

RETURN FIRE

wide-ranging anarchist anthologies, submissions, translations & editorials since 2013, from the British Isles & beyond

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before the aggression
of the state

we remain

DIFFICULT

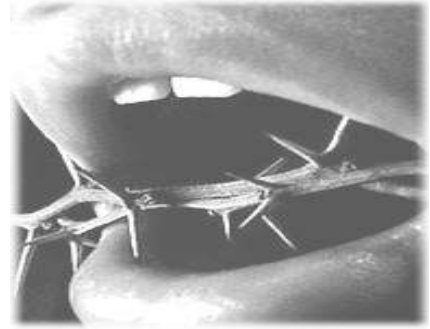
MATERIAL TO

KEEP BOXED UP



LET'S TALK ABOUT ATTACK

[ed. – originally in German-language anarchist street newspaper *Fernweh*, n.12]



The State has a clear interest in making the information about facts which mark the refusal of domination the least public possible. The police control the flux of information in order to prevent the spreading through its channels (the media) of hostilities and attacks which are a consequence of it. However if we want to seriously subvert this world, or if we simply cannot accept it nor be accomplices to its miseries – the ones of domination, of the State – it is necessary for us to talk about attack.

I.

Attacks target the manifestations of this world of domination. Against fixed structures, such as administration offices, institutions, buildings, infrastructures, churches, government offices, courts, prisons, police, the deportation machine and that of exploitation. However the wheels of this world of domination do not operate without the people who, whether they like it or not, put themselves at the service of this ideology and play their role in the upkeep of our oppression and in the management of this social organization, thus domination does not only consist in the physical structures to be destroyed. **Power is not an executioner who sits above us, observing the crimes we commit against the rules of domination. Power is a relationship, it is embedded in the social fabric which composes and determines our relationships.** An attack therefore has to address itself to the relationships between us and the roles that we choose, by asserting the existence of autonomous individuals and their will. It also has to head up against all the ideas that make up the functioning of this world of domination, such as morality, religion, property, the notions and judgments about good and evil and the abstractions which present themselves as external values to ourselves.

Even though many of these ideas need an actual physical structure to impose their existence upon us, by gaining their importance through social acceptance,¹ if one were to refuse them (even if we had to accept their consequences), attacks need to be prepared on different levels. Some targets are easier to recognize and the means to be used are evident, while for others, it is perhaps necessary to beforehand spread more texts and reflections about the proposed method and the place.

¹ ed. – For historically how this process played out in the creation of early States, see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; 'The Temple was Built Before the City'

II.

An attack interrupts the normal course of an aspect of the world or touches the surroundings of the structure which depends on it. An attack creates a rupture and opens a moment, a temporary space or a terrain for something new. It can open the possibility of having suddenly the time and the energy to confront oneself with something else, when for the most part of the uninterrupted daily routine only work and being exhausted was on the agenda. A large scale attack, such as an insurrection can also free the air of the obligations and requirements of domination and thus make possible, even temporarily, the experimentation of new relationships. An attack can also just be a simple tear in the tissue of normality and of routine in which our everyday life is caught up and cause little tension, and just be a sort of hopeful signal, or to correspond to the necessity of surviving without resorting to the offers of reintegration promoted by this world. **This world plays a hypocrite game.** While it is busy oppressing us by all means, at the same time it covers us with propositions of compensation to console us. The road to affirm one's dignity and individuality passes through the fact of rejecting the offers of reconciliation and of attacking all its forces.

III.

Attacks leave traces in everyday life. It leaves traces by showing to those who also feel this refusal but have not yet found the courage to express their rage, that the world is filled with anonymous accomplices in struggle, that no one is alone. And even more importantly, these traces and stories of attack show that this world is not the only horizon possible, that it can be changed, that this possibility is always there, even if the situation appears quite dire. **An attack is always the beginning of a communication on the ways to attack and the objectives that exist.** An attack is an invitation to anyone to pull up their sleeves and to rebel in their own way. In this sense an attack never remains an isolated incident, even though its existence is not recognized in the media. It belongs to a conflict in which the cops and the media clearly find themselves on enemy ground. Therefore we cannot have as a goal to see ourselves be represented and put under the spotlight by the distorted and conformist mediation of the press. Because this would do nothing but losing the potential in which each act of revolt finds itself in.

'A FEW LITRES OF GASOLINE' [Germany]

On the night of September 7th, we sabotaged arteries of the capitalist infrastructure in Hamburg. We chose a number of commodity transport hotspots, and in this case decided to limit ourselves to sections not used for passenger transport. A few litres of gasoline in the cable shafts along the rails should result in breakdowns or traffic jams for as long as possible in the transport of raw materials obtained, for example, through neo-colonial exploitation and planet-destroying extractivism.

Every year, millions of tonnes of goods and raw materials are transhipped in Hamburg, increasing the wealth of exploiters in the global North at the expense of the so-called global South. **We wanted to put a real stop to this machinery.** At the same time, we're also showing our solidarity with communities affected by industrial destruction around the world, and with those who find themselves behind bars for fighting against capitalism and the State. We are also joining the growing struggle against the 'Tren Maya' infrastructure project in Mexico [*ed. – see 'Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!'*], involving German companies such as Deutsche Bahn, whose infrastructure seems to us an appropriate target for showing our solidarity here too.

The port railroad south of Hamburg, the rails at the DUSS terminal in Billwerder, and the northern route of the freight bypass railroad were sabotaged. **These are all critical infrastructures for the transfer of goods from ship to rail, from rail to road, and for the redistribution of raw materials and commodities into and out of the country** [*ed. – in Europe, only Rotterdam and Antwerp ports exceed Hamburg in tonnage*].

The Hamburg Port Authority (HPA) railroad is the only connection to the regular rail network for various parts of the Port of

Hamburg. One example is the interconnection with the port of Sandau and the adjacent Hansaport terminal. In this terminal, designed for bulk goods, several million tons of coal and iron ore are transhipped every year before being transported to various coal-fired power plants or steelworks, such as Salzgitter AG. 70% of this transport is carried out by rail. It is well known that steel production is extremely harmful to the climate, and that the supply of ore is linked to neo-colonial mining conditions [*ed. – see 'Gállok is the Name of a Place'*]. The same applies to coal from Colombia, for example, or to oil imported at the oil port. With fossil fuels imported into the port of Hamburg, energy companies like others make billions in sales by profiting from crises and environmental destruction.

In addition, the Container Terminal Burchardkai (CHB) – the largest owned by the logistics and transport company HHLA – and the huge Europort Terminal are also linked by the port railroad. Around 50 million tonnes of goods are currently transported every year via the Port of Hamburg's rail line. Of course, this also includes parts for the armaments industry and nuclear-related shipments. **Usually, a freight train runs here every ten minutes, day and night.** Last summer, the section in question was already blocked for a few hours as part of a climate camp, and partially covered with ballast.

The transshipment terminal of Deutsche Bahn's DUSS (Deutsche Umschlaggesellschaft Schiene – Straße, which handles rail-road transshipment) is the largest transshipment terminal in northern Germany. Every year, several hundred thousand containers and other loading

units are transferred from trains to trucks and vice versa. Strategically located and well-connected to the Hamburg freeway and rail freight line, the terminal is an important link in the supply chain for a wide variety of export and import goods. All kinds of goods are loaded here for onward transport to European or Asian countries, including of course parts for the arms industry, cars or fast-fashion clothing.

The aim of the Hamburg bypass is to route freight traffic via the northern or southern outskirts of Hamburg, in order to reduce interference with passenger traffic on the connecting line. We decided to attack here, as this is a bottleneck in Hamburg's rail network.

Hamburg is a capitalist metropolis where numerous logistics chains converge. If we want to do away with capitalism, why not attack the infrastructure that supports it here? With the simplest possible means, which sometimes have surprisingly large impacts on a network that can hardly be protected everywhere [*ed. – in this case, the action also disrupted commuter trains between Hamburg and Germany's other biggest city, Berlin, for almost another week*]? We see sabotage as a real attack on the system of exploitation, as an experiment but also as a proposal to intensify local struggles against neo-colonialism and climate destruction.

Global capitalism will continue to destroy this planet, whether with fossil fuels or with the new "green" exploitation of the earth [*ed. – see 'The 'Green' Farce Everywhere and Nowhere Else'*]. It will continue to defend the injustice of its wealth with guns and barbed wire against the excluded. As revolutionaries, we see it as our responsibility to attack the wealth of the global North. We must sabotage the advance of capitalist industry at its heart, wherever possible.

Fight the system of destruction!



TARGETS THAT DO NOT EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE

– a counter-proposal to *Targets That Exist Everywhere* & another critique of the militarisation of the anarchist attack

[ed. – From the 2022 compilation of texts earlier featured in the German-language paper *Zündlappen: Anarchist Journal* from Nowhere, otherwise only available in print.

This speaks to a distinct trend in anarchist tactics across (primarily) Europe in recent years, which have often successfully disabled construction projects, communication systems, internet infrastructure and the like (see '**It Is Still Possible**'). We'll leave it to the author below to explain what actions these type of attacks perhaps suggest replacing; but we will also add a few words of caution. While honing the ability of anarchist insurgents to make precise and effective sabotages is a must, we wonder whether a focus on this alone as a strategy might entail a reduction of the anarchist project (including that of attack) into merely technical 'shut-downs' in a context otherwise considered 'pacified,' leaving aside the social and symbolic aspects of revolt that are so important. For a tendency which, as this text does, critiques militarisation (a critique that is necessary but underdeveloped), this is especially ironic. The question seems to be, how to link these inspiring actions further into social tension that exists, and relate them to on-going struggles, so they are harder to ignore as background noise for so many people? The time and space won from capitalist daily routine (by, for example, a transport circulation blockage or loss of mobile data coverage) is of course full of possibility, but we must not forget to put as much thought collectively into how to prise those cracks further open and introduce or extend subversive, liberatory relations.

By way of analogy, consider the reflections shared in "*The Rose of Fire Has Returned!*" on a particular strike in Barcelona last decade: "It is also necessary to take a step back from the exigencies of street-fighting to ask what was accomplished and what the point was. The most important elements of the conflict were emotional and symbolic, not economic. The State, itself the source of currency, cannot be destroyed by economic losses but only by popular attack. If [two major unions] had achieved 2% higher participation in the strike and prevented any riots and property destruction, total economic losses would have been far greater, yet social struggles would have gained nothing. What was gained was the interruption of the narrative of social peace that is vital to governance, the temporary spread of participation in outright resistance, and the experience that will make it possible to surpass this rupture in the future and to create relationships with the strangers who became our comrades for a day."

The following article rightly notes that there are many criteria that could be used for assessing the value of a particular action in a particular moment, not just the maximum amount of damage inflicted or delays caused. Some might be undertaken for training purposes (alone or as a group), maintaining continuity, gaining skills and experience and seeing "what works." (On this last point, perhaps it's as one author intrigues in the brochure *Blackout: Controversy about Meaning & Efficiency of Sabotage* – online and recommended for both technical and strategic consideration of anyone considering such actions – that "we really need these targets in order to go beyond them," despite our differences with that comrade in

other ways.) There is no one single criteria actions must be judged by; rather we must run them through various prisms constantly.

As noted when we reprinted *What is Insurgency?* earlier in this volume of *Return Fire*, we fear that anarchists must return to a more complex take on

what constitutes affective and symbolic action, rather than dismiss all such signals of disorder as wastes of time if we cannot easily quantify the result. To reinforce this point, we have added an appendix to this article from 'Here... at the Center of the World in Revolt,' in the hopes – to be clear – of supporting and extending the recent successes of infrastructural sabotages to new and more profound reaches. Solidarity with the fighters, now and always.]

Who would've thought? You would like to finally achieve something, would like to finally kick off the social revolution with your own actions. **So you go out at night, alone, in pairs or with a whole gang of accomplices... and when you wake up the next morning, you realize that once again it was only the big shot's or yuppie neighbor's car that you've messed with, and that the visible traces of the deed have already been swept up by the city's cleaning service.** Maybe you even meet the neighbor himself, who greets you joyfully from the open second or third convertible before he sets off to buy a new, fancier car. Well, it is perhaps less frequent that the big shot neighbor's car gets got and if so, then it nevertheless usually gives substantially more cause for satisfaction, because the city council cleaning up a charred car wreck is nevertheless somewhat more overtaxed and even the richest elites nevertheless are a bit annoyed – yes, sometimes even a bit fearful – that someone set fire to her car. Most of the time it is rather the cars of some big corporations that are globally or locally involved in gentrification, prison construction, war, camps, border and the deportation industry and sometimes also in the expansion of the smart, technological prison in which we all find ourselves [ed. – see **Cars as Cameras**]. And of course my heart also leaps for joy whenever I spy a burned out, flattened, painted or otherwise demolished vehicle of this kind on the side of the road, even when I read about it in an anarchist newspaper/brochure from a place near or far, and sometimes even when I learn of such an event in the not-yet-entirely-irrelevant expanses of the Internet. And yet: when I hear the proposal to "cross the threshold from symbolic resistance to material damage to the enemy infrastructure" and this expression of will is backed up in this context by listing arson attacks mainly against vehicles of corresponding companies as examples of a practical expression of this proposal (to be found in the brochure *Targets That Exist Everywhere* – a strategic

proposal for building a common front against the profiteers of war and repression), then considerable doubts creep over me as to what extent the declared goal can be achieved in this way at all.

