



TWELVE HYPOTHESES ABOUT COUNTER-POWER

ILL WILL

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1 A situational perspective allows us to examine the concrete “possibilities” that the acceleration of time impedes us from discovering. “Urgency” as a demand of the conjuncture and the mass media, in other words, of the world of representation, tends to submerge us in sadness. It is not a matter of isolating ourselves, but rather addressing the issues of the conjuncture based on a concrete situation, returning again and again to the concrete possibilities made possible or impossible by the situation.

In previous meetings we discussed the difference between *dispersion* and *multiplicity*. Dispersion leads to isolation, it impoverishes. But the alternative to dispersion is not necessarily centralization or bureaucratization.

When we think in terms of our proper situation, there is no reason our experience should become isolated. On the contrary, situational thinking is nothing more than the act of reconnecting with our own capacities and circumstances: it means thinking based on the concrete and towards the objective of the concrete.

Situation and the *locality* are not the same thing. The local is the territorial delimitation of the global. Therefore, the local is a part of the global, and every bit as abstract as it. The situational, on the other hand, refers to the fact that, based on our experience, we can elaborate a point of view that is practical, but also theoretical, about the issues that concern us.

It is not a question, then, of stepping “away” from reality. On the contrary, the experience of self-affirmation is characterized by cleaving to one’s situation. Far from dispersion and isolation, this type of experience always opens new possibilities for practice and thought. It shows us something fundamental: *there are always more possibilities than our conjuncture presents as its unique options. Herein lies the importance of thinking: discovering the possibilities that exist in the concrete situation.*

2 The logic of confrontation exalts the moment of battle, of violence as a wager on the offensive. In this, it stands in opposition to situational self-affirmation. It is an appeal to power [*poder*] rather than to potency [*potencia*]. It tends to believe that its conjuncture is a unique situation and subordinates everything to the struggle for power in that scenario. But it also tends toward centralization.

Another major problem with the “logic of confrontation” is that it tends to present the struggle according to a mirrored logic: the fundamental difference between “one and the other” is lost, all asymmetry is forgotten. The violence of a power seeking to appropriate the potency of another is not the same as a counter-power that aims to protect alternative forms of life to those produced by capital.

As such, violence is never excluded as a possibility. Rather, in the experiences of counter-power, violence is present in multiple forms: legal and illegal repression, the violence of the market, etc.

But violence is also a resource of *potency*, or power from below. The roadblock [*piquete*], self-defense, and punctual offensive attacks are all political forms of violence of those from below. This is evident. Violence cannot be judged from a narrow moral evaluation. But, at the same time, the fact that violence “comes from below” does not necessarily indicate that it is tied to the emergence of an alternative sociability: just because it is understandable and more legitimate does not, in itself, make it capable of *producing* an alternative sociability.

Two keys appear as possible for thinking about the forms of a violence that neither separates itself from, nor turn its back on the emergence of an alternative sociability: first, that it be based on an authentically defensive conception. That is not to say that it does not have its own initiative. It is not a law about how to act. It simply refers to the fact that acts of self-defense are driven by popular resources, not power, and especially that those actions are not guided by the aim of acquiring or obtaining power but instead by the defense of an emergent sociability and the *potency* of the experiences associated with it. And second, multiplicity as a form that is *different* from dispersion and centralization, in accordance with the reality of the experiences of counter-power and as a resource against isolation

in a specialized “apparatus.”

The offensive, as a conception of violence, is a weapon of the enemy, of central power, of the “powerful” in general (understanding by “powerful” in general those who control the *potency* of others). Offensive violence is conquering, colonial, and imperialist. That is why war is the terrain of power. Power wants to lead its enemies there. And it often happens that we believe that power is susceptible to attack. Nonetheless, the people who shoulder the majority of the deaths do not themselves choose the wars. A people’s war is not desirable. It is to be taken up only when imposed upon us, and as such represents an ultimate hypothesis, entirely undesirable.

