

STORM WARNINGS

*Anarchist bulletin
for the social war*
.....

45 – September 15 2021



| Held Hostage |

Reality has never taken the imagination hostage to such an extent as it has in these last days. Our desires and our wildest dreams are dominated by an invisible catastrophe that threatens and confines us, tying our hands and feet to the shackle of fear. Something critical is being played out right now around the unfolding catastrophe. Ignoring the few Cassandras who have been issuing warnings for decades, we have now moved from abstract ideas to concrete facts. As the current emergency with all its prohibitions demonstrates, what is at stake is not only the possibility of survival, but something much more important: the possibility of living. This means that the catastrophe that affects us today is not so much imminent human extinction – to be avoided, we are reassured from above and below, thanks to an absolute obedience to the experts of social reproduction – but rather the invasive artificiality of an existence whose omnipresence prevents us from imagining the end of the present.

“Catastrophe”: from the Greek *katastrophé*, “upheaval”, “reversal”, noun of the verb *katastrépho*, from kata “under, below” and *stréphein* “to overturn, turn”.

Since antiquity, this term has retained among its meanings that of a violent event that carries with it the power to change the course of things, an event that constitutes at the same time a rupture and a change of direction, and that consequently can be both a beginning and an end. A decisive event, in short, which by breaking the continuity of the world order, allows the birth of anything else. The simple and immediate image of the plough breaking and turning over a dry and exhausted clod of earth, reviving and preparing the ground for a new sowing and a new harvest, clearly captures the fertile element present in a term generally only associated with the dramatic epilogue. Hence the ambivalence of the human feelings aroused in the distant past by the catastrophe, going from panicked fear to

AUGUST 2021

3/8, Berlin (Germany).

In the districts of Mitte and Lichtenberg, several vehicles of the real estate developer *Vonovia* are set on fire in the night, as a "fiery invitation to do more property damage against the city of the rich and to fight for a society without hierarchies and authorities."

6/8, Berlin (Germany).

In the Lichtenberg district, two rental vans containing propaganda material for the far-right *AfD* party go up in smoke overnight.

13/8, Zelo Buon Persico (Italy).

In Lombardy in the province of Lodi, a cell phone antenna is set on fire around 5am. A tag "*No to 5G, No to Green Pass*" is found in the area by the carabinieri.

17/8, Melilla (Morocco/Spain).

Following the biggest assault of the summer on the border on July 22, when 238 migrants succeeded in crossing the double barbed wire wall of the Spanish enclave, this time 57 migrants succeeded in penetrating it around 5 am during an assault launched by 150 people.

17/8, Nostang (France).

In Morbihan, a cell phone antenna was set on fire during the night near the Lorient-Vannes highway.

18/8, Chania (Greece).

In Crete, *anarchists* break the windows of the office of the far right party *Elliniki Lisi* in the morning. "*Always against the state and the fascists. To break the veneer of normality.*"

extreme fascination. Beyond and against all fear of death, for long centuries human beings have perceived the infinite through catastrophic destruction, seeking in it the dazzling physical revelation of *what was not*. From primordial Chaos to the Apocalypse, from the universal Flood to the End of Time, from the Tower of Babel to the year 1000, there are numerous imaginations of catastrophe around which humanity has sought to define itself in its relationship with life and the sensitive world, under the sign of the *accident*. The feeling of catastrophe was quite likely the first intimate perception of the explosive potential of the imaginary, a permanent crack in the (presumed) uniformity of reality. To approach the edges of this crack, to follow its line, meant to give in to the temptation of questioning destiny, and not to claim the pretension of answering to it. Imaginary or real, the catastrophe possessed the astounding force of emerging as an expression of what exceeds the saddest human condition.

It is only towards the middle of the 18th century, after the discovery of the remains of Pompeii in 1748 and the great earthquake of Lisbon in 1755, that the word catastrophe began to be used in common language to define an unexpected disaster of gigantic dimensions. A shift in meaning facilitated by the fact that after 1789 and the storming of the Bastille, it is another word that will be used to indicate a reversal, an irreversible break with the pre-existing order, able to prepare the arrival of a new world. Born in the Age of Enlightenment, the concept of revolution could only have an *intentional* character, strongly linked to reason, and so was tied to the accomplishment of a process, to the evolution of an idea, to the result of a science. This is the profound difference between the revolution and the catastrophe that preceded it and that, in a certain way, accompanied it. Where revolution is the embodiment of history, catastrophe is its interruption. As much as the first is programmatic in its structures, projected in its goals, organized in its means, the second one is unexpected in its temporalities, unforeseen in its forms, inopportune in its consequences. It does not rouse men and women by satisfying their aspirations and their convictions, whether they are original or instilled, but it pushes them outside of their common measures and representations, until reducing them to insignificant elements of a phenomenon without any law.