In fact, I have often wondered to what extent certain recurring targets of attack – and these certainly include the company vehicles of the various firms that are identified as existing everywhere – do not rather contribute to ritualizing the attacks on domination, i.e. above all, to make them a symbolic act that – while perhaps expressing a certain anger, opposition, etc. in a relatively irreconcilable way – is far from causing material damage of any significance and so also becomes, to a certain extent, calculable, predictable, offsettable. **This does not mean that such an attack has no value. It can restore one's agency or, perhaps just another name for it, one's dignity, it can encourage others, it can intimidate, unsettle and make the right people think. It can make both the oppressed and the rulers realize that acts of aggression are always possible, no matter how controlled and ordered a particular space may be, and it can be an act of satisfaction, of revenge.** All of this has its value, all of this can even ignite or incite a gigantic potential in certain situations that can result in uprisings and revolts, even if this can very rarely be predicted. And yet, a burning van belonging to a prison construction company, a logistics company, a car dealership, a technology company, etc., however much it may be a symbol of certain struggles, is only rarely more than that, is only rarely capable of disrupting processes so significantly, of hitting the infrastructure so violently, that it would or even could create a moment of departure worth mentioning, that the logistics of rule would be disrupted decisively enough, production sites would come to a standstill, construction sites would stop running, and supplies to the front lines of war and repression would fail to arrive. This much realism is necessary if one does not want to lose oneself in a self-referential, ideologized and ritualized practice [ed. – see **What is Insurgency?**].

Where is the creativity in identifying worthwhile targets, one wonders, flipping through the pages of the *Targets That Exist*

Everywhere brochure? The answer seems to be provided by an otherwise unremarkable note at the beginning of the proposal: “It should not be enough for us [...] to search each time anew for suitable solidarity actions, but we propose to collect information about the enemies of freedom and to



disseminate it in such a way that they become known everywhere.” But why shouldn't we always reconsider where to start our attacks? Simply attacking more and more of the same targets, with the same methods, seems to me to be a quantitative argument that also ignores the fact that this is – even if the authors of the brochure seem to overlook this – a strategy that has been reproduced persistently and relatively comprehensively over the past decades, which would be difficult to increase quantitatively anyway and which, moreover, has not really led to the collapse of domination as of yet. The fact that companies avoid certain regions because they are attacked there may seem like a success at first glance (and it is, just not in an absolute sense), but it also means that these companies set up their locations elsewhere, where they remain relatively unbothered. This has only moderately harmed power itself, even in the regions that were originally avoided. **It is not my intention to minimize the successes of this strategy(s), only to object that such a strategy takes the place of the actual goal it is intended to achieve.** Although, for example, DB Schenker trucks repeatedly go up in flames, the company continues to successfully transport armaments and other products. If only more of these trucks would burn, some people might revel and wait for others to join the campaign. Another might go out and look at the freight tracks as they run all over Europe, try out here and there what effect fire has on signaling systems and switches, think of ways to block tracks, cut cables, etc., while someone else might figure out how to identify the group's deliveries that are relevant to the arms industry and then specifically make them harmless. A third person who lives in a region where DB Schenker has its trucks serviced, on the other hand, might have figured out how to sabotage that one factory gate so that the trucks can't drive out of the workshop parking lot again for a day after they've been serviced. **Superglue in the lock might have accomplished what butyric acid in building ventilation might have done elsewhere: shut down production site and workshops for an hour, a day or more.**

Naturally, these are only a few, very roughly elaborated ideas that I can and will present here, but I think that one thing should become clear: the creative potential of a few individuals, who work towards a common goal and do not commit themselves to a methodology determined in advance and according to some 'radical' criteria, can have a much more effective influence than the call of those “blatant” super arsonists, measured according to the same criteria, who desperately hope that more and more people will imitate a method practiced by them and elevated to an ideal, because it alone is effective

in their terms.¹ Of course, there is nothing wrong with collecting knowledge, communicating knowledge about supply chains, weak points, methods and more. But it's not like you always have to write a communiqué for that... Even without such communiqués, inspiration can be drawn from the attacks against the infrastructure of domination documented in both anarchist newspapers and on various blogs on the internet; indeed, even without communiqués, attacks and struggles relate to each other in what they choose as their target, how and when they are carried out, etc., etc.

Targets that exist everywhere... Well, sure, it's handy to torch a few vehicles of the technology multinationals and the profiteers of jail and war in your own neighborhood, where they stand around unguarded. And I certainly don't want to advocate not doing that. But when we talk about how we can move from symbolic attacks to a practice of inflicting material harm on our enemy, it seems to me that these ubiquitous targets pretty much embody the opposite: aren't they symbolic interventions? **The difference between material damage and symbolic intervention, after all, is not usually the amount of damage caused. Even if there are exceptions, of course. Rather, the question is whether an attack succeeds in paralyzing authority for a while.** And in this, the approach of targets existing everywhere must ultimately fail... at least if it is assumed that it will not be reproduced *en masse* – which experience shows beyond doubt. Because with the vehicles of a handful of companies, we are primarily targeting individual technicians in the logistics of these companies, who are also often only slightly restricted in their mobility – because a replacement car can be found quickly today, at least if it needs to be. Even the few materials and tools stored in the vehicles can usually be replaced quickly. There may be exceptions here, of course, such as when elaborately equipped special vehicles are hit or construction equipment such as excavators, cranes, etc., where replacements cannot simply be ordered from the nearest car rental company but must first be

1 I would like to note here that it is not my intention to devalue spectacular arsons or other spectacular – or let's rather say tremendous – attacks, and certainly I too have a kind of fetish to intuitively exaggerate such attacks a little bit. My point is rather not to let this fetish, or more neutrally, this fascination, become an ideal, to step back and take a closer look at attacks here and there, forgetting neither that attacks that don't take this huge, spectacular form, can be very effective – for example, because they hit just the right spot to paralyze production in a very unspectacular way – nor the fact that not everyone is always able and not everyone is always willing to put as much at stake or as much effort as most of these more spectacular attacks require.

brought in, **but even though this equipment may also be widely available, we are already moving away from the ubiquitous targets here, at least in terms of approach, because it is precisely the non-omnipresence of these targets that is being exploited here.** To be fair: the brochure *Targets That Exist Everywhere* does not lack such examples. For example, the attack on a crane at the construction site of the planned Amazon logistics center in Achim near Bremen is listed, as is the attack on the entire construction vehicle fleet of the Eurovia group in Limoges, as well as several other attacks on fleets of vehicles that are difficult to replace. And yet, it seems to be mainly a collection of individual vehicle arsons, precisely “targets existing everywhere” that the brochure presents and wants to suggest to us.

But what if the motto were reversed for once? How would it be if, instead of targets that exist everywhere, targets that exist nowhere else were brought into focus for once? Because domination penetrates the space neither evenly, nor uniformly. Each of its infrastructures has nodes that are of particular centrality, while some territories are more strongly marked by this infrastructure and others by that. Globally, for example, the high-tech metropolises, with their research, financial, armaments, and high-tech production infrastructures, can be distinguished from the more extractivist and agriculturally-exploited periphery [*ed. – see When the Barbarians Invade the Periphery*]. And even within the capitalist metropolitan regions, of which the “Everywhere Targets” seem to be primarily concerned, a closer look reveals quite different infrastructural emphases. **While one region is characterized by lignite mining and the energy generated from it, elsewhere the high-tech computer industry sits above all, and still elsewhere the biotechnology industry has pitched its tents, while the automotive industry and chemical corporations have for almost an entire century organized entire cities and regions according to their needs, port cities form important commercial metropolises, and sometimes individual military sites and even individual radio masts are of international (military) importance.** In the midst of this network, very different and often unique points of attack can be identified, which are capable of inflicting much more material damage on domination than perhaps the arson of vehicles with the same logos on them over and over again. It may take some effort to identify them, sometimes they may be better protected (or sometimes perhaps worse) than the targets that exist everywhere, and one may be forced to give free rein to individual creativity in identifying and destroying these targets. Nonetheless, or

precisely because of this, I think that these targets may provide the more interesting starting point in the struggle against domination. **Not least because they are ultimately also based on a more precise analysis of how domination works than the abstract specter of global corporations, police forces, and armies that seem to be equally latent everywhere.**

Finally, the pamphlet *Targets That Exist Everywhere* ends with a call for the formation of a “Network of Revolutionary Violence,” another proposal to abandon any individuality of the anarchist attack and to gather humorlessly, grimly and with self-discipline under the banner of yet another revolutionary organization, the “Direct Action Cells.” In other words, once again the proposal to militarize the anarchist attack.

It is difficult for me to recognize such proposals, especially when they are introduced so bluntly with quotes from authoritarian organizations – whose model they follow, after all – as anti-authoritarian at all. And I can't help but recognize in this proposal just that grimness which I also believe to recognize in the undoubtedly quantitative attempt of the targets existing everywhere. Because this proposal can only be successful if the masses join it, one finally falls into an vanguardist position, from which a large part of one's energy is wasted on telling others what they should do and, if they do not do this – or not in the required way – denying them the seriousness of their anarchist ideas. Because you have decided to bang your head against the wall, to give up your own individuality, the uniqueness of your own context and possibly also the fun of a life lived against domination, and henceforth to follow a boring, uniform organization (“Unity” is one of the slogans of the Direct Action Cells, along with “organization” and “war”.) There is nothing left to suggest to oneself but that others do the same, that is, also turn their backs on their individuality and the unique contexts in which they move, and henceforth wave the flag of the Direct Action Cells.

But what possibilities does that really open up? Are we – and who is this *we* anyway – really stronger just because we unite under one flag? I have already stated that I do not think that the anarchist attack makes strategic gains by narrowing its focus to targets that exist everywhere. It is not difficult to guess what I may think of fighting united under one flag, indeed under any flag at all. I do not think it is a coincidence that this concrete proposal also follows the example of authoritarian communist

organizations. And this is ultimately the only value (or rather for me it is not a value) that this proposal is able to create: unity [*ed. – see 'Not Fighting the Same Fight'*]. But what do anarchists get out of uniformity, loyalty to a flag, grimness and devotion to duty? Correct: nothing. Rather, it is the surrender of the anarchist project. Because the anarchist attack cannot be militarized!

“Likewise, while it is certainly possible to establish personal quantitative criteria – to affect a maximum amount of people, to create a disturbance that lasts as long as possible, etc. – the latter could be considerably expanded to other dimensions, where what matters could be for instance to accomplish a sabotage at a given moment despite the difficulties (ie: during the lockdown; at a given date tied to an event of domination or in solidarity; during a given restructuring of domination; or in the midst of a specific struggle that we wish to support or curb). Conversely, what matters could also be to target a specific antenna because of the consequences it would have (on a particular industrial zone; port; arms factory; start up; laboratory; administration). Moreover, it could be to simply participate in an ongoing joyful destructive momentum that we hadn't planned out, but that motivates us (and in this case just like in the others, its simple and diffuse nature could also become a criterion). And so on. [Sabotage] is a relationship between oneself and the world, a social relation that is not dissolved by or limited to a technical question. If we are to establish the criteria for each of our offensive actions ourselves, instead of being affected by an external quantified or objectified relation – which both reproduce a logic of measure that has its roots in the world of authority – couldn't we simply consider that a sabotage is successful (or “efficient”) if we are able to accomplish what we had planned while we gave ourselves the means to do it? That it is above all a matter of singularity, that it is a moment where we can touch upon Action, to this fleeting dimension of quality where we have finally taken on our own lives and the stars? A hundred antennas destroyed in two years certainly are not worth much in the face of the objectivity of the 29,900 ones [in France] left untouched. But each and every one of them has not only said a lot to those who have felt this dimension, but also to all of those whose services were shut down momentarily, as well as those whose relations of alienation and dispossession were affected by this destruction (“what did it mean?” is another question that could be detailed elsewhere).”

– *Assaulting the Existent*

'TO CHOOSE WISELY'

We do not carry out attacks to win a war against the State. In some future where a great part of society shares the anarchist dream, such a formulation might make sense. For now, the attack has four purposes.



We attack to come back to life: to inhabit our bodies again, to re-establish the connection between our desires or feelings and our actions, to act on our rage, to regain our dignity, to give hope and pride to the collective body we form a small part of, and to warm the hearts of repressed comrades.

We attack to gain visibility: to create signals of disorder and negations of the social peace [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg18*], to belie the omnipotence of the State, to let all the other people know that anarchists exist and to signal our targets.

We attack to constitute a force: to highlight social lines of conflict and to galvanize those conflicts, to foster a capacity for destruction within a social resistance and a capacity for the self-defense of any creative manifestations of that resistance, to win the ability to obstruct and derail the plans of the Machine and advance or defend our own plans.

Finally, **we attack** to develop a practice of sabotage: so that when a social rupture occurs, the awakening of the social body that is the only hope for the destruction of the Machine, we will have the knowledge and experience to enter into a higher intensity warfare and sabotage the infrastructure on which the Machine depends.

It will be noticed that these four reasons do not retain any connection between the attack and direct action. Direct action must be forever removed from the activist toolbox of tactics for accomplishing things, and returned to a terrain of strategizing for unmediated engagement with social problems.

Sometimes it will be possible to achieve a short-term gain through a campaign of attacks even when we aren't strong enough to constitute a force. A dozen determined people can successfully prevent the installation of surveillance cameras on a citywide level. An even smaller group might stop a specific development project if the developer is not extremely wealthy or powerful. But if the prize is great enough, the repression will be fierce, and a community of resistance that lacks substantial social support will not survive its determined use of sabotage, as has been the case with anarchist scene in Belarus in recent years [ed. – written at the end of the 2000s/start of the 2010s: see *How Did Belarusians Come to Rebellion Against the Dictatorship?* for updates]. We must never foreswear the possibility of immediate victory

that sabotage lends us, even when this possibility is also suicidal. We must, however, cure ourselves of the habit of thinking in terms of short-term gains, and instead give our immediate struggles a sense of history. Until now our heroic defeats have kept this struggle alive. Suicidal maneuvers should by no means be disavowed, but it is better to know what we are about [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg38*] than to trap ourselves in a tragic cycle that we fail to understand.

The four reasons for the attack are adapted to a struggle that has lasted and will last for centuries [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*], a struggle that is long-sighted but not self-denying, patient yet immediate [ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; Barcelona Anarchists at Low Tide*].

The first reason for the attack is the most urgent and the most dangerous. Without the capability to destroy, we can entertain no other question as anarchists. In a place where the Machine has achieved a pacification of society and the community of rebels, there can be no strategic choices. Attack, destruction, material negation, rioting, and sabotage must be present possibilities if the insurgents are to be able to choose wisely how, when, and whether to use them.

