Memory Loss

Collected Communiques from CLODO (Committee for the Liquidation and Subversion of Computers)

Contents

"Memory Loss" presents a history of the French group CLODO, which attacked and sabotaged computers in the 1980s. The zine contains a timeline of action, two communiques, and an interview of the group. Along with these items, there is a helpful introduction which contextualizes the group and its activities and situations them in relation to other anti-technology groups. The zine comes at a good time, coinciding with the release of a new film titled Machines in Flames that documents the group.

– Sprout Distro

Publisher Details

Introduction

CLODO is a group we had never heard of, upon learning about their actions and ideas, it felt useful to today's rebels to spread this little known history. Active from 1980 to 1983, CLODO carried out attacks against computer companies and data processing centers in France, mostly in and around Toulouse, a city in Haute-Garonne, a department in the southwest of the country. CLODO criticized computers as a tool of domination, and specifically destroyed files used by the computers of their time. Rejecting the labels of both formal and informal organization, it seems that CLODO was made up of computer workers and others coming together to struggle. After at least a dozen attacks CLODO vanished, none of its members were ever caught.

CLODO repeatedly characterize their attacks as attacks on files. They refer to files in one communique as the state's *"memories"*. CLODO's personification of the state as an entity with memories in file systems is a clever descriptive tool to locate the state historically.

While this is common sense contemporarily, it may not have been so in the 1980s. Computational technology was newer, electronic

filesystems were underdeveloped and used more minimally than paper filesystems, which were far less accessible and searchable. With electronic filesystems, the state's *"memories"* become rapidly searchable and accessible, making surveillance and repression an easier task to manage. CLODO claim that *"we are living in a reality of multiplication of files, really the goal of computing"* (and characterization...creating ever more data).

CLODO comment on the alienation this created for tech workers. One can imagine that staring at the lightbox that is the computer terminal all day immersed in courier font text and logical statement might make one feel a growing detachment from human interactions, simply, human brains did not develop to do this. People who work with computers are motivated by outside factors of stress and violence to do this, not genuine desire.

CLODO talk about how IBM is the 5th largest exporter in France, with microcomputer systems that cost close to 1 million francs, understanding the exponential growth in the importance of microprocessors to the global economy is a precient point. Recently, TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited) in Taiwan has been increasingly covered as the chokepoint for the world economy, -exacerbated by a global chip shortage in 2021 -holding an essential monopoly over microchip production12. The dependence of the world economy on these microchips to function (smartphones, computer, data storage and processicng, navigation, etc.) is a potential crisis in the flow of capital. Microchip production is so centered on one company globally, it creates a flashpoint for international conflict. Essentially, those who control the microchips control the world economy.

CLODO say that *"the spectacle is not our destiny"*, a reference to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*. In this context, *"The spectacle"* being the ever increasingly totalitarian marriage of state, capitalism, and propaganda that society is immersed in. A spectacle also being some kind of performance or illusion, one could view CLODO's attacks as attacks on the illusion of total state control or attacks on the maintenance and reproduction of society as desired by capital and the state. They make additional literary references in their work, spray painting *"No to Big Brother"* (April 9/May 19 1980) and *"1984"* and *"little sisters"* (December 26 1983) at three separate attacks.

These refers to George Orwell's 1984, a novel in which a totalitarian government, "Big Brother" enacts an absolute surveillance state.

CLODO's criticism of digital state surveillance is something that differentiates them from luddites who attacked new machines to protect their jobs and livelihood. CLODO actually makes clear that they

"don't feel like the loom-breakers of the 19th century". They also explicitly disidentify themselves with a primitivism.

"Looking at the past, we see only slavery and dehumanization, unless we go back to certain so-called primitive societies. And though we may not all share the same social project, we know that it's stupid to try and turn back the clock"

CLODO repeatedly attacks the concepts of quantification and binary in their communications.

