

Tactical Media at Dusk?

Critical Art Ensemble

*Pessimism of the intellect; optimism of the will.*¹

Antonio Gramsci

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant wrote a series of works that attempted to salvage the remnants of transcendental categories from the brutal philosophical assault of the Enlightenment thinkers (David Hume in particular). The transcendentalists that followed him (Hegel and Schopenhauer) believed that Kant had surrendered far too much to the secularists, and hoped to regain the ground that Kant had relinquished in the fields of epistemology and ontology by an exhaustive series of studies on the fundamentals of philosophy. Whether we need to go to such extremes in the area of tactical media is dubious; however, a constant reassessment of fundamental principles can never hurt, and may even help given the high speeds with which culture can shift. Serious concerns about tacticality began to show themselves at the *Next 5 Minutes* in 2003, where participants (an international contingent of tactical media users) spent a considerable amount of time discussing a return to an emphasis on strategy. Tactical media practitioners have also felt the impact of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's attempt to rekindle the productive flames of optimism. Persuasive arguments about the opportunities inherent in the transition to global capitalism that anti-capitalist vectors can exploit to re-establish principles of equality, peace, democracy and social justice, and to escape the horrors of Modernity such as fascism, world war, genocide, etc often flirt with orthodox Marxist notions of progress. At the furthest extreme, theorists such as Gene Ray have argued that revolution is again a viable option, and that tactical media should reassess itself through this radical lens. All of these points are well worth discussing and bring us to this moment of self-reflection in which we ask whether the basic principles that have guided not just tactical media, but most cultural interventionist practices over the past fifty years, are still intact, or whether we may be on the verge of a paradigm shift in resistant cultural methodology due to the historic shift in capitalist accumulation and technological development.

1 This phrase appeared regularly on the masthead of a journal called *Ordine Nuovo* of which Antonio Gramsci was the editor.

TACTICALITY

Ipsa facto, 'tacticality' is the defining principle of tactical media (TM). Unlike 'media', a completely open-ended term that refers in this context to the entire catalogue of means to produce and deliver representation (thus having no other imperative than its own existence), tacticality frames (and thus limits) every ontological strata of media expression from identity to production to environment/place. If tacticality is jettisoned from tactical media in favour of strategy then this model of resistance is truly dead, since the current manifestation has no meaning beyond the frame of tacticality.

To complicate matters further, tacticality has never been theorised to a point of consensus among its users. In fact, even the authors of the *ABC of Tactical Media*,² David Garcia and Geert Lovink, have not been able to come to complete agreement. On the one hand, Lovink is of the opinion that tacticality is primarily derived from military discourse. Certainly, the root discourse is grounded in military thought. Much about the way in which particular cultural tactics are conceived and executed has been refined through the principles offered by Clausewitz in *On War*.³ He clearly understood that 'Tactics are the art of the weak', and indeed, deception and trickery are the primary allies of those who must resort to tacticality. The Yes Men, for example, are masters of this element of cultural tacticality, and to some degree all TM users must be. In an age of asymmetrical warfare, the interrelationship of tacticality in the theatres of culture and warfare is quite clear.

On the other hand, David Garcia is quick to cite Michel de Certeau as a central influence, for while military discourse may be quite informative, the cultural manifestation of tacticality should also be informed by cultural discourse in order to capture the subtleties of action within the social sphere that are quite differentiated from those within the world of war. While recognising the significance of military discourse, Garcia insists that precise articulation relevant to cultural interventions rests in culture itself.

With regard to tacticality, CAE believes it behoves us to revisit this key passage on tactics from de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

... a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus... The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the power to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection; it is a maneuver 'within the enemy's field of vision', as von Büllow put it, and within enemy territory. It does not, therefore, have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a direct, visible, objectifiable space. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position and plan raids.⁴

More than the limits on action, this notion of tacticality begins with the relationship to a fundamental lack of territory. To escape the limits of tacticality, we would have to ask ourselves 'Where is our territory?'. For

2 See <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-1-9705/msg00096.html>

3 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans J J Graham, Kegan Paul Trench Trubner, London, 1911

4 Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans Steven Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988

we seem to have none. From what place can we establish a field of vision that inverts our generic minoritarian relationship to the overall environment? There seems to be no escaping the disciplinary apparatus in which we are enveloped. When have we transcended reactive politics and been the primary agents in setting a sociopolitical agenda, instead of responding to one that is imposed upon us? Never. Perhaps the seeming fatalism and pessimism of tacticality is what keeps us from accomplishing these tasks – a self-fulfilling Baudrillardian prophecy that serves only to invigorate the agencies of domination. While CAE will not go this far in our pessimism, we believe that we have to be quite sober about assessing the possibility of strategic action.