Even more than revolution, the catastrophic explosion of disorder swept away the old world, opening the way

to other possibilities. After the materialization of the unthinkable, human beings can no longer remain the same, for they have not only seen the houses, monuments, churches or parliaments crumble with their own eyes, but also faiths, theories, laws – all in the form of ruins. The ancient fascination for the catastrophe starts from here, from this chaotic horizon that is irreducible to any calculation, from the moment when an unprecedented upheaval suddenly breaks all stable reference points, brutally asking the question of the meaning of life whose infinite repercussions require, in answer, an excess of imagination. The catastrophe is offered to the individual, in the dramatic discovery of something that goes beyond their identity, to merge again with nature, the primordial earth or the source of creation.

But after the end of the Second World War, marked by the first atomic explosion, what happened? The revolutionary perspective gradually faded away, erased from hearts and minds. And so, within them, only one possible form of material upheaval remained unchallenged, and it had formidable technical means to manifest itself. But the present catastrophe has very little in common with that of the old days. It is no longer a thunderbolt of nature or the work of a God, bringing the human being face to face with itself – it is a simple product of scientific, technological, political and economic arrogance. If the catastrophes of the past could incite looking the impossible in the face, overturning the established order, modern catastrophes limit themselves to digging deeper into the possible. Instead of opening up the horizon and leading far away, they lock it up and nail it to the nearest thing. Wild imagination gives way to calculated risk, where one no longer desires to live another life, but aims to survive by managing the damage.

One after the other, the disasters of the last decades pass before our eyes as if they were simply consequences of techno-scientific myopia and bad governance, to be overcome by more attentive and far-sighted technicians and politicians. The disasters of the present and those of the future become avoidable, or at least reducible, only with an ever greater control of human activities, placed in conditions of permanent emergency. The effect of this logic is that “natural” disasters are immediately forgotten and put into a distant context, as if they were minor events, while only “human” disasters take center stage in a narrative that invites us to accept the unacceptable. If they terrorize us, it is only because it is *our* physical survival as a species that is threatened. And it is this that we should fear more than

Crush the fascists in every neighborhood', concludes the communiqué.

18/8, Nancy (France).
In Meurthe-et-Moselle, *illuminated joggers* set a 5G relay antenna ablaze at night, tagging "*Ni nuke ni 5G!*" on a wall of the compound that protected access to it. "*Nuclear and 5G are the pillars of a deadly industry. Solidarity to all those charged as a result of these fights!*" concludes the communiqué.

20/8, Poitiers (France).
In the Vienne, the office of the *LREM* deputy went up in smoke with an incendiary garbage can placed in front of the window, after having previously broken it.

21/8, Montreuil (France).
In Seine-Saint-Denis, a *JC Decaux* van is set on fire followed by an *Enedis* van a little further on. "*Courage Boris! The head high, the heart burning! Long live anarchy!*" concludes the communiqué in solidarity with the "*anarchist companion who is in a coma because of a fire in his cell in the prison of Nancy-Maxéville.*"

21/8, Bure (France).
In Meuse, during the days of action against the CIGEO project for the burial of radioactive waste, sections of the railroad intended to transport this waste are dismantled and bent, while the ANDRA depot is ransacked and one of their cars overturned, by different processions coordinated with the slogan "*ANDRA fuck off - Long live DIY.*"

8/22, Paris (France).

In the 20th arrondissement, a van of the prison builder *Eiffage* is set on fire in solidarity with Boris. "It is through struggle, even in conditions of inferiority, that we can see a little of what we want: freedom and an end to exploitation", the communiqué says.

22/8, Albi (France).

In Tarn, a relay antenna goes up in smoke at around 3 am next to the *Géant Casino* supermarket.

28/8, Beaumont-le-Roger (France).

In Eure, 15,000 homes and 500 businesses in 24 communes are deprived of any internet access following the willful sabotage of two fiber optic cables supplying the telephone exchanges and a dozen *Orange* mobile antennas in the area, at around 4am. This sabotage would have been committed as a preventive measure by night workers who, in addition to cutting these cables, entered the *Carrefour Market* by the loading dock by forcing the metal screen before making away with a part of its goods.

28/8, Saint-Pierre (France).

In the colony of Reunion Island, fifteen school buses went up in smoke in a depot in the Grand Bois district at around 6 pm, just one week after the beginning of the school year.

