueprints and a bookkeeping dossier relating to the Uzerche construction site. After this theft, the premises, papers and offices were perfumed with ammonia.

The total silence of the local and national press about our sabotage activity reveals, on the contrary, all its scandalous significance. Those who have spoken so much about the construction of new prisons have put the same care into silencing our actions. Whether they acted on other people's orders or on their own initiative, we find in it the same conspiracy of silence in the state's service. We salute the decidedly fitting act of vandalism against the construction site of the Villepinte prison (in January 1990). With the simple aid of the bulldozers available at the site, the ingenious saboteurs completely devastated the installations and constructions already carried out. Needless to say that in reporting the news, the press went so far as to coin a new description, that of "terrorist vandalism".

Between the end of April and the end of June, we entered various sites (Aix-les-Milles, Tarascon, Villeneuve-les-Maguelonne, Pontoise, Maubeuge, Bapaume) where we rendered the concrete meant for the building sites useless thanks to a procedure of elementary simplicity. In fact, sugar, mixed in the cement at a proportion of one to a thousand (or about two pounds to a ton), hinders the concrete from setting, definitively weakening it so that it becomes crumbly as soon as it dries. Even

hunger by organizing the spectacle of misery (as happened with the phenomenon of the so-called "new poor"). In this way, people have had unthinkable wages and working conditions imposed on them for nearly ten years. The labor force is kept completely at the disposal of employers (the unions euphemistically call this "work flexibility"), through related additional unpaid hours, Sunday work, wage decreases imposed through the blackmail of firing and so on. And some enterprises that are going through difficulties even go so far as to appeal to the workers for voluntary participation so that capital is formed from their donation of all or part of their wage! The extreme case happened in Lyons at the start of 1985, when a panel, appointed in extremis as the head of a factory in difficulty, put forth the donation of two months wages by the employees as the condition for saving the enterprise. The few that refused did well. After the payments were made, the new manager ran away overseas with the cashbox.

All that crawls upon the earth is subject to being crushed!

The universal history of desperation

Ever under the reign of the spectacle, the principle of money had manifested itself up to this

point as pure necessity. Individuals have never been so firmly brought back to their destitute condition. It's a matter of putting the poor back in their place; it is necessary to make them drool before the omnipotence of money. In Poland, for example, it isn't so difficult to make money by trafficking in the black market, as many people do. But it is much more difficult to get ahold of goods. Warehouses are empty. For us, scarcity is organized in the reverse manner. Warehouses are full, but it is quite difficult to get ahold of money.

We have met Polish people in France who are amazed by the zeal of the French for work. In Poland, there is none of this, quite the opposite! It's just that in our damned country, for many people, the mere reality of having a job, no matter how disgusting or badly paid, seems like a divine favor. All the same, there are those who spit on the offer. The now irreversible increase in those unemployed for life is certainly a direct consequence of the more rational organization of exploitation. But it is much more than a quantitative result; it is something qualitative. To a great extent, it is the young who cannot accept submission to the new conditions imposed on workers. If many young people don't have work, it is because they don't want it. And as the conditions of

Chronology and Correspondence of a Struggle Against French Prisons
(April 1989-November 1990)

The sabotage operation carried out against various enterprises involved in the construction of the new prisons started at the end of April 1989. Anyone who accepted a role in this construction program was, in fact, exposed to some reprisals from our side.

Since we risk being among the victims of this "13,000 project" at any moment, we have been able to partially fulfill a completely natural rage and break with the decadence of our epoch that allows anything to be done as long as there are economic or state reasons. It had become urgent to put a bit of ethics into public affairs and to do so in such a way that none of the enterprises stirred up against us would go completely unpunished.

granting of parole; prison leave passes and application of conditional liberty; minimum wage for prisoners who work; places reserved for intimate visits; amnesty for all sanctioned and sentenced rebels. We wanted to render them the homage they deserve by making known the plans and technical documentation about some of the new prisons that they are at risk of being transferred to. And we haven't neglected the possibility of causing these documents to reach the prisoners through appropriate means. We salute the spirit of revolt that animates them.

wage labor become more and more vile, the conditions of existence for the unemployed are becoming more and more stifling.

At the beginning of 1984, The French state attacked voluntary unemployment by reducing the welfare system to a minimum. Starting from this reduction, it consequently introduced voluntary, underpaid work (Jobs of Common Utility). For more than six months, we have been watching young imbeciles declare on TV that even though this work was badly paid, it was better than being left with nothing to do. A dual advantage for the state: it manages to make them say that outside of work (even when it's badly paid), they wouldn't know what to do with their youth. Working is having nothing to do! Those who buckle down, lowering themselves to this level, can joyfully accept any badly paid job. If it becomes increasingly unbearable to work due to the conditions of greater submission that keep coming on, it is also increasingly difficult not to work. Today it is becoming impossible to devise something for one's immediate subsistence by only working occasionally or collecting unemployment benefits.

In our opinion, the delinquency at the beginning of the 1970s expressed a desire for freedom, a wild shift, a game of mobs. Though the search

for money was part of it, it wasn't the main goal. In the 1980s, this carefree atmosphere was exhausted. This criminal freedom reached its peak in the autumn of 1981, with the corralling and burning of cars in east Lyons. From then on, the state and this society's defenders have taken action to make such excesses impossible; the reign of necessity did the rest. A young man told us that in 1981 they stole cars to amuse themselves. Now, they must first of all have a useful function and at least serve for a few thefts and robberies – after which one can amuse herself with them. Thus, it has become difficult to steal a high-powered car! The ferocity of police and judiciary repression, as signaled by an unprecedented wave of summary executions[1], has brought about the end of an epoch. All these individuals who were unemployed for life thus fill the prisons, giving rise to an automatic overpopulation. Workers are not spared and have to deal with the police more frequently. Debts, the impossibility of paying rent and other bills, bounced checks, thefts in the supermarket, and so on, lead an ever greater number of people to risk prison.

This return to the most brutal reign of necessity has effectively exacerbated the hostility and competition that regulates relationships among the poor in society. Isolation and atomization

This entire technological arsenal did not prevent the Villeneuve, Tarascon, Neuvic and Saint-Mihiel prisons from experiencing protest movements in the weeks after they first started to operate, before they were even completely full. Despite the mechanisms deployed to prevent access to the roofs, the insurgent prisoners still climbed up there. The prisoners immediately expressed their rage against the most modern conditions of their incarceration: monitoring with electronic cards; individual cells; the increase in prices and the rationing that results from the privatization of meal distribution and the canteen. It is really no more humane to be alone in a cell than to be crowded into one.

The silence to which many people in society have resigned themselves makes the dignity of unsubmissive prisoners stand out even more. Despite the risks, they have known how to make themselves heard with enough force to cause concern among those who rule by blows and contempt. Every time they carry out a dish strike or refuse to return to their cells after exercise periods, every time equipment is smashed up, every time there is an uprising, the demands that they make are the same: the elimination of isolation, punishment cells and internal prison tribunals; the automatic

has been thought out so that prisoners can see neither what is immediately outside nor the rest of the prison, but also so nothing filters in that they can hear. These units are generally located on the highest floor of the building with exercise yards enclosed in grillwork assigned to them. The high transom windows in the cells don't allow for any view. These prisons have nothing to envy in their bigger sisters, American maximum-security prisons. The muscular caprice of the guards is combined with antiseptic terror. The planners of this project conceived it with a subtlety dedicated to doing away with the idea of any outlets other than sports, tranquilizers, study and work. This has the aim of limiting the prisoners' mental universe. Increasing isolation and the loss of any reference even more, standardizing the detention of prisoners awaiting trial to the criteria of maximum-security prisons reserved for those already sentenced – this is the much-vaunted concern for humanization.

The high walls in the heart of the city were erected as a warning, a call to order, but sometimes allowed curiosity and support from passers-by in the instances of unrest. Now prison power manifests itself far from any friendly voices, without witnesses, outside the city walls.

dominate everything without contest. An atmosphere of anxiety and oppression never before known comes out of this. It has reached a point that in some big cities of the USA, there are people who die suddenly in solitude. The spread of drugs, which has very nearly annihilated the rage of so many young people, is obviously one of the more direct consequences of this state of things and helps to augment it. Now, no mediation is possible between people's misery and civil society. The revolts that have occurred since 1968 forced the enemy to modernize oppression and thus make the world even more unlivable and poverty even more visible. The old principle of 1789 returns to the first position in hostile preoccupations: filling the chasm that has been so dangerously produced between the ruling class and the poor over the last few years. This is what an entire generation of reformists under state orders are concerned with. Obviously, they only speak the language of the state and preach the democratic lie to the mass of the poor. The bourgeoisie is brutally confronted with the thing that defines it: the absence of community pushed to its fever pitch by renewed social conditions.

The violence that reigns among the poor, which is sometimes practiced openly among

them, is equal to the violence of the conditions that constrain them. At the same time that all the poor fully submit to the rules of the war of all against all, they can no longer aspire to a civilized existence and so become decidedly dangerous. This moment when separation has invaded everything also shows us that the poor cannot constitute a collective legal subject like in the period of the former workers' movement. Their dissatisfaction returns to its original basis, i.e. the ferocity that characterized their rebellion before society tried to civilize them. Thus, during the last miners' strike in Great Britain, strikers made use of criminal forms of action that are reminiscent of the punitive expeditions to which English workers abandoned themselves at the beginning of the 19th century. The very ones to which Engels referred in "The Situation of the Working Class in England", that is to say, before trade unionism had civilized the poor and crushed their rage.

Fanatics of the Apocalypse

In Heysel, people going to see a soccer match of some importance did not have specific reasons for dissatisfaction. On the contrary, they basically went to have a fine evening. The organizers of the spectacle never imagined

is to be effective. This is what produces the omnipotence of the law. Thus, there are cells reserved specifically for the handicapped, entire wings for drug addicts, so that no one escapes incarceration. It is understood how many and which possibilities for confinement[7] the antiseptic design of these mortuaries can provide for the judges. Generally no one should escape the omnipotence of this world. While society has confined every human prospect to the logic of money, with no conceivable elsewhere, the modern prison necessarily appears as a hermetic universe without any way out. Everywhere, triumphant capitalism lends credit to the idea of an inescapable world. Within the walls, the same feeling of fatality must reign relentlessly.

The new fortresses are built to notify everyone of this meager alternative. Either submit to the dictates of forced inclusion or put up with the rigors of exclusion; thanks to a profusion of technological means which it is impossible to evade; thanks to wings in which all contact with others and the surrounding environment is almost impossible. The principle of isolation and disciplinary units has been reinforced so the prison administration will be able to use the twenty-two new units at their pleasure for getting rid of refractory prisoners. Everything

des Halles or the main office of the Defense… Curiously, these techniques are tested out in the sphere of work and then made common pretty much everywhere else before being imported into the prison universe. But if the managers have integrated this constriction to the point that it becomes rewarding, prisoners, like subjugated workers, immediately feel its completely oppressive character. These techniques are the primary instrument for smoothing the explosive relations between guards and prisoners with the aim of making them as impersonal as possible. At the same time that the functioning of the buildings is dedicated to eliminating points of friction, it sends every prisoner into a depersonalized environment. Consequently, oppression becomes more abstract. Besides, the point is not so much to mete out an iron discipline to an undifferentiated mass of prisoners as to manage the smallest details of their incarceration. The repressive method cannot disappear – it forms the intrinsic backdrop of the prison universe – but it tends to dress itself up in a cold, impersonal management that characterizes our times so well.

The construction of new prisons arrives just in time to strengthen the arm of a justice system that laments the poverty of its means. The judicial institution also functions by value of example that must not allow exceptions if it

that the misery of the crowd could explode like this inside the stadium. They had said that there was no reason for violence. In Heysel, the spectacle had to demonstrate its function of manipulation of the lonely crowds, in live broadcast, play-by-play, to millions of people, at the very moment that this manipulation escaped from their hands. In live broadcasts, the rulers lost their heads. And the thing that shocked spectators so much was not the thirty-eight deaths, but the fact that they witnessed such violence on a live broadcast, that the spectacle wasn't able to spare them this time. They were embarrassed that they had seen it. The scandal was so great that in West Germany they simply blocked the press report. A journalist from *Le Monde* asked in dismay, in an article about the affair, "What effect might all this have among black African people upon whom we once tried to impose our civilization?" (The match was broadcast live to several African countries.) Since that time, we have seen a reggae concert in Guinea take a turn for the worse due to the excitement of the spectators who finally destroyed the show facilities. During the same period, in Greece, concert organizers gave orders to security guards to play with the sole aim of calming the riotous crowd. Even so, the crowd treated the singers

as wicked servants incapable of relieving the dissatisfaction and broke everything. Wild ones are everywhere in the world.