"Our society of "IF... GO TO"*, codified, aligned, controlled, this society where we connect like trains in a rail yard, desperately hoping to reduce chance and cancel the revolt, where those in power consider themselves the indispensable designer or analyst, where the binary and the quantitative are supposed to solve the crisis, this society in which we live is unbearable and inhuman."

* IF..GO TO being a conditional statement in early programming languages (i.e. FORTRAN)

Those who hold power view themselves as those who are driving civilization, as designers, creators, analysts of the surrounding world.

This self importance of humans and their egos does not account for the full entropy of the universe, it is very centered on how one individual perceives the world, biased, with them as the central figure in that perception. Reduction to binary, a computer language of 1s and 0s that represents information, is a simplification of complex phenomena. Reduction to binary allows for the process of quantification, the goal of science. Science is meant to probe and quantify the chaotic, to perceive, interpret, and characterize the indefinable so that it can be predicted. The process of characterization is one in which chaotic uniqueness is flattened and projected into well defined categories. The insatiable desire of civilization, the state, and capitalism to be able to quantify and predict is a desire for control over the natural world. Science and technology quantify, predict, and develop for capital and the state's project of domination. CLODO hits on this claiming that computers are a tool of the dominant to reinforce hierarchy and inequality.

"...the computer became a parahuman entity (cf. the discussion on artificial intelligence), a demon or an angel–but capable of domestification (computer games and telecommunications were supposed to persuade us of this)–anything but a zealous servant of the system we live in."

In essence, CLODO was doing propaganda of the deed against the computer, whose destiny is domination.

CLODO talk about how they fight daily in their jobs interfacing with computational technology, creating time-delayed bugs in software code as technosabotage. They talk about how programmers rarely reflect on the consequences of their actions;

"...the alienation of programmers, desk clerks and operators (who are often unaware of what they are doing and, a fortiori, of the results of their work)...",

this extends to those who do science as a whole (including medicine). Again the universal goodness of progress comes into question. The position of technologist is one to aspire to -through education (formal or self..although the latter is more infrequent) -society dictates. Why does society dictate that though? Society is only interested in these fields because they assist in domination. The fields of science that proliferate social control are the best funded (e.g. weapons, petrochemistry, pharmaceuticals, and batteries), as opposed to projects like documenting specific insects in a bioregion. Control over nature is more monetarily valuable to domination than nature itself. The same can be said of programming. Weapons systems, facial recognition, surveillance tools, these are the projects where the money is.

Those who proliferate these projects often do so without thinking specifically about how these technologies will be used, they do them to enrich themselves or to create/control simply because they can.

Society has created a delusion of universal goodness for those who develop/advance these projects. It tells them that they have a hand in crafting the future. That future is built on mangled bodies and psyches in graduate research programs and server farms, the future has always been a machine of suffering. The proverbial carrot strings them along, promising that if they sacrifice now, they will be rewarded in the future. The reward however, is the erosion of personal freedom at the hands of

domination. People take on and identify with this work for many reasons; passion, ego, wealth, power. To think critically about it is, in many cases, to threaten not only one's stance in life, but one's view of themselves in reckoning the consequences of progress.

CLODO finish their communique with the statement that when facing the computerization of society *"fighting becomes necessary"*. They go on to criticize leftists and the left, acknowledging themselves as attacking a fragmentary, yet symbolic and significant sector that is telematics. Concluding with

"Our dreams of change have led us to sabotage, spectacular or not, but destruction carries its own opposite; don't you think, dialecticians!"