29/8, Vernaison (France).

In the Rhône, a video surveillance mast downtown is set on fire during the night. The camera is out of order.

30/8, Athens (Greece).

In the district of Vyronas, a vehicle of ELTA (Greek Post

anything else, more than the invisible catastrophe of sustainable submission, of the administration of disaster, that which shackles and paralyzes our boundless desire to live by imposing distances and security measures.

Finimondo, March 28 2020
(Translated from Italian)



| Zines, books & journals |

Edith Thomas, *Les « Pétroleuses »*. Gallimard editions (Paris), 1963/February 2021, 396 p.

"As for the burning of Paris, yes, I participated. I wanted to oppose the invaders of Versailles with a barrier of flames. I have no accomplices in this fact."

Louise Michel, before the Council of War

If this long-out-of-print study by Edith Thomas on the mythical *pétroleuses* of the Paris Commune was republished earlier this year, it is of course to feed the editorial market of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of this insurrection. A bit like the previous monograph on Louise Michel, portrayed as a prophetess of anarchy, which was published posthumously in 1971 on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary.

When I saw this book lying around on the shelves of the book merchants, it was something else that immediately came to mind, which didn't leave me all day. You know, that cheerful little song about a machine-gun having bloodied some partying Stalinists in Spain, before unfurling the verses: "*Must say that we will put our hearts into it / The pétroleuses were our sisters / Come the storm...*". Very far, then, from the obscenities of the moment – where we saw, for example, a historian of the State priding himself with radicalism by exhibiting a cardboard reproduction of Louise Michel in front of the Sacré Coeur, under the good offices of the mayor of Paris. In short, it is in any case this catchy tune that made *Les Pétroleuses* pass from the stall to my pocket.

There is much to say about the author, but this is neither the goal nor the place of this little review. Let's just say that she trained at the Ecole des Chartes at the turn of the 1930s to work as an archivist, she took advantage of this time between two novels and reports to write biographies on socialist or revolutionary women of the 19th century (Pauline Roland, George Sand, Flora Tristan, or Louise Michel), while having a thwarted love affair with the Communist Party. She was only a member of one of its satellite organizations (the *Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists*) for a year before resigning publicly at the end of 1934, reproaching it for its "*orthodoxy*", then joining it a second time in 1942 to actively participate in the Resistance before resigning in 1949, following the Yugoslavian conflict between Stalin and Tito. She remained resigned until her death in 1970.

In substance, if we had only been dealing with the umpteenth work of a left-wing intellectual critic, even a forgotten one, this work would obviously have no place here. But the interest of Edith Thomas's *Pétroleuses* is that it is not only one of the rare systematic studies on the question (notably through an analysis of the trial against the communards, but also through the activities of women's clubs or various individuals), but above all that the author is not hostile to the great burning of Paris, and does not try to pass off the incendiary activity of the communards as a simple invention of the Versailles reaction. For what also distinguishes Edith Thomas from her contemporaries of the time, is that in distancing herself from Papa Marx and his offspring, she did not feel obliged to sanctify the word of the master, who denied women any ability in the material realm, like a vulgar Proudhon ("*This story is one of the most abominable*

Office) goes up in smoke. "*Let's bring the forest fires into town. Let the bourgeois, the security forces and their masters pay the price of the disasters*" states the communiqué in solidarity with the companions Dimitris Hatzivassiliadis and Boris.

SEPTEMBER 2021

1/9, Toulouse (France).
In Haute-Garonne, a boom truck of the telecommunication network installer *Scopelec* is targeted, in particular to "*attack boredom for real*".

2/9, Leipzig (Germany).
In Saxony, the large windows of the *Savings Bank* are smashed in the night, in solidarity with occupied places and in revenge for others that are already evicted.

3/9, Petite-Île (France).
In the colony of La Réunion, an *SFR* relay antenna goes up in smoke in the night with the help of flaming tires. Also connecting the neighborhood to the fiber optic network, the impact to telephones and the internet is estimated to last less than a week by the authorities.

6/9, Rennes (France).
In Ille-et-Vilaine, a modular building of 400 m² of the town hall is burned at about 1:30 with garbage cans ignited against its structure. It housed the *South Sports Department*, the census department of the *Department of Administrative Services for the Population*, the *Regional Chamber of Social Economy*, as well as a storage space assigned to the *IT Department* or a space dedicated to the CGT trade union... of which only soot and ashes remain.

6/9, Grenoble (France).