The mere fact that we came to the defense of hooligans against slander and repression caused scandal everywhere, even among people close to us. The arguments that have been used against us all originate from the same moral judgment that sees only an irrational and gratuitous violence in these actions. There are no gratuitous acts in this world; there are those who learn this at a great price. Hooliganism is an immediate expression of dissatisfaction that is not at all surprising after a week of boredom and work. Misery is always somewhat shameful, somewhat sacrilegious, to reformists. First of all they don't understand what everyday misery really is, and therefore they don't understand the violence that it generates. We affirm that the poor are united only in the breaking of all social controls and the annihilation of all laws; otherwise, they do not in any way form a community. The poor can only recognize each other in the expression of their dissatisfaction. Through this, the overturning of the situation takes place and they find themselves united in confronting a common enemy. The day after the beautiful uprising in Handsworth, an English police chief deplored the fact that

provided for identifying and directly punishing the perpetrators. One of the most widespread activities, blowing the fuses of an entire wing, will be located from now on, thanks to the fuse box each cell is supplied with. Since toilet pipes were sometimes plugged to flood a floor, siphons have been installed in appropriate pipes under every cell, allowing the perpetrator of such a natural revenge to be immediately identified. Here is an additional application of individualized control, which shows its value completely when one considers that, in many instances, the prison administration no longer had the means for strictly applying the despicable internal regulations. These sterile prisons give them the possibility to do so.

The new-look penitentiaries have been adapted to the needs of the end of the century. We are obliged to note a paradox: now it is prisons that resemble factories. Not only does the layout of the places impose rules of functioning adapted to the new techniques of work organization, but everything is thought out in minute detail in order to hinder, if not prohibit, all potential collusion. A sophisticated electronic system that encloses the prisoner in a fixed network of surveillance monitors her every move, at times relaying it through a system of magnetic encodings. One would think he was in the *Forum*

technical innovations and the introduction of private personnel would limit the staff (and the prerogatives) of jailers. Outside the chatter of publicity, the concern with making structures with the appearance of high-tech enterprises, which are economic and perfectly controlled at the same time, is clearly visible. Perhaps this is the true nature of what the judiciary administration sees as the "opening of prisons onto the world".

The assumption of individual responsibility that is constantly invoked in order to force individuals to bow down before the rationality of work is also used to subjugate prisoners to the rationality of prisons and induce them to participate in the administration of their own imprisonment. The prison administration already has an arsenal of coercive measures at its disposal for individualizing the duration of the punishment (favors and conditions granted on the basis of merit, the internal prison tribunal, solitary confinement and punishment cells, suppression of visits and activities, etc.). Modernization reinforces and extends the field of sordid calculations that is intended to subjugate prisoners. In these new pulping factories, the damage and acts of vandalism that were committed relatively anonymously in the old prisons can be immediately located. Everything has been

the people looked upon the thing as entertainment, just like soccer hooliganism. In any case, the Heysel "affair" has created new conditions for hooligans, with the military patrols of the *stadia* that followed from it. Now anyone who goes to a match to let off steam will be obliged to attack the huge number of police present in the place rather than fighting with the fans of the opposing teams. This already happened in Leicester on October 9, 1985.

The moment that the bourgeoisie and the state finish organizing the separation that defines the poor and makes their existence utterly unlivable is also the moment that creates the conditions for an overturning of the situation. What separates people and precisely makes poor people of them, is also what identifies them. The poor don't know each other; they recognize each other. In Marseilles, at the beginning of September 1985, after a pursuit following a failed robbery, police shot down one of the young robbers near the La Paternelle neighborhood. The inhabitants of the area rose up in revolt and attacked the cops, who had to retreat after a vigorous exchange of rocks and grenades. Police and journalists were surprised because the unfortunate victim was not from the area or even an Arab (if he had been from the area, police would have had to confront

an upheaval as violent as those of Brixton and Tottenham). The young people who live in La Paternelle are almost all Arabs and immediately recognized themselves in the fate that the police reserved for the unknown youth, since they suffer exactly the same harsh and painful conditions. Even in the Les Halles neighborhood of Paris, which is psycho-geographically the opposite of the suburban neighborhoods of Marseilles, the arrest of a small-time drug dealer led four hundred people to gather and attack the police and the rich area at the center of Paris (this happened last year in September). Here an attempt was made to overcome the contradictory reign of indifference and futility in Les Halles. We are satisfied by this.

We, the *Cangaceiros*

We speak a lot about the violence on the outskirts of the cities. However, there is no need to think that this is the only place that anything is going on. It's just that many people who share our conditions live there, as we do ourselves at times. We speak of nothing but violence. It is our element, and we could even say, our daily destiny. Violence is first of all the conditions that are imposed on us. Then there is the violence of the police who defend these conditions. And, unfortunately more rarely,

In this setting of reinforced security, the prison administration plans to occupy the prisoners' time. Educational pseudo-activity will be widely distributed. This dismal little animation is above all intended to present an image of the new prisons that is a bit more respectable than the image of a high-tech tomb. On the other hand, authentic little industrial sites are installed in these prison structures, which are themselves often located in the neighborhood of genuine Industrial Zones. Everything leaves us to think that it is not merely bricolage, but rather that there will be large-scale exploitation of prison labor. Some private firms have been associated with the management of these places through contracts. These firms artificially lower their construction costs with the aim of attracting the market. They intend to make up for this from now on through the exploitation of prison institutions, which is to say off the sweat of prisoners. They are entrusted with the "shelter arrangements" as these rotten shits dare to call it, the laundry, the cafeteria, the sanitary services and, of course, the work and education of the prisoners. This is how the judiciary administration intends to financially rationalize the prisons, without neglecting to integrate an economic series into its preliminary studies, dealing with materials[6] and personnel. The

The architectural conception of the new institutions is regulated by this imperative: prisons of moderate dimensions, with fragmentation and the division of space as their essential principles. Starting from small detention units for twenty-five people, locked up in individual cells, possible paths were obsessively distinguished with constant attention to separation.[3] Furthermore, the modular structure renders the different sectors of confinement watertight. For example, the movies and the socio-educational sectors, though placed on the same floor of the same building, cannot under any circumstance intercommunicate. Electronically controlled, inter-blocked entrances manage and regulate every movement, whether horizontal or vertical.[4] Access to the roof is made difficult due to the presence of acroteria.[5] The number of courtyards for walks has been increased to reduce the number of prisoners brought together in one of the moments that is most favorable to collective action. The devices for preventing potential rebels from taking over spaces in the prison structure have been improved and above all systematized in comparison with most existing prisons. Every attempt at revolt has to take these obstacles to its extension into account. We are confident that the rage and wits of the rebels will know how to figure this out.

there is the violence that we throw back in their faces. We don't know all of our enemies, but we know what they defend. Our allies are not all obliged to be our accomplices, but at times it happens that some of them are. We do not have relations with all of our allies. The unemployed who fight against poverty are our allies, as are the workers who rebel against work and escape the control of the unions. We don't think that we possess a universal truth, but we intend to communicate what we think. Universal truths are the ones that are communicated, not the ones that are possessed. We tell those who ask if we are assemblyists or councilists that we are interested in knowing how people establish and organize dialogue. We are not "terrorists" because we support underground activity: it was once said that the old mole digs. In our times, people who affirm revolutionary demands pass for dreamers. But the human being is made of the same material that his dreams are made from. We are revolutionaries. "Os Cangaceiros" means "Everything is possible", "We are at war", "Nothing is true, everything is permitted". There are many of us relative to the reigning atomization, and we have allies everywhere.

Our program is very old: to live without dead time. We propose to make it known through

scandal; there are no other means worthy of such a program. Our existence itself is already a scandal. We are clearly not indispensable, but on many occasions we have had to be so. In social war, no one can be exonerated. We are also very suspicious – experience shows that one is never sufficiently so. Distrust is never enough. Distrust is judged by the trust that is placed apart from what we call "the world of work", since we have escaped from this very world. But when struggles deserving of the name take place, they are against the world of work and unleash a rage against that which forces the poor to work, the need for money.

We explain the fact that there are no other groups like us in Europe at this time with this thought: we are simply the first. Of course, our writings have a negligible distribution when compared with our enormous ambitions. But we count on the strength of spirit of our readers to pose a remedy for this, and this does not call our ambition into question. The distribution of our writings obviously has nothing to do with the massive, daily distribution of lies in the press. If few people read our writings, they are addressed to potential correspondents, not to a mass of spectators. Better to have selected and combative people with us than amorphous masses. This favors our enormous ambitions. We are against

on a large scale rather than responding blow for blow. Up to now it has been limited to backpedaling by liberalizing the prison regime bit by bit. Now, the thirteen thousand cells form a margin of maneuvering that will allow prisoners as a whole to be better managed. We can imagine the frantic use that judges will make of this surplus of cells, following from the general policy of mostly systematic incarceration. Let's not forget that 100,000 prison sentences without the possibility of parole are meted out each year. This program grants the judicial administration the possibility of anticipating future prison policies. The extension of the means that were studied for quickly containing any uprising or collective unrest, if they cannot be prevented, has reached the point where it is claimed that even the idea of escape will be crushed.[2] The prison administration has profited from studies inside its institutions, notably those which were carried out during the Badinter period. Huge prisons like Loos-les-Lille, the Baumettes, Fleury, etc., are often the first to rise up. The tension that reigns in these places and the high number of prisoners show how the "problem of overpopulation" is ultimately just a question of the relationships of force. Thus, it is a matter of systematically isolating prisoners from each other.

the suburbs have been renovated using police criteria and repainted in the colors of the times. In the midst of the misery itself, the attributes of every advanced society are discovered: the police and the democratic lie.

With the "new conception" prisons, repressive modernity arrives and is introduced inside the walls. The proclaimed goal – humanization, healthiness, decongestion of overcrowded buildings[1] – in reality hides the desire to put these places on the same level as the social order. Their inadequacy to this order condemns the old structures. The prison doors are opened to the outside world in order to let the civilizing principle of our time penetrate into them: technically equipped separation. For a long time, pure repression was the only recourse of authority for overcoming revolt. Now it must avert revolt at its source, suffocating it even in thought. The responsibility for carrying out the task of constraining individuals to not merely respect, but to espouse social rules, lies increasingly in reformist measures. Reform is the continuation of repression by other means. It increases the efficacy of social control. This concern is at the center of the conception of the new prisons.

For the first time in the 20th century, the prison administration possesses a new, more adequate tool to apply the strategy of its choice

all hierarchy and consider our association egalitarian insofar as everyone is capable of making decisions within it. The fact that we make reference to intellectuals like Marx and Hegel doesn't bother us: in their time one could be an intellectual without being an intellectual whore; now this isn't possible anymore. Furthermore, they were not just intellectuals in that they had an effect on reality. We consider it possible to have continuous contact with other groups on this basic condition: that it goes beyond every form of agitation-propaganda in the way it goes into action. What we criticize in politics is the state.

We must bring something new to this epoch, and we even have the means for doing so. When we met at various times with some striking miners in Great Britain, they asked us these elementary questions: "What force do you really constitute? What can you do with the information we give you?" We need to be able to answer such questions clearly, especially since not everyone can understand a group like ours. In Poland they asked this as well: "But who are you then? What is your movement?" We need to be able to demonstrate the universal nature of our existence. The interest we have in the revolts of those like us goes beyond the interest that an isolated poor person, without means, has for the

world. Although we occupy ourselves with what interests us, it is quite clear that we do not intend, in any case, to furnish aid to other people's struggles. We merely intend to meet people and take part in their joy. Most of the rebel workers that we meet are influenced by the militant attitude that comes out of the former workers' movement. In the current state of things, we can count on having encounters with individuals on their own, but sometimes we also get in contact with various organized groups that still hold to some illusions about unionism, with rebel workers. Though the activism of these groups leaves us indifferent, we know people in these groups who are quite close to us due to their refusal of work. Young people of the urban outskirts are in the habit of meeting isolated people or those who have come together in local gangs; when they meet us, they are always a bit surprised to see a well-formed and organized group. On the other hand, when workers in struggle, who are in the habit of seeing people who act as members of an official organization, meet us, they marvel at seeing individuals who seem to act on their own. In Great Britain and Spain, many workers in revolt have continued to be amazed to see a group of those unemployed for life, that is organized, with contacts and information on

ing of the individual – the experience of bad luck that prisoners share is a weapon against isolation and prison silence. The experience of being able to have an immediate collective resonance, in spite of the "administrative" will to confine everyone in a merely personal condition, generates a dangerous cohesion. The endless collective revolts that have shaken the prisons since 1985, and the networks of solidarity that have formed since then, bear witness to this. Despite devastating treatments and additional years of imprisonment, rebellion comes around periodically to inflame the prisons. The necessity of freedom manifests itself in this without ambiguity.

Using proven techniques and strategies, the sinister "13,000 Program" is above all a response to this situation of endemic revolt inside the walls. The state is restructuring the industrial apparatus and at the same time, in a similar manner, it is building "new conception" prisons, closing down some old prisons and renovating others. Outdated, crumbling prisons from which people have escaped are replaced, just as the high rises of the proletarian neighborhoods where people were rebelling ten years ago are being blown up. To tame the insubordination of the populations that have been dumped there, the "large complexes" of

contesting the prison policies of whatever government, but are openly challenging the principle of imprisonment itself. To confront this unprecedented wave of opposition, the judicial administration has implemented a program of prison renewal and modernization that is also without precedent.