When the logic of open confrontation becomes the privileged site through which political struggle is defined, it opens the door to the naked power of death. And this logic is attractive not only to armies and guerrilla struggles but also to political parties, intellectuals, and social movements: *the logic of confrontation belongs to the dominant image of politics as the “struggle for power.”* In effect, if politics refers to the confrontation between two sides battling over a central power, offensive warfare will be the unique and common strategy for both contestants, equating them to an unimaginable point. As such, it has no relation to the defensive people’s wars for independence and against colonialism and imperialism that we have known in the twentieth century.

For the experiments in counter-power, violence is an unavoidable element: not only is it present in every mode of injustice and form of repression, but it also forms a resource unto itself. But there is no reason to equate it with the violence of power. Its differences come from being multiple (not centralized), in the multiple (one resource among others), and inevitably a defensive conception. Therefore, the true choice is not between violence and non-violence, but between self-affirmation and the logic of confrontation.

3 Violence is present and is, moreover, a situational resource. When it is made unilateral, it becomes the logic of confrontation. But if the opposite occurs, it can become the active defense of a newly produced sociability.

Violence is a situational resource, thus there is absolutely no reason to mechanically identify *violence* with the *logic of confrontation*. History is full of examples of intelligent and legitimate violence. To condemn violence in general is to fall into an abstract, pre-political, ahistorical way of thinking. Violence is present and we have to take it on, not deny it.

It is therefore essential that we separate confrontation as merely one of many possibilities in a situation, from the logic of confrontation that tends to monopolize the entire field of possibility until it becomes the only path imaginable. Our recent history shows us the risks of militarism and other forms of polarization that tend to constitute counter-power as a mirror of power, dividing everything in two and establishing “symmetries” between the two forces.

Violence as a resource of the multitude, however, has no reason to reproduce this mirror logic. To the contrary, the violence of the masses, when it seeks to affirm itself in its *potency*, is defensive, and is based on asymmetries of force, legitimacy, and resources.

On the other hand, violence as one resource among others can coexist very well with other resources of the situation, preventing the confrontation from “taking power” over the other possibilities that “always” exist.

That said, the core of a defensive conception consists in the fact that the legitimacy and efficacy of any type of violence that does not wish to become a mirror of power lies in its defensive character itself, and, on the other hand, in “what this defensiveness defends”: that is, alternative forms of life. In the final instance, the debate around violence rests on the existence of those forms. In this, the examples of the MST in Brazil and the indigenous communities in Chiapas and their relationship with the EZLN are illustrative.

4 In the *piquete*, three different forms of relation with the state are taking place at the same time, in a parallel and complementary fashion: 1) the state represses; 2) the state ignores the demands and conditions of the neighborhood; 3) the state funds benefit packages and projects. Insofar as the objective of the roadblock is to obtain benefit packages and funding for social projects, violence, as a resource, is inevitable. Hence, the risk of getting trapped in a logic of confrontation here is real, a risk that the government both considers and promotes (but they're not the only ones). For this reason, it is fundamental to build, starting from that reality, increasingly autonomous experiments capable of preparing for the reduction in subsidies, on the one hand, and, on the other, to strip power of the temptation of war, so that the autonomous *piquetero* organizations do not get dragged down that path.

We know that there is not one *piquetero* movement. There are many. Nonetheless, they all share the roadblock. It is true that each one carries out roadblocks in their own way (completely or partially shutting down the road, wearing masks or not, etc.). However, there is still something they have in common: making demands on the state (whether the municipal, provincial, or national government) for benefit packages and social projects, and using the roadblock as a weapon to apply pressure.

We discussed this issue last year. At that time, we identified three tendencies in the *piqueteros* movement: two that understand themselves based on *globality* and the *conjuncture* (which include both the self-described “revolutionaries” and those who fight for inclusion in the system through “reformism”). Each has different strategies but they share a way of conceiving politics: as a form of thought and practice based on the *conjuncture*. Unlike them, the MTD Solano was developing another possibility in the affirmation of situational thinking and acting.