Again, de Certeau:

I call strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as a base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats... can be managed.⁵

Here de Certeau may have underestimated the threat of capitalism by suggesting that institutions can become independent ‘isolated’ powers. While independence does emerge with the centralisation of capital, the interdependence and interrelationships of various institutions must also be recognised. An aggregate power exists that recuperates significant amounts of institutional autonomy. Be that as it may, de Certeau does place strategy out of reach for TM practitioners. But what of our aggregate power as the disenfranchised? Does the Movement of Movements teach us that a new coalition is possible that has a common strategic enemy (pancapitalism) and hence, as long as tactical action is tied to this aggregate strategic initiative, it can have strategic effect?

SOLIDARITY

In the early 1930s a rather rancorous feud broke out between long-time friends and colleagues, Louis Aragon and André Breton. The bitter argument was over the role of the artist in the revolution. Aragon argued the party line that artists, like any other workers, should submit to the collective good of the Communist party by working in a manner that would best serve its needs. For Breton, that meant making agitprop, decorating floats and designing sets for communist-style passion plays. He wanted nothing to do with a party and a movement that would become the new commandant demanding the repression of desire and creativity in favour of disciplined submission to bureaucratic orders. Finding no way to reconcile with Aragon, Breton left the Communist party.

CAE believes that tactical media left the party as well. Two key principles underlie this separation from ongoing organisational structures. First is an absolute mistrust of bureaucracy. Second is that the method by which TM users produce value needs to be independent of higher powers. While bureaucracies may be a functional form of organisation,

⁵ Ibid

they are a horrid one. This analysis has long been available whether we look at Marx's (unfinished) examination of the Asiatic mode of production or Max Weber's critique of the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy. Or we can look to history and witness the terror of bureaucratic domination in the former Soviet Union or the violence of the current neoliberal corporate bureaucracy. However one wants to approach the subject of bureaucracy, no one wants to construct one or be a part of one unless forced. And though forced we are, it is not necessary to submit our entire subjecthood to bureaucratic demands. Even if the bureaucracy is potentially necessary, such as a union for example, total submission to the status of worker in this case is a betrayal and disavowal of the many other vectors of becoming that constitute subjectivity. Such betrayals will have very negative consequences on both personal and social levels. For example, we know the many types of bigotry that become institutionalised when workers are not considered from any other subject position. Failure to consider other characteristics such as gender or ethnicity can have a dreadful impact on minorities individually and collectively in spite of the good that workers' organisations may do. The same damage from alienation may be said to occur when invention is limited to that which will advance a specific political agenda. It seems necessary and desirable to keep resistant cultural practice as removed as possible from bureaucratic envelopment.

The transition out of organising around unions, committees, parties, etc for politicised cultural workers began in the 1980s, not surprisingly paralleling the rise of the 'new politics of difference' to use Cornel West's term. A movement such as Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America (AC) is emblematic of the shift. Organised on a large scale, AC functioned as a point of political dissent for consciousness-raising and fund-raising purposes aimed at stopping US intervention in Central America. What is most interesting about AC is that it could have solidified into a bureaucracy, but did not. The central organisers could have simply picked a new cause and continued on their way, but instead they chose to dissolve the organisation when the immediate need came to an end. Over and over again, from Women's Action Coalition to White Overalls, the dynamic of organisational construction followed by rapid deconstruction has prevented cooptation by the status quo or the solidification of a centralised power. These self-terminating organisations stopped short of taking ownership of a territory that would make strategic (on de Certeau's terms) planning and action possible, primarily because no one has found the means to undermine the exploitive and alienating tendencies of territorialisation.