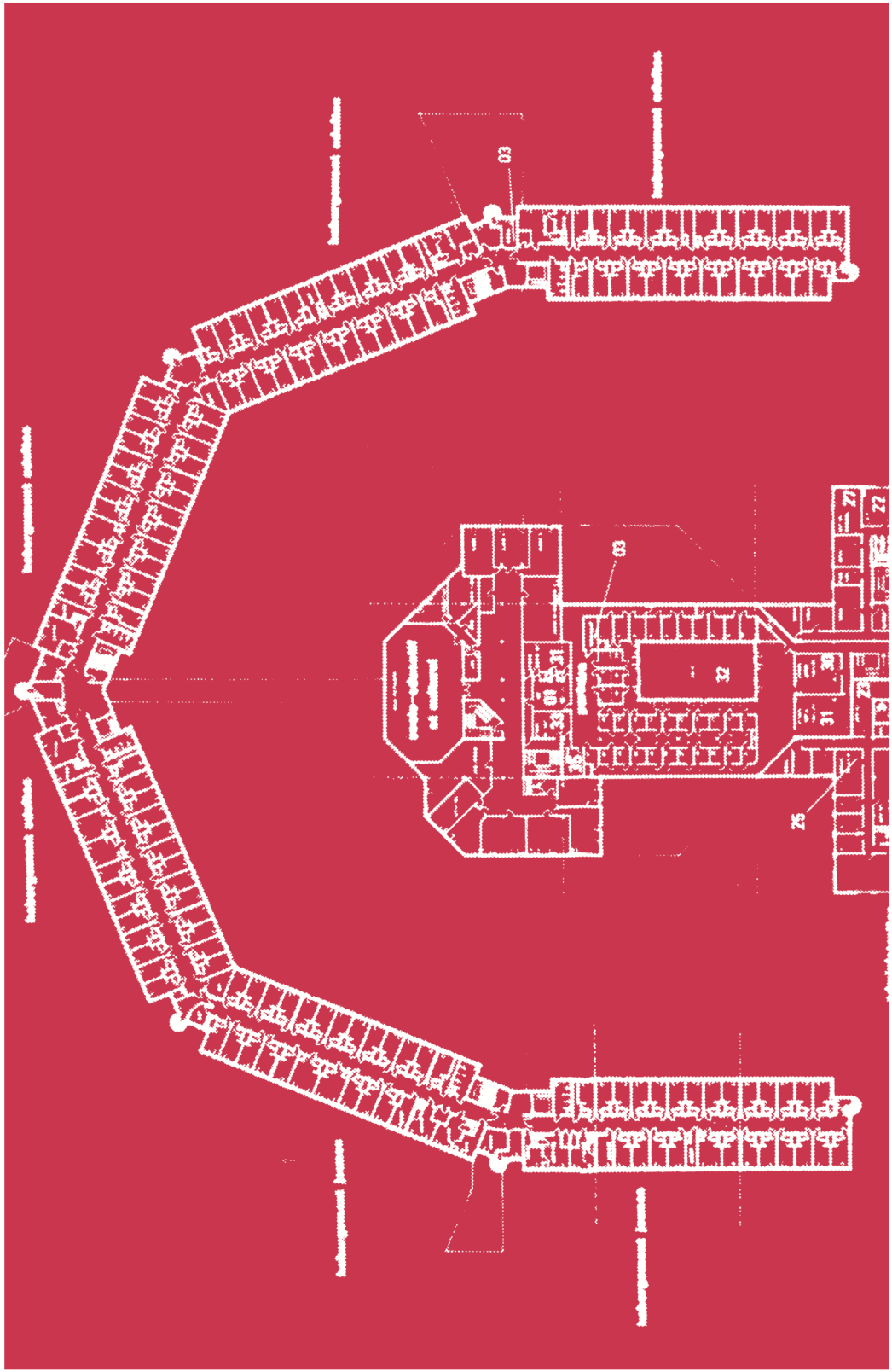
Until the revolts of 1971, the management of French prisons was still rigid. The prison administration managed to act in such a way that revolts stirred up by a few prisoners would remain isolated or at least would not be spoken about on the outside as anything other than curiosities. The explosions of 1971 and 1974, which involved the entire prison system, created a new situation. The force of the uprisings and the violence of the repression were a shock to society. The administration was forced to make some concessions and reform a system of internal regulations that had remained unchanged for decades. Since then, prisoners have not stopped attacking prison authorities.

While separation and atomization have become dominant conditions, places where a collective critique can be practically elaborated are rare. Paradoxically, prison is still one of those places. Unlike what happens in most cases outside the walls – where misfortune is experienced in a solitary way and often constitutes a disarm-

an international scale, and capable of making use of certain means for being independent of any political or union apparatus. In the end, we arouse the interest of others through our very existence.

In every way, the only serious risk that we incur is that of dying of poverty.

OS CANGACEIROS

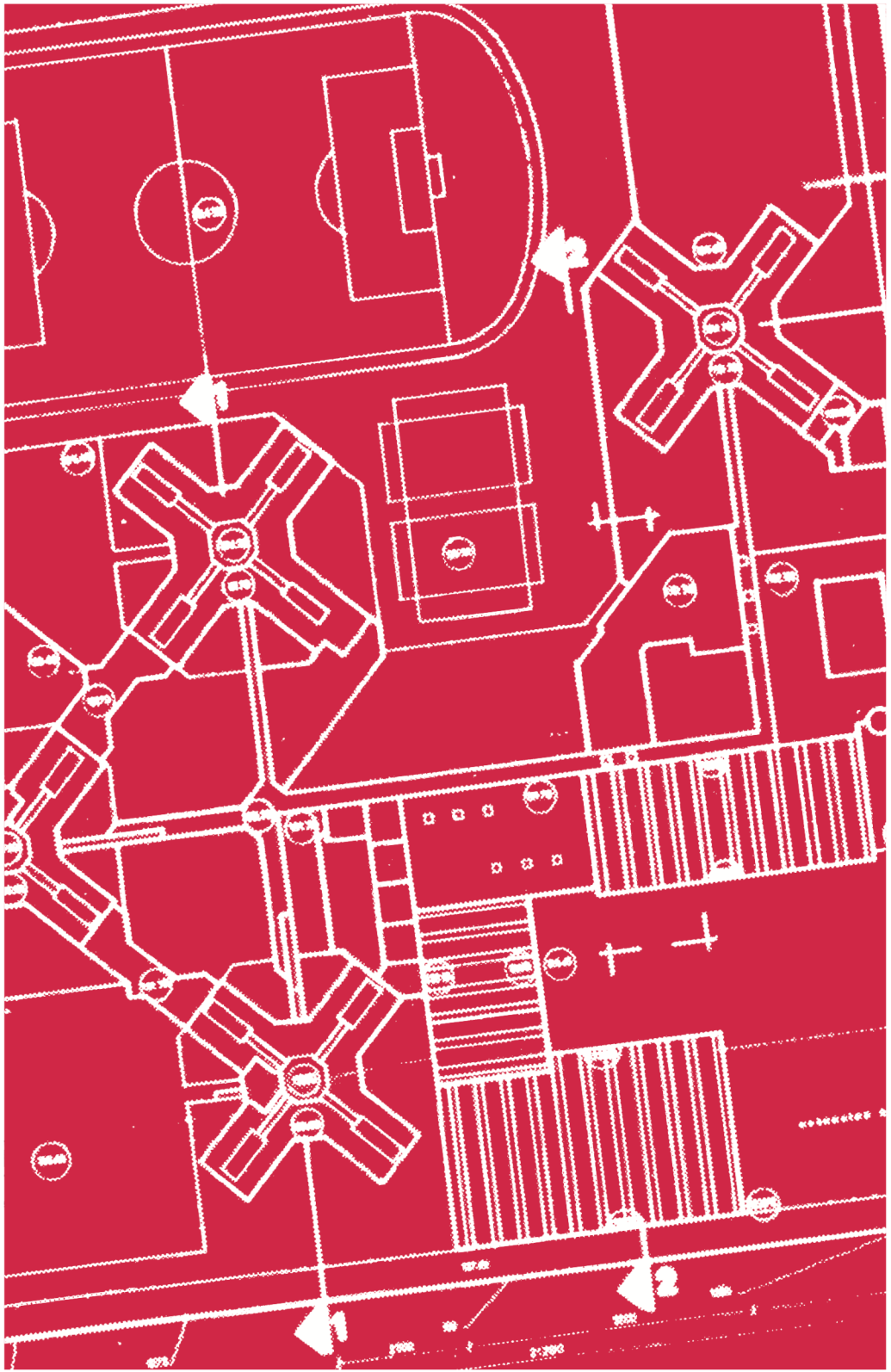


"13,000 Escapes"
A Dossier Against the "Project of 13,000 Places"

Preamble

"That the world appears this way, as it is, should be enough for its disgrace. When Dante wrote Inferno *he didn't additionally demand that they enact its reform."*
—Serge Coutel, *L'Envolée*

Starting more than twenty years ago, a growing number of prisoners no longer accept sanctions. Just as they reject the rules of the social game outside the walls, on the inside they refuse penance and punishment which, for nearly two centuries, have constituted prison morality that has the aim of keeping them under submission. Today the prisoners of democracy are not only clearly



Prisoner's Talking Blues

It is impossible to separate the fate reserved for prisoners inside the walls from the conditions reserved more generally for the mass of poor people in society. This is what the wave of uprisings of May 1985 has shown, uprisings carried forward especially by the accused awaiting judgment and developed solely in judiciary prisons. The penitentiaries did not stir, but among the prisoners awaiting judgment, quite a few are certain to be sentenced to "long punishments" and will end up there. The majority of the insurgents are part of the category of the accused who will end up being sentenced to at least as much time as they have already served before sentencing. These are "petty criminals" who we have the greatest chance of meeting outside. The revolt that resounds inside the prison walls is a continuation of the one that resounds outside, in the neighborhoods on the outskirts, and is a consequence of its repression.

In France, 1985, only prisoners have still continued to have rebellious hearts and spirit.

Those on the outside who still avoid the general annihilation recognize themselves, due to the force of circumstances, in the rebellion of the prisoners. Due to the contents of this revolt, they can only attribute a universal significance to it. One thing is indeed certain, the revolt against prison is now flaring up on the outside as well.

This wave of revolt was directed in the same way against prison and justice. Up to that time, prisoners attacked the penitentiary institution; now they also attack the judiciary institution. Before they rebelled against the execution of punishment, now they also rebel against society's judgment. Up to that time, they protested against the way they were treated inside the walls; now they also protest against the way in which they are treated by a society whose general interest is represented by justice. Supporters of the state consider the insubordination of prisoners more dangerous, the more it threatens to blow up the entire system of law, which constitutes the keystone of the state apparatus and the safety valve of bourgeois society. This is why it was logical that prisoners' revolt would find an echo outside.

Our aim is not exactly that of supporting on the outside the demands formulated inside for the improvement of some details of the prison

assault was restricted to a political form, leaving the last word to the state. The secret of the absence of a revolutionary movement across the Channel is therefore identical to that of the defeat of revolutionary movements on the continent.

We have described the beginning of a process that is now reaching its completion: the labor movement is definitively integrated into civil society, and a new project of industrial domestication is underway. Today the magnitude and the limits of the movements of the past that inevitably bring about social conditions in every region of the world have become completely clear.

Leopold Roc

deplorable that the "industrial revolution" was not accompanied by a "cultural revolution" that would have integrated the poor into the "industrial spirit" (such considerations multiplied in the '70s when the spread of wildcat strikes sharply revealed how important this was).

In France, the bourgeois counterrevolution was first of all theoretical; domination was exercised through politics and law, "the miracle that has kept people in a state of abuse since 1789" (Louis Blanc). These principles *represented* a universal project: the promise that the poor would be able to participate when they adopted the existing structures. Around 1830, a sector of the poor took on the role of spokespeople for this promise, demanding that "men who have been made inferior be given their dignity as citizens" (Proudhon). Beginning in 1848, the same principles were invoked against the bourgeoisie in the name of the "republic of work". The extent of the role played by the dead weight of 1789 in crushing the Paris commune is common knowledge.

This social project split in two in the 19th century. In England, the capital of capital, social struggles weren't able to merge into a unified assault, and so became travesties that remained at the level of "economic" struggles. In France, the cradle of reformism, the unitary

regime. It is not that we turn up our nose at such demands, since we know how things go in prison. Above all, we seek to fight against the idea of imprisonment itself. We want to succeed in the destruction of these damned institutions. Therefore, we can encourage and take up every sort of demand that contains the only vital demand: "Air!"

Being among those who risk prison, we completely reject its fatality.

For us, poor people who aspire to practical wealth, it is difficult to find words to express our rebellion and our aspirations in a clear way – i.e., words for understanding each other. The enemy's strategy is two-fold: making sure that the poor are distracted from questions of primary necessity and go to tilt at windmills, and in this way preventing them from meeting and discovering common tensions.

The majority of explanations that one is permitted to hear about the prisoners' revolt are false simply because they speak the language of the state, the law. The function of this chattering is so that the poor, in this case prisoners, are no longer even able to find the words necessary to express their dissatisfaction

and rebellion, so that they are not able to dialogue, because they only know how to express themselves in the language of their masters. The aim of the supporters of the state and the defenders of the present society is to cause the poor to no longer know how to talk unless they are addressing their masters. Anyone who speaks the language of rights speaks to the state and only to the state, solely on the basis of its reason. This lie, which doesn't just date back to yesterday, has the purpose of once again civilizing the insubordination of the poor.

