

Gabriel Pombo Da Silva

Writings

2011

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Introduction to the French Edition of Xosé Tarrío González' Huye, Hombre, Huye

From **Culmine** (July 10, 2011) translated by **this is our job**:

I like to sit down in front of the typewriter just as I'm waking up, when I still don't know who I am, where I come from, or where I'm going. My head is in the clouds, hazy and chaotic, beyond Space-Time or any Dialectic.

While I write, my sense of self (whatever that may be) gradually "returns." I open "my" cell window, take a deep breath of the cold morning air, and feel my lungs expand. I make coffee, and its aroma relaxes me, reminding me of "another time"—my childhood—as well as my mother.

My mother woke up every day at 5 a.m. to go to work. She would put the coffee pot on the kitchen stove, and in a few minutes that familiar aroma I found so appealing was wafting through the air. When I was little, I was convinced that one of the reasons my mother was so "dark" was because of all the coffee she drank. Who knows why? Kids have crazy ideas.

On weekends, "class" wasn't in session, so I was usually able to go to work with my mother. I enjoyed helping her.

My mother was (and is) a "cleaning worker," and to earn a living she had to clean other people's shops and offices. She always took pride in her work. Or perhaps it just was pride in having a job. I never knew exactly which.

My father (now dead) was a construction worker, and he built houses for other people while we lived in a rented shithole. He also took pride in his work. Or perhaps it was also just pride in having a job. Again, I didn't know which.

Even as a child, a deep feeling of hostility was beginning to grow within me toward what we now call "wage-labor," but what was simply called "work" back then. Somehow, my daily reality was teaching me that **those who had nothing were being forced to sell their time as well as their energy to those who had everything.**

When I asked my parents why there were poor people and rich people, they told me it had always been that way since the beginning of time. My parents' "mentality" always shocked me: beggars were beggars because they were lazy, whores were whores because they were depraved, thieves were thieves because they were evil.

You had to work, obey, be honest, and be a “good Christian,” always willing to suffer and turn the other cheek. Someday, in the “great beyond,” we would find our reward.

When I was a child, I was embarrassed to say that my mother was a “cleaning worker.” Now, I feel embarrassed for having been ashamed of my mother, for having been ashamed of being poor (I mean “proletarian,” since we never had to go begging)—as if having been born poor, in the heart of a proletarian family, was a “sin” or something you chose.

No, I couldn’t get used to that “order of things.” I didn’t want to accept such an order. I didn’t want to be a proud worker who worked for “other people” and sold his time, his strength, all his energy, and sometimes even his Soul for money . . .

To me, prison wasn’t anything distant or mysterious. Half the people in my neighborhood had been or were currently locked up in some cell.

Very early in the morning on (prison) visiting days, I would watch mothers, sisters, and wives (why are women always the ones who unconditionally make trips to prison year after year, while it’s the “men” who disappear into thin air after no time at all?) set off with their little plastic bags full of food and clothing to wait for the bus that would drop them off near the prison.

Off those women went, with clean clothes and food that were often bought on “account” (credit), because in those days money and well-paid work were in short supply in my neighborhood. **That’s exactly why so many people were in prison. It had nothing to do with being “lazy,” “depraved,” or “evil.” Not everyone wanted to join the diaspora of immigration (like my parents did) or exile, so instead of accepting the exploitation of wage-labor or the dictatorship of the post-Franco market, they decided to “steal” or “take up arms” against that entire order of things.**

Those women who bought on “credit” and marched with their little plastic bags like a silent army toward prison, often depriving themselves of food so that their sons, brothers, and husbands would never have to do without their little package of food and clean clothes, **were the very embodiment of love and solidarity. I felt tremendous love and respect for them.**

One of those women (she was both a mother and a grandmother) was called, or rather we called her, Doña Cristina. She was a little old wrinkled lady with a kind, cheerful personality, but so tiny that the plastic bags she carried almost touched the ground, making each step she took seem like a superhuman effort. On more than one occasion I helped carry her bags to the bus stop.

Doña Cristina’s son had been in prison for 12 years. He had stolen several cars (during the Franco era) that he later sold for parts to scrap yards and repair shops in order to make some money. He was one of those (thousands of) prisoners who didn’t benefit from the “political amnesty” at the end of the 1970s. He was also

one of the rebels who organized the Committee of Prisoners in Struggle (COPEL, which was already in decline by then), and no one wanted anything to do with them.