After December 19 and 20, the movements re-accommodated themselves to the *conjuncture*. Some disappeared and others wanted to be the vanguard. In one of the workshop meetings, we discussed the importance of rejecting the illusion of a political vacuum. On that occasion, it was said that the priority was to expand our grassroots work and produce our own times and spaces, in which to have a sovereignty that would allow us to

think about everything, including the conjuncture.

It is worth repeating that, among so many differences, there is one thing that all the movements share: the roadblock. As a moment of making demands on the state, it becomes an inevitable site of confrontation. The state only recognizes those whom it subordinates or those who confront it. The MTD's choice, therefore, means an inevitable level of violence linked to making demands on an increasingly devastated state.

Let's look at this more closely: in the roadblock, three different, parallel, and complementary, forms of relation with the state take place: confrontation, negotiation, and indifference. It is a difficult, contradictory, paradoxical situation, but there is no other choice but to take it on. And the movement's capacity, in large part, rests on knowing how to combine these three realities. The first conclusion we can draw is that *while it is necessary to make demands on the state, all the variants are present in variable proportions. And therefore, confrontation is inevitable.*

It is for this reason that it is of vital importance to consolidate alternative forms of reproducing the movement's existence that no longer rely on the benefit packages as the single and sole resource.

5 The perspective of experiments that sustain themselves through their own capacity, through their *potency* and their ability to project their energy, derive their strength from the process of self-affirmation. The key to their development lies in their capacity to subtract themselves from the temporality and demands of the conjuncture and representation in order to produce a time of their own. For such counter-powers, politics lies primarily in the capacity to produce this temporality, this autonomy.

Autonomy, independence, and self-affirmation are not obvious and are not achieved once and for all. They are not easy to obtain or easy to sustain once achieved. It is a *permanent task*.

The fact that autonomy cannot be total, at least not for now, opens up different possibilities.

This can lead to a supposed realism that tells us that the "politics" of negotiation, alliances, and the electoral realm is the only means left to us to control, once and for all, the state itself. Another position says "let's

take advantage of the state,” “as we confront it, we will accumulate force” to the point of “taking the state itself.” Both positions end up being the same, because they constitute two different strategies based on the same underlying belief: change comes from controlling the national state, and that politics is cunning and a struggle for power.

But there is another possibility: the politics of self-affirmation. However, this is not easy, because it always depends on two principles that are difficult to achieve, and above all, difficult to develop once they are achieved. First, a greater capacity to determine our own temporalities, themes, resources, spaces, and initiatives. These capacities are already difficult to find in politics, because they depend on a position that does not seek resources for war but rather an option for life, everyday reproduction, daily rebellion, and the need to avoid the traps of power. And, second, there is no autonomy without interdependence: it is impossible to obtain one’s own space, time, thought, and resources without developing a web of counter-power capable of comprehensibly reproducing the movement.

A new conclusion that can be drawn is that the autonomy of potency involves a self-affirmation that founds a new (spatio-temporal) sovereignty that is capable of subtracting itself from the norms of capital. But, in order to do so, potency must expand, link up with other experiments, weaving together autonomous reproductive circuits.

To move forward along this path, three observations are vitally important: 1) the need to deal with the state does not entail that it is impossible to develop, in a parallel manner, autonomous options; 2) self-affirmation must be based on the practical hypothesis of an autonomous reproduction of the experiment (and its projection); and 3) it is important to produce, in parallel, a political analysis of counter-power that allows for understanding the phenomena of the conjuncture with the fundamental objective of producing, sustaining, and protecting the experiments in counter-power.

6 The state has transformed. It has been degraded, held hostage by neo-liberal politics, by the acceleration of the global flows of capital (so-called globalization), while also being appropriated by real mafias. A new social formation is emerging in Argentina: social fragmentation, mass impoverishment, and the destruction of the old productive structure. The *piqueteros* recognize this transformation.

What does this novelty mean for the thought that emerges from experiences of counter-power? Two things seem clear: 1) the current state is no longer the (not so) old nation-state, with its effective capacities of integration, even if they were always limited; and 2) there are currently important resources of domination that unfold, to a relative degree, outside of the neoliberal-mafioso-state.