The other key observation is that TM is not typically the tool of coalitions. Its tendency is toward affinity groups and small collectives. Much of this has to do with methodology. TM has two common functions. The first is pedagogical – one that is established through ideological interventions in an effort to crack the illusion of hyperreality. The second is to create tools and models that can be useful to resistance movements on any scale. Both of these functions, but particularly the latter, require research and experimentation, which require time. Time is a commodity of which resistance political organisations always have little, since they are always in a position of reactivity. TM researchers need time to explore and, more significantly, to risk failure. Experimental cultural

research, like all experimental research, is tied to trial and error. It does not necessarily move fast. For this reason, research is rather impractical in reactive spheres of action, but it must be done.⁶ TM has been very successful as a research wing for resistant movements because it exists in a different temporal field from specific movements.

To sacrifice these functions for the possibility of discussing strategy – which necessarily entails seamless solidarity with a particular movement – seems to be a waste of the talent that has amassed around TM. CAE also suspects that few TM users have the inclination or temperament to surrender autonomy or submit themselves to the scale of organisation required to make strategic planning and action viable.

UTOPIA

What are TM users working towards? Strategy needs an endgame – that final moment when the world will be wonderful, inviting and pleasurable. Unfortunately, the strategic principle that delivered this future vision of perfection seems to have died an ugly death some time in the early 1970s. The design for a future utopia that is not perceived as little more than a fairytale seems to have fallen into the category of the impossible. A quick survey of the popular conceptions of utopia on the left from the twentieth century leaves only a very abstract description of a social order that sounds nice in thought but seems unable to manifest itself in material reality.

Certainly the most popular leftist utopian vision from the last century was indebted to Charles Fourier the century before. His ideas were the foundation for dropout culture (his more psychotic notions aside). His massive work is difficult to summarise, but here are a few key influential principles:

- 1 Civilisation, as conceived in the West, is absurd and must be abandoned.
- 2 Preindustrial, precapitalist life was the most ideal. Everything necessary for human pleasure could be produced under these conditions or would be given by nature. The tools of industry should be minimal, but when employed be thoroughly aestheticised.
- 3 No one should be forced to work. Everyone should get a ‘social minimum’ (wage) that would allow them to live without discomfort. Without alienation, people are naturally productive, especially if labour is made ‘attractive’. By ‘attractive’, Fourier meant that production should be full of events, contests and surprises in a delightful atmosphere from which people could come and go as they pleased.
- 4 Pleasure and happiness are based in one’s relationship to food and sex (and not in the collection of useless industrial commodities of excess). Along with the social minimum, everyone would receive a sexual minimum.

Fourier went on to write in painstaking detail how this utopia would look and function. No stone is left unturned and a beautiful vision is presented – but an impossible one, as those who tried it in the nineteenth

6 One successful example of invention comes from the Institute for Applied Autonomy’s *TXMob*, which acts as a mobile phone B-Board for distributing texts on a mass scale easily and fast. This tool was used by the coalition protesting US government policy at the Republican convention in New York City as well as by participants in the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine.

century (especially in America) soon found out, as did the mass of drop-out culture adherents in the mid-twentieth century. The abandonment of civilisation had to be total, otherwise its forces (and sometimes those of nature or other unruly elements) would come calling to recuperate what they believe to be their own.