If my family was “poor,” then Doña Cristina’s family lived in the most abject destitution. The subhuman conditions in which that woman survived (together with her daughter and her children’s children, and without a “husband” or any kind of economic support) infuriated me so much that I decided to help her out. . .

It was the summer of 1982.

Like every morning, a swarm of human beings was set in motion. They spread out in all directions like tiny worker ants—little rows and groups of men, women, and children on the way to their workplaces and schools. From their outfits and uniforms, it was easy to figure out their job, schooling, and even the “social class” they belonged to.

Few workers went to work in their own cars. Most of them used public transportation or woke up a little earlier and went on foot.

I was sitting at the wheel of a Seat 131 I’d stolen that very night from another part of the city. My friends’ faces were tense, observing every movement on the streets adjacent to the Bank—every car, every person, everything.

I watched a cleaning worker enter the Bank at this early hour: the headscarf covering her hair, the yellow rubber gloves, the little plastic bucket that probably held cleaning products and supplies. I was reminded of my mother, who was doing exactly the same thing as this woman, but in another country 2,500 kilometers away.

Toni tapped my shoulder and told me to move the car. Here, parked right in front of the Bank, we were drawing too much attention to ourselves.

Toni was known as “Lefty.” Years later he was found murdered alongside his girlfriend Margot. Both of them had been shot in the head. Word on the street was that it was the work of the Vigo police department’s Robbery Squad.

Toni was 15 years older than me, so he must have been around 30 at the time. He had just recently been released from prison and was part of a group that was responsible for supporting and disseminating the struggle of prisoners.

I always liked his demeanor. He didn’t talk too much, and when he did speak, he was usually very specific.

Moure (who committed suicide years later) was sitting next to me in the passenger’s seat. He winked at me, smiling while he cleaned the oil off the weapons he had in his lap.

Moure also belonged to the prisoner solidarity group. Like Toni, he was older than me and had been in prison.

We drove to the outskirts of the city since there usually wasn't any police presence there. After all, the poor didn't need to be "protected" from their misery. The money was downtown, in the Banks.

Once we were out in the sticks, we got out of the car to stretch our legs a bit. We'd spent the whole night driving around, and we were tired and needed sleep.

Toni picked up a twig. In the dirt, he began to sketch out the positions we would take up and the steps we would follow during the robbery. We also discussed the roads and routes we would use for our escape after the robbery.

During this first action, I would have to remain in the car and "cover our withdrawal" in case the pigs showed up. For the task, Moure handed me a Winchester repeating rifle that very much reminded me of the ones "cowboys" carried in Hollywood movies.

Once everything was sorted out, we got back in the car and headed for our target. Each one of us was immersed in himself. At such moments, there is nothing left to say. Everything has already been said. All that remains is total silence, complete concentration, and indescribable tension.

We arrived. When we were a few meters from the Bank, Toni told me to stop the car, but we hadn't yet come to a full stop when I saw him leap out as if propelled from a slingshot. With a ski mask covering his face and a pistol in his left hand, he shouted: "*Come on, let's go, let's go!*"

Moure followed a few steps behind, also masked and armed with a revolver.

I saw them disappear into the Bank. Some pedestrians were dumbstruck by the whole scene. They were staring at the Bank, and then they looked in my direction.

I didn't know exactly what I was supposed to do with these "spectators," but to calm my nerves I decided to get out of the car and do something. I grabbed the rifle and approached them, saying something like: "*Move along assholes! Get out of here before I start shooting!*"

I wasn't wearing a ski mask, and the only thing partially covering my face was a pair of sunglasses. Luckily, it wasn't necessary to repeat my threats. The spectators left the scene. I remained outside the car, watching the Bank with my rifle pointed down the street in case the pigs showed up. My heart was beating furiously in my chest. I reached for my asthma inhaler, then remembered that I had left it at home. My hands were sweating. Each minute became an eternity. If the pigs appeared, I was prepared to shoot. That's what we had agreed to. I told myself that next time I wasn't going to stay in the car. It was better to be inside the Bank. Finally, I saw my friends exit the Bank and come running in the direction of the car. I jumped in, threw the rifle in the back seat, and picked them up.

In the car, all the tension and energy that had built up during the robbery was released. My friends were all smiles, and so was I. They joked about how I looked with the rifle and sunglasses. We took the prearranged route at top speed, and I left them at a spot we had chosen in advance, where they hid themselves, the weapons, and the money. I had to get rid of the car far away from our “base,” and I usually torched the cars we used.

A few days later, Doña Cristina found a bag full of 150,000 pesetas on her doorstep. Around the neighborhood, graffiti appeared in red paint: Total amnesty! All prisoners to the streets!