A community of rebels with no history loses the capacity to attack if they do not entertain it as a possibility in any given moment. Such a community is always on the cusp of pacification, no matter how aggressive. They will, accordingly, often attack in a suicidal, self-defeating way [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg44*]. With no past, after all, they have no future. On the other hand, a community of rebels that is indivisible from its history of struggle may pass ten years – as long as it is not an entire generation – without realizing any strong attacks. As long as the moment is not opportune, they will focus on other motions in the struggle, but they retain the capacity to attack within their memory and their imaginary.

By grafting this capacity into our history, we may use it with patience. The successfully repressed earth liberationists illustrated, with the tragedy of their lacking fortitude [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg78*], that those who attack out of desperation will neither withstand the pressures of time and hopelessness, nor the threat of imprisonment. We can overcome the insurmountable fear of loss only by accepting that we have already lost, and that we fight to avenge our ghosts [ed. – see *Ghosts*]. There is no other way to confront such a powerful enemy than to understand that our survival does not rest upon defeats or victories within our own personal drama, but in the passing on of an Idea that will bloom irrepressibly when the weather is ripe, though for all we know it may only ever germinate in the world of the imaginary.

THE 'GREEN' FARCE EVERYWHERE & NOWHERE ELSE

– towards destroying electric mobility & decarbonizing lies



Summer 2023, Frankfurt, Germany: as Portugal, Hawaii, Greece, Slovenia & Austria reel from wild-fire damages and other catastrophes of the ecological crisis, rebels return the flame to incinerate a few new Tesla electric cars after the International Motor Show

[ed. – Taken from the German-language website [SwitchOff.noblogs.org](https://www.switchoff.noblogs.org), this translation continues our interventions in the new climate movements. There are two fronts on which we would like to extend the thrust of the author/s further, in terms of its response to the text reproduced above in this chapter of *Return Fire*, **Targets That Do Not Exist Anywhere Else**. Firstly, the proposal below (to focus anarchist attack and critique on the new “green” infrastructure and propaganda) corresponds not only to the proclivities of the author/s, as one worthy cause among many jostling for anarchists’ attention when fighting a domination which can never truly be compartmentalised. Rather, (social acceptance of) the industrial re-structuring underway under the guise of ‘solving’ ecological collapse forms a strategic choke-point in the pivot of capitalism’s latest world-system – “a system that understands itself as global and that mediates political conflict and the flow of resources and information in accordance with a certain logic [see *Return Fire vol.5 pg11*],” following Peter Gelderloos’ ‘Geopolitics for 2024’ – as different forms of power are suggested by various elites vying to become the next’s architects and win global agreement. His ‘Diagnostic of the Future’ posited that the discourse around ‘climate change’ will (or has) become “a linchpin that conditions the governmental and economic crises and also suggests – or even requires – a synthesis in the responses” (namely a “bioeconomic expansion”; see that subsection of the essay), now that eco-catastrophe – especially in the middle latitudes home to several rising powers – is the backdrop: “Currently, the only viable platform from which to launch a new project of interstate cooperation capable of deploying and managing the changes that a bioeconomic expansion of capitalism would require can be found in the response to climate change. Climate change provides a narrative of unified global interests. Any political power that acts in the name of addressing climate change can act in the name of all humanity: this offers the possibility to establish a

hegemonic project, the same way that the narrative of democracy and human rights undergirded a hegemonic project after the horrors of World War II [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg61*]. Political structures for interstate coordination and global intervention would be justified as holistic measures necessary to save the entire biosphere, and they could also have a justifiably technocratic character, given that the media have successfully framed climate change as a scientific rather than economic or spiritual issue [ed. – see ‘*The Principle of Reciprocity*’]. [...] As long as climate change is treated as a purely scientific issue, any responses will have to be compatible with the preexisting social relations, funding sources, and regulatory mechanisms through which they are to be carried out. In other words, a technocratic approach to climate change would not threaten capitalism.”

Since the above was written in 2017, the self-described “climate movement” revived in the wake of Greta Thunberg’s youthful activism and Extinction Rebellion (see *Rebellion Extinction*) etc.: yet in a form as often as not clamouring for precisely this kind of technocratic approach, often divorced from previous radical ecological critique of the structures of this society at their base. They can even include some forms of the sabotage called for in the following article, such as the Tyre Extinguishers mentioned below, an open platform – having taken inspiration from Andreas Malm (see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.3; Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism*), among others – where participants deflate tyres of Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) in their city, framing their actions directly as pressure to appeal to government policy; even though they do list electric SUVs as legitimate targets. Attacking the structures of industrial society, “green” or otherwise, is necessary, and so is making sure that in the process we don’t end up supporting – inadvertently or not – the very escape route conjoining austerity and a kind of techno-socialism (see ‘*A New Relation with Social Conflicts*’) that certain elites project for themselves at our expense.

This would be both tragedy and farce; not least because the system very much needs an impetus from society at large to back a State-level shift, rather than relying on the market to deliver. Returning to *Diagnostic of the Future*: “[C]apitalists themselves are incapable [of building] the kind of systemic change they need. [...] The volatility of the market will never produce the resources necessary for a phase shift in energy technologies. Liberal capitalism would leave us festering – or rather, boiling – in a fossil fuel economy. A rapid shift to a climate change economy will not be possible without most major governments introducing huge policy shifts and legally mandating investment in alternative energies and environmental protection measures as a significant part of their total budgets, on par with health care or military spending.

“Capitalism faces a great need for strategic change, for a governmental mandate capable of redirecting social resources on a coordinated, massive scale. This is where the question of different governmental models becomes extremely important, as certain types of government are better suited to make such a shift than others, and some political tendencies are well positioned to seize the platform of climate change, whereas others are incapable.”

Already we can see in concrete terms ways that this appears in the context of ongoing struggles; to take one example, the effort to prevent the United States latest 'Cop City' being build in Weelaunee Forest, so-called Georgia (see **'We Laugh Harder Than Them'**). In late 2022, an interviewee participating in that fight commented on the Millenials Are Killing Capitalism podcast that "very big industrial factions are relocating their entire industry to Georgia because of the low wages and cheap land, and climate pressures on the West Coast are actually expediting that process: because wildfires and droughts are making it very difficult to continue operating at scale on the West Coast. Furthermore, SoftBank (the big Japanese investment firm) has recently pulled lots of their money out of like a gig economy industries, such as like Uber and Airbnb and all this [ed. – see **A New Luddite Rebellion**]. And these already were the jobs that were designed for the surplus labor potential, the surplus workers of the metro area and of the country. But a lot of those companies are collapsing and ostensibly some of those workers are going to be forced into the Rivian plants, Hyundai plants and Kia plants, all of which are being built around Georgia to build electric vehicles. In the coming years, actually, Georgia will be the number-one place for electric vehicle manufacturing, definitely in the country, I think possibly on Earth [ed. – See also the new nuclear reactor and more power still needed for further water-hungry data centres also now courted by the state of Georgia with tax breaks]. This is a part of the green capitalist plan to continue to racket public funds, because also Georgia and Metro Atlanta is being pitted as somewhat like a refuge city. So literally their bigger plan of this until 2035, 2040, 2050, is to accept huge amounts (millions) of people [ed. – i.e. climate refugees, among others; see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire, **The Swell**] from Houston, New Orleans, Mobile, Miami. And of course, these are very Black communities and definitely working class communities. And we can imagine with the kind of pan-urban gentrification, the collapse of remote mobile jobs, reemergence of manufacturing for a few, all of these things... You're just going to have a huge amount of people who don't have a job, have basically nothing to do [ed. – see **'Something Different Than the Reflection of This World'**]. I really think the Cop City idea cannot really be strictly separated from this idea. Because basically, when you have millions of people with no way to survive, you either have to kill or incarcerate them. I mean, you don't actually; you can actually just take care of them. But that's not how our society works."



Aftermath of 2017 category-four hurricane hitting Houston

Attacking on these fronts of capitalist and extractivist development and delivery, if done intelligently, could contribute to weakening one of the main supports the elites have on hand to prop up their rotten system. As the author/s mention, this proposal is already being realised in certain places; one thinks of the repeated arsons of electric vehicle charging stations in German-speaking territories (prying open fans at the rear – or unscrewing the casing from the cable shaft – and letting the accelerant do its work) or, across the Atlantic, the wind farm construction sites repeatedly harassed and burned by rebels on indigenous Mapuche territories (see **Return Fire chap.3 pg59**), and the metal spikes left hidden in trees due to be felled for the electric vehicle battery factory mega-project outside Montreal – the largest investment by the Quebec government in a private enterprise in that Canadian province's history – to prevent transformation of the woods and wetlands into part of the projected 'Quebec Silicon Valley.' Some revolutionaries in Caen, France, flatly explain why they sabotage charging stations with expanding foam rather than buy into the green-washing discourse:

"It's still the metro-work-sleep (yes, but decarbonized!)."

"It's the digitization of the world [ed. – see **'From Fringe Prophecy into Voguish Ideology'**], the loss of autonomy, the destruction of solidarity, mass surveillance [ed. – see **Cars as Cameras**]..."

"It's the misleading presentation of technology as a solution to political problems, it's the absolute belief in the ideology of progress [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg11**], it's driving straight into the wall (yes, but electric!)."

Now, our second elaboration. We have not tired of asserting that resistance to the "green farce" must contain subversion on the social terrain where the latter seeks to implant its acceptance, and not just material attacks which – while we may once have hoped could speak for themselves – without the above element could even risk feeding into the State's own absorption of ecology as a branch of governance. Yet neither, to stick with the proposal in the article to follow, have we tired of stating the necessity of those attacks, constantly investigating the cracks in edifices both technical and social. While it is beyond the scope of this introduction to apply the question of the text this piece replies to – namely, in each area, what are the targets that don't exist anywhere else? – to this theme, we will limit ourselves to one anecdote, continuing the discussion from a previous chapter (see **Capitalism & Electrification**) of the 2021-2022 anarchist interventions in the global crisis in the supply-chain of semi-conductor chips. (One UK anarchist analysis of 'The Cost Of Living Crisis' then contextualised that "recent shortages in computer chips has in part been caused by a drought in Taiwan, which produces 60% to 70% of the worlds semi-conductor chips. This production is water intensive, and has been hampered by the worst drought in the area for 56 years. Considering how many objects now incorporate some level of computerisation, this shortage has had knock on effects across the entire global economy, from laptops to cars.")

While not hot on the lips of the climate technocrats, these chips are vital to most of their digital "solutions" (production of the newest cars was severely impacted worldwide,

alongside electrical appliances more generally, before rippling out to a staggering amount of economic sectors). “With chips needed in everything (data centres, AI, autos, mining), semiconductors are the oil of the 21st century,” reads a text published by ActForFree.noblogs.org concerning ASML (the Dutch firm producing the hardware that makes the actual semi-conductors, “an unavoidable dependency for all semiconductor manufacturers”).

Spring, 2022: an arson (tagged with the circled (A) of anarchy alongside) of precise wiring elements at the high-voltage transformer supplying the nearby technology plant of STMicroelectronics is conducted in Froges, France, in the high-tech cluster historically key to military, civilian and nuclear development (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg38**). The company are one of the world’s leading players in semi-conductor design, manufacture and marketing (serving the war industry, automotive sector, 5G – see **The 5G Net** – and cloud computing, the Internet of Things; see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?**). The very next day, while still reeling from the black-out, the facility is again struck down after a fire targeting the cables under a nearby bridge over the Isère river, as is most of the Grésivaudan basin industrial zone, home to several major micro-electronics like companies Soitec, who use nano-technology (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg26**) to design and produce semi-conductor materials used to make chips for smartphones, tablets, computers, computer servers and data centers. Semi-conductor production was halted in the middle of the night at these two companies, which employ several thousand people and work around the clock due to the unique nature of the multi-million dollar production line.

The sector is highly vulnerable to sudden power outages; even aside from the very high demand for components at that time and ambitious production targets. An article in the French press explains, “Clean rooms, used in particular in the production process of the semiconductor industry, depend on filtered ventilation systems and various sensors (temperature, humidity, etc.) in order to guarantee a very low level of concentration of airborne particles and dust, which must be recalibrated in particular when they are restarted. Not to mention the adjustments to the production equipment itself, which is responsible for combining a high level of quality and volume production, while producing on a very small scale, in the order of a nano-meter. An incident that has already had an impact on the prices of both companies on the stock market, since after a first day of decline following the announcement of this episode (-5.3% for ST and -3.8% for Soitec), the price of STMicroelectronics was still down -3.2% this Wednesday, and -3.2% for Soitec this morning.” Inspecting the machines, removing burned cards and such was predicted to take weeks. “This episode reveals a point of weakness,” mourned director of operations at Soitec: “The redundancy of the power supply sources was not enough to protect us because the criminals attacked all the power supply lines.”

(Little over a week later, at 4.30pm an explosion alerted employees at Inovalée – the region’s main technology park – to another fire set against a high voltage source station feeding the 380-some companies there working in the field of digital technologies, knocking out one of its two generators.)

Not many of us have the ‘privilege’ of proximity to such facilities, of course, and this is after all only one of many forms, objectives and focuses of attack (see **‘To Choose Wisely’**), even within the reduced scope of the “green farce.” We trust that in every location, ingenuity, curiosity and courage could carry the day. Happy hunting.]



Anarchists, and autonomists, have been slow to respond to green capitalism. Anarchist combatants in France might be the only exception systematically burning wind turbines, electrical and other technological infrastructures.¹ While some years ago German saboteurs ‘call to attack the Green Deal’ by setting fire to the electrical cables feeding the new Berlin Tesla Gigafactory [ed. – see **‘Let’s Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!’**] designed to further solidify gentrification, advance labour exploitation, deplete water resources and demand the global increase in mining so-called ‘transition materials’. And, with these exceptions, social anarchists have largely been slow, maybe themselves even taking the ‘green bait,’ failing to realize that so-called ‘greening’ is the next mechanism to not only justify but to actively expand capitalist plunder of the land, air, sea, water and – equally damaging – the minds of people. Greening, decarbonization, electrification and, even, the concept of carbon itself is an apparatus of psychological warfare – and an attempt at pacifying popular ecological and climatic struggle.

