

**'... we are lost, and afflicted but in this,
that without hope we live in longing.'**

(Dante: Divine Comedy. Inferno. Canto IV)

**Some preliminary remarks on the position taken by the Comité
Invisible with 'L'insurrection qui vient.'**

Already in 2007 - which also means: before the international political and economical shifts and readjustments that have been given the name 'financial crisis,' as well as before the ado caused by Greek anarchists in December 2008, sometimes called insurrection -, already in 2007 a text with the modest length of about one hundred pages was published in France whose future effects still can only be guessed: 'L'insurrection qui vient.' Appearing as editors or collective of authors is a Comité Invisible to whose members, according to reports, belong an elite student of philosophy and a popular young actress from a TV soap, who both joined the Comité instead of pursuing their respective careers. Both the Comité and the text were soon in the grip of the media interest and of the state: The assumed authors were, at great expense, arrested by special forces and threatened with prison terms of up to ten years, based on recently passed EU-anti-terror legislation. Soon the US-american TV agitator on his own behalf and for counter-revolutionary causes, Glenn Beck, picked up the booklet, which in the meantime had also been published in English by University of California Press, and presented it his audience, as always driven by lust for sensation and fear, as an outstanding and vanguard example for an insurrectional and revolutionary wave of violence, gathering internationally, but especially in the USA for some time already - motivating Beck on his part to try to gather the troops for the counter-attack.

In Germany up to this point, reactions to 'L'insurrection qui vient' have been less spectacular, but still there have been some - more subliminal, sporadically maybe even puzzled: eavesdropping among those who still relate themselves to terms as subversion or revolution in the affirmative made evident that most of them had heard of this text coming out of France. However, the words they received had something obscure to them, the more so as most of those people hadn't read the text yet. At the same time one could perceive a certain state of curiousness regarding this publication. Some of those, who hadn't read the text, and most of those, who knew it, in the end disapproved of it flatly and called it irrelevant, faulty or poor in some way or other, "not up to date." The accusations raised against the text until now, as far as they can be known regarding the still reluctant reception, shall, to some extent, be considered in the following remarks on 'L'insurrection qui vient'. For sure, a lot of statements, comments, publications on the text of the Comité Invisible will follow in the near future, since it is now - after a in itself symptomatic delay of three years - published in German - even two times: first, there is an edition by Edition Nautilus, a

publishing house that likes to impersonate the representative of French political and cultural vanguards; second, an unornamental booklet has been published by anonymous producers, which not only can claim the advantage of being cheaper but also of including a rather unagitated preface and a pretty readable translation - for those reasons it will be referred to and quoted here. If there will emerge new aspects, apart from the prevailing stand-offs, out of the dispute over 'L'insurrection qui vient' that can be expected here in Germany remains to be seen. After all, the people that until now at least in principle show an interest in the text, are pretty much the same who, for example, confronted with the varied incidents in Greece in the last few years, have been interested more in an here supposedly happening 'anti-Greek-baiting' than in the Greek events themselves.

"The War in Progress" [p. 63/p. 63]

By referring to 'the position taken by the Comité Invisible' in the headline the attention shall be drawn already at the beginning to a central aspect of the intentions of the Invisible Committee - in the hope of dispelling a misunderstanding, if it can be called by that name, that often presents itself in the discussion of this publication: Even if today 'taking position' usually is understood as 'having an opinion,' 'present a view,' 'The Coming Insurrection' is more than that. 'Taking position' applies to it in its original meaning, which is a military one. The members of the Invisible Committee are taking position in a situation they see as warlike, namely the constitution of today's world, where they try to live and move with revolutionary purpose.

This state-of-war has to be imagined, apart from the avowedly military innovations being introduced in today's states, - to choose a rather up-to-date example - as it could be observed on occasion of the broadcasting of the last soccer World Cup, when reporters on the ground, with an air of combat journalism, informed their audience in a stalwart manner that on the Berlin *Fanmeile* "everything is in good order," just a few drunks had to be removed. In the background the "fans" could be seen, who didn't appear like fanatics but more like exhausted warriors and in whose faces could be perceived that they belonged to the army of the superfluous, since a long time by no means exclusively recruited from the unemployed, and that they knew that. By command of the reporter they consequently fulfilled their duty by performing a lukewarm enthusiasm with some flag-waving. In the view of the writer's collective, these types of mobilizations - sometimes happening by way of social control and engineering, but more often (to use the term in an ironic way) spontaneously - are pervading the life of society and of the people caught in it in a fundamental manner. Other examples, partly mentioned by the Invisible Committee, are the recurring campaigns on occasion of diseases, crime, terrorism, violence, drugs, or the permanent

alertness maintained in 'social networks.'