The fact is that a modern capitalist country cannot be governed with pure force, putting tanks at every street corner. The same is true for the maintenance of order in prisons. A modern state is constrained to guarantee all the formal liberty necessary to the smooth functioning of business. Two important capitalist countries, Argentina and Brazil, recognized this last year (the South American bourgeoisie is also on the verge of realizing it). A capitalist country cannot prosper by shooting the poor as soon as they get restless. To make them participate with their labor in the wealth of society, it must make them speak only its language and fill their heads with universal and abstract concepts that are really those of bourgeois society. It is necessary for them to identify with the

modern poor. But it is also the country where institutions have been left unchanged for three centuries, having not been shaken by a revolutionary assault.

Ready to Take to the Barricades

This is what distinguishes England from the nations of the European continent and contradicts the marxist concept of revolution. Commentators have tried to explain this enigma as a British atavism. This led to the endless repetition of tall tales about the reformist and anti-theoretical character of the English poor as compared to the radical consciousness that animated the poor in France, who were always ready to take to the barricades. This sort of ahistorical outlook forgets the abundance of theory that came out during the years of the civil war in the 17th century along with the persistence and violence that have always characterized the social struggles of the English poor, struggles that have continued to grow since the middle of this (20th) century. In reality, the enigma is resolved like this: *the revolt of the poor always depends on what it confronts*.

In England, the ruling classes carried out their enterprise of domestication through the brutal force of a social mechanism and without flowery phrases. English historians often find it

not produce this community themselves; it was the product of an external mechanism.

The "aristocratic minority" of skilled workers was the first incarnation of this ideology – the sector that interested politicians, and from which came those who society was only too pleased to greet as the representatives of the working class (as Edith Simcox fittingly noted in 1880). The huge mass of still intermittent and unskilled workers couldn't be part of this. When the trade union doors opened, these workers were the only ones who still maintained the wild and combative spirit of English workers, beginning a long cycle of social struggle that was at times violent, but lacked a unifying principle.

"Although the revolutionary initiative will probably begin in France, only England can serve as the lever for a serious economic revolution. (…) The English have all of the *material* for social revolution. What they lack is the *generalizing spirit* and *revolutionary passion*." This late 19th century declaration of the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association contains both the true and false consciousness of an epoch. From a social viewpoint, England has always been an enigma. It is the country that gave birth to modern conditions of exploitation, and was thus the first to produce large masses of the

general interests of society, and this is precisely the historical enterprise of the bourgeoisie: to be successful at doing this.

Every modern state has the imperative to civilize the wild ones, the poor, including those who it has isolated from society in its prisons. The battle of ideas therefore rages on this front. The supporters of the state know that they will gain the upper hand over the prisoners' revolt not so much due to mere force, which they are compelled to make use of at an early time with the risks that entails, but rather through pseudo-dialogue, through deception. This is why we must make supposed questions of legal right become social questions, causing the operation currently tried by the most modern supporters of the state to fail.

As a former prisoner recently said about penitentiary administrators, "they always try to make you participate in your own punishment; this is dialogue, there are no other possible forms of it." There is even a figure who specializes in the matter – the social worker. The thing called "social work" has its origins in the practices of the Church. Historically, it is born from the exchange of charity for penitence. Social workers are secular priests who preach for the state. All the thought that currently dominates the judiciary and prison system

goes in this direction. They even dream of giving prestige back to the condition of prison guards, conferring upon them the label of educator. Once the penitence inflicted on the prisoner was not nearly so ambiguous; it was physically very hard (it is enough to read the frightful accounts made by survivors of the punitive bath). Now it is claimed to be moral and also, so to speak, spiritual, although it conserves the basis of the prison system and the violence that entails (many die in French prisons). The repressive system is weighed down with a moral content; it is even supplied with justifications. Its aim is moreover that of filling people's heads and preventing the people involved in rebellion (that is now chronic in prisons) from being able to find their own words.

The people currently responsible for repression seek to provoke and feed an endless pseudo-dialogue about multiple improvements that could be introduced into the prison regime, all in order to justify it. It is an indirect way of convincing the prisoners of the validity of punishment. The state is convinced that it has a greater chance of managing this by combining pseudo-dialogue with repression, the physical violence of which is no longer enough in itself.

By refusing the very concept of punishment, the imprisoned delinquents start to openly

In his famous 1864 address to the International Workingmen's Association, Marx began by drawing a detailed portrait of the appalling situation of the English poor and went on to applaud "marvelous successes" like the ten-hour workday law (we've already seen what that was worth) and the establishment of manufacturing cooperatives, which represented "a victory of the political economy of work over the political economy of property"! If marxist commentators have amply described the horrifying fate of 19th century workers, they consider this fate to be to some extent inevitable and beneficial. It was inevitable because it was the unavoidable consequence of the demands of science and of a necessary development of "production relations". It was beneficial to the extent that "the proletariat was united, disciplined and organized by the mechanisms of production" (Marx).

The workers' movement was founded on a purely defensive basis. The first workers' associations were "associations of resistance and mutual aid". But if the poor in revolt had always previously seen themselves *negatively*, and had identified with their enemies' class, it was in and through work, which they had been forced to make the center of their existence, that workers came to seek a positive community. But they did

of the new industrial sites, shivering workers withdrew to the solace of the chapel. There is always a tendency to rationalize insults when revenge does not take place. The new workers' morality turned poverty into a state of grace and austerity into a virtue.

In industrial areas, the union was the direct offspring of the chapel, and lay preachers were transformed into union representatives. The campaign to civilize the poor, carried out by the bourgeoisie, gained the upper hand over social hatred only on the rebound, once it was relayed by the workers' representatives, who now spoke the same language as their masters in their struggles against them. But the religious form that the domestication of thought might still take on was only a secondary aspect. Its most effective basis was the economic lie.

Quite appropriately, John and Paula Zerzan bring up this contradiction[2]: It was during the second third of the 19th century, when the poor were subjected to the most degrading and mutilating conditions in all aspects of their lives, and when all resistance to the founding of the new capitalist order was defeated, that Marx, Engels and their followers greeted the birth of "the revolutionary army of work" with satisfaction, and believed that the objective conditions for a victorious assault had finally come together.

accept what they are in society. The prisoners are aware that a penal code belongs to its time and to the state that corresponds to the current society; the same goes for the penal procedure.

Reformist consciousness is always expressed in the form of justification. Contrarily, the behavior of the rebels appeared unjustifiable (like the destruction carried out in Fleury on May 5), as does its only declared reason ("air"), which cannot be negotiated with the state. When prisoners start challenging the justice of which they have been the object, prison ceases to be suffered as a fatality.* Leftist educators

**Thus it is increasingly common in courtrooms to witness behaviors of open rebellion on the part of the accused who refuse the claim of the judge and jury to judge them. We recall that in 1984, two people accused of robbery, in two separate instances, at the beginning of their hearing in the Court of Assizes in Paris, one after another refused to be judged by the repugnant presiding judge Giress – the same one who had absolved the no less repugnant police officer Evra, killer of two young motorists, in the preceding hearing. The refusal of the accused caused a procedural crisis of sorts in the Court of Assizes of the Seine. More recently in Nice, the Ghellam brothers created a fine disorder: "Two brothers accused of having committed a robbery with seizure, who had to appear Monday and Tuesday before the court of Assizes of the Maritime Alps, have refused their lawyers since the opening of the hearing, forcing the court to postpone the trial to a new date. Michel Ghellam, 26 years*

who try to justify delinquents, finding some excuse for their crimes, just make us sneer with scorn. One is already forced to justify oneself as a defendant before the judge (besides, it is understood that if one tries to explain oneself too much one ends up losing, the same thing that happens when one is stopped by the police). And perhaps it is still necessary to be justified as prisoners! The rebels know that they have no admissible reasons from the point of view of those who judge them. Before the state, silence is truly the weapon of the poor.

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*old, and his brother Roland, 37, suspected of carrying out an armed robbery on October 9, 1980 at the central post office of Antibes, vehemently criticized the 'justice of the rich' in bulk, their lawyers 'who need this putrid justice in order to live but don't denounce it', journalists 'always under orders' and the police charged with keeping an eye on them 'who only await a gesture from them to shoot them down like rabbits'." (*Liberation*, September 24, 1985). "At the end of a long suspension of the hearing, the court decided to designate two official lawyers and to reschedule the debate for October 7." Three weeks later, they refused to witness the trial. Obviously one cannot allow oneself such an attitude unless one is being judged for a very serious or a very minor crime, if one has nothing more to lose, or if one has very little to lose.*

On another occasion, in the spring of 1985, a group of Lyonese punks succeeded in making a mockery of justice. While

side of the Channel. This refinement allowed the latter to dispossess the poor, first of all, through ideology. Even today, the English defenders of the old world put forth their moral rectitude rather than their political opinions. The particularly visible and arrogant boundary that separates the rich from the poor in France is on par with the feeble penetration of the concept of the individual and legal equality.

While Puritan moral indoctrination had the initial effect of unifying and comforting everyone who had a particular interest to defend in a changing and uncertain world, it devastated the lower classes, who were already bent under the yoke of work and money, and put the finishing touches on their defeat. Thus, Ure recommended that his peers maintain the "moral machinery" as carefully as the "mechanical machinery", in order to "make obedience acceptable". But this moral machinery would reveal its harmful effects particularly when it was adopted by the poor, stamping its imprint on the nascent labor movement.

The Campaign to Civilize the Poor

Working class sects multiplied. Methodists, Wesleyans, Baptists and other sects recruited as many faithful as the Church of England, a state institution. In the hostile environments

In France, in 1789, these principles were to be fully realized, as they definitively shed their religious form and took on a universal one through law and politics. France was a latecomer to the industrial process. There was an irreconcilable conflict between the bourgeoisie and a nobility that was wary of any mobilization of money. Paradoxically it was this delay that led the bourgeoisie to advocate the most modern approach.

In Great Britain, where the ruling classes had long ago merged along a common historical path, "the Declaration of Human Rights took form dressed not in a Roman toga, but in the robe of the Old Testament prophets" (Hobsbawm). This is precisely the limit, the incomplete nature of the English theoretical counterrevolution. Citizenship was still ultimately based on the doctrine of election, according to which the elect recognized each other by the fruits of their labor and their moral adherence to this world. This excluded the *rabble*, who could still dream of a land of plenty.

The initial goal of forced labor in the factories was, above all, to limit this threatening potential, and to integrate it through a powerful social mechanism. The lies of the English bourgeoisie still lacked the refinement that characterized their counterpart on the other

PRISONER'S TALKING BLUES

In prison, there are all kinds of individuals. But prisoners are most of all delinquents that society has decided to isolate. The term delinquency should not lend itself to confusion. It is chronically used to describe a set of behaviors that share the ephemeral shattering of social restraints and contempt for the law as well as other people's property. Society uses this term to identify the youth who goes dancing on Saturday night in order to fight, the housewife who steals at the supermarket, the kid who turns into a robber, the worker who takes materials away from his factory, or who, more directly, sees no way to survive but to steal – all the people who,

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*one of them was being tried for sneak thieving in a sleeping car, his friends distributed a flyer in the hall entitled "No mercy for sneak-thieves, cut off their hands!"… When the judge proposed a TIG [*Travail d'Interêt General*, an added punishment that provides for hours of work in a few associations that have agreements with the state], the defendant gave the clearest refusal. (In the end he was sentenced to 15 days, suspended). Moreover, as far as we know, it is the first time that anyone has had the dignity to refuse a TIG. Perhaps this is the same group of punks that had the delightful idea of putting the manifesto "Du fric ou on vous tue" ["Your money or your life"] (see* Os Cangaceiros *#1) to music in Lyons.*

We also recall the mass movement of demands for provisional liberty that originated in Lyons last year and threw judges into confusion and panic, which arose again in September, 1985 in the Baumettes prison in Marseilles.

on varying levels, it can no longer completely integrate. It is a time in which work and the law are no longer sacred in the eyes of many poor people.

"Delinquent, from the Latin *delinquere*, to take away (as one's due), *de linquere*, to leave out. Delinquent XIV, from the present participle *delinquens*. Delinquency XX." (*Larousse Etymologique*).

If the individual has rights, it is because she has duties. If she fails in these, she cannot seriously demand her rights in society and before the state. Except in view of repentance on her part, paying her debt (in a specific fashion, by working for a few coins while suffering her punishment) and giving evidence of her desire for rehabilitation (by having conditional or partial liberty, the individual is judged a second time, this time on the basis of her concrete desire for rehabilitation). If she decides to work for rehabilitation, she can hope to be exempted from a portion of the misfortune that strikes prisoners, conserving whatever effective right. The state understood quite quickly, since the first uprisings of 1971 and 1974, that it was not necessary to isolate imprisoned individuals completely from civil society. If necessary, it forces the condemned to earn the right to reenter it anew. This is not the least despicable thing!

remedy. With the triumph of the English ideology, the poor, who were already completely dispossessed, were deprived of even the idea of plenitude.

Puritans – scum

The cult of utility and progress found its source and legitimacy in Protestantism, and more precisely in its Anglo-Saxon Puritan variant. Having made religion a private affair, the protestant ethic confirmed the social atomization caused by industrialization. Individuals found themselves alone before god just as they found themselves isolated in the face of commodities and money. This ethic also professed precisely the values that were required of the poor: honesty, frugality, abstinence, thrift and work.