The phrase, ‘with devastation comes opportunity,’ echoes through all the world’s financial centres as floods, droughts, fires and extreme weather and ecosystem devastation spreads at unprecedented rates. Capitalism will not allow, in academic parlance, ‘degrowth’ in any real sense or the living in socioecological harmony with habitats. Equally far-

1 See *Fragments of the Struggle Against this World’s Juice* lille.indymedia.org/IMG/pdf/nuclear_or_lignite_fragment_s_of_the_struggle_against_this_world_s_juice_from_the_bois_lejuc_to_the_hambach_forest.page_by_page.pdf and *Face to Face with the Enemy: A brief overview of last year’s attacks against power in France 2020-2021* ia903104.us.archive.org/24/items/ZineArchive/face_to_face_france_2020_2021.pdf

fetches is urban planning that permits life to thrive outside the circuits of capital. Walking and biking are still reserved for the poor, token middle-class gesture (or identity) and the Dutch. The extractive machine continues, now intensifying its push to extract life and mineral from the earth in the name of being 'environmentally friendly', 'carbon neutral' and 'renewable', yet the only things being renewed are the multiplicities by which capitalism kills through industrial activities, near lifeless banal environments, consumer lifeways and enforcing state control. **And, 'yes', tear gas, tanks and prisons are currently being beautified, decarbonized and greened.**² From environmentalism to climate justice, greening has tapped into the hopes, fears and indifference of people to propel the existing further into dystopic oblivion. And that is why those that spread fire against Tesla are right: It is necessary to 'show that we don't agree with the green lies, the plundering of raw materials or the cities and roads that belong only to the rich.'³ Big or small, disagreement, rejection and hostility must emerge against electrification, decarbonization and whatever green bullshit, as it is a bullshit with higher social and ecological stakes than we might realize. The best avenue to counter this green pacification and distance ones' self from this swindle is, of course, to attack it.

In conversations concerning the organization of attack, it's true the ideal 'targets' are those 'that do not exist anywhere else'. Targets that are costly, not easily replaceable, damage logistics and incur the most damage are the ideal targets, no question. Important, however, is the spread and reproduction of autonomous attack, making available the ideas, techniques and criminal considerations necessary to stay safe and strike at capital and the state. Al Gore [*ed. – see **Green Capital & Environmental "Leaders" Won't Save Us***] and Greta-induced climate anxiety, the limitation of climate justice mobilizations (e.g. Ende Gelände [*ed. – movement organising mass civil disobedience actions against coal mines*], etc.) and the Green Party's political failure to recuperate the Lützerath struggle [*ed. – site of combative defence against a coal mine*] has brought an enormous amount of attentive critters to consider sabotage, arson and, the authorities worry, strategic assassination. Universities and journalists are clamouring over the rise of "eco-extremism" [*ed. – the author/s may be thinking of recent calls by European policing apparatuses to label more acts as "eco-terrorism" (see 'A Few Litres of Gasoline')*],

- 2 *Military Green: Energy & Environment at the European Defence Agency* eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/news/military-green-leaflet.pdf
- 3 *Fifteen Tesla Vehicles Set Alight* unoffensiveanimal.is/2023/10/05/fifteen-tesla-vehicles-set-alight

and not of what else goes by the self-identified label of eco-extremism; see **'The Position of the Excluded'**], and how to manage it. An enduring governmental concern with all sorts of new research funding streams and journalist chatter. The fact remains, however, so-called "eco-extremism" remains legitimate, logical and a healthy emotional, if not spiritual, reaction to the present state of the world.

The ecosystem of actions demonstrated at Lützerath (and elsewhere), Earth Rising (*Les Soulevements de la Terre*)⁴ [*ed. – see **Struggling and/or Being Manipulated in the Name of the Struggle***] as well as the rise of the 'Tyre Extinguishers' remain hopeful steps, moving from 'activist' hand-holding and self-congratulation to holding each other into positions of attack – lighting up the dark nights with fire, adrenaline and deserved self-satisfaction. The imperative of skill sharing combines with the need to destroy the so-called 'green' and all of its ecocidal gymnastics – again: 'decarbonization,' 'electrification,' 'renewability', 'smart' technologies [*ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?***], automation, geoengineering [*ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg8***] and so much more. **Capitalist environmental policy and carbon preoccupations are an advancement of entrepreneurial conspiracy, refining political control and setting the stage for eco-modernist** [*ed. – see **'The Decoupling Thesis'***] utopias that surpass the dreams of classical totalitarians. Anarchists, and autonomists, are in a position to share skills enlivening Calcifer's appetite [*ed. – reference to a fire-demon in Diana Wynne Jones' fantasy novel *Howl's Moving Castle**] to consume earth destroying logistics and infrastructure that entrepreneurs call ecological. Climate youth [*ed. – see **Why is Youth Liberation So Important in the Climate Movement?***], the environmentally and climatically concerned [*ed. – see **Rebellion Extinction***], this also means learning from those who are fighting this capitalist hydra – yesterday, today and tomorrow [*ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics***]. *Ecological struggle did not begin in 2017*, it dates back to 1492 [*ed. – start of the conquest of the so-called 'Americas'*] and the Imperial Civilizations before that date [*ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg6***].

Indeed, constructing political unity is pointless [*ed. – see **'Not Fighting the Same Fight'***] but there is no shortage of common cause. This text affirms the necessity to wage war on the 'Green Deal', as it was

- 4 See *Breaking Ranks: Subverting the Hierarchy and Manipulation Behind Earth Uprisings* actforfree.noblogs.org/post/2023/07/12/breaking-ranks-subverting-the-hierarchy-and-manipulation-behind-earth-uprisings-usa

called. Global environmental policy is a cynical joke, which *nobody* should tolerate. War is peace; malls are freedom; and environmentalism is ecocide – it's psychotic. Environmental policy constitutes rapacious mineral mining (in addition to existing oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear infrastructure);⁵ creating even more material and energy intensive automobiles and branding them as 'electric.' All the while intensifying the production of heavy electrical infrastructure and, worse, digital and smart technologies to monitor consumption⁶ [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg36**]. Material and energy consumption is increasing alongside social and ecological catastrophe: decarbonization and the green economy is an intensification of capitalist dystopia and renews itself by political swindle that feeds on our carelessness, apathy and false hopes. Besides rebranding existing inequalities, police control and miserable work, the greening of capitalism is a clear attempt at intensifying the existing and disabling peoples' real social and ecological concerns and, naturally, direct actions. There is good reason to attack green infrastructure everywhere and nowhere else – kill electric mobility and the racist supply-chains it refashions [ed. – see **Their Sustainability is a Disaster – Let's Smash It**].

Electric mobility is a sham that is intensifying mining for lithium, cobalt, various metals, digital components and spreading new charging station infrastructure everywhere. Charging stations should be attacked *everywhere*. **This transition to renewing extraction and green marketing needs to be stifled, and, if possible, killed by all and every bit of human creativity and joyful ingenuity available.** While charging stations and electric vehicles spread, their production – as well as the military equipment and conventional capitalist operations – are now being



Fighters at the Hambacher forest occupation, an important recent precursor to the ongoing eco-defence struggles in German-speaking territories; see **Return Fire vol.3 pg91**

5 ourworldindata.org/energy-mix

6 *Green Mining is a Myth* friendsoftheearth.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Green-mining-myth-report.pdf

justified with so-called 'green mining.' This mining public relations stunt, aided and abetted by governments, is done by 'decarbonizing' vehicles, and enormous dump trucks, with lithium-ion batteries and electrified pulley systems; powering mines partly on wind, solar and hydrological infrastructures; employing internet-controlled environmental sensors (e.g. 'remote environmental measuring'); automating and electrifying underground mining equipment. More digitalization, more spatial control, more chemical processing, manufacturing and poisoning of the environments to justify more mining as 'green', 'sustainable' or 'responsible'⁷ [ed. – see **'Gállók is the Name of a Place'**]. This psychological thievery – and sheer cynicism unafraid of consequences – demands swift and sustained retaliation. Racism is now justified and branded as green, sacrificing the people and ecologies of rural and marginalized communities everywhere, but with greater intensity in the Global South, so middle-class families can 'feel good' buying Tesla's and ride electric bikes instead of carrying themselves (and their kids) with their own efforts. Ecosystems, the poor, Black and Brown carry this cost for overdeveloped convenience and incapability founded on carelessness and actively preserving ignorance. This green delusion and, occasional, righteousness is insufferable – it must be destroyed.



Cables easily severed at electric vehicle charging station

The technological factories, vehicle equipment, internet and new mining infrastructures 'elsewhere' are great targets but require some extra homework, planning and preparation [ed. – see **Cars as Cameras**]. Mining, and the job-seeking humans propelling it, is the basis of capitalist reproduction and expansion – green or otherwise – and should remain priority targets. The Green Deal needs sustained attack everywhere from charging stations, towers hosting 'private wireless access points' and Tesla cars – to industrial zones 'elsewhere' hosting electrical, manufacturing and mining infrastructure. Volvo, Volkswagen [ed. – see **'The First Smart Island'**], Telsa and every other automobile brand are tripping over Euro-American climate and environmental policy and working to

7 *Responsible Mining in Europe: A New Paradigm to Counter Climate Change* vimeo.com/762229908

establish their mining supply chains across Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe (e.g. Finland, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, France, Spain) to advance their competitive electric vehicle fleets.

There are no shortage of targets and no shortage of anxious, depressed and angry people 'who care about the environment', but somehow they fail to attack this system that organizes their life to slowly kills them. Killing electric mobility before it spreads, scales-up and further erases social and ecological knowledge(s), remains imperative. Financial investors operating these death industries are central players, all too eager to believe in the green marketing themselves as they fill their bank accounts with legally plundered loot.

Attacking insurance companies, moreover, is a force multiplier for spreading economic damage. **The insurance companies backing mining companies are key logistical bottlenecks for capitalist expansion.** Road, internet and manufacturing logistics – especially

'THE FIRST SMART ISLAND' [Greece]

The future dystopia – of a life fully controlled by smart cities [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg31*], 5G [ed. – see *The 5G Net*], in which your refrigerator communicates with your mobile phone or a street lamp, and supermarkets offer you everything you want, to (anti)social media – is already here. Everything is more and more connected and everything is monitored. It is a future where people will be controlled by the artificial intelligence of big capital – big data and machine learning. Whatever information capital collects is shared with the State. Technology means repression, blackmail and total social control.

At the same time, the ecological war for resources called green energy is nothing more than a new form of slavery on other continents, allowing Western capitalism to be as independent as Russian gas or oil-producing countries. All this is another great stage of capitalism – green capitalism. It is the exploitation of the climate crisis and biological extinction by capital and the State.

When the New Democracy government took power, an unprecedented upgrading of the repressive apparatus in numbers and technical equipment began. The cops are used as a solution to every “problem”: The pandemic, the universities, demonstrations and protests of every kind, the gentrification of Athens. Cops are the number one medicine for everything.

All of the above are summarized in the memorandum of cooperation between the government of New Democracy [ND] and Volkswagen [VW] aiming to transform Astypalaias into the first smart island, a laboratory that leads the residents to become laboratory animals of the dystopian future. The contract began in September 2021, and aims to gradually replace the island’s conventional vehicles with electric ones. The program is presented by the mainstream media as a technological leap that will benefit the environment and the residents. In fact, the memorandum of cooperation is nothing other than another way of increasing profitability and repression at the expense of the natural environment and the inhabitants. VW will be able to test autonomous vehicles on the island on conditions outside strict EU legislation, gaining the upper hand against competition.

At the same time, there is a discussion about the installation of hundreds of wind turbines on the island, turning it into a hub for electricity production and completely destroying the natural environment. **Finally, one of the first moves of the program was the donation of electric vehicles from Volkswagen to the murderous assault squads of cops and the port forces.**

The cooperation between the sanguinary government of ND and VW is not unprecedented. VW has a long history of supporting fascist and oppressive regimes. From Nazi Germany in the 1930s to military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina, to Franco’s Spain [ed. – and today forced Uyghur labour (see *Hong Kong: Its Relevance for the Rest of Us*) in a joint venture with China’s State-owned SAIC Motors], Volkswagen has always been and always is at the forefront of capital profiting under conditions of harsh oppression.

For all these reasons, at dawn on May 10th, we visited the Volkswagen dealership on Alexandras Avenue [in Athens]. Our intervention resulted in the destruction of several new electric vehicles and the destruction of the facade of the delegation, without endangering passers-by or residents of the area. We consider as a part of anarchy the recognition of those who profit from oppression, misery and exploitation and our debt to return to them the violence they cause.

We dedicate our action to the prisoners of the social war, Fotis, Jason, Panos and Lambros who are being persecuted for the attack on the traffic police of Piraeus.