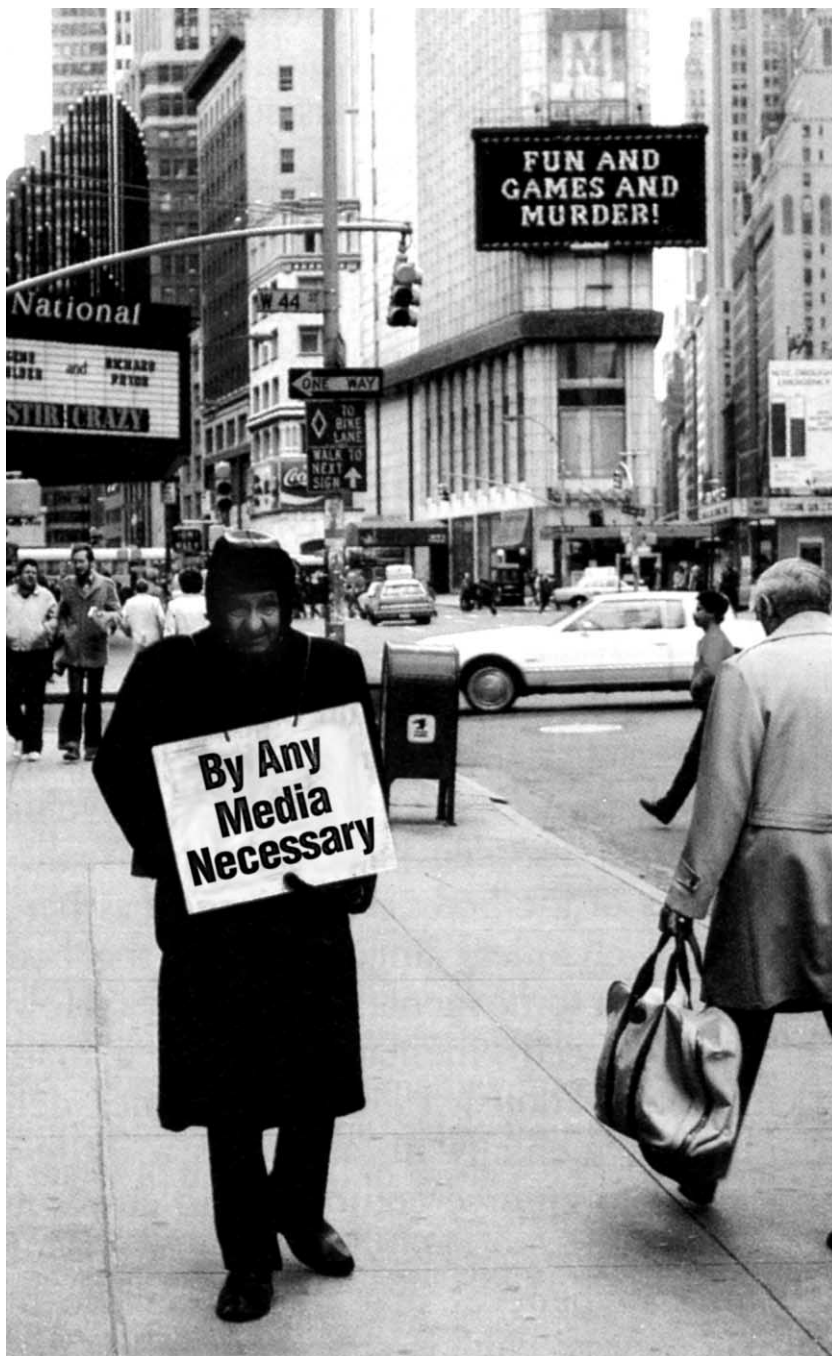
The Marxist utopian vision has also lost its credibility. Certainly, the Soviet Bloc saw to that. However, even in its most utopian form, it remains a science fiction fantasy found in the socialist optimism of *Star Trek*. In this narrative, people have become so productive, due to the excess of technological optimisation, that material value implodes. Anyone can go to a replicator and receive anything she/he desires. Since there is no need to work for purposes of material accumulation, people can instead spend their days working to improve themselves and the fate of humankind – a life of unalienated productivity, equality and justice. Unfortunately, throughout the twentieth century, capitalism's ability to infinitely expand the possibility for accumulation was underestimated. The age of imperialism and regional accumulation was just another step towards an even grander global phase of accumulation. It appears that Marx's dystopian vision of the pauperisation of the proletariat (now meaning everyone but the neoliberal elite and their servants) is coming to pass instead.

The Situationists had their own utopian vision. This view was a mix of the best of Marx, Fourier and Berkmanesque Anarchism. In abstraction it sounds wonderful and has been exceptionally influential over the past fifty years. In principle it argues for an emergent productive power through a decentralised base structure (a distributed network in contemporary jargon) that would protect citizens from the abuses of centralised power (which to the Situationists was inherently corrupt), so that everyone has a stake in the political process. Everyone would escape the oppression of work and the glue of social solidarity would be love (said without irony). An environment that fuels the engines of becoming in continuous defiance of the creation of a material status quo would be the goal of all social planning and architecture. But then come the statements about workers' councils and assemblies, and it all starts to look a bit dubious again. As always, the devil is in the details.