This current state is dismembered. On one side, it was emptied out by neoliberal policies. On the other side, according to those who have much more information than we do, the mafias have taken over the apparatuses of the state. Finally, there are ample testimonies showing that it is no longer functional in areas that used to be its fundamental tasks. It is not that the state has disappeared, nor is it on the road to extinction. But yes, it has changed. The point is not that it is either weaker or stronger, but simply that some of its roles and priorities have changed, as well as the ways that it carries them out.

Although the neglect of basic services such as health care and public education, pensions, and, in general terms, essential services for the lives of much of the population, is evident to all, the state has also given up on certain tasks that were once regarded as non-delegable offices of the capitalist state. At the moment, *there is no monopoly on legally circulating currency*. Not only because of the bonds produced by the national and provincial governments, which maintain a certain state legality, but because of the circulation of “credits” in all the barter networks. In Quilmes, for example, there was a plan to pay taxes with credits from the Global Barter Network. Another powerful example is the defense of private property: during the looting in December, large transnational supermarkets directly contracted personnel from the police or gendarmerie to repress would-be looters, while the small and medium sized grocery stores were defended

at gun-point by their own owners. We can list example after example: police gangs that become autonomous from legal and political power, mafia warfare, private security agencies, para-police groups, massive corruption at all levels, etc.

These examples reveal that the national state is no longer, currently (at least in Argentina), the exclusive and sufficient source of domination. It is true that it never was completely, but now, more so than at other times, it is illusory to assume that domination passes primarily through the state apparatus. On the one hand, there are the market resources: publicity, media, production of images of happiness and fulfillment, desire for consumption, the determination of new forms of inclusion and exclusion, etc. On the other hand, there are new forms of control that are no longer organized by the state apparatus, although they have its relative authorization (for example, within supermarkets or factories), and finally, there is para-militarization, the mafia, that has taken over the state apparatus, but that directly articulates itself to large corporations (private security agencies and the illegal direct sale of services of state resources).

In this context, one thing seems certain: *the loss of the state's regulatory capacity demonstrates the nonexistence of the old national state that sought to integrate the population, even with all its limitations.* This situation raises new challenges both for those who organize domination and for counter-power.

Capital is faced with the challenge of constructing the minimum forms of state regulation. This can mean attempting to build a neoliberal state that is able to enforce the law, that is, recomposing, in new terms, a political authority founded on its technical capacity to develop business in the country; or, to the contrary, directly associating itself with, as it has up until now, the mafia state, which constitute nuclei of regulation outside of the state, without reversing the decomposition and corruption of the state apparatus.

These possibilities should take into account that the mafia-state exists and, as such, it constitutes a powerful point of departure for any analysis or project on the level of the organization of domination (marked by the need for capital valorization), therefore any result will be intermediary between these possibilities. These options are also crossed by other fundamental movements of the global, continental, and national conjuncture

that we have not even mentioned yet, but that reveal a greater level of complexity and that have a direct relationship with the imperialist forces that want Argentina to join the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

We insist on what seems to be of the most importance to us now: 1) *the end of the national state as we knew it*; 2) *a reorganization of domination that involves a combination of old resources along with new modalities*.

7 Capital needs to recompose its dominion and it still does not seem to have a single strategy or a clear way of doing so. The national conjuncture is characterized by this fundamental fact. It is not a matter of a power vacuum, but of a more complex process. The question is what type of capitalism is possible in the current context determined as much by political and institutional degradation as by the presence of extended networks of counter-power.

It often seems as though political reality is presented in two ways: what appears when we think of it immediately, as a reflex, and what is revealed when we think about it more deeply.

Reflex thinking tends to reproduce what the media and politicians say. We think about our reality as if what has already happened in the past will necessarily be repeated, as if history operated according to cyclical time. So, for example, the Triple A are in the government, and the guerrillas are the ones resisting today, and the year 2002 is supposed to be something like 1975.¹ Then, all that is left is to wait for a victorious insurrection that avoids the final death, or a repressive dictatorship that repeats history.