The criticism and attacks CLODO carried out feel ahead of their time, and many of the things they fought against have unfortunately come to be our daily reality. Computers have aided in making tracking and surveillance ubiquitous in some parts of the world. The relationship many people have to their cell phones could certainly be described as a *"man-machine"* way of living. Algorithms facilitate the classifications that exist to determine which neighborhoods are deemed high crime or which advert to serve to whom. Telecommunications are assumed to be a given in almost all workplaces. Automation continues to increase in all sectors of society able to take advantage of it. Computers are foundational to the function of today's particularly precarious gig economy. The ever increasing insistence on integrating computer technologies into people's lives further alienates humans from the means of their subsistence. If nothing else, this illustrates CLODO's point that *"[t]he progress of technology is not the same as the progress of humanity."*

Computers so completely surround us in today's worlds, it's easy to forget they haven't always been around and that their existence has been challenged since day one. CLODO's actions and ideas are part of an often invisible tapestry of anti-computer revolt. In their own words they say that it is the bugs, negligence, and the daily activity of programmers that will be the most costly to the bosses of computer companies. Their spectacular and fiery actions *"are only the visible tip of the iceberg!"*

This sentiment contains a comment on militancy, CLODO state that, at least financially, their industrial sabotage is more costly than more spectacular attacks. Bombings and arsons will illicit state response and news media interest, software not working is not an immediate threat to the social peace. In recent years, extortion by software has grown as a method of attack on state and capital[1]. Ransomware attacks and so-called cyberterrorism are hot topics for modern threat analysts. Ransomware attackers will target companies, hospitals, government agencies...anyone with files precious enough to pay millions of dollars in ransom.

To hold CLODO's actions beside those of modern anti-technology saboteurs we can use their own words; *"[f]aced with the tools of those in power, dominated people have always used sabotage or subversion."* CLODO didn't seem to think of their sabotages as particularly novel, and understood their actions as part of a longer and larger trend of people responding to social control. In the 2010s and 2020s networks seem to be a primary target of politicized rebels challenging technological control. While CLODO attacked the physical storage of information (in the form of files), today's revolted go after the means by which that information circulates. Computers themselves are much smaller and much more ubiquitous, to go after individual machines seems more fruitless than ever, especially considering that so many of them are connected to each other and have data backed up elsewhere. Fiber optic cables carrying internet and telephone service, rail lines transporting people and goods, power lines moving electricity, and radio antennae broadcasting information are coming under attack. There are of course exceptions -it's not unheard of for a data center to go up in flames or a laptop to go missing -though the trend seems to be targeting the flow of information, goods, and people.

When viewed along other anti-technology extremists such as FC (UNABOMBER), ITS, CCF, FAI, CLODO communicates their attacks from a different ideological position. The afformentioned groups communicate some of their attacks from anti-civilization anarchist or post-anarchist perspectives. Their attacks are wide in breadth, -computers, air travel, nuclear power, cell phone infrastructure, nanotech-

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[1] /www.cnet.com/personal-finance/crypto/a-timeline-of-the-biggest-ransomware-attacks/

nology, AI -for the most part they all link technology in general to the project of civilization and domination. Likely none of the other anti-technology groups mentioned would disagree with CLODO's specific criticism of computers, CLODO's assessment diverges from these groups', falling short of addressing civilization or technology.

Struggles against technologies of control continue into the present and as the technologies expand so too does *"a wider field of action and revolt."* Always partial and never pure, CLODO moved forward with their string of attacks, citing as their only goal *"[f]ighting against all dominations"*. The idea of struggle as an end in itself resonates with a lot of today's insurrectionary anarchist ideas. While there isn't a way to ascertain, it's more than likely that the same notions guide many of today's anti-technology saboteurs. We can trace a line from CLODO to the present, not just through their actions against technological control but also through their ideas. CLODO's idea of fighting as a goal and understanding their struggle as partial lines up rather neatly with insurrectionary anarchist ideas of permanent conflictuality and specific interventions. CLODO's writings lack any mention of revolution or being revolutionaries, and this too seems to foreshadow the increasingly common (among anarchists) themes of nihilism and struggle not necessarily aiming for revolutionary horizons.

Finally we wanted readers to be able to learn about CLODO through their own words and actions and context. The translations have been minimally edited, mostly with footnotes to provide more context, all translators' introductions have been kept. We have included a previously untranslated paragraph to the CLODO Speaks interview.

Timeline

April 27 1979

Sperry Univac is attacked with explosives in Toulouse. The attack goes unclaimed.