Among the most enduring models of the late twentieth century is Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zone*⁷ (for which he owes a big tip of the hat to the Italian *Autonomia* movement). So many of the perennial problems with utopian theory disappear. Starting from the premise that in the current situation (of neoliberalism) revolution is suicidal, and hence utopia must emerge through another process, Bey suggests thinking smaller in scale both in terms of time and space. If smaller autonomous zones that are relatively free of capitalist imperatives can be created, and perhaps networked, then a viable alternative to capitalist culture could emerge. Emphasis is on the emergent – no more top-down party politics. Power should flow from the grassroots up. The big difference separating Bey from his predecessors is that TAZ is possible, and we know it is possible by experience. What he describes is not just a hopeful principle. Bey's theory also recognises the problem of difference in that the parts making the whole can be extremely different as well as differentiated. In fact, difference is encouraged as something desirable. However, Bey's particular vision has a limited or in the worst

7 Hakim Bey, *Temporary Autonomous Zone*, Autonomedia, Brooklyn, 1991

case no strategic value, in that its argument is that we can sneak and struggle for some pleasant empowering moments here and there, but mostly life in capitalist hegemony is going to be fairly awful. In other words, Bey's optimism is tempered by a sharp political critique, and thus it reads as plausible. This is the world of tacticality. Unfortunately, when



Critical Art Ensemble, *By Any Media Necessary*, poster, 2000, photo: CAE

we compare the TAZ with the strategic utopian visions of the neoliberals, it pales in comparison. The hyperreality produced by brilliant marketing and a virtual monopoly on distributive media convinces many that the neoliberal agenda is hurtling them toward a perfect utopia of total privatisation and open markets that allows anyone with a better idea to enter its perfect meritocracy. All ‘individuals’ will get what they deserve. Neoliberal forces have the strategic power to marshal a concept like utopia and use it towards their own ends, and unlike the left they also have means for revolution.

REVOLUTION

Nestled in the comfort of historical hindsight, one can look back at the late 1960s and early ’70s and come to understand that this era is typically *misperceived* in contemporary culture as a time when leftist revolution ruled in the West. CAE does not want to underplay the many gains that occurred through difficult and brutal struggles during this time, or argue that a series of significant *uprisings* and movements did not occur. We are only saying that a leftist revolution did not happen in the advanced capitalist economies of the West. Ironically enough, however, the first phase of a revolution was taking place in the US, but it was not from the left. This revolution was coming from the far right. One in which a ‘military-industrial complex’ desired by ‘a small group of Texas oilmen’, to quote President Eisenhower, would grow into the neoliberal hegemony we know today. During the late 1960s, economic forces and the state came into such extreme contradiction that the state had to be remade to accommodate the neoliberal vision of the opening of world markets (except to labour) and accumulations of assets on a global scale. The first strategic step was to take the presidency. Once accomplished, only one important secondary goal failed – the centralisation of power in the presidency. Nixon failed in his gambit to place the presidency above the law (Reagan accomplished this goal a decade later by running illegal covert operations out of the White House without penalty), but their other goals were achieved. Controlling inflation and opening all foreign markets (a ‘pro-business’ climate) became the central concerns of the government in conjunction with the dispossession of public resources into private hands and dismantling the welfare state (a job completed by Clinton). The first neoliberal utopia was successfully established in Chile in 1973, and in that same year Saudi Arabia was subdued and became an American client state. These were strategic actions; this was revolution with global implications.

Be that as it may, one very important resistance model, essential for the development of TM, did emerge during the 1960s. Resisters to the authoritarian tendencies of the time came to understand that while the contradictions between economy and state are of primary importance, they are not of sole importance. Cultural contradiction could significantly contribute to the success of many ongoing struggles. The construction of cultures of opposition by groups such as the Situationists, Provos, the Diggers, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the Youth International Party and cultures of disappearance (the various forms of anonymous dropout culture) was enthusiastically undertaken.

The culture of opposition is the well-spring of ideas from which TM emerges, and it began with an understanding of culture not as a determined superstructure but as a causal variable in the formation of political economy. As economy, politics and social relations become ever more indistinguishable in the post-Ford era, TM (and cultural intervention in general) becomes all the more important as a model for resistance.