The Puritans were scum who relentlessly fought against parties, games, debauchery and everything that was opposed to the logic of work, and saw the millenarian spirit as the "stifling of the spirit of enterprise" (Webb, 1644). They paved the way for the industrial counter-revolution. Moreover, one could say that the Reformation was the prototype for reformism: as the product of dissent, it, in turn, favored all dissenting points of view. It "did not demand that one become a Puritan; it demanded that one be a believer. Any religion would do."

cementing the defeat of their long resistance to the new industrial order.

The ever-present dictatorship of necessity was thus established. Once the vestiges of the former social order were suppressed, nothing remained that could not be reduced to the imperatives of work. The "struggle for existence" was all the poor had to look forward to. But the absolute reign of necessity cannot be understood merely as a quantitative increase in scarcity. It is above all the colonization of the mind by the trivial and crude principle of *utility*, a defeat for thought itself.

Here is where we measure the consequences of the crushing of the millenarian spirit that inspired the poor during the first phase of industrialization. During this period, the reign of brutal necessity was clearly conceived as *the work of one world*: the world of the antichrist based on property and money. The idea of the suppression of necessity was inseparable from the idea of the realization of the Garden of Eden for humanity, "the spiritual Canaan where wine, milk and honey flowed, and money did not exist" (Coppe). With the defeat of this attempted reversal, necessity attained an *appearance of immediacy*. Henceforth, scarcity appeared to be a natural calamity that only a more extensive organization of work could

Anyway, civil society already has its entrances into prisons: prisoners often work. But it enters prisons on the basis of the particular methods reserved for socially unworthy individuals. Since prisoners are outside of the mechanisms of integration into this society, the rate of exploitation of their labor can be permitted to be especially high, and their wages especially low.

All sorts of people claim to be interested in the insubordination of prisoners. Many of them, the reformists, demand that society acknowledge the prisoners' assertion of their rights. But what are these rights? Rights of defense? But these only apply to the object of judgment, not to the execution of the sentence. Prison is a closed universe in which there can be no place for "contradictory debate". Human rights and citizens' rights?

Human rights are the recognized privileges and safeguards of the atomized individual of bourgeois society, in which there is room for only two kinds of individual: those who make money and those who work. How could we, who do not enrich society but rather cost it money, think of benefiting from these privileges and safeguards? By virtue of what social activity in which we could take pride?

Citizens' rights? The citizen is the political individual, i.e., an abstract individual. The prisoner is not a citizen.

On the one hand, there is the effective member of bourgeois civil society, the isolated and limited individual that this society considers the essence of the human being. On the other hand, there is the moral person, the citizen. It is important to distinguish, methodologically, between the moral person (the accused, the condemned) and the real individual who is imprisoned. Here the member of society is the individual who has not fulfilled her duties toward the rules that society has democratically established; the moral person is the accused, who is given the honor of recognizing a right to defense. The accused is a citizen.

As judged and condemned, nothing remains to him except to suffer his fate, in prison. He cannot then take advantage of any right, since he doesn't contribute to the wealth of society with any work (except for that which he is obligated to perform, forced by poverty and regulation). The state is logical when it refuses to permit the possibility of prisoners' unions. It only offers one road to prisoners: this is to pass through its hell on earth; enduring; accepting punishment, suffering and humiliation, in silence – and completely mending their ways through prison labor. Secular in theory, religious in practice, justice and the prison system are made in the image and likeness of the

of credit for the poor. In any event, even if the bourgeoisie had succeeded in civilizing the behavior of the poor at work for the time being, it could never totally domesticate their spending. Through money, savagery always returns.

After the suppression of Holy Monday lengthened the workweek, "workers from then on enjoyed their leisure time at the work place" (Geoff Brown). Slowdowns became the rule. The introduction of piecework was the thing that ultimately imposed discipline in the workshops, forcing diligence and productivity to increase. The main result of this system, which began to spread in the 1850s, was to force workers to internalize industrial logic. To earn more, it was necessary to work more. However, this had a detrimental effect on everyone else's wages, and the less zealous workers could even find themselves out of work.

The response to the resulting all-out competition was the establishment of collective bargaining to decide the amount of work to be done, its distribution and remuneration. This led to the implementation of trade union mediation. Having won the victory with regard to productivity, capitalists consented to a decrease in the hours worked. The famous ten-hour law may have effectively been a victory for trade unionism, but it was a defeat for the poor,

working class", were mainly an exhortation to use their wages wisely rather than a response to a concern about public health. (The fact that work caused even greater damage did not induce the bourgeoisie to call for its abolition). One hundred years later, the same sectors were unable to fathom that the poor would deprive themselves of food in order to buy a "superfluous" commodity.

Savagery always returns

Propaganda to encourage saving was introduced to combat this propensity for immediate spending. And again, it was the "avant-garde of the working class" that instituted savings establishments for the poor. Saving increased both the dependence of the poor and the power of the enemy. Capitalists could rise above crises by lowering wages, and could accustom workers to the idea of accepting the minimum necessary to sustain life.

But Marx brings up an irresolvable contradiction in the *Grundrisse*: each capitalist requires his own slaves, as workers, to save, but *only his own workers*. He needs all the other slaves to be consumers who are obliged, as such, to spend. This contradiction couldn't be resolved until much later when commodity development permitted the establishment

bourgeois class. Rehabilitation from that hell on earth is granted to the prisoner who passes through it in silence, without having anything to say, neither raising his voice, nor complaining, much less protesting. The Christian ideal is still interiorized by many people in prison.

The worst thing that one must endure in prison is this feeling of complete dependence on the rules, clearly aimed at taming the individual. Prison has a semblance of "re-education"; it is school and barracks at the same time (as is very obvious, for example, in England, and even more in the sadly famous camps of some stalinist countries). The jailers' abuse of authority is just an expression of the authority of the regulations. In this sense, the state tries to completely recuperate a few individuals over whom, at a certain point, the control of civil society did not serve adequately; therefore it needs to impose rules on them by force. In this sense, the prison evokes the barracks, where the individual ends up being bent to the primary rules of society, obedience and discipline. The condition of the soldier and that of the prisoner have this in common: they are individuals whose fate depends entirely upon the state, to the point of having to suffer the abuses of hierarchy without complaining. Despite all the privileges and concessions the prison administration might

concede – and it is well known to be rather stingy in this – there will still be spontaneous rebellions of prisoners in the face of regulation.

As for the accused awaiting trial, she has not yet been the object of moral judgment. She is kept in a safe place, completely at the disposal of the state. It can never be repeated enough that to this extent the condition of the accused is like that of a hostage. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that England, which made French reformists drool with its *habeas corpus*, introduced temporary detention into its penal procedures in 1980, i.e., when the social war had taken a few steps forward.

One could note in passing that, no matter what the humanitarians of the left claim, prison will always remain a place of absolute unworthiness, as is shown by recent government regulations that try to bypass it for the petty criminal, the one who is not completely excluded from society, because for now she has only committed crimes of little significance and is capable of reintegrating into the social system thanks to her job. It is up to her, however, to give proof of this by carrying out X hours of work "in the general interest."

The state will always be able to grant some improvements in the particulars of the daily life of prisoners, but it will never be able to grant

Holy Monday didn't just bring the question of work time into play, but also the *use of money*, because workers didn't return to work until they had spent all their wages. From this time on, the slave was no longer considered merely a worker, but also a consumer. Adam Smith had theorized the need to develop the internal market by opening it to the poor. Furthermore, as Archbishop Berkeley wrote in 1755, "Wouldn't the creation of needs represent the best means of making the nation industrious?"

In a way that was still marginal, the wages allotted to the poor were thus adapted to the needs of the market. But the poor did not use this additional cash as the economists had foreseen. The wage increase was time gained back from work (a nice twist on Benjamin Franklin's utilitarian maxim *time is money*). Time gained by being away from the factory was spent in the well-named *public houses* (during this time, news of rebellion was communicated from pub to pub). The more money the poor had, the more they drank.

The spirit of commodities was first discovered in liquor, to the amazement of economists, who claimed that the poor would spend their money usefully. The temperance campaigns, jointly carried out by the bourgeoisie and the "advanced (and therefore sober) portions of the

This materialistic conception of the neutrality of machines sufficed to legitimize the organization of production, iron discipline (on this point Lenin was a consistent marxist), and all that ultimately followed. Though the Luddites were supposedly backwards, at least they understood that the "material instruments of production" are first of all instruments of domestication with a form that is not neutral because it guarantees hierarchy and dependence.

The resistance of the first factory workers manifested itself primarily in one of the rare things that belonged to them, but of which they were being dispossessed: their time. There was an old religious custom of not working on either Sunday or Monday, which was called "Holy Monday". Since Tuesdays were dedicated to recovering from two days of drinking, work could not reasonably begin until Wednesday! This holy custom was widespread at the beginning of the 19th century and subsisted until 1914 in some trades. The bosses employed various coercive methods to combat this institutionalized absenteeism, but without success. With the introduction of trade unions, Saturday afternoons off from work replaced "Holy Monday". This glorious conquest meant that the workweek was extended by two days!

them the least bit of dignity. Prison discipline will always have the final word. The demand to grant the prisoner the same rights as the accused (such as that of getting help from his lawyer before the tribunal inside prison) has no possibility of being granted, inasmuch as the prisoner is not a moral person like the accused. The prisoner is a real individual, unworthy of society.

Reformists demand that prisoners be granted social dignity, in other words, human rights. But of what does this dignity consist? It is what bourgeois democracy recognizes in the worker. Of course, prisoners are sometimes workers and are paid very poorly. The prison administration is in charge of selling their labor power to various contractors and makes money from it. After all, the prisoner is its burden, and is quite expensive. If a normal wage were granted to the prisoner, then the greater part of it would be held back from him for maintenance expenses, withdrawn by the prison administration for legal expenses, fines and the compensation he would have to give to the victims of his crime as well!

To what extent do the poor have any rights, civil or political, in civil society? To the extent of their duties. Civil society describes the totality of the "system of needs and jobs". The poor par-

ticipate in it only because, due to circumstances, they are forced to concede the exploitation of their labor to others who make money from it. The true need that the social system produces and reproduces for everyone is the need for money. The poor experience it exclusively in the form of lack, due to necessity. Only the bourgeoisie have a positive relationship with this essence of society. The relationship of the poor to it is work. Of course, bourgeois democracy proclaims that everyone is free to profit, acknowledging anyone's right to do business. Thus each one can make his way in the world, but only one world exists, that of business. And modern bourgeois society, which we see in Europe, the USA and Japan, allows many poor people to be fooled into thinking that they are profiting. The constraint that is exercised over the wageworker and the necessity that defines all his needs within the same limits are thus transfigured in the language of society. The most savage reign of necessity is magically transformed into its opposite, and this is how motivated workers, satisfied and reimbursed consumers, responsible voters and even prisoners who pay their debts to society exist...

The necessity of money reigns through a multitude of legal relationships that clearly perpetuate themselves through constraint. And every form of dissatisfaction that expresses itself

Imposing industrial logic

In England, while the nascent trade union movement was half-heartedly repressed and even tolerated, the destruction of machinery was punished with death. The unwavering negativity of the Luddites made them socially intolerable. The state responded to this threat in two ways: it organized a modern, professional police force, and it officially recognized trade unions. Luddism was first defeated through brutal repression and then faded away as the trade unions succeeded in imposing industrial logic. In 1920, an English observer noted with relief that "bargaining over the conditions of change has prevailed over merely opposing change itself." Some progress!

Of all the slander heaped on the Luddites, the worst came from labor movement apologists who regarded it as blind and infantile. Hence the following passage from Marx's *Capital*, representing a basic misinterpretation of the era: "Time and experience were needed before workers learned to distinguish between machines themselves and the manner in which they were used by capital, and to direct their attacks against the specific social context in which they were used, and not against the physical instruments of production themselves."

mate of insurrectional fury. It was not merely a question of nostalgia for the golden age of the craftsman. Surely the advent of the reign of the quantitative, of mass produced, shoddy merchandise, was a major source of anger.

Henceforth, the time it took to accomplish a task became more important than the quality of the result. This devaluation of the contents of any work carried out led the poor to attack work in general, thus revealing its essence. But Luddism was above all an anti-capitalist war of independence, an "attempt to destroy the new society" (Matthias). As one of their tracts read, "All nobles and tyrants must be struck down."

Luddism was the heir to the millenarian movements of the previous centuries. Although it no longer expressed itself as universal and unifying, it remained radically foreign to every political outlook and to all economic pseudo-rationality. At the same time in France, the silk-worker uprisings, which were also directed against the process of industrial domestication, were on the other hand already contaminated by the political lie. "Their political understanding deluded them about the source of social misery and distorted their consciousness of their real goal," Marx wrote in 1844. Their slogan was "live working or die fighting".

constitutes a violation of these relationships. Society responds to this with more extreme constraint, prison. One who doesn't work is a damned one.