April 6 1980

CLODO enters Philips Data Systems in Toulouse, where they gather and burn computers and records.

April 9 1980

CLODO sets alight CII Honeywell Bull's files, discs, and a computer in Toulouse. Graffiti left behind reads *"C.I.I. = EDF,"* *"No to Big Brother,*

No to the informaflic". EDF refers to an electricity company involved in nuclear power. Informaflic is a portmanteau of the French words informatique (IT), and flic (cop).

April 9 1980

CLODO's first communique is published in the French newspaper Liberation. The communique is entitled *"Clodo claims the attack in Tou- louse"*.

May 19 1980

CLODO sets fire to magnetic disks and documents, and destroy a computer at the offices of English company International Computer Limited in Toulouse. A spraypainted message reads *"No to Big Brother in Ireland"*.

Late June 1980

Offices are trashed within the University of Sciences in Toulouse. The offices were to host the International Symposium on IT and cybernetics. Graffiti at the scene reads *"Scientist Swine. No to capitalist data processing"*1.

1 Conflicting reports attribute this attack to CLODO and a group called La Belle.

July 1980

A security guard encounters an unknown individual on the Toulouse CII Honeywell Bull premises near the computer. The two exchange gunfire and the unknown individual flees.

August 9 1980

CLODO attempts to bomb CII Honeywell Bull in Louveciennes, a suburb of Paris. The attack fails due to a defective detonator and the bomb is discovered and disarmed. Graffiti on the scene reads *"Stop nuclear power,"* *"stop classifications,"* and *"C.i.i. = E.d.f"*.

September 9 1980

CLODO break into the offices of Cap-Sogeti, an information technology company in Toulouse. Inside they gather documents and papers and burn them. The fire damages a computer with a printer. Blue chalk reads *"CLODO endures and signs: happy SICOB"*. SICOB was a tech trade show.

December 2 1980

In Paris CLODO sets the offices of the Paris Insurance Union ablaze.

March 23 1981

Persons unknown break into the Toulouse headquarters of Banque Populaire and destroy an IBM computer and its printer. The attack in unclaimed.

May 19 1981

An unclaimed bombing rocks the Toulouse offices of International Computers Limited. *"English power kills in Ireland"* is written on the wall. Of note, Bobby Sand had died of a hunger strike two weeks earlier.

January 28 1983

CLODO uses 15 kg of dynamite to seriously damage the Haute-Garonne prefectural data-processing center in Colomiers, a suburb of Toulouse.

January 28 1983

The police arrest and violently interrogate five members of the Canal Sud radio station. The arrestees were released the following day after their alibis were verified. The Canal Sud members seem to have been targeted because there were preparing a series on digital files.

February 7 1983

CLODO's second communique is published in 01 Hebdo, issue 735. The communique is entitled *"Clodo addresses a letter to 01"*.

October 1983

French magazine Terminal 19/84 publishes a self-conducted interview of CLODO. The interview is entitled *"CLODO Speaks"*.

October 26 1983

CLODO enters the offices of Sperry-Univac in Toulouse, once inside they pile up materials from desks and armoires and set them ablaze. They leave behind the spray painted message *"Reagan attacks Grenada Sperry multinational is complicit C.l.o.d.o."*

December 26 1983

CLODO sets fire to American technology company National Cash in the suburbs of Toulouse. Graffiti left behind reads *"CLODO-1984" "Signed CLODO and its "little sisters'"*.

Glossary of Companies mentioned

Sperry Univac

An American equipment and electronics company involved in the development of military technologies and computers. UNIVAC was their Universal Automatic Computer.

Philips Data Systems

The IT arm of Philips, a Dutch conglomerate. They offered services related to office computers and data processing.

CII Honeywell Bull

A French computer company. In 1982 CII Honeywell Bull was nationalized.

International Computer Limited

A British computer company, best known for its mainframe computers.

Cap-Sogeti

A French multinational IT services company.