Only when we think more seriously, in other words, with our own minds, based on what we experience in our own circumstances, can we see that neither the media nor the politicians, nor the consecrated intellectuals truly think, rather they “know things” (honestly or dishonestly, depending on the case). But thought must be produced anew each time, each one of us, in our situation.

Doing so, we discover that history does not repeat itself and while there are clear continuities, they tend to develop new meanings, even if they seem very subtle and minor at first glance.

It is in this sense that we have to ask ourselves again whether the current conjuncture is just another repetition of the many things we have al-

ready seen or if, in its singularity, it is showing us something that is worth the effort to understand.

On the one hand, the current conjuncture is illuminated when it is perceived based on transformations, in the heat of the destitution of the national state, as we analyzed in the previous point.

On the other hand, the current crisis has managed to render visible the development of experiences of counter-power and accelerated their growth.

In this context, the needs of power include: 1) producing opportunities for re-initiating a process of capitalist accumulation, and to do so, it requires, 2) recomposing forms of regulation, which means minimally recomposing certain state functions (political power, legitimacy, including for repression, etc.) and 3) resolving its co-existence (in more or less repressive terms) with the networks of counter-power.

Here we are not trying to develop a meticulous panorama of the international or national conjuncture (although it is clear that these are problems of the utmost importance, particularly the explosion of the crisis across Latin America), nor of the struggle that is currently developing within the dominant class bloc, nor party politics superstructure game. No, it is primarily about insisting that it is worth taking this context into account in order to develop consistent hypotheses within the experiences of counter-power.

Let's return to the issue of the mafia-state. It is not just a state form. It is also a form of social regulation that extends throughout the very base of society. Its dynamic spreads a de-institutionalized violence founded on internal struggles (whether political, business, or police struggles, all of which are articulated and submerged in the same conspiratorial, hidden, mode). Its current articulation with global capital does not mean an expansion of socio-economic inclusion, but rather brings the population together in complete degradation.

A hypothetically efficient administrative state, articulated with a re-composition of capital investment (eventually, and in the best of cases, based on a massive proletarianization of the middle classes) would have to coexist with this panorama and articulate with this mafia state.

Even in that case, which seems to be the panacea of "Argentinean progressivism," the use of violence would continue. Repressive violence would

be more targeted, but not necessarily less generalized. In all cases, repression would tend to be applied against the obstacles that “the excluded, the radicals” exert on new business, to the circuits of capital valorization. It is clear that the roadblock, therefore, lies in the center of all repressive hypotheses.

If what we have said so far is not simply delirious (and we can make no promises that it is not), we can draw one more conclusion: the coexistence of the power of capital with counter-power, does not only guarantee physical repressions in the future. That is only one aspect, which, furthermore, is already seen in the present. There is also the possibility of “compromise.”

If capitalism’s subsistence involves producing business, the maturity of experiences of counter-power (as such) would involve both coexisting with repression (in whatever form it appears) and with co-optation, which is no longer, as it used to be, generalized integration led by the state (as it was under Peronism from 1946 to 1952), but rather more degraded forms of gift-giving, clientelism, proletarianization in hyper-precarious conditions, etc.

If, as we have supposed, the state (trapped as it is in the networks of capital) lacks the ability to substantially expand social inclusion on its own, we find ourselves confronted with a face-to-face relationship between, on one side, capital (and its mafia-state articulation), its repressive capacities, and co-optation and, on the other side, counter-power and its project to create autonomy. And there is no truly effective mediation between both forces. Thus, *compromise* (co-optation, precarious inclusion) and repression (especially of those who block the circuits of capital valorization, but also due to internal mafias) are two variants that, either combined or not, will become present as long as coexistence between the power of capital and counter-power continues.

8 Class struggle—in the current circumstances—is built around a power that seeks needs to appropriate and control natural, cultural, and vital processes (capital) and the forces of resistance, which will manage to take up the challenge of producing another sociability if they are capable of generating a new way of producing life: external to, opposed to, and more potent than the regime of capital. There are very rich experiences in this respect across Latin America.