It can be claimed that the Invisible Committee regards all this as part of a variation on 'state capitalism': "The present production apparatus is therefore, on the one hand, a gigantic machine for psychic and physical mobilization, for sucking the energy of humans that have become superfluous, and, on the other hand, it is a sorting machine that allocates survival to conformed subjectivities and rejects all "problem individuals," all those who embody another use of life and, in this way, resist it. On the one hand, ghosts are brought to life, and on the other, the living are left to die. This is the properly political function of the contemporary production apparatus." [p.31/p. 33] The depiction of labor and its function today in 'The Coming Insurrection' has in any case the potential to arouse indignation, since, if the Invisible Committee is considered to be right, it would leave countless left academics without occupation, who deal in a critic of society and economy "on a marxist [or, as well: "critical"] basis," along with lots of others, who do the same in their leisure time as members of talking associations that choose for themselves the adjectives 'social-revolutionary' or 'communist.' This effect is intensified, because it touches also the critical, individual core of today's forms of labor, that allow an identification with the available wage labor or management positions only at the risk of fatal self-damaging. The I-am-what-I-am-attitude, not only promoted by the PR industry, but also to be found at the most private levels as search for an identity the individuals constantly discover in the present and thereby are stuck in it, is in any case at the beginning and centre of the attack of the Invisible Committee: "»I AM WHAT I AM.« Never has domination found such an innocent-sounding slogan. The maintenance of the self in a permanent state of deterioration, in a chronic state of near collapse, is the best-kept secret of the present order of things. The weak, depressed, self-critical, virtual self is essentially that endlessly adaptable subject required by the ceaseless innovation of production, the accelerated obsolescence of technologies, the constant overturning of social norms, and generalized flexibility. It is at the same time the most voracious consumer and, paradoxically, the most productive self, the one that will most eagerly and energetically throw itself into the slightest project, only to return later to its original larval state." [p. 16/p. 19]

Against this background most of the objections by which the French are confronted and, after the German translations, increasingly will be confronted here, too, miss the point, as long as the all-encompassing fundamental constellation of a permanent mobilization, that characterizes the relationship between the individual and society, as it is claimed by the Invisible Committee, is not taken into account. Thus, the question has to be: Does one share the attitude of the Invisible Committee that

every effort to subvert the order of society immediately means to accept and take seriously the declaration of war presented by the way this societal order works? Or, to make use of a phrase by the French themselves: Does one have to accept or reject the proposition: "To no longer wait is, in one way or another, to enter into the logic of insurrection" [p. 63/p.64]?

Independent of the answer to this question, it can at once have a salutary effect on the potential or real critic, since it deprives him of the possibility to deal with the arguments of the Invisible Committee in a routine manner by which one finds fault with this or that single aspect, but in the next step one discards the entire pamphlet or at least integrates it into the pool of leftist text production, guaranteeing complete irrelevance and reflecting the rampant relativism of a left that doesn't know itself anymore, a pool whose contents make sense only in their mutual distancing relation and the rotating criticism and positioning without there being anything else that would hold together the bunch of texts and groups.

In view of this, 'The Coming Insurrection' is a distancing of its own kind, since the authors in fact leave this hustle and bustle (in the exact sense even geographically - which will be commented later on), have nothing of relevance or essence to do with it and, by way of that, are in the advantageous position, compared to common practice in the Left, to observe a state-of-war in the dominant society, but to be able to do without a narrow-minded and insignificant declaration of war against these or those leftists. This attitude together with their unmetaphorical use of the term war makes it, for example, possible, that they, even if anonymous, can be discerned as individuals, subjects, who are as such - like all the others - confronted with totality - and not as a member of this or that, as representative of position XY and so forth, etc. Against this background, all the reproaches of 'subjectivism' or 'vitalism,' that can be found in the front ranks of all the reproaches, have no power as long as they do not aim at the location the Invisible Committee chooses for itself in society - and, by way of that, its relationship towards the Left - for the Committee no longer a relationship of rivalry, which makes things worse for 'the Leftists'.