Banque Populaire

A French group of cooperative banks.

National Cash

An American software and technology company.

First Communique

CLODO takes responsibility for the attack in Toulouse

April 9 1980

Translator note

CLODO (Committee for liquidation or subversion of computers) was a collective of machine-arsonists responsible for around a dozen attacks on computer sites between 1980 and 1983 in Toulouse and Paris. Their targets were multinational computer firms and governmental data processing sites. The present text was sent to the newspaper French Libération 5 days after CLODO had set the files and computers of Philips Data Systems and CII-Honeywell-Bull on fire.

AUTHENTIFICATION

Ask Albert Louys, the director of Philips Data Systems in Toulouse, to explain himself:

- the presence of a cartridge belt (and a Rolls Royce catalogue!) in the left-hand drawers.

- the nature of the folder "affaire Rodeau" (or "affaire Rodeau-Borel") with its orange cover.

WHY THIS COMMUNIQUÉ?

We don't see the point of press releases when actions speak for themselves. Unfortunately, some have have carelessly claimed an attack of which they are not the authors.

We support the organisation Action Directe, like we do all those who practice direct action against authority, but the communiqué previously sent to AFP is fake. We did not take any files, so there will not be any publications or 'revelations'.

WHY THIS SABOTAGE?

As you will have suspected, we are IT workers, and are therefore well placed to understand the current and future dangers of IT and telematics. The computer is the preferred tool of the dominant. It is used to exploit, to file, to control, to repress. Tomorrow, telematics[1] will establish '1984'; the day after: the programmed man, the man-machine...

This is what we are attacking, and will continue to attack. Our sabotage is only a more spectacular version of those attacks performed daily by us or by others.

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[1] /www.nytimes.com/2022/01/26/us/politics/computer-chip-shortage-taiwan.html

WHO ARE WE?

We're asking this question not to make it easier for the cops, but to clarify the obvious:

- We are neither the armed wing of the proletariat, nor pure and strong militants, even less the centre of an organization with a desire for hegemonic power.

- We are neither Cubans, nor Libyans, nor Martians.

- Almost above suspicion, we attend neither general assemblies nor any meetings. We are not looking to recruit. We know we are not alone.

- In an increasingly unliveable society, we are a group of rebels like there are hundreds of them.

- We don't want to be locked in the ghetto of programs and organizational platforms. Fighting against all dominations is our only goal.

We sign: Comité Liquidant Ou Détournant Les Ordinateurs. (C.L.O.D.O.)

Second Communique

Clodo addresses a letter to 01

February 7 1983

Translator note: The communiqué appeared in 01 Hebdo (numéro 735) on 7 February 1983 under the headline "Le Clodo adresse une lettre à 01". It was received ten days after CLODO's bombing of the data-processing centre of Colomiers, a municipality just outside of Toulouse.

The brain drain continues! Last night, at more than 6,000 meters/second, a fraction of the state's memories dissipated into air at Colomiers. Catalogues of offences, alerts and objects; catalogues of stolen vehicles; catalogues of vehicle registration cards; catalogues of migrant workers; the embryo of an anti-terrorist catalogue... The prefecture of Haute-Garonne experienced memory loss when its computer centre was shaken.

Of course they will say that they have duplicates in Paris (the pleasures of centralisation!), that there could have been human victims, and that it is a cowardly attack (the more one risks one's life and one's freedom, the more one is a coward... of course!). However, we know that for several weeks the prefecture of Haute-Garonne will be paralyzed. We also know that by using explosives for the first time (dismantling the locks and alarm system was beyond our competences) we will be treated as followers of Khadafi or Carlos, even if our arrangement of the explosives, and their discharging, left no room for accidents. Let's say it, once and for all: the end justified the means, and the risks were ours only.

The centralised computer system of policing that we were aiming at – that of files and secrecy – perfectly symbolizes what we are fighting against day after day. We do so because the spectacle is not our destiny. Many bosses have learned, and will learn, that their 'negligence' and 'bugs' are more costly than our fires and explosions.