In effect, we think that class struggle revolves around the fundamental fact that capital tends to dominate the environment, human life, and cultural wealth in an increasingly direct way. It is clear across Latin America how communities' struggles to control their own conditions of reproduction enter into direct contradiction with the needs of capital accumulation.

Everything that is subordinated to capital is brutally exploited. Capitalism, more than ever, produces life for death. Its own mode of accumulation structurally generates exclusion. The moment of greatest productivity in the history of humankind is also that of the most misery.

On the other hand, the strength of struggles increasingly lies in their tendencies to *become autonomous from capital's command*. Whole networks of Indigenous culture, of peasants, and direct producers develop an increasingly powerful counter-power at the grassroots level of society.

We do not expect—although it is not obviously not impossible—for counter-power to be destroyed in the short term. In any case, it would not be so easy to do so. Capitalist society has little or nothing to offer those who manage to constitute a sociability at the margins of its control and purely repressive solutions are costly from any point of view. However, the combination of co-optation and repression is always available.

It is possible to envision a coexistence, at the same time, of capitalist power (under whatever form it eventually acquires) and a counter-power that increasingly distances itself from open war and tends to affirm itself in its new productive and reproductive forms.

According to what we have developed so far, we can insist on two conclusions: 1) that capital must resolve (in Argentina) its dilemmas related to the forms of valorization and regulation of class struggle. The specific modalities of direct articulation between capital and the mafias is what is at stake at the

moment. And this resolution is taking place in the context of the emergence of a counter-power of epic proportions. 2) Counter-power itself, in its development, must also resolve a number of fundamental questions in relation to the state, local governments, hunger, medicine, forms of self-management, connections between experiences, forms of self-defense, etc.

Thus, the fundamental axis of class struggle is configured by capital as control (and aspiration of control) of the productive *potency* of the people and life and, on the other side, counter-power, as the tendency toward ever more autonomous reproduction of life. Their novel coexistence will not be without conflict.

9 Capitalism produces men and women for death. The logic of confrontation, also maintained by sectors of the left, does so as well. The self-affirmation of *potency* and multiplicity only exists as the will to persist and deploy life. Thus, we insist: to resist means to create (forms of life).

Class struggle is asymmetric. Capital plays the offensive. It conquers, colonizes. But it also, in a scandalous way, excludes and impoverishes. It is fundamental, in this respect, not to lose site of the fact that capital means control of *potency* and of subjectivity, of nature and what is produced by science, and in general, the culture of the people.

Capital is nothing other than a social relation between humans and with nature. It is not possible to fight it as if it were external, as if it had its roots in government headquarters. The only way of combating capitalism, as the hegemony of sadness, exploitation, individualism, and the market, is through producing other forms of sociability, other images of happiness, another form of politics.

10 In Argentina, and across Latin America, networks of production, anti-repression, counter-culture, alternative education and health care, and in general, for a radical politics that is no longer separated from life, are being developed. These networks, insofar as they tend to become autonomous from the command of capital and the state, offer new possibilities of developing the self-affirmation of the productive, cultural, and political *potencies* of autonomous experiences.

The wager on making the reproduction of radical experiences increasingly autonomous requires practical hypotheses for its own project, as well as to be effectively implemented.

And from among what we have been saying, one thing stands out: in Argentina, there are a series of different—more or less diffuse, more or less organized—increasingly autonomous networks, related to barter, alternative economies, human rights, assemblies and public debates, others growing out of factory occupations (of which there are more than 100s), others in health care, in education, and so on.

These experiences are very heterogeneous. Some are even, frankly, dark. But, at the same time, millions of people are *living* in them. In these experiences, political *punteros* and mafias connected to the state apparatus mix with the genuine expressions of vital reproduction for those who were considered dead, for years, by the capitalist market.

These networks tend toward autonomy with respect to capital's command to the same degree as they have lost any possibility of inclusion/integration in conditions that are minimally dignified. Or, in other words, to the extent to which desirable forms of inclusion are no longer available.