Magic of Words

Closely related to the first misunderstanding - that 'The Coming Insurrection' constitutes a 'position' which wants to hold it's own in the contest of ideas and programs within the Left, and in the end wants to succeed as the better alternative, that it even wants to convince by way of "the forceless force of the better argument" - is a common second misunderstanding, which makes reading of the text futile, if one falls prey to it. Interestingly enough, it appears in context with the paragraphs of the first

part of 'The Coming Insurrection,' i.e. those parts that are treated mildly or sometimes even with praise by the critics. The booklet consists roughly of two parts, of which the second one treats questions that are perhaps usually considered within the so-called 'question of organizing.' The first part again, which is divided into seven circles (of Dante's hell), examines the world as it is, at least, as it is seen by the Invisible Committee. The misunderstanding arises because the reader might have the impression to discover here finally the analysis of society which would allow to discuss 'The Coming Insurrection' in group meetings, theory circles, critical seminars, or related gatherings, to weigh one point or another of the text or its entire conception, to trace theoretical traditions, that the French, without any doubt, follow, and alternatively built productively off the works of their predecessors, or deviate from them in a reprehensible manner, or repeat and continue the mistakes of the elderly, which everybody already knows all about. To be sure, the text is suitable for such shenanigans - not a single text in the world is immune from such lecherous approaches. But the French authors' collective will not be disturbed by these in any way, since exactly this part of 'The Coming Insurrection' is written and construed in a way that reveals an utter indifference to such methods of text interpretation. The interest of the Invisible Committee, at least as far as they claim it, lies in fact in the, in a way, much more modest endeavour of presenting and describing the world and not in the meticulous analysis, which is not considered to be a too lowly occupation by the committee, but, it can be guessed, in which it, on principle grounds, doesn't lay too much trust as a separate occupation in the dispute with and about the world.

By this attitude - meaning that foremost in the form of and by way of language an image of the world shall be created, that can be conveyed to the reader, even better: that can bring the reader's own image of where he lives back into memory, before, in part two of the booklet, he is presented with some ways of what can be done in this world if one's intent is its revolutionary subversion - by this attitude then, the accusation - which is not completely mistaken - is motivated that 'The Coming Insurrection' constitutes 'revolutionary poetry.' Already the small hint to Dante, introduced prominently by the Invisible Committee in part one, shows the reader: Yes, it is poetry you're dealing with here. And indeed, it aims at an poetic effect, which shall be caused by reading it. This could be called a certain trust in the magic of words, which has always been related to poetry. A trust of this kind is for example expressed in the following words of the "imaginary collective": "This book is signed in the name of an imaginary collective. Its editors are not its authors. [...] They've made themselves scribes of the situation. [...] It's enough just to say what is before our eyes and not to shrink from the conclusions." [p. 7/p. 17]

Not astonishingly the rudest criticism is caused by these characteristics, since they are characteristics of language. To quote from one of the until now few German articles about the Invisible Committee and 'The Coming Insurrection': "By their cult of immediacy those publications are a handbook for regression into a, maybe seducing, but in the end claustrophobic political idyll." Another example: "With such gross over-simplifications this discourse only serves the rampant resentment against representative democracy and its institutions. An easy way of non-agreeing." The concluding judgment of this journalist: "This book is only the latest attempt to give an ultra-leftist politics a glamorous face. Situationism, autonomous Anarchism und punk poetry are mixed into a hip-phrased pamphlet. There are superbly resignative sentences like this: 'The couple is like the final stage of the great social debacle.' In any case, the authors delight in the posture of the heroic melancholic." - That those lines appeared in the leftist paper *taz* and that their author, Aram Linzel, is branded by this description: "The author is working as a scientific assistant in the parliamentary group of the Green Party in the Bundestag. He's also a free-lance writer.", is probably a mark of honour for the Invisible Committee. On the other hand, this exponent of those, who certainly don't go easy paths of non-agreeing, is by far not alone, and also not only an example of the for today's political order most representative and in the long run most relevant stratum of the 'new citizens' of the red-green milieu, but he fits well into a long list of 'Realists,' to whom melancholy, poetry, immediacy (or, slightly friendlier: primary experience), resignation never were allowed to offer an attitude which is adequate to reality, but always have only been cause for the suspicion, that here, maybe, is someone who really doesn't want to take part (or, in an older phrase: who could be part of a 'Great Refusal') and by this could disturb their positive, constructive, and forward-looking participation in the real world. The desire that "finally the spell of society may lift" not only in this country always caused suspiciousness and uneasiness - in the majority of the population as soon as it forms itself into a mass; in socialist, communist, or leftist circles often based on adherence to a principle of rationality and productiveness.