The neighborhood leftists talked about “political prisoners,” but people in the neighborhood didn’t understand them. After all, the “political prisoners” had already been released thanks to two partial amnesties. They talked about “solidarity,” about “freedom,” but only for prisoners from their organizations. What about the prisoners from the neighborhood?

I didn’t attend “political” meetings. I was 15 years old and didn’t understand what the people there were saying. Also, it was always the same ones who spoke. They talked like “television personalities.”

I said goodbye to my friends with an embrace. They had a meeting to go to. I was planning to rob a food warehouse in Revilla and then distribute the food throughout the neighborhood. It was an action I managed to pull off successfully.

“Call me when you’re planning another action. I’m just not interested in politics.”

Over the course of two years, we managed to successfully expropriate over 20 bank branches and a dozen gas stations, along with other actions of that type . . .

Almost 30 years have now gone by since those events, those times, those “speeches,” yet differentiating between prisoners still seems to be “topical.”

It’s absurd to think that only prisoners with political consciousness are worthy of our “solidarity.” As if Doña Cristina’s son wasn’t also a result of the system’s contempt. As if the “lumpen” were incapable of drawing conclusions from their own experiences and circumstances. As if their lack of “education” and “culture,” of money and support, wasn’t punishing and ostracizing enough in itself.

In prison, those differences are meaningless and irrelevant, because the architecture of prison doesn’t “mix” prisoners according to their “political ideology.” It’s quite the opposite. Time, architecture, “employees,” conditions, attitudes, and individualities are all artificially constructed in such a way that the “day-to-day operations” produce relationships of power and coercion—in other words, alienation, contempt, etc.

One defense mechanism (or even better, self-defense) against these false “dichotomies” (compartmentalizations), inside as well as outside (the System is the same on both sides of the walls), is informal organization based not only on action, but on **any activity in accordance with a “distribution of tasks” that**

pursues two simultaneous ends: “living our lives in the here and now,” but also defining more “ambitious” goals that “transcend” our own “individuality” without dehumanizing or alienating anyone in the name of some hypothetical “community” or “communism.”

What we want, or at least what I want, is the disappearance of power relations based on coercion: to live and act according to the principles of our hearts, to see “others” not as “objects” and/or “subjects” but as individuals.

Freedom doesn’t mean “alienating” ourselves. It means understanding our common “interests” and desires in pursuit of a shared liberty, and in that sense living/organizing and acting/thinking in concert without having to “sacrifice” oneself to **delegation, participation, dirtying one’s hands, getting involved, accepting “responsibilities,” etc.**

No single organization takes precedence over my individual liberty, and I don’t want to be part of any revolution that doesn’t let me dance.

‘There is nothing to reform’

words from **Gabriel Pombo da Silvia** via **culmine**, translated by **war on society**:

I am not so naive as to believe that what I am living here is something exceptional. . . and since “the prisoners” are not born here but come from a very concrete social context I do not look for the directly responsible “only” among the salaried jailers and the jailing administration which, in the end, reproduce on a microcosmic scale the politics and the ignobilities of the System and its “Society”. . . There is nothing to reform; everything must be demolished down to the foundations. . .

They are mistaken who believe (or imagine) that my radicality comes from the indigestion of “utopias” and various “theories”. . . actually, in the end and from the beginning I owe “my radicality” to the System and its miserable Society. . . or, if someone wants to look for the “theorists” responsible for my radicality, they can start in the offices of Department of Corrections and leave in peace the poets of the dynamite. . . :)

(. . .)

For me, I have never been left indifferent to the beggars who fill the metropolis, those who, brutalized by a whole life of wage slavery end their days taking refuge in programmed leisure activities, alcohol and/or drugs. . . or those who, in order to survive, sell their bodies to satisfy the pleasure of those who can buy bodies as if they were commodities. . . but it has not been all this legion of miserable and exploited who have filled me with the strength, inspiration and dignity necessary to combat the system that generates all this. . . for that my brothers in struggle are responsible: some were “bandits” and others were revolutionaries. . . that is the fundamental difference between the majority of “anarchists” and me. . . I do not need “excuses” and revolutionary “subjects” in order to confront the System. . . I hate the System because it taught me to hate it. . . and in this path of frontal war against the System I am learning who are my accomplices and who are my enemies, beyond “isms” and “conceptualizations”. . .

Aachen, July 2011

For a black Christmas!