Prison isolation is added to the isolation that already defines the atomized individual of civil society. The imprisoned delinquent is thus made the object of a real social damnation, which is also expressed in the relative indifference witnessed in the face of prison revolts. If, at minimum, all former prisoners and those who have imprisoned relatives were to start supporting the revolts by attacking cops from behind (like someone tried to do in Rouen and in Montpellier in May 1985)... All these people are unaware of being a social danger, and sometimes all they would need to do is comprehend this in order to truly become so. The state treats delinquents en masse as a social danger, but demolishes them one by one. The law knows only the single individual that it crystallizes as an abstraction before society. But it is really because he is concretely in society that a poor person is judged.

But if the delinquent is judged as an isolated individual, prisoners rebel as a collective subject. Once inside the walls, the reason why one has ended up there is of little importance. All are there together, in the same shit and treated in the

same way. Prisoners rebel against a common fate.

Whatever the specific reasons for the revolts may be, they will not be exhausted in any reform or improvement of details, because in prison it is always necessary to demand the smallest thing that one could work out for oneself on the outside. And in such a desolate universe, the smallest thing takes on an enormous importance and can furnish the occasion for a rebellion; the occasions will never be lacking. It is understood that the prison administration is able to impose calm for a time, as a consequence of repression combined with some improvements, but the calm is not destined to last for long.

This social critique of rights could only arise from inside the prison since, even though justice condemns individuals one by one, the fate of each one being her own private affair, it then locks them all up together. And it is there that the conditions are created for a revolt directed specifically against the authority of the prison administration, the conditions of imprisonment, and more generally against a social system that is based on prison. It is from there, and in relation to this collective rebellion, that a movement can emerge outside that not only recognizes itself in this human protest, but extends its development, something that is not

restraint. The repression that followed the millenarian assault by the poor[1] had also paved the way for the industrial counter-revolution.

It was the sad fate of the English poor to be the first to be subjected to the unmitigated brutality of this developing social mechanism. It goes without saying that they considered this fate an absolute degradation, and those who accepted it were scorned by their peers. At the time of the Levellers, it was already commonly thought that those who sold their labor for a wage had abandoned all the rights of a "free-born Englishman". Even before production began, the first factory owners were already experiencing difficulty in recruiting workers and often had travel long distances to find them.

Then it was necessary to force the poor to stay at their new jobs, which they deserted en masse. This is why factory owners took charge of their slaves' dwellings, which functioned as the antechambers of the factories. A vast industrial reserve army was formed, bringing about a militarization of the totality of social life.

Luddism was the response of the poor to this new order. During the first few decades of the 19th century, a movement dedicated to the destruction of machines developed in a cli-

to directly control the realm of exploitation. So this is what governed the spread of factories. The work sphere was to be made independent in time and space from the rest of life. Already in 1725, Ashton had written, "It is not so much those who are absolutely idle who wrong the public, but those who only work half the time." Military arts were applied to industry, and factories were literally modeled after prisons, which made their appearance at about the same time.

A huge, surrounding wall separated the worker from everything that was external to work, and guards were assigned to turn back those who, at first, found it natural to visit their less fortunate friends. On the inside, the first goal of draconian regulation was to civilize the slaves. In 1770, a writer envisioned a new plan for making the poor productive: the House of Terror in which inhabitants would be forced to work for fourteen hours a day and kept under control through a starvation diet. His idea was not far ahead of its time. A generation later, the House of Terror was simply called a factory.

Factories first became widespread in England. The ruling classes there had long since overcome their internal conflicts and could thus devote themselves to the passion of commerce without

in one-sided opposition to the consequences, but rather in open conflict with the presuppositions of the state itself.

Workers in struggle can fight to demand a wage increase. In the same way, prisoners can manage to obtain reductions in punishment through their actions. Prisoners don't struggle for a general reform of prison conditions, just as workers on strike don't concern themselves with a reform of work. They leave those concerns to union bureaucrats. The only thing that prisoners in revolt can reasonably demand within the limits of the existing system is a bit of air. Reforms are made anyway, always in order to quench the smoldering fire. What has been obtained for improving the prison regime has always come at the end of a test of strength with the state. Prisoners also know from experience that the advantages extracted under the threat of the worst are often quickly transformed into a further disgrace once calm has returned.

The insubordination of prisoners always takes on the character of a universal threat since it has to do with individuals who have been locked up in the name of the general interest of society. This is what transforms it into a significant political event every time. Each wave of rebellion leads to some project of reform of the laws and codes.

The left, which had promised to modify the

entire prison regime, hasn't even risked trying it. Once it came into power, it immediately understood that if it had done so, it would have been playing with fire. There is no improvement possible in the regime of imprisonment except that of granting air to prisoners. The left knows that the smallest opening risks provoking disorder. Any type of government is sure to have hassles with prison. No matter what side one takes it from, he ends up getting his hands dirty.

The notion of general interest is at the center of the entire system of legal rights against which the rebels fight. The state and its supporters continually refer back to this general interest, in contrast to the latent state of war that rages in real society. They are able to make people identify themselves with this supposed general interest, to the extent that, in the France of 1985, any line of demarcation between the poor and civil society seems to be erased, and delinquency often takes its victims from among the poor. On the one hand, the places where money and goods always circulate in abundance are being transformed more and more into impregnable fortresses; on the other hand, the conditions to which those who work must submit are becoming more and more intolerable. Decidedly harsher conditions arise from this for those poor people who don't work, increasing the isolation

then bought the finished products dirt-cheap. For the workers, exploitation was only a facet of commerce over which they had no direct control.

The poor could still consider their work an "art" over which they exercised a considerable range of decision-making power. But above all, they remained masters of their own time. They worked at home and could stop whenever they felt like it. Their work escaped any calculation. Variety, as well as irregularity, characterized their work, since the domestic workplace was more often than not a complement to agricultural activities.

The consequent fluctuations in industrial activity were incompatible with the harmonious expansion of commerce. Thus the poor still possessed considerable leverage that they exercised constantly. The rerouting of raw materials was common practice and fed a parallel market. Above all, those who worked at home could exert pressure on their employers. The frequent destruction of looms was a means of "collective bargaining by riot" (Hobsbawn). Come up with the bucks, or we'll break everything!

Factories modeled after prisons

In order to suppress the dangerous independence of the poor, the bourgeoisie felt obliged

Here the enemy deals a double blow, legitimizing the existence of managers and hierarchy as unavoidable technical necessities, and imposing a mechanical conception of progress, considered as a positive and socially neutral law. It is the religious instance of materialism and the idealism of matter. Such a lie was obviously designed for the poor, among whom it has inflicted long-lasting devastation.

To refute it, it is enough to stick to the facts. Most of the technological innovations that allowed factories to develop had been discovered earlier, but remained unused. Their widespread application was not a mechanical consequence, but stemmed from a historically timed choice that was made by the ruling classes. And this choice was not so much a response to a concern about purely technical efficiency (which was often doubtful) as it was a strategy of social domestication. The industrial pseudo-revolution can thus be reduced to a project of social counter-revolution. There is only one type of progress: the progress of alienation.

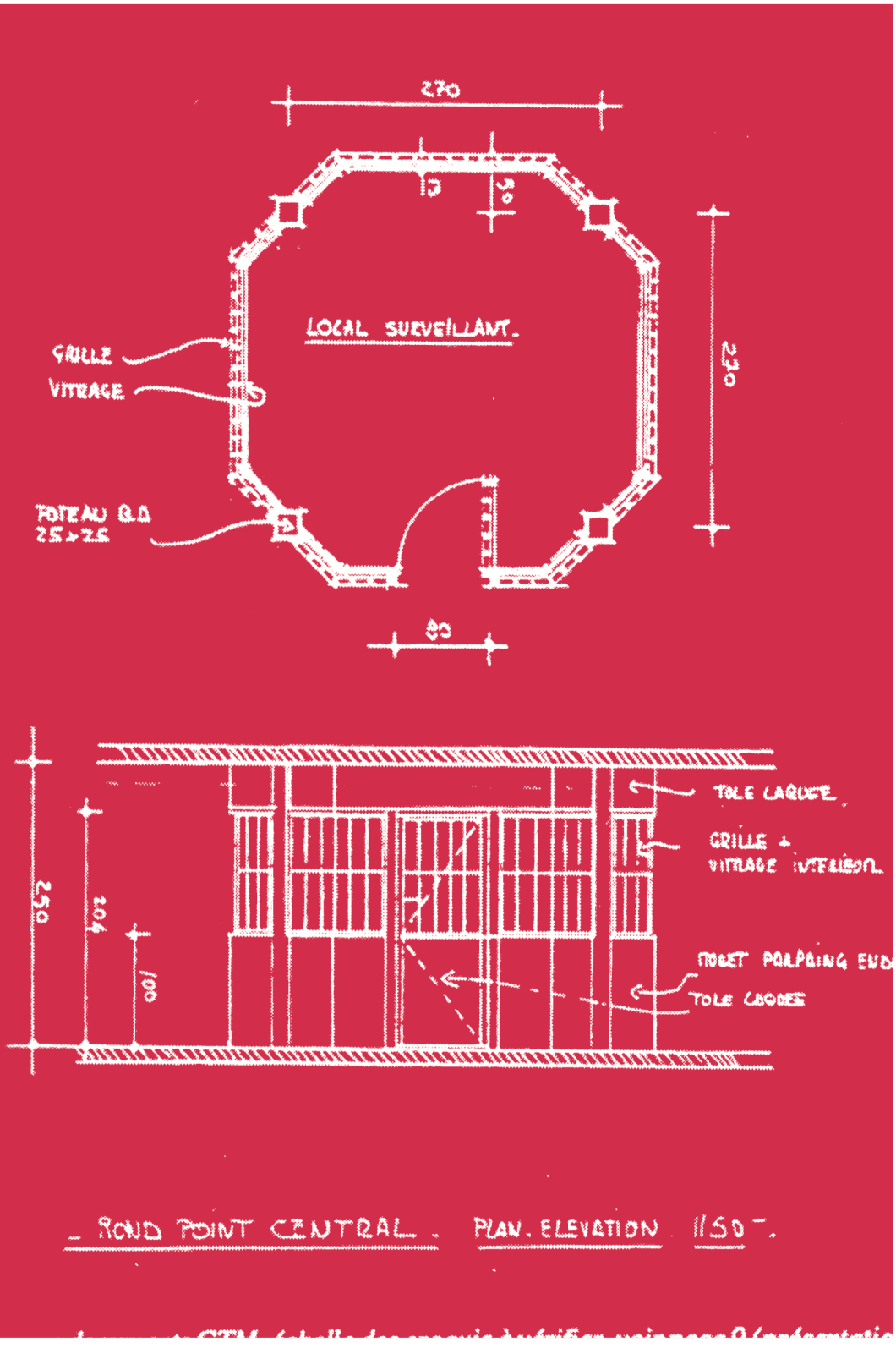
Under the system that existed previously, the poor still enjoyed a considerable amount of independence in the work they were obliged to perform. Its dominant form was the domestic workshop: capitalists rented tools to the workers, provided them with raw materials and

of each one in her search for money (and the spread of heroin among the youth aggravates this process even more). The state and the bourgeoisie erect a system of military defense of private property, of the circulation of money and commodities, unleashing at the same time the war of all against all, the fiercest conflict of isolated interests. The authority of the state thus finds its basis again in the confused hostility that reigns over society in its totality.

Then the prisoners' revolt appears as a possibility for overcoming this state of affairs. The protest against justice and prison crystallizes the general interest of all the poor, subdued by necessity and what they must bear under various forms, the repression practiced in the name of the general interest of society.

Solidarity with the revolts doesn't appeal to sentiment, any more than it speaks to so-called public opinion. We have simply wanted to speak to the prisoners. And the fact that their rebellion has been strong enough to find such a response outside is not the least of its merits.

Yves Delhoysie



Industrial Domestication: Industry as the Origin of Modern Domination

If science were put in the service of capital,
the recalcitrant worker's docility
would be guaranteed.
—Andrew Ure, *Philosophie des manufactures*, 1835

In the past, if anyone called a tradesman
a worker, he risked a brawl.
Today, when they are told that
workers are the best thing in the state,
they all insist on being workers.
—M. May, 1948

The term industrial revolution, which is commonly used to describe the period between 1750 and 1850, is a pure bourgeois lie that corresponds to the lie of political revolutions. It doesn't include the negative and flows from a view of history solely as technological progress.

means for creating terror in the population and at the same time for justifying emergency measures using the police and the army. But since then, we have learned that such "emergency" measures, imposed for the moment, become the rule.

We are suffering directly from the intensification of the means of control. The sinister German precedent gives a foretaste of what is hanging over our heads. It becomes more and more difficult to conceal oneself from the eyes of the state. In this world, only commodities can circulate freely. For us, the poor, the simple act of circulating is becoming dangerous.

DOWN WITH FRANCE

OS CANGACEIROS
February 12, 1986

Freedom is the Crime That Contains All Crimes

We have many friends in prison; we ourselves have been among the fucked jailbirds. This is why we have felt the wave of revolt, which began on Sunday, May 5 with the mutiny of a part of Fleury-Mérogis, coming for some time.

Prisoners could no longer tolerate the crap to which prison guards more and more openly dedicate themselves. Two specific events were probably too much:

In March, the murder of Bruno Sulak by guards after a failed escape. The liars that talk on television and write in newspapers have presented it as an accident, despite the fact that a few guards in Fleury have bragged about killing him.