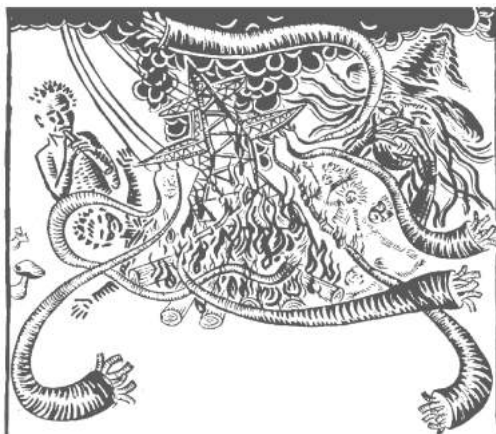
*Solidarity with the wounded comrades Boris [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Latest on the Wounded Fighter Boris*] and Serge [ed. – see *Struggling and/or Being Manipulated in the Name of the Struggle*] from militant ecological defence in the territories of the French State.*

*Solidarity with Monica Caballero and Francisco Solar, whose trial against them begins in a few days [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; 'Today, March 8th'*].*

*For a black May, in memory of comrade Mauricio Morales, who fell in battle 14 years ago [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg92*].*

Anarchists

smelters – remain other sites everywhere and elsewhere. Oil, coal and natural gas infrastructure, we must remember, powers and spreads electric vehicles and the whole Green Deal package subsists on existing fossil fuel infrastructures [ed. – see **'The Ecological Transition is a Hoax'**]. Anti-coal action, especially considering the role of coke coal plays in metal



smelting, is also an attack on the Green Deal [ed. – note the coking coal mining operation proposed in Whitehaven, England, site of a week's occupation for the Earth First! summer gathering last year]. What is important, especially given the environmental discourse of weekend warriors, is connecting the dots of ecocide and how destruction renews itself on the backs of our ignorance, apathy and carelessness. Dignity is only reclaimed through attack and sustaining economic damage and making extractive activities inoperable by every means. And, for the weary of heart, do not forget this is self-defence against ecocidal industries, our present existence and future – for ourselves, our friends and those who cannot speak and yet consume the chemicals of this machine by slow and quick death.

Can social war be sustained against the Green Deal? The capacity to act and spread attacks by easily reproducible means continues to remain imperative. Developing solidarity alongside global digital supply-chains, while demonstrating transnational capabilities to attack extractive infrastructure, profiteers and their insurers, all the while evading their mercenaries remains an enduring objective. The Gigafactory saboteurs are exemplars in making this solidarity, highlighting German investments to death projects in Mexico. Yet, where are the

compañeres [ed. – see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**]? Has capitalism broken people into scrabbling for jobs from mining projects or NGOs? The attack on the green and decarbonization must spread.

There is, however, a sustained

disconnection between all the anti-mining 'activism' and conferences across the world and autonomous direct action. Activist bureaucrats understanding, let alone visualizing, the possibility of attack still remains difficult, so much so it frequently results in paranoid claims of conspiracy theory and 'false flags' when effective action is taken [ed. – see **Eric Laursen Owes Me a Lamp**]. These people have ceded their power, imagination and possibilities to counter-bureaucracies designed for political pacification and retirement [ed. – see **Green Capital & Environmental "Leaders" Won't Save Us**]. The importance of spreading actions and the existence of them to remind the youth and the resigned activist bureaucrat that people are still fighting – inflicting real consequences on ecocide and the deception that maintains it – remain imperative. **NGOs, activist bureaucrats and civil administrators cannot be allowed to hide and bury this struggle against extractivism, green or otherwise.**

This proposed social war against the Green Deal should be global, cutting through the green façade that has everyone tripping over themselves (with the exception of action groups in France, Germany and Italy [ed. – see **'The Ecological Transition is a Hoax'**]). Spreading war on faux environmentalism emerges as a capitalist 'choke point,' and the potential to save ecosystems from the renewed mining rush that magically transformed mining companies into environmentalists.

The only thing more abundant than earth destroying companies, is an anxiety and rage to reverse this ecocidal trajectory maintained by state domestication.



"THE ISTHMUS IS OURS" ('Mexico': resistance by indigenous & anarchist locals to the 3rd largest wind-farm in Latin America, on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec; see Return Fire vol.1.3 pg39)

Time to give homage to the spirits of the forest, water, air and soil [ed. – see **Riots & Eagles**], bow to the sun and play under the moon, by spreading war against this green death machine. This means reminding the 'climate youth' that the secret is to really begin to attack the targets everywhere and elsewhere as seen fit. **This is the only remedy to depression and climate anxiety – make friends and make a mess of your enemies.**

As a wall with black paint once said: 'Some very rich people need to feel the suffering they cause if things are going to change... have fun.'

Love to all those waging their war on this system, for their lives and others.

'GÁLLOK IS THE NAME OF A PLACE'

[ed. – Here you have a collage of texts (including an appendix, “**Their Greed Never Stops**”, and an insert frame, ‘**When People Talk About Saving the World**’) we were invited to take from *No Mine in Gállok: Ecocide & Colonialism in Swedish-Occupied Sápmi*, published by the anti-colonial network *Kolonierna* last year. While referring in principle to opposing the slated iron mine, the book offers an excellent window into the oft-neglected struggle of the Sámi people (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg46**) on Sápmi – their indigenous territories – and beyond. But first, a word

about the industry involved: the Swedish State (one of the largest suppliers of metals and minerals to the EU, including over 90% of iron ore produced within those borders, and around 98.5% of total value of mineral extraction is extracted from Sámi traditional lands) has long had a historical relation with British capitalism. As one of the interviewees, Alf Hornbord, mentions in one chapter, “in the very early phases of the British Industrial Revolution, say around 1780, much if not most of the bar iron used in Britain came from northern Sweden [ed. – i.e. Sápmi] [...] Sweden actually subsidized the build-up of technological infrastructure in Britain. Of course for every ton of bar iron that was exported from Sweden [sic] we should remember there were huge amounts of labour in forests and mines, huge amounts of forest acreage embodied in that iron – they used charcoal to refine the iron – so Swedish [sic] land and labour were very much embodied in the iron that was imported to Britain.”

Indeed, (as Alf’s interviewer adds), “it is also no coincidence in that context that the first railway in Sápmi, between Jiellevárre-Málmavárre and Julevu was financed by British capital as well (finished in 1888)” – now, it is again a British corporate interest to be profiting from the train carriages supplying the mining operation in Gállok, on a line already cutting down reindeer by the hundreds which the local Sámi exist in symbiosis with. The British firm in question is Beowulf Mining, already notorious for one of the worst records among oil, gas, and mining companies regarding their relation with Arctic lands and indigenous peoples. Their hired consultants are currently engaged in further mapping and sampling of the area, and expect to submit their final feasibility study in 2025, the last hurdle before breaking the ground after over decade of local and international opposition (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg4**).

A further segment of the full text dwells on their disgusting opportunism: “Another argument for mining the veins of



Sápmi is that the whole world is in dire need of a Green Transition [ed. – see ‘**The Ecological Transition is a Hoax**’], one that entails the construction of renewable energy infrastructure such as wind parks (with a lifespan of perhaps a decade or three), battery factories for electric cars (perhaps with inbuilt obsolescence) and Sweden’s youngest parade horse: Green steel. As Beowulf Mining has it on their website: “The Company’s purpose is to be a responsible and innovative company that creates value for our

shareholders, wider society, and the environment, through sustainably producing critical raw materials, which includes iron ore, graphite, and base metals, needed for the transition to a Green Economy and to address the Climate Emergency.” We live in an era in which it is perfectly normal to seriously suggest that open-cast mines ought to be opened to address the climate emergency. To readers who were born in this somewhat peculiar millennium: such claims did not used to be commonplace a short time ago.”

The new “green” factories already in the far north will double the electricity consumption of Sweden – all for the production of “renewable energy,” of course. This is taking place in the context of announcement last January of Europe’s largest deposit of rare earth elements – crucial for the production of a variety of “green” technologies – in the Giron area; once again, Swedish-occupied Sápmi, and Europe’s main source of iron ore for over a century (indeed, the main city – known also by its coloniser name, Kiruna – was decided needed to be physically moved to a new site due to the instability of buildings undermined in a literal sense by the shafts extracting the ore).

The colonial devastation continues, under a new humanitarian – even ecological – brand (see **The ‘Green’ Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else**). As noted below, the recent intensification of capitalist projects in the far north – no longer speculations in anarchist texts such as ‘Desert’, over a decade ago – to justify itself falls back on the same old troupes of ‘terra nullius’ (Latin: nobody’s land) and/or a ‘mission civilisatrice’ (civilising mission) historically lent upon by Western culture to facilitate conquests from the so-called ‘Americas’ to western Africa, central Asia and Oceania, by the empires of Britain, France, Russia, Portugal, etc. It is the very antithesis of Sámi knowledge of place (or any; see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; ‘**Here or Anywhere Else**’). As you can read in *No Mine in Gállok*, “A text published by the anonymous “Anti-Kolonial Kollektivet” on kolonialinfrastruktur.noblogs.org

sums up the accelerating industrialization of the region: “new roads, new factories, new mines, upgraded railways, faster deprecation, automated and improved industries” to transform the boreal forests into a huge industrial site are about to deliver the urgently needed ‘Green Transition’. [...] More concrete: metals and minerals to things like electric cars, solar panels and wind turbines, and trees to bio-fuel and electricity.

“But the reality out here looks very much less green and environmentally friendly than the picture painted by the companies, politicians and governmental institutions. The companies are increasing their harvests, and the few real forests that still remain are soon also to be clear-cut, plowed and converted into tree plantations. In parallel with a mining boom that literally is exploding in the north, at the same pace as the drastic increase in the number of wind power industries. Rather, we are witnessing how our landscapes are transformed into industrial areas. We are seeing miles of wind power industries where neither animals nor people want to live, where tons of micro-plastics are spread across the land and the turbines are killing some of the few birds of prey that still exist. We are seeing clear-cuts and ghostly mono-cultures of contorta pines, a mass extinction of species and a reduced biodiversity. We are hearing the companies and the state’s promises of wealth and prosperity – ‘if we just make another mine...’ – but instead we are left with poisoned landscapes, bodies and minds and another huge empty hole in our hearts.”

The involved parties will soon become more sophisticated in their ability to cast shadow over the naked exploitation of indigenous land, as they have elsewhere in the world; such as Sveaskog, responsible for most of the logging in the area, who boast of their Forest Stewardship Council certification and its commitment to the “free, prior and informed consent” of inhabitants. Today, they can over-harvest and sell timber, and in the sick parody of a shell-counting game that is the green economy they do not even have it counted as a clear-cut if wind turbines are installed in their place. (Nevermind the logic at play – for example, as also confronted by Mapuche land-reclaimers in Wallmapu, where the Chilean State boasts of the ecological credentials of its tree-cover: see **Rebels Behind Bars; ‘Today, March 8th’** – which designated mono-cultural tree-farms as forests in the first place.) Elsewhere in Sápmi, Sámi are active in the fight against wind-farm projects that are multiplying; there, as in territories to the south that are also claimed by the Swedish State, such as the Twin Peaks Blockade of recent years in Salsjö and Ranasjö, where barricades have been raised, machinery tampered with and an access bridge burned down. For more information see the zine *Resistance Against Mines, Forest Companies & Windpower in Sweden*, hosted at Kolonierna.se, where you can also find the full PDF of the book this article’s from.

The central message the authors impart could perhaps be condensed in these words of theirs: “In truth, the division between the colonial theme and the ecocidal theme is an artificial one; they belong to one and the same paradigm. Can we not see how the logic of the colonial nation State corresponds with the logic of the monoculture plantation,

how herbicide is analogous to ethnocide?

“From the perspective of statecraft, revolving around the primacies of order, control, homogeneity and maximized profit, one may have to conclude that the eradication of Sámi culture – the weed within the monoculture – has not been thorough enough. [...] To conclude we would like to acknowledge all those people past and present who remind us, in these times of crisis, confusion, hypocrisy, disavowal, hostility to life and the uneasy marriage between anthropocentrism [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg11**] and undifferentiated misanthropy, that it is not the human genus as such that is a scourge upon this planet. We especially acknowledge in this context those who have resisted assimilation to this singular humanity that insists on walking astray on a straight but aimless path.”

Ourselves anarchists who see great relevance in the confluence of our paths with an indigenous resistance celebrated with song, arms and the memory of different life (see **Rebels Behind Bars; Between Weichan & Social War**), we thank these comrades for their efforts, and the Sámi in struggle whose words they transmit. Below we include relevant information about the capitalist interests implicated in the Gállok mine, along with a reminder of the aforementioned kolonialinfrastruktur.noblogs.org – “a webpage publishing information about the progress of industrialization [in Sápmi], focusing on infrastructure for the mining, forest and wind power industries. Here you can read about where Sweden’s largest sawmill is located, what mines are beginning to get ready to start, what plans there are for the coastal cities, where the freight transport routes go, where the managers live, and when and where the different industries meet and have their fairs and events.” No peace for the defilers of Sápmi, no peace for extractivist projects here or anywhere else.]



Beowulf Mining plc, 201 Temple Chambers, 3-7 Temple Avenue, London, EC4Y 0DT, United Kingdom

Beowulf subsidiaries:

Grafintec Oy, Yrittäjänkatu 17, Futura 1 3rd floor, 65380 VAASA, Finland, rasmus.blomqvist@grafintec.com

Nordic Graphite Ltd., 34 Arctic House, London NW9 5FL, United Kingdom, info@fennoscandian.com, telephone +44 208 200 9667, telefax +44 207 900 3616

Jokkmokk Iron, Stockgatan 37B, 962 31 Jokkmokk, Sverige

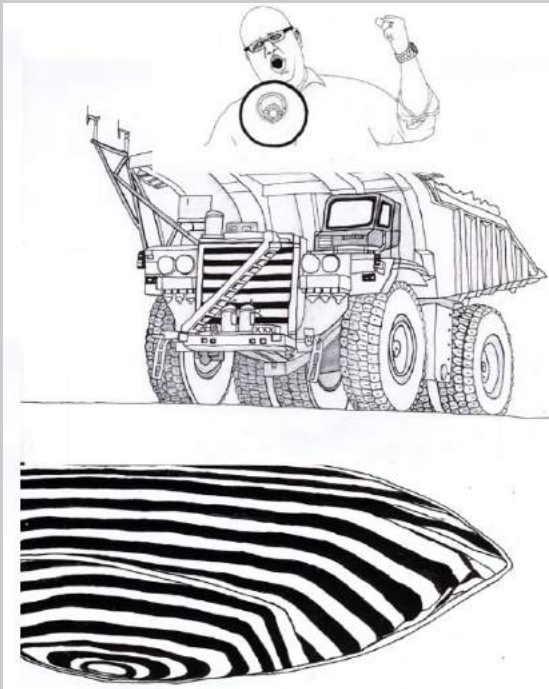
HSBC bank acts as custodian nominee shareholder for 76.05 percent of Beowulf Mining shares

Swedish bank **SEB** acts as a custodian nominee shareholder for Swedish shareholders

Nordic investor **Formue Nord** contributes a GBP 1.76 million loan for the Kallak iron ore mine: info@formuenord.dk / Østre Alle 102, 4. sal, 9000 Aalborg, Danmark, +45 28 55 34 74 / Grev Turegatan 30, 114 38 Stockholm, Sverige, +46 70 043 96 90

“We looove mines!”

– Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson (Swedish Minister for Business, Industry & Innovation, when granting Beowulf Mining permission to start a mine in Gállok)



“...temper thy pride,
warrior famous! The flower of thy might
lasts now a while: but erelong it shall be
that sickness or sword thy strength shall minish,
or fang of fire, or flooding billow,
or bite of blade, or brandished spear,
or odious age; or the eyes' clear beam
wax dull and darken: Death even thee
in haste shall o'erwhelm, thou hero of war!”

– Beowulf (the anonymous epic poem
translated from Old English)

Gállok is the name of a place high up in the north of Scandinavia, north of the Arctic Circle. It is located in the boreal bioregion, with its once vast expanses of old growth forest stretching from the fells and mountains of what is nowadays the Swedish-Norwegian border down to the Gulf of Bothnia. It is a landscape of coniferous woodland, Scots pine and Norway spruce interspersed with birches, rowan, aspen and willow, ericaceous and berry shrubs, mosses and lichen, mires, lakes, and wide rivers once teeming with salmon.

The people who called this place Gállok, or Gállokjávrrre ('the lake of Gállok'), did not think of the mountain range that runs like a spine along the Scandinavian peninsula as the Swedish-Norwegian border. Their geography was neither defined by State

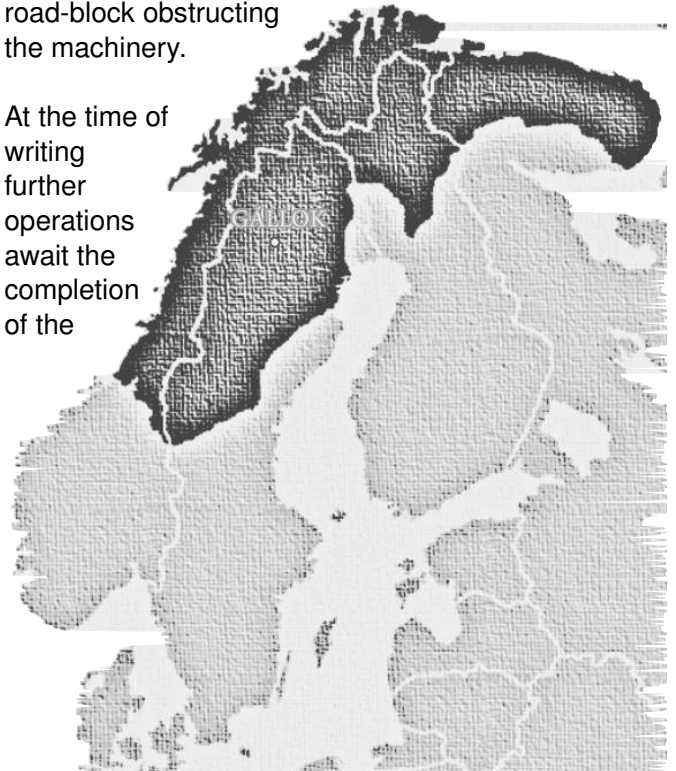
boundaries nor by our contemporary rights of private property. **Here place names refer to the topography, not to persons – people felt that they belong to the land, not that they own the land.**

Yet since the advent of capitalism and the modern nation State complex half a millennium ago, Sápmi, the European subcontinent's northernmost region, has been steadily integrated into a colonial system by the several nation States laying claim upon the territory. The land and its indigenous inhabitants known as Sámi have been systematically subordinated to the needs of the southern nation States and foreign entrepreneurs in the course of an ongoing but largely unknown colonial history on Europe's own northern fringe.

A planned open-cast iron mine in Gállok is one of the most recent developments in that history. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of a blockade and protest camp in Gállok, we have taken the initiative to look deeper into the matter and invite an audience at least as foreign to the region as the editors of this booklet to join us on an educational journey, taking Gállok as a focal point in a broader context of colonial and environmental issues.

In March 2022 the British prospection and investment company Beowulf Mining was granted permission to pursue an open-cast mining exploitation of Gállok. Test drillings establishing the quality of the iron ore have already been undertaken a decade ago. These test drillings spurred a first wave of direct resistance in the year of 2013, with a protest camp on site and a road-block obstructing the machinery.

At the time of writing further operations await the completion of the



An approximate map of Sápmi (black) & colonial borders

required environmental impact assessments, which is expected by the end of 2023. Approval is the usual outcome of these formal assessments but they can still be appealed at the Environmental Court. One of the Sámi communities in the region has also launched an appeal case at the Supreme Administrative Court of Sweden. When all bureaucratic hurdles have been overcome, Beowulf Mining can sell the mining concession to the highest bidder, allowing foreign investors to capitalize on the favourable investment conditions for mining on Swedish territory, on the previous and current Swedish governments' proclaimed love of mining, and, most importantly, on yet another episode in the centuries old history of land grabbing in Sápmi.

In recent years the severity of the global climate and environmental crisis and the plight of indigenous people worldwide have received increasing public attention – as well as the notion that both might indeed share underlying causes [ed. – see *Yawar's Story*]. Yet at the same time environmental degradation and neocolonial land grabbing continue unabated, also in Sápmi. [K]nowledge of the existence, life ways and ongoing marginalization of Europe's own indigenous population in Fennoscandia remains comparatively poor, blatantly so in the Nordic countries themselves. Media coverage prefers to focus on more dramatic instances of ecocide, racism and colonial oppression in countries whose governments can easily be vilified, such as Bolsonaro's Brazil [ed. – see *Rebellion Extinction*], without urging introspection. For instance, within Sweden ignorance is widespread of the fact that the Swedish State up to this day has refused to ratify the Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention of the International Labour Organization, also known as ILO 169, which is supposed to safeguard free, prior and informed consent from indigenous people in questions of resource exploitation. The Nordic countries like to pride themselves on their supposed sense of social and environmental responsibility, meanwhile casting a blind eye on the devastation of Sápmi's boreal forests and the enormous carbon sink that is encompassed within them.

A red thread running through the current wave of ecological devastation is the green-washing propaganda designed to legitimize it all in a grand narrative of a so-called Green Transition [ed. – see *The Ecological Transition is a Hoax*']. In Sápmi one can see how State policies and extractivist enterprises claiming to mitigate climate change in fact exacerbate ecological degradation. As the imminent threat of climate chaos is slowly finding resonance among Europe's privileged population, we see how this increasing awareness is instantaneously being

instrumentalized to the end of legitimising new forms of ecological and colonial exploitation, employing the same logic and serving the same interests that began to fuel the climate crisis in the first place.

This, of course, is a global phenomenon that can only be understood within the context of the capitalist world-system's metabolism [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg11*]. The infringement upon indigenous lands driven by capitalist accumulative appetite emanating from the European core to extract wealth from far-off peripheries has a long and enduring history indeed [ed. – see the companion piece for *Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation*]. Innumerable cultures have been cast into oblivion, innumerable species pushed into extinction, as a diversity of human ecologies have been subsumed into the totalising capitalist world-system that keeps on crunching the living world into dead numbers on a spread-sheet [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; *'Here or Anywhere Else'*]. Although the greatest colonial havoc has been and continues to be wreaked on foreign continents, we believe that an intra-European case study can serve an educational purpose as to the fact that these processes, though in a different shape and guise, are ongoing also in Europe.

[...] Already the Gállok case, before any digging has begun, has attracted more attention than many other exploitative operations in Sápmi. We believe that given its controversial nature, the arrogance with which it is pursued and the ever increasing pressure on the viability of Sámi livelihoods within Swedish territory, the case has potential to draw attention to the underlying colonial relationship and the overall ecocidal developments in the region. And from that attention can grow direct or indirect support for Sámi struggles against the Swedish State and foreign exploitative companies, both from within Swedish society and beyond.

[...] Gállok lies in the historical homeland of speakers of the Lule Sámi language, named after the Lule River basin that connects the mountains of the northwest to the coast in the east, by the modern town of Julevu (Luleå). In the last century, the Lule River course has been dammed at multiple locations. The site we refer to as Gállok lies on the banks of Gállokjávrrre as well as those of the larger Bárgávrrre (Parkijaur). Its static energy powers the Parki hydroelectric power plant. The construction of the dam caused the inundation of a Sámi offering site

below the sacred hillock Átjek. Átjek, its name bearing reference to ‘Thunder’ as well as ‘Father’, is said to frequently attract lightning discharges. In its core, as well as in the surrounding area, large quantities of iron ore have been detected. Thus Gállok, or in its Swedified form ‘Kallak’, has drawn the interest of mining prospectors. [...] When Beowulf Mining was granted prospection rights [in 2006] in the Jokkmokk-Kvikkjokk area, Gállok being part of that area, their intention was to prospect for iron and titanium in the Ruovddevárre Mountains by Kvikkjokk. These mountains, however, are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Laponia. This is an area considered to be worthy of protection due to its “outstanding universal value” based on the pillars of both natural and cultural history: the alpine landscape, its geology, flora and fauna, and the cultural way of life of Sámi reindeer herding as practiced in the area. As the idea of blasting a mountain to bits within a UNESCO Heritage site was too sensitive a matter politically, the focus shifted towards the iron ore deposits of Gállok. Gállok does not lie within the boundary of the Laponian Area heritage site, yet its location is of central importance to the migratory behaviour of the reindeer that in summer browse the fells of Laponia. In particular the reindeer herding community of Jáhkågasska tjiellde would find a bottleneck area for their annual migration blocked by a mine in Gállok.

The Gállok case first received wide public attention in the aftermath of a major marketing blunder by then-chairman of Beowulf Mining Clive Sinclair-Poulton in 2012. In unabashed Victorian fashion he addressed a shareholder meeting in Stockholm, showing a picture of a seemingly empty landscape: “One of the major questions I get is: what are the local people gonna go ahead and say about this project? I show them this picture and I say: what local people?”

The reason this was a marketing blunder was not so much because of what he said, but rather because he actually said it, openly. Of course sparsely populated ‘former’ colonies are still treated as *terra nullius*, up for grabs for ‘foreign investment’, ‘development’ and neocolonial variations of the *mission civilatrice*. The problem with Sinclair-Poulton’s old-fashioned statement was the honesty and nonchalance of it, failing to respect the obfuscatory codes of political correctness.

The threat to the future of reindeer herding in the area, the infringement on anyway poorly recognized

indigenous rights, the neoliberal plunder of resources by foreign investors, the certainty of pollution of aquatic ecosystems and drinking water, the risk of a major environmental disaster in case of tailing dam failure, the air pollution involved in open-cast mining and the emission of greenhouse gases connected to the mine and its logistics, are among the main concerns raised in opposition to yet another iron mine on Sámi territory.

When prospective drilling started in Gállok in 2012-2013, a call-out was heeded by activists from the south to come and support the local people, who by then had formed the *Inga gruvor i Jokkmokk* (No mines in Jokkmokk) network.¹ They blocked machinery and eventually the whole access road, which they held for several weeks until being forcefully removed by Swedish police forces. This summer has later been referred to as “The Gállok Rebellion”.²

It is important to emphasize at this stage that it was not activists from southern Sweden who instigated opposition to the mine. They joined an already existing opposition by the local population. It should be borne in mind that the consequences of openly



resisting a controversial mega-project can be much graver and longer lasting for locals who are known in the area than for relatively anonymous activists engaging with the conflict for a short time. This is especially true for an already marginalized group that has had to deal with racist oppression from a settler-colonial State for hundreds of years.

- 1 Note that the network uses the swedified spelling Jokkmokk. Henceforth the Lule Sámi spelling Jáhkâmáhkke will be favoured in this document. If used in a quote the Sámi way of spelling will be added afterward. Another Lule Sámi name for that place is Dálvvadis
- 2 For a more detailed overview over what happened in Gállok the summer of 2013 we recommend you to watch the documentary “The Gállok Rebellion” made by some of the activists on site.

'WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT SAVING THE WORLD'

perpetuated
extractivist plunder
not best suited to

Would steel-based wind parks not be preferable to coal mines to cover the high energy requirements that our societies have become so direly dependent upon, even if their economies were liberated from the growth imperative? **A valid question. But a counterfactual one.** Our societies are not guided by reason. Ours are societies ruled by a narcissistic Reason with capital R [ed. – see *Necrophilic Logics & the Revolt of the Imagination*], where the gift of human intellect is as exalted as it is directed towards unreasonable pursuits, where phallic monuments to industrial grandeur like the Eiffel Tower not only stand erect but are being replicated from Mexico to China, where new open-cast mines are being opened while obsolete wind turbines stand to rust along with the other skeletal remains of leaching industrial debris littering land and sea alike... What is steel [ed. – *requiring iron*] actually used for anyway? Sure, it is used for wind turbine pylons, but no less for the rest of the steel-and-concrete construction industry, the car industry and the war industry.

What of good intentions towards some form or other of 'saving the world', in its manifold formulations? **When people talk about saving the world, what do they mean?** Preventing the planet from being consumed by a supernova? Not quite. When we talk about saving the world, we generally mean saving *our* world, our image of the world, our physical environment. As people who tend to talk about saving the world are people whose world is this moribund civilization of globalized industrial capitalism, what is really being talked about is saving the world of this civilization. The world of this civilization has throughout its history proven incapable of coexistence with the many other worlds that have existed in the world. **In our attachment to our self-annihilating world, are we willing to deny other worlds the possibility of existence - for the sake of 'saving the world'?** What would it mean if we weren't?