Our society of "IF... GO TO"[1] – squared, codified, aligned, controlled – this society where we connect like trains in a rail yard, desperately hoping to reduce chance and cancel the revolt, where those in power consider themselves the indispensable designer or analyst, where the binary and the quantitative are supposed to solve the crisis, this society in which we live is unbearable and inhuman.

In an appendix to the Nora-Minc report, Philippe Le-Moine wrote that he saw the computer as a tool for change[2]. Indeed, the computer is only a tool, a pile of junk, which we take as neither a devil nor as a god. But it is a tool in the hands of the dominant and, as a result, it only reinforces hierarchies and inequalities. If computers could allow people to work 2 hours a day, they would produce unemployment for some and stupefaction for others... and the socialists turn them into the symbol of change! What could be more laughable and more distressing than the ecstatic bliss of a Mitterand or of a Servan-Schreiber[3] faced with the magical computer potion that will be the change of society!

The reality in which we are living is the multiplication of files; the alienation of programmers, desk clerks and operators (who are often unaware of what they are doing and, a fortiori, of the results of their work); the search for profit and perfection of rationalisation. Behind the smokescreen of an expanding microcomputer industry – with large and medium-sized systems which cost more than one million francs selling like hotcakes – IBM France, which prides itself on having become the 5th largest French exporter, is continuing its monopolistic hold.

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[1] /www.cnbc.com/2021/03/16/2-charts-show-how-much-the-world-depends-on-taiwan-
[2] /www.cnet.com/personal-finance/crypto/a-timeline-of-the-biggest-ransomware-attacks/
[3] IF.. GO TO" appears in English in the original French communique. It refers to programming language logic and syntax.

The progress of technology is not the same as the progress of humanity. That some people see in the personal computer the 'man of the year' or the instrument of a rediscovered conviviality makes us smile. That others want to teach basic computer skills to 50 million French people in 2 years (following the example of the Cuban literacy campaigns) is even more of a joke. But when all this seems to justify the real computerization, the one that enables our flawed society, that causes the filing and the unemployment, the reinforcement of power and centralisation, then our laughter turns into a grimace, and fighting becomes necessary.

The leftist parties are as stupid and dangerous as the parties on the right, even if naivety and ignorance sometimes replace the thirst for profit. One need to only look at their miserable municipal campaigns... We refuse to choose between the plague and the cholera when the life or non-life of billions of people is at stake. By attacking this fragmentary, but oh so symbolic and significant, sector that is telematics, we join the struggle of billions of oppressed people, and we KNOW it. Our dreams of change have led us to sabotage – spectacular or not – but destruction carries its own opposite; don't you think, dialecticians!

C.L.O.D.O. (for reference: Comité liquidant our détournant les ordinateurs)

CLODO Speaks

October 1983

Translated and introduced by Maxine Holz and published in Processed World issue 10

Sporadic acts of sabotage against companies involved in nuclear plant construction began to take place in the region of Toulouse, France in mid-1979. This occurred at the height of vigorous, broad-based regional opposition to the construction of the GOLFECH nuclear power plant on the Garonne River. But the local anti-nuke movement reached an impasse in early 1981, when it became clear that GOLFECH would continue unabated. Despite, or because of this impasse, sabotage became more frequent and the targets more diverse.

In June, 1983, a stolen bust of Jean Jaures, famous socialist of the 1900s, appeared hanging by the neck from a tree in front of city hall. A "suicide note," signed by Jaures and "edited" by the "Association of Mischief Makers," denounced the current socialist government [of Francois Mitterand] for repressive, authoritarian policies. According to the note, Jaures regretted a life wasted on the futile path of advancing the social-democratic cause, which had come to such an ignominious end.