At the beginning of April, a guard was punched during an escape attempt at a prison in Lyons. His colleagues responded by proclaiming a strike. A few days later, still in Lyons, some prisoners reacted to this arrogance by beating two of these shits. A national

strike of all prison guards followed this. It further aggravated the unbearable conditions by eliminating the hour of air, visits and leaves (multiplying the discomforts, daily vexations and beatings that were already part of ordinary administration).

Those who speak to us of overcrowding in the prisons are the very ones who have filled them until they burst! Obviously they are turning the question upside down. For us, it is not a question of building more prisons, but of emptying those that already exist.

The need of prisoners in revolt is obvious: freedom! They don't negotiate this with the prison administration, but rather start to take it for themselves: climbing up on the roof is freedom snatched from the state. "Let's take air," they exclaim. For a few hours they can chat, protected from indiscreet ears, dialogue with their comrades outside over the walls, insult and throw roof tiles at the dirty skunks who oppress them, and finally talk about themselves. Here they are, the real free conversations!

The prison administration and the media attribute the revolt of Fleury-Mérogis to a handful of political militants (specifically of *Action Directe*) who, preoccupied with their notoriety, have always participated in this lie,

a terrorist. Their intention is clear: to define every act of revolt as terrorism, and at the same time to increase the emotional charge attached to the word tenfold. Terrorism is the continuation of politics by other means.

The campaign of sabotage in solidarity with the prison revolt (summer of 1985) was the work of a few organized proletarians. The media attributed it to mysterious "railroad terrorists". More recently, on December 20, subway wildcat strikers were accused of taking Parisians hostage. The same day, in Nantes, Courtois, Khalki and Thiolet were also said to have taken the media hostage[2]. This is a sordid reversal of reality on the part of those whose job is precisely to colonize minds. These sharks particularly displease us.

Manipulation achieves its goal in all this. Future trials will take place in an atmosphere that is most unhealthy for those who are the state's real target. After having the millstone of terrorism hung around their necks, the sentences they receive will be staggering.

Unlike what happened in Italy in the 1970s[3], these bombings are not the last weapons of a state at bay. In France, partisans of the state intend to consolidate the position of strength it has acquired over the last few years as much as possible. The Italian state used expeditious

prepared and justice can bury alive anyone who holds his head up.

In this shitty country, any proletarian who does not feel guilty is suspect, and can thus be murdered. After the flare-up of the French suburbs in 1981, the state left the social reaction, which led to the crushing of all those who were growing restless in this country, to the initiative of reactionary vigilantes. The bombs set off in the cities around Marseilles (in La Cayolle and Bassens in 1981, in La Bricade in 1983) and the murderous summers of 1982 and 1983[1], are two aspects of a decisive moment. When justice hasn't already taken care of them, terror and isolation now paralyze the majority of those who have not surrendered.

The state hammers in the final nail. It uses the legal system to complete what reality has already imposed. The Badinter projection for a modernized legal code confirms the license to kill while extending the right of "self-defense" to include the defense of property. The stage is set: police custody for four days, the gathering of criminal and terrorist files, a general intensification of the penalties for all forms of delinquency, suppression of remission of sentences…

The media devotes itself to making us believe that only terrorists attack the state and that, consequently, anyone who attacks the state is

not stopping these statements. All these liars had already done the same thing during the hunger strike proclaimed in Fleury at the end of 1984. Let's abandon the militants to their lying, wooden language…

But there has been real solidarity among prisoners (at Bois D'Arcy, prisoners in the cells were ready to wreck everything if those on the roof were evicted. This is why the GIGN[1] did not intervene and the others were able to remain in the open air for about forty hours, fed by their comrades in confinement. Meanwhile in Bastia, a hunger strike was announced in solidarity with the rebels in other prisons). The same solidarity has been expressed outside as well. On May 19 in Montpellier, a group of people lined up on the side of the prisoners in revolt and attacked the cops from behind. The cops dispersed them by unleashing dogs on them. The main concern of the prisoners has been that of communicating with the outside, shouting their protests against imprisonment, the daily terror that is exercised against them. "They want to kill us." "They gas us, they cudgel us." These are the things that could be read on the banners at Bois d'Arcy.

Prisoners take an enormous risk when they rebel. Everyone knows beforehand that the prison administration will immediately make

them pay dearly for this: with custodial sentences, the suppression of sentence reductions[2], transferals, beatings, murders disguised as suicides. In Douai, three prisoners (one of whom was supposed to be released in June) had climbed onto the roof and demonstrated their rebellion by throwing down roof tiles. As soon as they came down, an emergency tribunal condemned them to 15 months and 6 months additional time without parole. This sentence was intended to be exemplary.

The anxiety engendered by repressive terror, and the despair of returning to the oppressive isolation of the prison, are so present even in the moment of rebellion that some of the prisoners turned against themselves, mutilating themselves. In Fleury and Montpellier, some prisoners took possession of some barbiturates and gulped them down, smashing everything in their path. Twenty-five of them were seriously poisoned. Others slashed their wrists, calling on their comrades to do likewise. One of them died. Meanwhile several prisoners in different yards hanged themselves. At this very moment, in St. Paul in Lyons, some prisoners try to mutilate or hang themselves every day.

"Freedom is the crime that contains all crimes," and it is against this crime that the old world defends itself. The state is physically eliminating

Nothing Human is Achieved in the Grip of Fear

(This text was put up as a poster in Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles, and distributed in other cities. Some copies were sent to the press after the sabotage of the print shop in Lyons.)

The series of bombings carried out in Paris recently have as their immediate consequence the reinforcement of police control. Paris is now in a state of siege.

The media's chattering, asking "Who did it?", hides the essential question, which is "Whose ends does it serve?" The exploitation of the bombings by the cops and the specialists in lying plays its part in a state strategy; it makes the climate of generalized defeat in France even more absolute. Little by little, a thought must enter one's head: that the increase and systematization of repressive measures are necessary and inescapable. The everyday nature of the areas targeted by this strategy of widespread panic reinforces the feeling of anxiety and powerlessness in everyone. The terrain is

Our friendship to the Hoboes of Val-de-Seine!!!
Our friendship to the rebels of Chaumont, Lyons, Douai, Evreux and all the others.

OS CANGACEIROS
Beginning of August 1985

all the beautiful young people who aren't resigned – the same young people who die, murdered by cops or reactionary pro-cop vigilantes. The state buries those that the law can trap alive in its prisons as long as possible while terrorizing those who manage to stay outside. For these, it pays educators and other pests to demoralize them and make them forget their comrades in jail…

Poor neighborhoods on the outskirts[3] are emptied of their youth, while prisons fill up. This is the secret of overcrowding. The state's lackeys would like us to believe that it is a budgeting problem! Overcrowding is supposed to be caused by a malfunctioning of the prison system, but it is actually a result of the optimal functioning of the judicial system.

Obviously, the only way to deal with overcrowding in prisons is to empty them, as the rioters in Fleury maintained – on this point they couldn't have been clearer. In a declaration signed by "the six hundred leaders", they oppose the building of new prisons. On the other hand, the prisoners in Montpelier furnished a concrete solution to overcrowding. They destroyed almost all the cells!

The prisoners are rebelling against the justice system and, more specifically, against the kidnapping that is portrayed as preventive

detention – which officially condemns people to an indefinite confinement that is later confirmed if not increased at the trial. Moreover, we are reminded of the movement that sent collective demands for provisional liberty in Lyons at the beginning of summer in 1984.[4]

As long as there have been prisons, everything prisoners have gotten they conquered by risking their lives in revolt. In some instances, they were able to impose a breach in the prison regime.

What prisoners manage to grab by force and at the cost of blood, the prison administration later gnaws away again, using improvements of prison conditions as a means of blackmail.

The guards have the task of persecuting the least bit of freedom in every gesture of daily life. The deprivation of freedom is refined every day in the constant, sadistic abuse of these pigs. In prison, freedom is even the choice to remain seated, asleep or standing when one wants to.

Since the time of Peyrefitte and Badinter[5], if the state proposes a program of reform, it is solely to prevent the risk of an explosion and certainly not for humanitarian reasons.

Prisoners no longer demand reform; they have suffered its reality. The application of each reform depends on the good will of the

And if these actions have remained limited, this is clearly due to our own isolation in this society.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOME ACTIONS CARRIED OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRISON REVOLTS

The coming of the left to power has allowed French capitalism to conveniently overcome a difficult moment and particularly to put the majority of workers back in line with the help of the unions. Furthermore, it has intensified the modernization of social isolation through the extension of policing and control. The condition for all this is a policy of prison isolation for those who still escape this control. The social peace that seems to reign in this country is mainly based on prison overcrowding. That's all.

Of course, one could hope that, under the pressure of revolt, there will be a breath of fresh air on July 14. We have seen the extent to which the socialists make fools of the people. But what can one expect of the state except beatings and lies? And what can one expect from a swine like Mitterand, who in 1955, as Interior Minister, ordered the shooting of striking workers in Nantes?

"Everything that crawls on this earth
is governed by blows."

be described as obscure and mysterious. A widely distributed brochure explains the reasons for these actions, but not one news report, whether printed, televised or broadcast on radio, has taken the risk of reporting its contents with accuracy. They have preferred to make suppositions, *to turn something simple into a mystery*, precisely like all the chattering that happened around the prisoners' revolt, about "the prison problem". Although it is something extremely simple, they have continued to complicate the matter so that in the end no one knows what the point is any more. The point is to know whether one accepts or refuses the existence of prison. No ambiguity whatsoever.

We intend to widely circulate the demands that arise with a rigorous logic from the May revolt, and in this way to wear away the jailbirds' isolation, now that, with the passing of the fever of revolt, every effort has been made to suffocate them in silence.

On the outside, we are usually overcome with a feeling of impotence in the face of what happens in prison. For the first time, we have gotten beyond this feeling of impotence. Though we are not very many, through simple and effective means we have assured that the May revolt has remarkable publicity.

prison administration and the guards. What was presented as a benefit becomes a further degradation.

"Free conversations" are even refused by some, because what one has to submit to in order to get these visits is so humiliating.

Though in appearance the death penalty has been abolished and no longer is part of the legal code, it has in fact become more common and democratized. It is now carried out by a mob of reactionary vigilantes and cops, while in prisons the guards do it.

In the same way, the suppression of the QHS (maximum security wings) was a humanitarian bluff (supported by the left). The best example of this opportunistic attitude was when they used a humanitarian campaign to release Knobelpiess, who had denounced the horrors of the QHS, and then, when they were done using him, did not hesitate to lock him back up.[6]

As a special regime of isolation, the QHS was never suppressed. They simply changed the name. It is now called QI (isolation quarters). In 1983, a new prison called "Les Godets" opened near Nevers. It is intended for imprisoning convicts who are considered particularly dangerous. It can hold eighty prisoners in an extremely harsh surveillance regime.

Furthermore, the administration and the

guards want to extend QHS conditions to the entirety of the prison. The number of isolation cells has increased. The DPS (specially watched prisoner) statute is applied more and more. Punishment cells are increasingly filled. With greater frequency, the prison administration reserves the right to inflict more special punishments and sanctions on the basis of the tension that reigns in prison. Abuse and beatings are the order of the day. It drives prisoners to suicide or allows murder to pass for suicide. There are no natural deaths in prison; those who succumb, die of prison. Murder is called "accidental death" – like Mohammed Rhabi in Rouen and Bruno Sulak in Fleury, who guards killed during an escape attempt; like Alain Pinol in Fresnes, killed by the cops. Prisoners' suicides are all murders committed by the prison administration that gladly provides you with the rope for hanging yourself. And if there are more and more suicides (at least twenty since the beginning of the year), it means that living conditions inside are increasingly intolerable.

An additional pressure is exercised against condemned immigrants. Along with prison, they can suffer a second penalty: deportation. And it even goes so far that, after having served their sentence, they continue to rot in

fact that we are well organized, they state that we are "strongly structured" (the horror!). They find our texts too well printed; anyone knows that you don't need to be covered in gold to get a few thousand magazines properly printed. Yet they insinuate… They slander and mix things up, hoping that something might end up on a judge's desk…

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOME ACTIONS CARRIED OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRISON REVOLTS

In one of the most ridiculous of these slanders, the press and TV have said that one of the four people arrested in Rouen is a professor of philosophy! The Ministry of Public Education had to correct this a few days later: the insulted person had actually only been a tutor in a school ten years earlier! This is that same old police reflex: a thinking head is pointed out, and to these cretins it has to have a university degree. They certainly are degreed cretins. Proletarians know how to think for themselves. They have no need of education. And in any case, philosophy professors don't know how to think, because they don't know anything about life.

To put an end to these dubious allegations, we say that a group that publishes a magazine and frequently makes its positions known through posters, flyers and brochures can't

to have orchestrated all this. A pretentious ignoramus stated in *France-Soir* that, "these groups come from left anarchism, on the border between criminality and terrorism." Let us point out immediately, once and for all, that we *cangaceiros* do not come out of the left, anarchist or otherwise; there isn't a single ex-militant among us. And none of us has ever had anything to do with any political racket whatsoever. We have only one form of relationship with political groups and organizations: war. They are all our enemies; there is no exception. We aren't "on the border of delinquency"; we are delinquents. And this doesn't mean that we have made our "condition as delinquents a profession", as a well-known Marseillaise police chief would say. We have nothing to do on any level with terrorism. The poor devils that let themselves get regimented into that are nothing but robots acting out a stinking ideology in the service of an apparatus with a cop mentality and hierarchical structures. As we said before, we despise militants.