[...] The indigenous philosopher Ailton Krenak notes that not even the world's indigenous peoples exist nowadays without any outstanding debt to the land. Surely, Sámi, integrated as they are in the fossil-fueled global economy, would be no exception to his verdict: "No community that is in debt to the land can call itself sustainable, because we take out more than we can put back in." Sámi reindeer herders live in houses with electricity, maybe they have a fridge, a computer or a television. They have four wheel drive cars, use snowscooters and quad bikes for their work, sometimes even helicopters. They are not some sort of primordial, innocent, pre-industrial people. They do not live in intact tribal societies based exclusively on mutual aid and free from monetization and commodification.

They are far from being the poorest people in the capitalist world-system. In Krenak's terms, their current way of life can hardly be called sustainable (whose can?). Yet, all contradictions of a hybridized, semi-industrialized culture considered – are those inclined towards conservation and restoration rather than towards

inherit from this ageing civilization their own homeland? Perhaps whatever is left of Sámi culture will prove to be beyond salvation, dependent as it is on an Arctic climate that is being flung out of its Holocene equilibrium [ed. – *although this would assume that indigenous cultures haven't been constantly adapting already, having world-views often centred on life as a dialogue with the shifting living world (see 'With Whom One Relates'), as opposed to static ideas of an equilibrium peddled by imperial science; see Return Fire vol.5 pg33*]. Or perhaps the people of Sápmi would make a mess of the land and waters themselves. But with what right can Stockholm – or London, or Beijing – ravage the land and poison the waters of a whole region for the sake of elevated numbers on an already saturated iron ore stock market?

It has become rare in the world today, rarer still in Europe: **(the vestige of) a culture that has established neither metaphysically nor economically a dichotomy between nature and culture, ecology and economy.** The sylvopastoralism [ed. – *integrating trees, forage, and the grazing of domesticated animals in a mutually beneficial way*] of the reindeer herders thrives on the reindeer's integration in their natural habitat – there is no contradiction between economic rationalism and ecological integrity. The congruency between the reindeer economy and ecology is the cradle of their culture. They neither want nor need mines and deforestation. Their short, medium and long term economic interest – not to mention their cultural, spiritual or aesthetic interests – is in favour of preservation and restoration of environments rich in biodiversity and apt at carbon sequestration. **In other words: favourable to life.** At least in Europe, where societies are so deeply immersed in commodity fetishism, dependence on industrialism is rampant and animal husbandry tends to degrade the ecology and everyone involved, this is quite rare.

It seems clear that in multiple ways the struggles of Sámi people against exploitation imposed by the Swedish State and venture capitalists are of interest to anyone concerned with the global climate, the biodiversity crisis, the treatment of indigenous populations and matters of autonomy and self-determination. Confronted with the ways in which environmentalist campaigning leading up to a broadened societal awareness of the joint threats of the climate and ecological crises is being co-opted by capital interests [ed. – *see 'The Ecological Transition is a Hoax'*], the question is raised: shall we allow investment capital to corrupt our endeavours into a green-washed justification strategy for plundering and polluting the lands of Sápmi's indigenous population?

Out of that question the next ones naturally emerge: how to support the Sámi people around Gállok in preventing this mine from further scarring the land? How to prevent the Swedish forestry from continuing to perpetrate their climatically disastrous acts of ecocide?

“THEIR GREED NEVER STOPS”

Tor Tuorda, a man of Sámi lineage in the area of Kvikkjokk, lives in the village of Ráddnávrre (Randijaur) next to Gállok. Ever since 2006 he has been drawing attention to the threat represented to the area by the plans of the Swedish State and Beowulf Mining. On the banks of Bárgávrre he shared with us his knowledge of the history of the place. He took us on a stroll over the soft and soggy blanket of billberries, bog blueberries, cloudberry and bog rosemary, indicated bear marks and three-toed woodpecker bore holes in tree trunks, explained how knurrs on old trees used to be shaped into ceremonial drums (called *goavvdis*) and showed us the remains of an old Sámi dwelling (called *goahti*). Under unrelenting assault of mosquitoes, midges and horse flies, Tor helped us to discern in the remains of the old *goahti* the fire-place that would have provided just the right amount of smoke to ward off such assailants. The marks of historical habitation are visible only to the trained and attentive eye, and as such easily overlooked by the biased civilized gaze that seeks to deny claims of long term Sámi presence in the area. Yet, backed up by archaeological and archival work, Tor knows that where some see only trees and shrubs, the land always bears witness to its own past.

This is an old cultural landscape, a Sámi cultural landscape. Sámi have traveled and hunted here. They had a lot of traps in this forest, they were fishing, they had their reindeer, they milked the reindeer. They lived on many feet, just to survive. The men were mostly hunting and fishing, the women with the reindeer. In 1720, according to the church books, one of the reindeer herders of this landscape was a woman: Gunilla Pählsdotter, a powerful woman. She was caring for the males' reindeer, also for the reindeer of the settled Sámi of the village of Ráddnávrre. At that time reindeer were kept very intensively. She would have made a smokey fire to keep away the mosquitoes while milking. The reindeer were kept very close to the people, moving short distances between grazing grounds.

Taxes [*ed. – demanded by the Swedish State*] had to be paid in furs – marten, ermine, wolverine, squirrel... and dried fish and meat. It was also forced upon the Sámi to pay taxes in furs. You can't eat a marten. It wasn't in the Sámi culture to use marten fur either; it was reindeer fur they used, and some wolverine.

When the Swedish government saw the value of forestry and mining, they stole this tax land from the Sámi. Samuel Gustav Hermelin, a member of the Swedish upper class, a count, was the one who took this land. By 1905 all the tax land had been stolen and the taxation system was dropped.

The Swedes did precisely the same as did the government of the USA, with that difference that they didn't kill millions of people. They reached the same goal with laws and paragraphs. They only used paper and pen and managed to do exactly the same: a big huge land grab.

Along with the First Mine Came the First Church

An important driving force behind the colonization of Sápmi was the advent of mining in the area. As the enforcement of systematic taxation had marked a decisive shift in the relationship between the southern Swedes and northern Sámi, so the exploitation of the mineral resources introduced another layer of colonial violence. **Along with the colonization of the land would come the colonization of the body; the body to be followed by the spirit.** In the seventeenth century, silver was the currency of the expanding capitalist world economy and the stock backing up State expenditures such as military campaigns and overseas colonial ventures. Silver was found in the mountains of Ánjepluovve, as Tor relates.

The first mine in Sápmi was opened in 1635, at Nasa. They forced Sámi, tortured Sámi, killed Sámi. They forced the Sámi and reindeer to transport the ore over about 70 kilometers. They stopped when it was almost empty. Then they moved west from Kvikkjokk. The old Sámi name for Kvikkjokk is Huhtán, which means 'melting place', where they processed the ore. That continued about forty years. Silver ore was transported from about 65 kilometers away, from mines which are nowadays in the Padjelanta [Badjelánnda] and Sarek national parks. The government got from these mines about 31kg each year.

They forced Sámi there too, punished Sámi, dragged Sámi under the ice, whipped them. A lot of Sámi ran away from this area. Around 1670 there was no one left of the Lule Sámi that used to live here. Everyone had fled to Norway because of this forced labor. That period, these forty years of madness, the smoke of the foundries, the crushing of the ore, the yelling, were like Dante's Inferno. Sámi that lived here hadn't seen anything like that.

But then, in 1702, they stopped the silver melting. And it was calm. The only Swedish persons who lived in Kvikkjokk at that time were a priest and his family. The wife was an entrepreneur. She had a lot of tame castrated reindeer, *hårkar*, and undertook many merchant journeys to the coast with a sled – dry meat, horns, furs, ptarmigan... and came back with other items such as flour and salt. She was also befriended with the *noaidi*, the Sámi shaman. She was a priest's wife but was interested in the Sámi religion.

She was not the only one to take interest in the Sámi's approach to matters of the spirit.¹ **As taxation was employed to lay claim upon the Sámi's time, corporal punishment to lay claim upon their bodies, State sanctioned property rights to lay claim upon their lands, so were the eradication of indigenous religion and forced Christianization employed to lay claim upon their spirits.**

Mandatory church attendance went hand-in-hand with prohibitions on divination practices, desecration of sacred sites (*seidi*), confiscation of ritual drums (*goavddis*) and persecution of *noaidi*. Subsequently, children would be severed from their parents and grandparents and sent to boarding schools for civilized, European, Christian enculturation. In early modern times, the whole instrumentarium that the coalition of Church and State had developed domestically was brought in full-fledged operation in the colonies [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*]. The transgenerational trauma inflicted by the eradication of meaning, the humiliation of enforced adoption of an alien and domineering godhead and the scarring of the ancestral and spiritual bond with the world one inhabits, one can only try to imagine as an outsider.² We do not consider it our domain to here delve deeper into a sensitive matter that, we

1 It may be noted that in trying to refer to 'matters of the spirit', 'religion' or any other such choice of words in the same semantic field, one finds oneself at risk of reproducing a modern European conceptual demarcation that is most probably alien to the culture one is trying to talk about, namely one in which this discrete field has not been enclosed but is rather allowed to permeate the totality of experience – a culture that, to use another modern European term, would be called animistic [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; A Web of Relations & Tensions*].

2 Though in a way one could consider these colonial processes to be especially dramatic, contracted episodes in a more generic historical development of the civilization in which presumably most of the readers were born. In the case of Sweden this history also included enclosures of the commons [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; 'Centering Relationships'*] and massive witch hunts that targeted not only Sámi *noaidi* but also Swedish women [ed. – see *'The Scarcity Dynamo'*].

are told, remains taboo within Sámi communities.

Yet what is clear is that many grim stories around Sweden's colonization of Sápmi – whether they pertain to the theft of children or the witch trials against *noaidi* – remain either untold entirely, or ignored in Swedish historical consciousness. Would they represent too great a blemish on the conscience of a nation so sensitive to its self-identification construed around notions of social equality, moral impeccability and global responsibility? Would these stories be especially awkward in the context of a new wave of neocolonial exploitation and negligence of the Sámi's indigenous rights? One such untold story lies buried somewhere in the town of Jåhkâmåhkke, Tor explains.

Back in 1935 a priest visited the site for the new Jokkmokk [Jåhkâmåhkke] hospital. Where they were digging, a hole was found with up to sixty Sámi skulls and remains of about forty more people. They put the bones in a box and buried it in another place. They didn't mark it. And almost no one has written about it. They don't research this, don't do anything. They were executed, decapitated, I think. But I don't know why. No one knows. And no one bothers. Also the Sámi that refused to hand over their drums were killed. For Christianity's God.



10.01.22: Half a world away, in Wallmapu (see *Return Fire vol.3 pg59*), Curarrehue's church burns during the 2021-2022 state of emergency later reinforced by the newly-elected leftist Chilean government following intensified land re-occupations & attacks on commercial forestry, tourist, police, rich settler, electricity & dam targets occupying Mapuche land (which also saw the Archbishop of Concepción's holiday home attacked). The church's genocidal history is as recent there as it is on the north of that double-continent – see 'Lest We Forget' – in Sápmi, or in Eire (where 100s of unrecorded children's bones were exhumed this century from the septic tank of one of the many State-sanctioned institutions run by Catholic – occasionally Protestant – orders where 'sinfully' unmarried mother-and-child families were put up until 1998, with around 15% child mortality rates)

Deforestation

Not only has the Swedish State-owned company Vattenfall dammed all of the waterfalls and rapids along the Greater and Minor Lule Rivers, damaging the aquatic ecosystems as well as the adjacent land, also the land that has not been inundated has not been left undisturbed. For the land surface too, the boreal

forest once covering the lower regions of Sápmi has been affected by the logic of development and financial value extraction. As a result, barely any natural old growth forest remains: only a few percent of the precolonial old growth forest cover is left, almost uniquely on the less productive higher altitudes. The landscape around Gállok too displays the marks of clear-cutting, a forestry practice that is still commonplace on Swedish territory. Some of the forest around Gállok has been freshly cut and now lays bare, with the exception of a few seeding trees that have been left to reseed the scarred and compacted soil. Other sections have been clear-cut in the previous century and are now pine mono-cultures. Yet also a rare patch of old growth forest remains, home to red-listed species such as the three-toed woodpecker. More than half of the red-listed species on Swedish territory are forest species. Annually 200 000 ha of forest are clear-cut on that same territory, most importantly by multinational corporation SCA and State-owned company Sveaskog, FSC-labelling notwithstanding.

Current Swedish forestry practices in Sápmi are rooted in the historical seizure of the land by the Swedish State and the development of settler colonialism in the region. The establishment of a stable settler colony requires the settlement of subjects of the metropolitan, colonizing force. This typically involves a blend of high ranking colonial administrators, missionaries and commoners whose native societies have often gone through processes of dispossession and enclosure themselves [ed. – see *23 Theses Concerning Revolt*]. To incentivize settlement in Sápmi, Swedish and Finnish (who were then subjects of the Swedish Crown) peasants were offered privileges like temporary exemption from military duty and taxation. Additionally, significant parts of the already present population were assimilated into the crude category of *nybyggare* or settlers, including Forest Sámi who adopted farming practices and sedentary lifestyles. The extent to which the different forms of land use resulting from the parceling out of the stolen land were ultimately bound for conflict is debatable, but the presence of settlers did not exclude the possibility of coexistence, mingling and mutual aid in relation to the Sámi population generally, or the reindeer herding part of Sámi society specifically.³ For a long time, the

3 ed. – Indeed, here it's worth a quick side-bar into how – as with many indigenous conceptions (see **Lies of the Land**) – this history will differ from various nationalist conceptions. From elsewhere in the book: “Very broadly, Sámi are people self-identifying with Sámi ethnicity, which, like all ethnicities, is a category constructed around notions of kinship, shared historical background, customs, language and ways of perceiving the world and one’s

exploitation of the forests was carried out on a comparatively modest scale. However, with the advent of mechanization, in particular the introduction of large forestry machinery in the second half of the twentieth century, the scale tipped from land use to ecocidal plunder.