Another reason for such a condemnation, coming 'from deep inside,' may be the notion that here could be someone who takes the term 'totality,' mentioned above but largely out of use and fashion today, seriously und who could actually try to develop his attitude and his bearing in the world from a refusal of the bad state of affairs in its entirety. Such a behaviour corresponds not at all to the most common method to handle the world or questions of subversion, revolution, emancipation. As a rule, the standard leftist method tends more to result in a kind of caricature of a Negative Dialectic for household use: By criticizing the bad in

the details of the world, preferably in publications or positions coming also from the left, it is hoped that one day the good will result. Given this, there is no cause for surprise when such 'totalitarian' advances, as the one by the committee, which are hardly interested in any details of the Left, but very interested in all the details of the world - but only as they relate to the entire picture and its abolishment - do not encounter much love or enthusiasm among such partisans of the separations.

"The metropolis is this simultaneous death of city and country." [p. 34/p. 36]

If, as is the case with 'The Coming Insurrection,' such an argument is combined with all kinds of practical examples, hints, and consequences - the authors write, e.g., against a "neutral idea of friendship" and confront it with an "affinity within a common truth" [p. 66/p. 66]; another sentence reads: "Communes that aren't afraid, beyond their specifically political activities, to organize themselves for the material and moral survival of each of their members and of all those around them who remain adrift. Communes that would not define themselves - as collectives tend to do - by what's inside and what's outside them, but by the density of the ties at their core. Not by their membership, but by the spirit that animates them." [p. 68/p. 68] - then, for many readers, they exceed the acceptable limits. The corresponding aggressive reaction is made more probable because giving such specific information about what might follow from their view and perception of the world for the way they are living their lives is similar to a battle with a lifted visor or even without any armor, inviting the attack, because the opponent can get the impression: it is here where he can get at the Invisible Committee and settle the whole matter without too much of an effort, a mere pushover. This is why the decision of the members of the Invisible Committee, to get a house in the French countryside, to live and work there, is being denounced as primitivism and related to an allegedly reactionary concept of nature and of the relationship between city and countryside. That central paragraphs of 'The Coming Insurrection' are devoted to this relationship between city and countryside and describe those in former times complementary extremes as dissolved into the "metropolis" and the cities as uninhabitable - at least if you follow revolutionary intentions -, is being assiduously overlooked, just as the rather extra-ordinary concept of environment and ecology in the booklet, that is in fact a final reckoning with all aspects of the ecological movement, whose ideology is not anymore the privilege of some marginal groups but part of the consciousness of the elites and of the daily works of government. A poignant phrase about this in 'The Coming Insurrection': "There is no "environmental catastrophe." The catastrophe is the environment itself." [p. 47/p. 49] Mentioning the dry and in all its briefness very fundamental denunciation of

the latest variety of a supposedly radical ecology, which goes by the name of *décroissance* or 'degrowth', in 'The Coming Insurrection' should be reading advise enough for all who consider the booklet an appeal for the 'simple life' and as an example of anti-modernism or romantic affection for nature.

At least according to the ideas and the presentation of the members of the Invisible Committee, the retreat from the big cities for which they have opted (but which - this has to be mentioned - they do not in any way propose as the only option, let alone prescribe) is a result of strategic considerations, again related to the view of the world as being in a state of war, as it was described here in the beginning. The same goes, at least in part, for the, within the context of 'The Coming Insurrection,' rather central concept of the commune: It cannot be understood if one ignores that communes mean small action units that give individuals the possibility by way of association to be active in the world with the aim of changing it - they are not adventure or self-awareness groups but serve as an instrument to appropriate, in a conscious manner, the means of production of human life (be it technology or knowledge). The concept is diffuse and loose enough, and includes as well permanent as temporary associations, established for various ends, so that there can be no doubt: an equation of those communes with the clichés about diverse ways of living together in the 1960s and 1970s, that went by the same name, would be mistaken, even if it may be tempting in Germany. Rather, as the Invisible Committee writes: "A commune forms every time a few people, freed of their individual straitjackets, decide to rely only on themselves and measure their strength against reality." [p. 68/p. 68] And here is a paragraph about the dominant model in real life contradicting this concept of communes: "Conversely, any observation that leaves us indifferent, doesn't affect us, doesn't commit us to anything, no longer deserves the name truth. There's a truth beneath every gesture, every practice, every relationship, and every situation. We usually just avoid it, manage it, which produces the madness of so many in our era." [p. 65/p. 65] And those "so many" are living this model in "organizations - political, labor, humanitarian, community associations, etc. [...] [Y]ou can, on occasion, run into worthy beings within them. But the promise of the encounter can only be realized outside the organization and, unavoidably, at odds with it." [p. 66/p. 67] Or they are living it, "far more dreadful," in "milieus": "Flee all milieus. Each and every milieu is orientated towards the neutralization of some truth. [...] Particularly to be avoided are the cultural and activist circles. They are the old people's homes where all revolutionary desires traditionally go to die. [...] Just as it's useless to expect anything from them, it's stupid to be disappointed by their sclerosis. It's best to just abandon this dead weight." [p. 67/p. 67]