In the following months, several attacks on Catholic bookstores and religious statues (including the bust of Pontius Pilate near the famous religious shrine at Lourdes), signed by a "Stop the Priests" campaign, protested the visit of the Pope and the "Vatican Multinational Corporation." That same summer a number of companies and governmental offices that were directly or indirectly involved in the GOLFECH construction suffered serious damage by explosion or fire.

While different groups, often with humorous names ("A Heretofore Unknown Group") and punning acronyms, have claimed responsibility for these actions, the tone and content of their communiques reflect a common perspective. The "Committee for the Liquidation and Subversion of Computers," known by its French acronym CLODO (an untranslatable slang term which means something like "bum") has claimed responsibility for six actions over the past three years, most of them involving torching or otherwise destroying computer centers. The most recent action occurred in October 1983 when the offices of SPERRY–a U.S.-owned computer manufacturer–went up in flames. Nearby, graffiti read "Reagan attacks Grenada, SPERRY multinational is an accomplice."

Though CLODO's emphasis on computer technology reflects a specific area of expertise and interest, they are ideologically close to the other saboteurs of the region: they claim to work as an ad hoc grouping, associating around particular actions and interests, and eschew the notion of themselves as a formal organization. They have no rigid rules and principles and tolerate considerable diversity among individual participants; they distinguish themselves from traditional left groups by their rejection of a "vanguard" role, their explicitly anti- authoritarian playfulness and a sense of humor that they wield as an ideological weapon.

One French newspaper described the saboteurs as part of an "anarcho-libertarian" movement that is based in Toulouse. In another "interview" with a group that conducted simultaneous "fireworks" at two sites of nuclear-related production in August 1983, "Groucho" explains:

"People talk a lot about the silent majority and it gets a lot of press. But there is also a muzzled minority that can only express itself through political and social rejection, because it rejects the sham of democracy. It doesn't demand the right to free speech, the right to justice, the rights of man–it *takes* these rights, or at least it tries to. This minority exists, be it organized or disorganized, atomized in the social fabric, revolutionary or deviant. In our practice, we affirm its specific character. We have no

illusions about the propaganda of ideas, but we support everyone who can no longer stand injustices and contributes their little recipes to subvert a capitalized daily life."

French authorities denounce the saboteurs as deranged and inhuman, always pretending that it's only by chance that no one gets injured. In fact, the obvious caution demonstrated by this particular brand of sabotage (there have been no human casualties in the acts described here) is clearly distinct from the bombs in trains and other public places worldwide that continue to claim innocent lives in the name of this or that "liberation organization."

The following "interview" was sent to the French magazine, *Terminal 19/84* and appeared in the October 1983 issue.

Why did you accept this interview?

We've always felt that acts speak for themselves, and we decided to write a communique only because a (presumed?) member of a so-called armed, and in any case ephemeral, organization tried to pass off our acts as something they aren't. In the face of the propaganda of Power, which is particularly stupefying when it is about computers, and to end some myths about us, we felt some explanations have become necessary.

Why do you do computer sabotage?

To challenge everyone, programmers and non-programmers, so that we can reflect a little more on this world we live in and which we create, and on the way computerization transforms this society.

The truth about computerization should be revealed from time to time. It should be said that a computer is just a bunch of metal that severs only to do what one wants it to do, that in our world it's just one more tool, a particularly powerful one, that's at the service of the dominators.

We are essentially attacking what these tools lead to: files, surveillance by means of badges and cards, instrument of profit maximization for the bosses and of acclerated pauperization for those who are rejected...

The dominant ideology has clearly understood that, as a simple tool, the computer didn't serve its interests very well. So the computer became a parahuman entity (cf. the discussion on artificial intelligence), a demon or an angel–but capable of domestification (computer games and telecommunications were supposed to persuade us of this)–anything but a zealous servant of the system we live in. In this way, they hope to transform the values of the system into a system of values.

By our actions we have wanted to underline the material nature of the computer-tools on the one hand, and on the other, the destiny of domination which has been conferred on it. Finally, though what we do is primarily propaganda through action, we also know that the damage we cause leads to setbacks and and substantial delays.