In Isère, '*refractory people in solidarity*' set fire to an *Orange* vehicle in front of their offices in the center of the city, proposing to attack this telecommunication company everywhere "*to show that we do not forget Boris and that we think of him, with our heads held high, our hearts burning!*"

6/9, Chauny (France).

In the Aisne region, we learn that an electric transformer was deliberately set on fire in mid-March, plunging the public lighting of an entire neighborhood into darkness for the past six months, to the great displeasure of some of its inhabitants.

6/9, Ivry-sur-Seine (France).

In the Val-de-Marne, a *Vinci* van goes up in smoke a few days earlier. The communiqué of this attack against this international company responsible for the "*destruction of the living, exploitation and confinement of human beings*", ends with "*On this subject, we could not prevent ourselves from having a thought for our friend Boris who is still hospitalized while lighting our bonfire. Fire to the prisons and to those who build them!*"

6/9, Kochersberg (France).

In Alsace, two cabinets of the fiber optic network are sabotaged in Schnersheim and Mittelschaeffolsheim, severing the cables at a strategic location by forcing each operator to come and repair the section that they are responsible for. This is at least the third identical targeted sabotage in the area since December 2020, depriving thousands of inhabitants of internet for several days each time.

8/9, Les Ulis (France).

In Essonne, four video surveillance

machinations ever invented in a civilized country. ... everything that has been burned has been burned by men", Karl Marx, interview in the New York Herald, August 3, 1871).

Of course, and let's say it right away, since we are not talking about the plot of the latest popular televised fiction, but about the very real subversive activity of thousands of women in an insurrectionary moment: Edith Thomas does not reach any definitive conclusion from her judicial sources, while taking great care to distinguish the Versailles myth of the fifth column setting fire to Paris once it was recaptured, from their probable participation as fighters in the great burning of the capital to prevent the troops from entering it. More precisely, with a few exceptions, it is clear from the court records that the convicted women were sentenced to years of imprisonment or life imprisonment for having been communards, rather than for the so-called "objective" elements of their incendiary activity. And for good reason, since a court of law, and this is still true today, never has the objective of establishing any justice or truth, but only consecrates a balance of power between two opposing parties.

Many of the condemned women had either directly carried arms (not all of them were canteen workers or nurses), or had incited the combatants not to retreat, or had insulted the Versailles soldiers, or had simply defended that everything had to burn in front of witnesses ("*He can become a King now, he will find his castle in flames!*"). As for the few who were caught with oil under their skirts, they generally pleaded to looting for heat... which means nothing, since many arsonists were simply not arrested. Notably for the simple reason, besides the fact that they were not all snitched on (the basis of these trials at the time), that a part of them participated in the fighting until the end, dying directly on the barricades or being executed on the spot without any other form of trial ("*hundreds of women*", according to E. Thomas). So, alongside an Aurore Machu, who admirably handled the cannon at the Place de la Concorde (headquarters of the occupied Ministry of the Navy), both to point and to shoot; for an Elisa Rousseau, guilty of having fired at least fifteen cannon shots; for a Marie Schmitt, a former sex worker guilty of having fired the shot in the defense of the Butte-aux-Cailles and proudly declaring to her judges "*I regret not having done all that I am accused of*"; or for

a Nathalie Lemel who left with about fifty women to defend the barricades of the Batignolles and Pigalle, the activities of thousands of others will remain unknown forever, whatever they were.

With her enthusiastic style of another time (both in its pleasantly literary aspects and in its occasionally annoying essentialist moralizing), Edith Thomas paints the portrait of several female combatants or simple defendants, but also describes the activities, proposals and debates of numerous women's clubs (like those of the Great Revolution, or of 1848), which allows her to unearth a resolution taken by one of the most important, the *Union of Women for the Defense of Paris and the Care of the Wounded*, close to the workers' First International. In article 14 of its statutes, devoted to the allocation of the money collected to support its poor or sick members, it is in fact explicitly foreseen from the start that this fund will also be used "*for the purchase of oil and weapons for the female citizens who will fight; if necessary, the distribution of weapons will be done by drawing lots.*" And Edith Thomas adds afterwards to clarify things: "*it is difficult to believe, as some historians animated by I don't know what hypocritical prudishness have done, that the word "petroleum" coupled with the word "weapons" has here only a domestic meaning, daily petroleum to light the family lamps. It is more likely to think that oil was envisioned as the ultimate means of defending the Commune*" (p. 231).