Other liars insinuate that we have great financial resources on hand, presuming that all this would be "supported by more important organizations". Which ones, pray tell? The Mafia? The KGB? The Red Brigades? Or the Opus Dei? Finally, in order to explain the

prison for months before the deportation procedures are completed.

To finish with Badinter's famous reforms, his latest gift, the TIG [a work program mentioned above] has been a fine load of shit. One can already predict that new accused prisoners awaiting trial will quickly fill the cells emptied by the TIG. This modern version of forced labor is not at all preferable to prison – so little so that some of those convicted have refused it.

ALL THOSE WHO DEMAND RIGHTS IN PRISON (prisoners' unions) are far behind the prisoners' movement of revolt, because prisoners can only impose their demands through violence, risking their own lives. "Union battles will be carried out within the law and through the law, by prosecuting all abuses before the qualified authorities": this is the program of prisoners' unions…

WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN WHAT UNIONS ARE ON THE OUTSIDE. They only serve to channel and domesticate people's rebellion, in reforms aimed at prettifying misery. Furthermore, they are used to stifle the real demands that the poor spontaneously think up in their struggle.

Prisoners no longer fight for reforms that they now know were mere illusions. Rather than placing themselves on the abstract terrain

of rights, they can demand something that will at least have a concrete result – a general reduction of punishments.

It's a question of demanding:

A Reduction Of Punishment
For All Those Convicted.

The Release Of All Prisoners Awaiting Trial.

The Definitive Stopping Of All
Deportation Measures.

And, of course,

The Cancellation Of All Sanctions
Against The Rebels.

The demand for the release of those awaiting trial is more than a specific demand relating to prison. It is not so much addressed to the state or the prison administration, as to all the poor for whom preventive detention is a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads every day. It is a challenge launched against this society that resounds in the minds of all those who have decided not to submit.

Judicial and prison questions almost always remain private matters in which each one is powerless in his isolation. Both the one on the inside, awaiting her trial, and the one outside,

endangerment of persons", which puts them at risk of a criminal charge in the jurisdiction of the Court of Assizes. *Antenna 2*[12], *France-Soir* and *Paris-Normandie* have pushed these slanders to the limit! All with the aim of horrifying and intimidating possible admirers of this sort of action.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOME ACTIONS CARRIED OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRISON REVOLTS

In Paris, on Friday morning, July 12, the subway was interrupted in two places at the same time. That evening, *Le Monde* and *France-Soir* announced in their news reports that the saboteurs left flyers signed "Black Order". This is a falsehood. It is obviously a provocation by the cops who, as the first on the scene, then presented things in their own way. "Black Order" is known to be a name used by the Italian secret services that several years ago set off a murderous bomb in the Bologna train station. The comparison that the cops are trying to suggest is thus pretty obvious…. Despite a denial that occurred that evening, *France-Soir* still repeated this bizarre fabrication in its edition of the following day.

After having asked at first whether we were terrorists or practical jokers, the specialists in lies went from insinuation to snitching. This is no surprise in a social system that maintains itself with police and deception. Thus they have evoked a "mysterious group" that is supposed

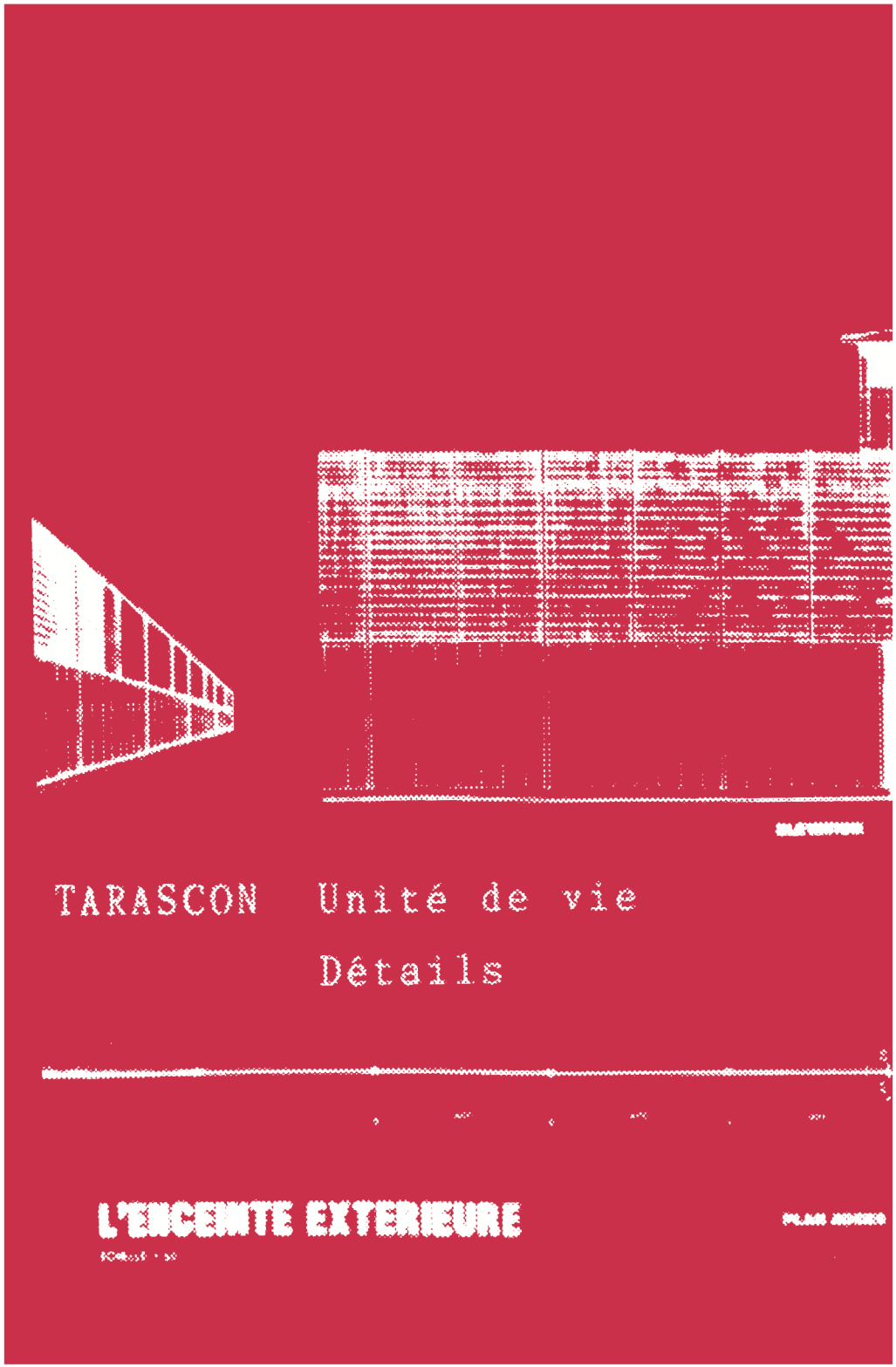
In each instance, every precaution was taken to see that the safety of travelers was not endangered. This is why we didn't stop the high-speed train (TGV) as we did the TEE. It seemed far too dangerous to brutally stop such a fast train, so we contented ourselves with the sabotage of materials to interrupt traffic.

At the beginning of July, the specialists in lying, emboldened by the arrests of four people in Rouen, outdid themselves in vileness, insinuating that the four might have been responsible for the derailment that took place three days after the action of the "Hoboes of the Val-de-Seine" on the Paris-Le Havre line. The press announced that the four had burned some electric signal boxes, which would have caused the irregular functioning of the apparatus. But as the SNCF (the French national railway company) stated repeatedly, this action could not have consequences for the safety of the passengers because such damage to railroad signals automatically activates the red signal so that all trains coming into the sector stop, and then resume travel at a reduced speed (about 20 mph) that allows the engineers to operate by vision alone.

There is no way that the "Hoboes of Val-de-Seine" could have been responsible for this accident. Nonetheless they have been accused of "the destruction of material with possible

who has a friend in prison and can often do nothing more than to help out financially or pay her a visit. The rebels have put forth some practical demands that aim, at the minimum, at getting the greatest number of people out. These demands form a prisoners' offensive against their isolation and an appeal to those on the outside to act concretely to break it. It's a question of bringing pressure to bear against this society, of shitting on this world with its prisons that would prefer not to hear about them.

OS CANGACEIROS
Beginning of June 1985



they blockade roads and rail lines, sabotage materials and TV transmitters and so on.

The thing that characterizes the style of the actions carried out from mid-June to mid-July 1985 is simplicity. The Paris-Brussels TEE was stopped thanks to a simple pair of pliers that, by connecting two tracks, allowed the simulation of the passing of a train, automatically making the signal turn red. A group of fifteen people was all it took to block this important train, spray-paint it with the demands of the May rebels and break its windows in order to throw some flyers inside (while the customs officials and plainclothes cops, always present in the first car of this train, didn't move a finger). The signal posts of the high speed TGV was sabotaged with a simple hammer. On various lines, electrical boxes were burned with a little gasoline.

Straw burns well in the summer, as a Toulouse chair manufacturer who had profited off the sweat of prisoners discovered. "Bandoleros" reduced his business to ruins! In Nantes, the printing press that prints the newspapers for the western region was sabotaged by putting sand, gravel and nails into the compressors that feed the printing cylinders. In Paris two subway lines were shut down in a simple way: by throwing material from a construction site onto the tracks.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOME ACTIONS CARRIED OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRISON REVOLTS

expressed, in the rare writing that managed to filter out and especially in their actions. In consequence, a certain number of people created a tumult, particularly by disturbing rail traffic in different parts of the country. These actions gave the demands the notoriety that up to then had been denied. Thus they have given the reality of the revolt what is due to it.

The hostility of the media was immediately *systematic*. At a minimum, they have all spoken of these actions as attacks from the start. Defining a blockade of a railroad track or the breaking of a signal light as an attack is not only incredible nonsense, but is also a way of invoking repression by intentionally confusing every act of concrete solidarity with the rebels, with terrorism. With greater reason, speaking of "railroad terrorists" as some newspapers have done is decidedly despicable. One paper went so far as to talk of "kidnapped travelers" following an action against the Trans Europe Express. (Speaking of hostages, what about the 25,000 prisoners awaiting trial?!) If things were reported in their correct dimensions, they would talk at most of "organized vandalism".

Our tools for action are the same ones that every proletarian uses: sabotage and vandalism. We don't carry out symbolic actions, we create disorder, like workers currently in struggle are able to do when

The Truth About Some Actions Carried Out In Support of the Prison Revolts

For the first time in this rotten country, a movement of concrete solidarity with prisoners in revolt has appeared on the outside. This was a twist of fate that neither the reformers nor the complainers – those who believe that they can shamelessly make use of the suffering of prisoners to justify their cowardice and their interest in maintaining the status quo – ever expected. Above all, it was a cruel trick against the state.

On the outside, there is a mass of imbeciles who allow themselves to flap their lips, endlessly debating about what they modestly call "the problem of detention", even though they don't have the least bit of personal experience in the matter and would do better to shut their trap. Their pretentious hot air contrasts with the *silence* that is imposed by force on the

prisoners in revolt (and with the total censure that that their communiqués have received).

Inside a prison, it is public and underground rumor that makes news circulate. From one prison to another, however, things happen differently. This is why the written press is considered to have a certain importance beyond just being a way to kill a few hours. Boredom and isolation are the only two things that cause prisoners to take any interest in the press and two things that make every one of its lies more harmful.

The hostility of the press towards prison revolts is unanimous. When it doesn't pursue the politics of silence, it follows the path of slander. All its commentary is stuffed with the same stupid questions that only intellectuals could pose, with the clear aim of sowing doubt and confusion. The only thing that distinguishes them is the way in which they ask the state to crush the revolt. At one extreme, *Le Figaro* calls for clamping down more harshly on the prisoners and never stops expressing its indignation about supposed government inaction. At the other extreme, *Liberation* happily supports a government that talks of reform, extolling the cultural gadgetry through which the government hopes to cool the jailbirds' rage.

The hostility of all these liars is even more obvious when they report some of the acts of real solidarity towards the prisoners that give the lie to their prose.[1]

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOME ACTIONS CARRIED OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRISON REVOLTS

We are not among those who specialize in writing and speaking about prison (and we are not even among those who try to organize demonstrations in Beaubourg or go to converse for a couple of hours with the warden of Fleury-Mérogis, as some did shamelessly last year).

As it happens, the risk of ending up in prison, and the fact that many of us have spent time there, conditions our lives to a great extent. Let us be clear that when any of us have been condemned and imprisoned, it has been for common crimes. We have no affinity whatsoever with "political prisoners".[2]

Prisoners' struggles thus are utterly important to us. At the beginning of June we distributed a foldout that gave voice to the demands of the rebels, amplifying them, in *the spirit of the rebellion itself*. As far as we know, this is the only document[3] created on the outside that has clearly sided with the revolt without making any concessions to the embarrassed excuses of militants of every stripe. The four demands that concluded it were simply a restatement on the outside of what the rebels on the inside had