"Nothing is to be expected from the end of civilization."

[p. 61/p. 62]

This may sound very presumptuous and arrogant - and *en passant* forfeit the French entirely the goodwill of all the factions and currents of the 'really existing Left' -, but it is quite true to the traditional method of making the shame more shameful by publicizing it. In any case, it is of little avail to charge the Invisible Committee with not coming up with anything better, or coming up with something even worse - e.g. crude decisionism or romantic existentialism - than what is at hand in the Left. To be sure, there is indeed a high probability that 'The Coming Insurrection' will entail various phenomena of narcissistic militancy, a zest for action which is empty of thought because it is too lazy to think, and maybe even create a not very attractive 'milieu' of its own. For sure, there will be 'romantic revolutionaries' who will feel inspired and confirmed in their destructive and nihilistic leanings by the Comité Invisible, and who will act out the suggestions of the French - for example the suggestion of sabotage - with some consistency, but rather spectacularly. The opposite development can also be imagined, a radicalism as lifestyle or habitus, devoid of deeds, to fill the time, until professional life begins, "intellectually," with some gain in distinction, in an "exciting" and "interesting" fashion.

However, instead of jumping at the the spirits they may be calling, it seems to be preferable to meet the french sorcerer's apprentices on the level where they take their start and which they describe in apodictic sentences as the following: "From whatever angle you approach it, the present offers no way out." [Followed immediately by the sentence: "This is not the least of its virtues."] [p. 11/p. 13] "We're setting out from a point of extreme isolation, of extreme weakness. An insurrectional process must be built from the ground up. Nothing appears less likely than an insurrection, but nothing is more necessary." [p. 64/p. 64] And, to come to a close, a longer quote: "Of course, this imperialism of the relative finds a suitable enemy in every empty dogmatism, in whatever form of Marxist-Leninism, Salifism, or Neo-Nazism: anyone who, like Westerners, mistakes provocation for affirmation. - At this juncture, any strictly social contestation that refuses to see that what we're faced with is not the crisis of a society but the extinction of a civilization becomes an accomplice in its perpetuation. It's even become a contemporary strategy to critique this society in the vain hope of saving this civilization." [p. 61/p. 61] Whoever wants to defend what is meant by "organizations" and "milieus" has either to refute those statements - for example by making it clear that one will not have anything to do with such embarrassing, self-congratulatory, trivializing, and apocalyptic views. [Incidentally, it may be claimed even then: Why not read 'The Coming Insurrection' at a profit similar as can be gained by reading for example the private manifesto of the young man who ran amok in the German town of

Emsdetten, appreciating its 'diagnostic' value?] Or, if one doesn't refute the argument of the Comité Invisible completely, one would have to check one's own 'organizations' and 'milieus' if they offer a suitable answer to the argument. Otherwise the claim of criticism turns into the idle business of professionals or artists of psychological repression, who anyway will not take part in the process described as possible in the following excerpt: "It is precisely in this desolate situation that one has to have the courage of not looking for another form of organization, but, so to speak, to gather around contents. We can imagine that in today's situation collectives that are associated loosely, but are really clear about their contents and are endowed with reason can present the first step. For example, not to lapse back into the old error: First, we create a central committee, then the masses will join us anyway. Obviously, this is the wrong road. It's more important to work at the basis and create small groups consistent within themselves. How they will relate later depends partly on the development of society. - In this regard we are in no way pessimists. Science proves, there will be no more revolution in the future. And we say: Mankind is much more flexible than science likes to believe. Suddenly there is an explosion. And if there is an explosion you have the possibility of those collectives getting into contact with each other and accomplishing something together." However, these excerpts are not taken from 'The Coming Insurrection,' but (there written in first person) from a text composed by a slightly isolated German-Italian representative of the greater informal committee.

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