In the same way, although many women who wanted to fight were rejected outright (as was also the case in Spain in 1936), this did not prevent hundreds of them from imposing their fighting presence by force or deed. Whether by taking over immediately from men who had fallen at the front or on the barricades by abandoning any gendered role (nurse/canteen worker) in order to recover their rifle and use it; whether by obtaining weapons without asking anyone for anything (several women carried revolvers on their belts during debates in the clubs), or by self-organizing collectively to do so: on May 14, 1871, a hundred women marched in procession to the Hôtel de Ville (where the *Committee of Public Safety* was sitting) to demand weapons, which they obtained on the spot.

In this context, it is no wonder that determined women (as well as men) took hold of an idea that was circulating

cameras are destroyed in the night with a hammer.

8/9, Cherbourg (France).
In Manche, two night outings leave the windows of the town hall, the CAF and a yuppie store hit by tens of sledgehammer blows.

9/9, Varcès (France).
In Isère, in the parking lot of the prison, two cars belonging to prison guards were set on fire during the night, while a prison van was damaged by the flames and out of order. The arsonists entered the parking lot by cutting the fence that separated it from an adjacent business.

10/9, Turin (Italy).
During a revolt in the detention center (CPR), undocumented migrants destroyed their entire module with burned mattresses, reducing 35 cells of confinement to ashes.

10/9, The Hague (Netherlands).
Two ticket machines of the Dutch railroads (*Nederlandse Spoorwegen*, NS) are set on fire at the station in the Moerwijk district. These machines managed and operated on behalf of the railway company by the company *Thales*, are only part of the business of the latter, specializing in the arms industry and security, including at borders. "*Thales profits from Fortress Europe, war and militarism. Thales is our enemy. Wherever the company is, it must be attacked,*" concludes the communiqué.

10/9, Saint-Sébastien-sur-Loire (France).
In Loire-Atlantique, we learn that a 15 year old youth has just been arrested for having ransacked (smashed computers, microwave through the window) then set

fire to the teachers' room of the René-Bernier college. According to the authorities, "*angry at the school in general, he was apparently targeting the entire national education system.*"

11/9, Vienna (Austria).
Several charging stations for electric cars were set on fire in various parts of the capital. "*To ensure the widespread introduction of electric mobility, they must ensure a decentralized charging infrastructure - we have identified in this aspect a sensitive point to attack,*" says the claim, among other things.

11/9, Albi (France).
In Tarn, a first relay antenna (Bouygues and SFR) voluntarily went up in smoke on the Mascabière hillside around 10:30 pm, followed by a second one (from TDF) on the Canteperlic road shortly before 2 am. Nearly 52 000 people of the whole region were deprived of television, radio and mobile telephones (3 to 5G) for several days, since the ones that went up in smoke served about 60 other antennas.

12/9, Amboise (France).
In Indre-et-Loire, the cash dispensers of three different banks (*Caisse d'Epargne, Banque Postale, CIC*) were completely burned down at around 4 am. One person in custody.

everywhere; leaving only smoking ruins to the victor, even if they were the most prestigious ones, such as the Louvre or the Notre-Dame-de-Paris cathedral (even if these two targets were too quickly extinguished)? And this was independently of the repulsion that the reaction created afterwards through the particular feminine figure of the pétroleuses, but which like many others before it, could nevertheless be reappropriated in a subversive way. In any case by the less citizenist among us! Our purpose here is not to open up interesting questions about the difference between reconstituting a more democratic army of volunteers (or conscripts, since the Commune reinstated the obligation of military service for men in May after having abolished it in April) and a population in arms, between a uniform tactic of fronts or non-gendered barricades and that of diffuse guerrilla in the form of autonomous groups based on affinity, and so on, but simply to underline the extent of Edith Thomas' work.

Beyond the pétroleuses, she thus makes a vast overview of the participation of women in the Paris Commune, even in the least known domains, without forgetting the experiments and debates that animated the communards in the clubs (for example on education or religion), including the most polemical of the time: "*They dethroned the Emperor and God, but to put themselves in their place. The need subjects for Republicans, or at least subjects. No more than in the past, they do not admit that women are responsible for themselves.*"

Ultimately, as some companions wrote a few years ago, the memory of revolt – when it has not been entirely lost – has become the hostage of institutional knowledge, sequestered in archives that not everyone has the possibility of consulting, in places frequented by historians who, although motivated by the best intentions, can only reduce to a matter for specialists what is a source of rebellious energy to be spread... There is only one thing left to do: *wait for a chance to lighten these historians of their precious loot.* A loot, of which the action of the pétroleuses is, in our opinion, certainly a part, unless we believe that the destruction of the palaces and monuments of a great capital must remain absent from any desirable horizon.