These networks have an enormous potential insofar as they put all of their resources into action: connecting producers to one another, producers with consumers, new forms of exchange without mafioso mediation, and especially, insofar as these circuits can sustain themselves by constructing mobile borders with the capitalist market.

11 Power and counter-power can coexist for a long time without either one defeating the other. Power must solve its problems in order to persist, but counter-power must also develop its own solutions, which is no easy task. The central problem of this class struggle is, precisely, how to take on this conflictual coexistence.

The coexistence of a capitalist power that is in a state of constant recomposition with a counter-power that is also constantly recomposing itself, creates anxiety for those who, on one side or the other, want to finish the game in a single move.

From the point of view of counter-power, it is vital to gain time. To strengthen these networks. There is an urgent need to develop a political theory that would allow for better understanding complex issues, such as relations between state institutions and grassroots politics, between struggles' effective presence and levels of representation, between situational leadership and *caudillismo*, between production and the reproduction of life, between self-defense and exodus, between the necessary confrontations and the protection of comrades and experiences, between local, national, and continental development, etc.

12 The experiences of counter-power have consolidated greatly in the past few years. But they are being overwhelmed by an acceleration of time. No one is going to give them that time. Therefore, their virtue lies in the capacity to produce it. Militants in organizations of struggle could do so by also producing networks of autonomous material reproduction. And vice versa: the networks of autonomous reproduction, with all the ambiguities that envelop them, would undoubtedly benefit from a hybridization with the experience of the *piqueteros* struggle. The popular assemblies in various Argentinean cities could play a vitally important role in energizing these networks, as well as this encounter.

The *piqueteros* think of themselves as organizations of struggle. And they tend to seek alliances with other organizations of struggle. Nonetheless, from the point of view of a strategy of self-affirmation, this only covers one aspect of the experience: that of *confrontation*. If this line develops

disproportionately in comparison to others, it will lead to a logic of confrontation. But if it is understood within the networks of counter-power as a whole, as a line that strengthens and protects, if it is developed as part of a work of composition with these economic, health, educational, and counter-cultural networks, it will encounter new perspectives, in the same way as it can open the doors to increasing the material foundations for building greater autonomy.

It is clear that this is not easy, because these networks are precarious. They still have not resolved all the basic issues and, in many cases, are infected with individualism and clientelism. Nonetheless, thinking about this dimension can create space for new alliances, experiences, and the production of new circuits. In this way, benefits can be obtained in the short term, such as affordable food (soy, rice, oil, etc.), generic medications (even creating their own laboratories), perhaps a school, a more effective coordinating body to counter repression, new spaces in which to discuss political theory, etc.

What is more, difficulty is probably related to the specific type of militancy that emerges as a model in these autonomous networks. It is no longer a specialist in ideologies or confrontations, but in situational operators of thought and skilled craftspeople of production and social reproduction. These are the categories of a new political theory of counter-power.

Of course, this is not easy. It is a hypothesis that must be taken to its final point. But there are good examples of experiences across the country, and across the continent, that support this path of development.

It is not a solution to all problems. Even repression itself will not disappear as a possibility. That is, that even working along this line, confrontation will be a harsh reality that must be addressed. But a new horizon can be glimpsed here: 1) the fusion of vital and political reproduction; 2) a better understanding of the possibilities for relations between representative institutions and grassroots experiences; and 3) avoiding the logic of confrontation to radically focus on self-affirmation.

—July 2002

Notes

- 1 The “Triple A” refers to the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance, a far-right death squad that operated between 1973-1976, targeting any leftist opponents of the government, and which has been found responsible for crimes against humanity. 1975 was a year marked by intense political violence, from the Triple A and other right-wing groups, as well as left-wing guerilla movements, which ultimately lead to a coup, in which a military dictatorship came to power.—Trans.

Capitalism produces men and women for death. The logic of confrontation, also maintained by sectors of the left, does so as well. The self-affirmation of potency and multiplicity only exists as the will to persist and deploy life. Thus, we insist: to resist means to create forms of life.