I express my total fraternal solidarity with the anarchist comrade **Gustavo Rodríguez**, for the continual attacks that he is receiving from the authoritarian and reformist trash.

I express also my solidarity with all the groups and individualities of action (from the **Autonomous Cells for Immediate Revolution** to the **Individualists Tending toward the Wild**, and all other groups) and insurrectionalists of Mexico and of the World, regardless of whether they adhere to the project of the **FAI/IRF** or not.

I salute with pride each action of our sisters and brothers in struggle . . . all of them!

For a black Christmas against the consumption, capitalism and repression!

A black Christmas that recalls our incarcerated sisters and brothers of the **CCF** and the **FAI** (Indonesia), those of the so-called “**bombs case**,” **Tortuga**, and the **prisoners of the Struggle in the Street in \$hile**, those who were **murdered in San Miguel prison** last December, **Marco Camenisch**, **Juan Carlos Rico**, **Tamara**, the antifascist **Jock** and all the anarchist prisoners of the world.

Gabriel, December 2011

“Don Pedro” (an authentic stoic)

Don Pedro was (and may still be) a “true Stoic,” a “Unique” and “Egoist” being who ended up in prison for killing or stabbing someone (I have never been able to find out the entirety of that chapter of his life) . . .

I met him in the “Special Department” (FIES module) of “El Acebuche,” in Almería. Physically, he was a person who perfectly matched that stereotype we all have of Don Quijote: relatively tall, thin, in his fifties, with a pointy grey goatee and short hair . . .

He walked very erect, exaggeratedly majestic, but most remarkable of all was his tone of voice and manner of expression. He spoke very slowly and he conscientiously selected each word while fixing his gaze (which oscillated between arrogance and irony) on a person, trying to uncover whether or not his interlocutor was worth his time and would comprehend what he was trying to express . . .

They say that he had been a professor of literature (which is plausible enough) at some institute in Valencia. The reason why he ended up in FIES was not, certainly, for participating in protests, riots or escapes . . . That would have gone against his “values” and “philosophical principles,” not in vain and aside from considering himself a “True Nietzschean,” I would presume because of his misanthropy . . .

No, Don Pedro took out the eye of a prison guard when he put it up to the door’s “snitch” to see what he was doing in the cell . . . From this incident on, the existence of Don Pedro was a long drawn-out pilgrimage through the special prisons of the Spanish democracy . . .

It is obvious to say that he did not “lower” himself to “denouncing” the innumerable times that he was the target of beatings and torture by the guards.

Even though we (the FIES) had the habit of laughing at him (or more than him, at his “philosophy of life”) we fell “sympathetic” to his “particularity,” and because his hatred for the guards was real and whenever they gave him the opportunity he sought confrontation with them.

Don Pedro liked to converse with me . . . he could never understand how “someone like me” (a student of Philosophy with a great knowledge of/about the works of Nietzsche) could “be a Marxist” (he could never understand the differences between Anarchism and Communism; and even less so Anarchist Communism) and “embrace metaphysical illusions” . . .

So we killed the time: sometimes we spoke (philosophized?) about the philosophers of Mileto, about Diogenes Laertius, Socrates-Plato-Aristotle, to wind up with his Master-Nietzsche—and his favorite work, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” . . .

Sometimes I lie in bed with my gaze fixed on the ceiling and I imagine Don Pedro speaking about this philosophical fusion of his master with a political “ideology” like Nihilism . . . and I laugh . . .

Don Pedro—a stoic and misanthropic “Over-Man” so consistent with himself that he refused to allow any kind of “transcendence” to live over him, enemy of humanity and of humanism, egoist and unique—no one who has not met him personally knows about his life and his work materialized in himself—in his ethic . . . !!

And for him everything was reduced to this: the “over-man” was his ethic and his moral, his attitude before and in the face of adversity and the existent—without regret or glory . . .

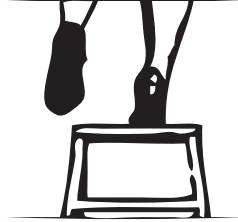
Because, obviously, if there is no ethic and moral (which is, in sum, a way of conceiving oneself to oneself and acting consequently) then it’s all the same anyway* and we would end up in a “relativism” that has nothing to do with the philosophical current of modern stoicism.

I imagine him all erect saying: Those are “charlatans,” “Don Pombo,” charlatans!!

It is worth mentioning that Don Pedro referred to those he respected as “Don” and to the rest as “you” . . . He was (and/or is) a true Stoic: Don Pedro . . .

Gabriel, Early September 2012, Aachen.

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