Can a cultural movement bring on a revolution? In light of the historical record, CAE's opinion is that it cannot. However, we are willing to entertain the *possibility* of a slower evolutionary change of equal profundity. To quote Félix Guattari only seven years after the failure of May 1968:

Some people say that social turmoil in the United States during the 1960s or in France in 1968, was a spontaneous event – transitory, marginal – and that such utopian revolutions lead nowhere. But in my opinion important things only started happening *after* [emphasis in the original] that revolution, which was probably the last revolution in the old style.⁸

Guattari sees the 1960s as a revolution, certainly a failed one, or the *after* would not mean so much. Be that as it may, the modern concept is historically dead for advanced capitalist economies. This notion is echoed by Hardt and Negri three decades later in the claim that revolution as understood in modernity (with the opposition being 'people's armies') is finished. The guerrilla warfare emblematic of peasant revolt also has no place within the historical conditions of post-Fordism.

This position should be taken as pragmatism, not pessimism. Both Guattari and Hardt and Negri have suggestions for what can be undertaken, but in neither case is it revolutionary in a traditional sense. For both it is a slow cultural revision constructed around tactical (not strategic) interventions in everyday life that eventually network and flourish. For Guattari, the answer is 'molecular revolution'. Guattari's choice of 'molecular' is very unfortunate for it causes a great deal of confusion due to its intense association with scale. Guattari, in his dislike for the tyranny of Enlightenment rationality, has an equal dislike for quantity and prefers instead to hover around the category of quality. By 'molecular revolution', he meant transformations in arrangements of desire into dynamic heterogeneities that open fields of possibility for activities of liberation – or, conversely, for the destruction of master narratives that maintain social and political forms of subjugation. The performance and ramifications of molecular or micro activity can be small or large, but they are always profound. For Guattari, an interventionist project that successfully intervened in the structure of semiotic subjugation, by introducing new arrangements for enunciation, would be praiseworthy even if it only benefited a few at a particular time and would be of equal importance as a molecular revolution that has global impact. One may not necessarily think of the molecular having global impact, but from Guattari's position it can. For example, when Margaret Sanger suggested the idea for the birth control pill, her goal was to better control the birthing habits of poor women. What occurred instead was the liberation of desire on a mass scale, as those able to give birth were freed from its imposition on their desires and behaviours, and

8 Félix Guattari, *Chaosophy: Soft Subversions*, Semiotext(e), New York, 1996

were instead able to turn mothering into a selectable subject position. This too was molecular revolution. As Guattari states: ‘Through systematic decentering of desire, micropolitical analysis will lead to soft subversions and imperceptible revolutions that will eventually change the face of the world.’⁹

Hardt and Negri take a slightly retooled model from *Autonomia*. The primary shift is due to the impact of the politics of difference on how they conceive of the tactical use of biopower (not to be confused with Foucault’s notion of it). Hardt and Negri still envision a cultural resistance where smaller, flexible vectors create new forms of subjectivity and new forms of life/living that will eventually network together as more and more nodes of anti-capitalist alternatives appear on the cultural landscape. Capital will rot from within from the corruption it generates and the struggles levied against it. If we forgive the implicit Marxist historical fatalism, what should be left is a decentralised, democratic form of organisation that values difference as well as differentiation. This activity is based on two key principles, the first of which CAE believes motivates any TM user:

Each form of organisation must grasp the opportunity and the historical occasion offered by the current arrangement of forces in order to maximise its ability to resist, contest, and/or overthrow ruling forms of power.¹⁰

What Hardt and Negri are referring to is tacticality (as in de Certeau’s quote above). ‘The second principle is the need for the form of political and military organisation to correspond to the current economic forms of economic and social production.’¹¹ Farewell to the revolution.

Some might ask, ‘But what of Seattle, Genoa, Porto Alegre, Mumbai, Gleneagles, etc. Is this not revolution?’ We must be very sober in assessing these actions, for we do not want to move forward by way of our fantasies and even delusions (let’s leave that to the neocons). Certainly, these actions were very significant for two reasons. First, the resistance showed capital that it would not find smooth space simply by abandoning regionalised imperialism. Alternative globalisation forces are onto that move. Second, and possibly more importantly, new forms of networks, alliances and coalitions relevant to current conditions are in the process of invention and emergence. The downside is that what we have seen so far on a mass scale has not been able to produce self-sustaining alternative social constellations. Protests are only protests; they remain in the realm of tacticality. The expansion of the neoliberal agenda has moved forward with only a modest amount of *strategic* resistance coming out of South America and the Middle East. Some tactical victories have been gained – for example, the Zapatistas in Mexico or the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa, but for the most part the situation is as dire as ever and getting worse. No nation is contributing more to this disaster than the US, which is currently controlled by a fascist executive branch.