Doesn't the spectacular, radical aspect of the destruction you cause seem a bit outrageous?

These actions are only the visible tip of the iceberg! We ourselves and others fight daily in a less ostensible way. With computers, like with the army, police or politics, in fact, like with all privileged instruments of power, errors are the rule, and working them out takes up the majority of programmers' time! We take advantage of this, which undoubtedly costs our employers more than the material damage we cause. We'll only say that the art consists of creating bugs that will only appear later on, little time-bombs.

To get back to your question–what could be more ordinary than throwing a match on a package of magnetic tapes? Anybody can do it! The act appears excessive only for those who don't know, or who don't want to know, what most computer systems are used for.

Then how do you explain the fact that others haven't done similar things?

To tell the truth, it's hard to explain. We are in a good position to know that most computer workers really participate with their "work tools" and rarely use their gray matter to reflect on what they do (they generally would rather not know about it!). As for those who don't work with computers, they are unconcerned or they passively accept the dominant propaganda. But that doesn't explain everything, and even those who do resist the soporifics of power are still scared of police uniforms!

Aren't you really a bit retro, like the machine breakers of the 19ᵗʰ Century?

Faced with the tools of those in power, dominated people have always used sabotage or subversion. It's neither retrograde nor novel. Looking at the past, we see only slavery and dehumanization, unless we go back to certain so-called primitive societies. And though we may not all share the same "social project," we know that it's stupid to try and turn back the clock.

Computer tools are undoubtedly perverted at their very origin (the abuse of the quantitative and the reduction to the binary are proof of this) but they could be used for other ends than the ones they now serve. When we recognize that the most computerized sector is the army, and that 94% of civilian computer-time is used for management and accounting, we don't feel like the loom-breakers of the 19ᵗʰ century (even though they fought against dehumanization in their jobs). Nor are we defenders of the computer-created unemployed... if microprocessors create unemployment, instead of reducing everyone's working-time, it's because we live in a brutal society, and this is by no means a reason to destroy microprocessors.

How do you situate your actions in the context of France and the rest of the world?

Computerization is world-wide. In the Third World, it helps to reinforce the ideological and economic domination of the West, especially the U.S., and to a lesser extent, of local power. We therefore consider that our struggle is global, even if that sounds exaggerated given the pin pricks we actually accomplish.

What are your projects for the future?

Little by little the theory of computerization that we have been developing for several years is getting fleshed out. On the whole, though, it remains unchanged since computers are still basically being used by the same people for the same things. So there is no reason not to continue in the same direction. With more imagination, and at our own pace, even if the result is less spectacular than our previous actions. The rapid pace of automation and the forthcoming explosion of telecommunications opens a wider field of action and revolt. We will try to fight in these areas, knowing that our efforts are partial. There's room for all rebels!

What are your chances of success? Aren't you afraid of getting caught?

Our chances are fine, thank you. We've got the motives and the ideas, and among the blind, the one-eyed are kings. For more than three years a security court of the State (may it rest in peace) and several dozen mercenaries have been looking for us: their material resources are sophisticated but pretty insufficient and our last action against the information center of the Haute Garonne municipality must have shown them we know more about them than they know about us! We are nonetheless conscious of the risks we run and the scope of the arsenal we are running up against. May our next interview not be with a police magistrate!

-Toulouse, August 1983

Shout out to anti-tech rebels

a societe Sperry est revendiquepar le Clodo.

"Our society of "IF... GO TO", codified, aligned, controlled, this society where we connect like trains in a rail yard, desperately hoping to reduce chance and cancel the revolt, where those in power consider themselves the indispensable designer or analyst, where the binary and the quantitative are supposed to solve the crisis, this society in which we live is unbearable and inhuman."[1]

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[1] Published in 1977, the Nora-Minc report was a document written by civil servant Simon Nora and economist Alain Minc at the request of French president Valery Giscard. The report asks questions and makes proposals about the use of computers in French society.

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