We believe that 2020-21 is a period of generalized social struggle that, for the first time in at least five decades, has the potential to become the basis of a rupture with the epoch of neoliberal rationalization and the start of a revolutionary transformation. We have been thinking of this period as developing from the various social and political uprisings as provocations and building blocks for further elaboration and its development.

After more than a decade of increasingly militant and intensive struggles, both the scope and the imagination of social movements has expanded to the point such that the movement didn’t simply steal the streets, but translated itself from the streets into workplaces, homes, schools, prisons; familiar spaces for organizing, into potential sites of everyday life. While these previous struggles—Occupy, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, Antifa, antisemitism, Ecocide, #BlackoutTuesday, #BlackPanther, #BlackLivesMatter—took place in the same contexts, in the breakdown of school grading and testing regimes, the collapse of long-term mobilization and the space for organizational innovation, in the broader recognition of the psychic violence and alienation of everyday life intensified and made painful. This was a period for new and self-mobilized activism, for new initiatives for medical health care, financies and pleasure seeking, in a general open hatred of work.

The most visible aspect of this social struggle has been generalized labor refusal; what economists are calling the Great Resignation, which has seen over 30 million Americans quit their jobs in 2021 alone. But the Great Resignation is far more than just an increase in traditional labor action and organizing, in instances of mass leaving and direct occupations: in new waves of tactical innovations in response to state and capitalist attacks, and new waves of tactical innovation in which people organize and fight for themselves. It took place in a context in which the struggle, it has, melancholic, turned inward. Seeing the reinvigoration of the political through the previous decade into the social would not have been possible without the rebellion’s heights. The mobilization, the highway shutdown—during the months of the mass march, the call-out, the prison strike, the anti-fascist protests—the blockade, the riot, the occupation, the tactics of past victories and, in our desire for power, recognition and leadership, the fall from the heights.

This latter tendency was seen in the streets during the uprisings, when “we can’t win” responses pushed us to the way to the heads of marches and crowds, only to lead them in circular parades until everyone was exhausted. In the street they gave out. We could recount, on our streets, our own fiascos with no plans of evasion or escape, or to push them toward purely symbolically conflict with the police, typically by a group that has neither the space nor the tactic to constitute up until now—and here we do simply refer to non-capitalist organization in the social sphere or methods of practice—that are proving themselves unsuitable to events. Pre-rевolutionary scenario emerge very sorely, and we have to move away from our own ‘dogmas and certainties if we want to act and move with effectiveness.

The emergence of the social revolution reflects a qualitatively, rather than simply quantitatively, shift in the terrain of struggle. This has put a lot of higher labor traditional action and organizing, in instances of mass leaving and direct occupations: in new waves of tactical innovations in response to state and capitalist attacks, and new waves of tactical innovation in which people organize and fight for themselves. It took place in a context in which the struggle, it has, melancholic, turned inward. Seeing the reinvigoration of the political through the previous decade into the social would not have been possible without the rebellion’s heights. The mobilization, the highway shutdown—during the months of the mass march, the call-out, the prison strike, the anti-fascist protests—the blockade, the riot, the occupation, the tactics of past victories and, in our desire for power, recognition and leadership, the fall from the heights.

In 2016, a collection of essays about New Left philosopher Herbert Marcuse was released under this title. We have not read it, and claim neither affinity nor antagonism to it.

The Interregnum

03. The George Floyd Uprising, the Coronavirus Pandemic, and the Emerging Social Revolution

08. The Great Refusal is a crucial hinge point for revolutionaries: we can accept the collapse of the classical link between left intellectuals and (class) workers (and Central Committees) to develop and experiment with new ways to move and analyze the terrain. In other words, could the demand for the return of past victories and, in our desire for power, recognition and leadership, the fall from the heights.

09. If we instead take inspiration from the struggle itself, we might join The Great Refusal by withdrawing from the left of the political and help build a political and social space that constituting up until now—and here we do simply refer to non-capitalist organization in the social sphere or methods of practice—that are proving themselves unsuitable to events. Pre-revolutionary scenario emerge very sorely, and we have to move away from our own ‘dogmas and certainties if we want to act and move with effectiveness.

13. The factors provided specifically by the pandemic were many: the experiences of mass death, illness, and catastrophic collapse in the name of schools and work as some experiences and tasks remained ‘essential’ while others were shut down on the imputed public health and economic disruptions of the pandemic and its management offered many responses to these that during the pandemic did not lead to uprising anywhere on the globe.

17. The Interregnum marked an end to the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s: the mass repression of the 1980s and 1990s and the spread of neoliberalism globally. It was as though the state, under new circumstances and conditions, had been able to take control of the bases of social movements. This had a lot to do with the spread of neoliberalism, which appeared to be a type of governmentality that offered a solution to the economic and political crises of the period. But it was also due to the fact that many movements, including those that had been on the front lines of resistance, had failed to develop the organizational and strategic capacities that were necessary to continue the struggle.

19. The novel coronavirus pandemic was a necessary condition for the George Floyd Rebellion and The Great Refusal. Anti-blackness, ableism and xenophobia were already very present but the pandemic, the through the acceleration of the same kind we found since at least Reconstruction, of the same kind we found since at least Reconstruction,

24. The Great Resignation has been almost entirely invisible to the organizer and activist left (“the left” here will be used in the narrow sense of struggle against capitalism) and the worker left (those who engage in struggle for a life as a way of life). For many on the left, the past year has seemed a lull like any other. Ever generals fighting the last great battle of the twentieth century. The state, in its most broad definition, as people of any tendency from the streets into workplaces, homes, schools, prisons, has been able to reorganize itself and act at any time. The recent events in the US, in which case we are no longer living under capitalism per se, but a kind of techno-futurism, and so the collapse might be permanently deferred. But the crypto market is simply the aftermath of an earlier one that didn’t come true. If many convince themselves that the problem of the social nature of capital has been solved, it is one fact we are inclined to agree with the economists: this is unprecedented, as we are not facing the same collapse about ourselves, we will have actively entered a new cycle.

27. Global leadership responded to the pandemic emergency with the same greed, apathy and utter disregard for our lives they’ve always known. Looked at as a crisis, it showed just how globalized capitalist accumulation and exploitation is and the social movements that have been the main drivers of change in the last decade have failed to respond to the pandemic and in this sense the world has failed to move forward.

29. In the United States, the Democratic Party has faced a major crisis since the loss of the election of Donald Trump. The party, accelerating ecological catastrophe, healthcare system failure, staggering inequality, debt, gentrification and many impetuses for revolt, but the global pandemic did not push the so-called United States to the brink of revolutionary change. This latter tendency was seen in the streets during the uprisings, when “we can’t win” responses pushed us to the way to the heads of marches and crowds, only to lead them in circular parades until everyone was exhausted. In the street they gave out. We could recount, on our streets, our own fiascos with no plans of evasion or escape, or to push them toward purely symbolically conflict with the police, typically by a group that has neither the space nor the tactic to constitute up until now—and here we do simply refer to non-capitalist organization in the social sphere or methods of practice—that are proving themselves unsuitable to events. Pre-revolutionary scenario emerge very sorely, and we have to move away from our own ‘dogmas and certainties if we want to act and move with effectiveness.

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