9 Ibid

10 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in The Age of Empire*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2005

11 Ibid

PESSIMISM

While the unconscionable behaviour of the G8, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank continues unabated with devastating effects in

developing nations, the situation in the US may be darker than it has ever been. A historical hiccup has occurred that has thrown the US back into the horrors of modernity. All of the terrors we were supposed to have escaped via historical conditions – fascism, world war, nuclear war, genocide, etc – are either back or on the verge of coming back. This current full-spectrum catastrophe has had a tremendous impact on TM users in the US and, CAE would suspect, to a lesser but a still measurable degree everywhere, because the consequences of this situation spill over the border and resonate around the world. TM practitioners in the US find themselves in the situation of having to look away from the global struggle in order to focus on the nightmare at home. War, nationalism (ie bigotry), natural disaster, constitutional collapse, electoral politics, prisons, poverty, health crises, environmental disaster, and so on, have become the immediate and representative points of reaction for resistant forces.

The origin of this general problem is found in the slow rise of the neoconservative movement – a ‘radical’ (as William Kristol calls it) right-wing (fascist) movement bent on the creation of *Pax Americana* (though ‘Pox Americana’ might be more accurate). Its roots in government date back to the Halloween Massacre of 1975 during the Ford administration¹² and consistently expanded through the Reagan/Bush administrations, finally coming to full fruition during the Bush Jr administration. In 1990, the neoconservatives wrote up their battle plan in the document *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* (RAD). For the most part they have followed this blueprint with only modest reconfigurations. The first principle of the document is that the solution to all political and economic problems is military force. The bulk of the document details how this force should be constructed so it is capable of fighting on several fronts. This has been Donald Rumsfeld’s goal since joining the presidential cabinet. Rumsfeld, as delusional as he is, probably still believes that small forces (100–150,000 troops) reinforced with high-tech weaponry can quickly and easily defeat any enemy. According to the neoconservatives, with this formation, multiple wars could be fought at any given moment, and this could be done with a volunteer army. Second, the military budget for the development and manufacture of advanced weapons should be without limits. To quote the report: ‘the process of transformation [must be] treated as an enduring mission worthy of a constant allocation of dollars and forces’.¹³ The original first target was North Korea, to be followed by the Middle East (Iraq and Iran). After 9/11, the sequence changed according to opportunity.

RAD also outlines the militarisation of the entire culture and all related environments. The document is sprinkled with their dystopic future vision – an Orwellian universe that exists only for war and brutal domination. To give a couple of examples:

... ‘combat’ likely will take place in new dimensions: space, ‘cyber-space’ and perhaps the world of microbes [by this they mean both nanotechnology and germ warfare].¹⁴

And

Control of the sea could largely be determined not by fleets of surface combatants and aircraft carriers, but from land and space based systems,

12 The Halloween Massacre occurred on 4 November 1975. Gerald Ford was convinced by Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney to reorganise his cabinet in a manner that represented a stronger commitment to radical right politics as a way to appeal to conservatives in the next election. Most notably Henry Kissinger was relieved of duty as National Security Advisor – the Kissinger policy of détente, deterrence, and non-proliferation was at an end. Donald Rumsfeld was made Secretary of Defense, and Dick Cheney was made Chief of Staff.

13 Richard Halloran, *To Arm a Nation: Rebuilding America’s Defenses*, Macmillan, New York, 1986, position paper posted on the neocon site Project for the New American Century (account suspended).

14 Ibid

forcing navies to maneuver and fight underwater. Space itself will be come a theater of war, as nations gain access to space capabilities and come to rely on them; further, the distinction between military and commercial space systems – combatants and noncombatants – will become blurred.¹⁵

RAD explicitly detail full spectrum dominance of space, the Internet and the micro world must parallel the full spectrum dominance of the geopolitical world.

The fascist tendency for military fetishism is overwhelmingly clear. The signers and implementers of this document are indulging themselves in a consensual hallucination. Pumped up by the hubris stemming from their ridiculous notion that their plans and acts of aggression defeated the Soviets, the neocons believe their military functions like a magic wand and as a product of destiny. Anyone who sees this magic force will throw down their weapons and submit to US rule, and their latent desire to be like Americans will manifest. But they do not stop there.

To accompany this transformation of the US into a military state and the world into a little America, they began another of their long cherished initiatives – to centralise power in the executive branch by making the president an absolute sovereign with exclusive world rights for pre-emptive attack. Through the use of signing statements and a full frontal attack on the constitution, culminating in the Military Commissions Act of 2006 (roughly analogous to Hitler's Enabling Act), the president was placed above the law. Habeas Corpus was suspended;¹⁶ the president usurped the right of the judicial branch to interpret treaties (thus allowing pre-emptive strikes, illegal prisons, torture, etc); forced self-incrimination became acceptable in the courts (contrary to the Fifth Amendment, evidence acquired under torture was now admissible); mass widespread surveillance without warrants or court oversight was legalised. The Constitution of the United States was and still is in a shambles.

Two objections tend to be raised when CAE calls the neocons fascists. (We do admit that the term is often inappropriately used when describing right-wing ideologues.) The first is, where are the genocides indicative of all extreme authoritarian positions? The US-backed Israeli war of aggression against the Palestinians is approaching that level of destruction, and we shall see what happens in Iraq (the tendency is beginning to express itself). Many would argue that the disproportionate imprisonment of black men in the US also approaches genocide. At the beginning of the neocon revolution in 1981, 450,000 Americans were in jail. Now over 6 million are in the criminal justice system and 2.2 million behind bars with an inordinate number of black men in the system. We do not know how many people are in the secret jails the US has created around the world. Moreover bigotry has been consistently used by the conservative party to win elections – such as the attacks on gays and lesbians, on people of Islamic faith, and on 'illegal aliens' (a means to fan the flames of bigotry against Hispanics in general). All the elements historically leading to genocide are there. While we have not seen a final solution yet, we should not underestimate the brutality of the neocons, and what they might do in the future if there were no longer political or social checks on their power. Consider this passage from *Rebuilding America's Defenses*:

15 Ibid

16 While Habeas Corpus has supposedly not been suspended for American citizens in principle, in actuality it has. Habeas Corpus has to be universal in order to offer protection. Once arrested in its suspension, how can a citizen prove he/she is one if he/she has no right to a court date or an attorney?

And advanced forms of biological warfare that can ‘target’ specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool.¹⁷

Thankfully such a microbe does not exist and would be incredibly hard to manufacture. Unfortunately, the neocons are thinking about how to commit genocide and – just as with unleashing the war machine in the Middle East and against US citizens – they are waiting for the right time and the right means.

The second objection is that neoliberal free-market imperatives and the centralisation of power in the executive branch are in contradiction. No classic fascist would support such extreme market deregulation. Bush often finds himself ensnared by this very contradiction; for example his need to cultivate prejudice on the US’s southern border to win votes for the conservative party conflicts with giving business access to the most vulnerable, powerless people in the Americas for maximum exploitation. This problem is what keeps the neocons from perfectly replicating classic fascism. However, from their position, there is no difference between their positions in political office and their positions in the corporate world. For them, these are not competing spheres of power, but overlapping interdependent ones.

Is CAE pessimistic? Yes, but we still believe in the pleasure and effectiveness of tacticality, and will continue in the struggle to the best of our ability – permanent cultural resistance. The fundamentals have not really changed over the past five decades. Certainly they must be retooled and freshly articulated by each generation (no more love-ins) to fit specific needs and adjusted to historical and technological shifts, but until a major shift out of post-Fordism occurs, CAE does not see any major paradigm shift on the horizon. So while we remain open to strategic initiatives, we have yet to see a foundation for them outside limited geographic and cultural areas (Venezuela for example). The problems of alienation and the centralisation of power as inseparable from political and economic abuse have yet to be solved in the sphere of strategy. Such a treatise would be the precondition for a discussion of strategy. Moreover, while many unified theories and global maps of capitalist globalisation (strategic discourse) have surfaced over the past fifty years, no one has yet explained how to use them in a strategic manner. In the end, CAE can only conclude by reiterating that one of the most essential revolutionary qualities is patience.

¹⁷ Halloran, *Op cit*