In tandem with mechanical engineering, social engineering methods were used to maximize wealth extraction from the land that had historically been usurped from the indigenous population. To spur the ‘development’ of the region, tax pressure was imposed on the settled population that would have used the forest as a commons for subsistence purposes including controlled burning, cereal cultivation and cattle grazing (sylvopastoralism). **To meet the tax pressure, the commons, *allmänningar* in Swedish, were transformed into commercial associations by the same name. Born under tax pressure, these *allmänningar* came to master the logic of profit-oriented exploitation and over the**

place within it.

[...] According to common understandings of that term, those people can be referred to as indigenous people “on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions” [definition of the International Labour Organization].

The fact that both “descent” and the “inhabited geographical region” are defining characteristics of indigeneity may lend the notion to be confused with supremacist blood-and-soil ideology, with which it shares these two characteristics. Yet there are at least three important differences. One is whether or not identification is based on fantasies of racial superiority. The second one is whether one belongs to a colonizing or a colonized group. And a third important difference between notions of indigeneity and blood-and-soil ideology, although the elements of blood and soil are indeed implicit or explicit in both of them, is precisely how absolute the importance attached to blood is. Sámi scholar Harald Gaski points out that, at least in the case of the Sámi, “it has never been of vital importance to be full-blooded. What has mattered more is a person’s attitude toward the Sami people, language, and culture [...] There are even old Sami myths that express the positive side of mixing blood with other peoples through what might be called “extra-ethnic” marriage.”

It may be added here, lest there be confusion about the matter, that there has never been such a thing as a uniform Sámi culture – it is a vast region indeed, in which historically and presently different Sámi dialects have been spoken, for example – and that culture contact and multi-ethnicity are normal human conditions. It being any different – having an undifferentiated national body inhabiting a hermetically closed homeland – is an invention of nation State ideology.”

course of the last sixty or so years, they grew out to become among the most aggressive clear-cutting enterprises on Swedish territory. Within settler culture, current forestry methods of erasing whole tracts of forest came to be regarded as ‘traditional land use’. The largest of these associations is the Jokkmokk Allmänning, proprietor of the land around Gállok and keen supporter of mining concessions on ‘their’ land, which is also the land the reindeer herding Sámi depend upon. Tor continues his discourse.

So it began, and so it continues: every inch of land you passed when you came here, be it from Jokkmokk [Jåhkâmåhkke], from Luleå [Julevu] or from Stockholm, it doesn’t matter which way you took, from the coast or the inland, everything is a plantation, everything. Also here. They clear-cut everything, completely destroyed the old forest and grow only one species. In the south it is spruce, here it is pine. Pine, pine, pine. And the Swedes that come to this area now say: ‘Oh what a beautiful forest’. They don’t know. They don’t see the difference between a real forest and a plantation. The biggest species we have are fungi. You don’t see it, it’s under us, you only see the fruit. When you clear-cut, everything gets killed. When it gets killed it rots and leaches methane gas. It is dreadful. It is the Western economics that boosts this so-called ‘development’.

Átjek was a holy mountain. My relatives were offering to the gods here. But then the offering place was drowned by the hydroelectric dam. And now they want to make a mine here. Their greed never stops.

“Every day, the forest disappears down the forest roads, down to the paved roads, further on to sawmills, wood terminals, pulp mills and paper mills. Every day, ore and minerals travel along the Malmbanan to the ore harbors in Luleå and Narvik. Every day, mercury and arsenic is finding its way out of the wastewater ponds of the blasted mountains. Provides nerve damage to animals and people. Gives us cancer and autoimmune diseases. And every day the police are ready to violate and imprison those who try to stop it. [...] Colonialism is not a closed chapter. [...] There are still some groups that directly control areas with less power and use their resources to increase their own power. It is concrete and obvious for us. As obvious as the trains that groan by with ore or trucks with timber passing by the outside our windows.” – *Green Colonialism*

'THE SCARCITY DYNAMO'



The Israeli military and French riot police are learning about decentralization. The CIA and FBI study networks on Facebook. Capitalism as a whole is undergoing a major decentralization. Through bio- and nanotechnology, intelligence itself is being situated within the materials produced, from smart wool to smart bombs [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?*]. Many of the new methods aim for growth by allowing automated production at a smaller, more efficient scale. The factory as a site of conflict is dispersed. The Middle East as a geopolitical pressure point is being edged out by technologies that seek to produce electricity, even oil, anywhere on the planet. The old corporations are trying to manage this dispersal and provide continuity through the transition, but more than a few giants have proven to be dinosaurs. These pyramidal institutions have found themselves outmaneuvered and befuddled by chaotic, decentralized networks one too many times. They’re trying to keep it under wraps that they’re learning from their betters. What they themselves don’t know is that they’re going back to their roots.

The proto-machine, patriarchy [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg8*], succeeded in creating hierarchical social structures; however the reason for its diffusion and resilience is that patriarchy functions as a network.

It is a common idea that the universe is comprised of pairs of opposites. Many societies see the world in terms of feminine and masculine elements. This

same idea can lead to an ethics of balance and mutability, or one of separation and immutability. By creating idealized genders, by understanding bodies as imperfect realizations of one or the other ideal rather than hosts to a flux of opposing energies, patriarchy demands a normative performance of its members in which they cannot succeed. No one can be both Venus and the Virgin Mary; no one can fill the shoes of Hercules and Solomon; no one contains only the characteristics of one pole and none of its opposite.

Patriarchy's double-edged idealism, its pantheon of beautiful figures, makes everyone incomplete. But like a good snake-oil salesman, it has the cure for the disease it has hypnotized its audience into experiencing. Within the framework of the romantic/reproductive couple, patriarchy offers completion [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg31*]. By promising one fulfilling, intimate relationship it is actually stealing a world of such relationships and simultaneously dooming the couple to dissatisfaction and mutual exploitation by demanding they carry the world all on their own, where otherwise a whole community of hands would be there to hold that weight [ed. – see *'The Way That We Fail Each Other & Love Each Other'*].

Through the categorization of love and friendship and the separation of these different types of relationships, patriarchy impoverishes them both. People are tricked into nourishing themselves through what is depriving them. In this way, patriarchy creates a scarcity dynamo, locking people into relationships of dependence [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg46*]. Time and again, the Machine has encountered addiction as a useful ally for increasing control.

Inside this framework, the abuse cycles and successive generations turn to the same deprivations. This is why patriarchy takes on such different manifestations in different relationships rather than following the irreversible, patterned flows of power that are indicative of institutional relations; this is why a patriarchal system often lacks clear power holders and why many patriarchies have existed without specialized enforcers or centralized structures: because each individual and each couple and family recreate it themselves, on the basis of their own unique experiences.

These miniature cycles of abuse and control sap networks of their liberatory and chaotic potential by erecting walls of privacy and jealousy, prohibiting a whole list of loving relationships and dispersing people to atomized households. Networks are stronger, more effective, more versatile, and more intelligent than hierarchies, but they can be tamed



“[R]omantic love is a fundamental mechanism for protecting isolation itself. By giving us the idea that the couple form completes us, patriarchy protects itself from an insurrection of desires and social needs, opening a pathway for a controlled escape that can never evade its borders. If the plebes need love, give it to them as an addiction, precarious, as atomized as possible and that way they will always live under the fear of losing it. They themselves will renounce all other relations, the whole community, to keep from ending up alone. Ironic, our defeat.”

– *Organization, Continuity, Community*

and limited. Patriarchy is so useful to the Machine, after this many thousand years, because it constantly neutralizes the liberatory potential of human relationships.¹ There is a reason why segmentary

1 ed. – “In his writings on the various societies of the Amazon Basin, [Pierre] Clastres discusses how these horizontal, anti-authoritarian societies preserve their bilinear tracing of kinship and the separate identity of extended families within a community, as a way to prevent the centralization of the residential community or the emergence of separate lineages and clans (kinship structures associated with greater hierarchy). Adults tend to live in a single community, and they have little contact with the original community of their mother or father (depending on whether they are patrilocal or matrilineal), meaning it would be easy for them to only trace one line of kinship – through the matriline if they are matrilineal and through the patriline if they are patrilocal. Their insistence on a more expansive view of kinship can be read as a method for creating more numerous horizontal ties and preventing the centralization of society in atomized communities or separate lineages.

Referring to the stateless societies of Southeast Asia, James C. Scott describes families that are so expansive and multilinear that many individuals can not only claim kinship with a large number of families and communities, they can even claim multiple ethnicities, a useful resource for peoples who need to assure their survival through horizontal relations, who often have to flee state armies and slave-raiding parties, and who constantly resist state efforts to homogenize potential subjects [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg120*].

Among nomadic Mbuti communities, Colin Turnbull described the habit of claiming kinship relations with every other member of the community, as well as with neighboring communities, regardless of whether common ancestors or blood relations were a genetic “fact.” Traditionally, kinship relations were deliberately

lineage systems prevented the emergence of the State and eventually had to be abolished by it,² but not so with patriarchy; though patriarchy privileges men, as a network system it cycles endemically. It does not create power holders who will fight the emergence of greater power holders. It only creates addicts and dependents.

Speaking ideally, no one is independent, no one exercises personal agency, no one executes decisions or programmatic action within this dynamo. Patriarchy is participatory. Men are privileged insofar

ambiguous, all the adults of a community were parents to all the children, and all the children of the same age group were siblings. In fact, the anthropologist reports that the Mbuti got annoyed when he tried to map out a “factual” family tree of the community to ascertain who, within a Western conception, was related and who was not.

Societies without an anti-authoritarian ethos, we can surmise, treated relations not as an opportunity for everyone’s mutual enrichment, but as a resource to be controlled. And for someone to gain power from access to a resource, they first must make that resource artificially scarce. In fact, the whole Western concept of an “objective” kinship based on shared genetic material, or in earlier terms, “blood,” is little more than a massive mythical justification for limiting familial relations” (Worshipping Power: an Anarchist View of Early State Formation [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; 'The Temple was Built Before the City'*])

2 ed. – “[T]he Erligang culture and the corresponding Shang dynasty are well known to have organized on the basis of hierarchically ordered kinship lineages that centralized and monopolized access to divine rites. The kinship system was instrumental to the Shang state’s territorial expansion. Younger male relatives of the dominant lineage or inferior elite lineages (e.g. lineages said to be descended from younger brothers of the mythical ancestor-king, or younger brothers from subsequent kings in the dominant line) would be sent out from the royal capital to found new settlements as a way to secure military frontiers, expand agricultural production, and encourage population growth. Each of these elite males, sent out with blessings from the king and “ritual paraphernalia and ceremonial regalia,” would become the founder not only of a new town but also a new branch of the royal lineage.

In his new settlement, the royal benefice holder would erect an ancestral temple, in which his own lineage tablet would eventually be placed as a founder of a branch clan. In time, new segments would hive off from this branch, forming secondary (and then tertiary) territorial sublineages which were ranked in a sequential hierarchy of descending political and ritual statuses. In this manner, the system of Shang patrimonial benefices – the earliest known form of institutionalized territorial governance in China – reflected gradations of kinship status within a segmented royal lineage, gradations which had themselves been patterned in the first instance after the patriarchy of ancestral spirits.

But when military successes allowed the Shang state and the Zhou dynasty that followed it to continue expanding, this kinship system of territorial administration

as masculine perspectives and experiences are normalized whereas their feminine counterparts are exceptionalized, but the male ideal is as untenable for the half who must pursue it as it is for anyone else. The male role is privileged. Those who must perform it derive no agency from this arrangement.

Patriarchy has in its past wed itself to gerontocratic [ed. – rule by elders] lineage systems. Now, it weds itself to capitalism. Because the latter is progressive, it demands a schizophrenic adaptability of patriarchy. Thus it is that so little has changed in a society that legitimizes nuclear homosexuality, gives women unprecedented mobility, and supplies a truly new cultural production that features women as protagonists, rebels, and ass-kickers. Virginie Despentes identifies the counterbalance; never before have women had to perform their femininity so extensively as they must in exchange for this new mobility.

The form of patriarchy and the structures by which it propagates itself have changed completely since its multiple beginnings. The only continuity of this system can be found in the scarcity dynamo, in the self-perpetuating cycle of abuse and dependency.

Notwithstanding the present form assumed by patriarchy, when one’s gender does not determine one’s ascension as an engineer or power-holder in the Machine, it is vital to recognize the surviving

became “diluted” and “the king was unable personally to conduct all the manifold ceremonial rituals that, as Son of Heaven, he was called upon to perform in each of the central state’s territorial domains.” Ever more degrees of authority had to be delegated to elites who symbolically were inferior but in practice came to exercise supreme power. Additionally, the strategic interests of territorial expansion convinced the king to grant hereditary administrative mandates to unrelated but allied tribes on the periphery who performed military service and swore fealty.

Eventually, growth of the state led to a feudal form of organization in the Zhou period, with hereditary enfeoffment granted to lesser nobles who promised obedience. Unsurprisingly, such a system could not support a strong centralized power, and the unified state disintegrated, giving rise to an efficient empire only after the centuries-long Warring States period. [...] During the Warring States period, “Confucian ideologists” laid the groundwork for the subsequent Han empire by fusing “the three worlds of ancestral spirits, kinship groups, and the imperial bureaucracy into a single, integrated system of hierarchical social and political authority.”

Subsequently, lines of command were stronger and the monarch could exercise despotic rule, whereas in the Shang dynasty the king could only rule by consulting other priests or the heads of the clans, and in Zhou times the king had to seek the counsel of the Guoren and the Daifu, a popular assembly and a council of elite elders, respectively” (Worshipping Power).

legacy of violence that is directed against the feminine, whose primary recipients are thus women and children, and whose primary perpetrators are men and parents [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg46**].

This violence is only one-sided in idealized terms, in that it is a violence of masculinity against femininity but not necessarily of men against women. In fact, men are more likely to die violent deaths, precisely because masculinity is an unattainable, competitive ideal and not a quality nor even a status automatically inhering to men. To be men, those assigned this possibility must compete for masculinity, punish femininity in those assigned the male role [ed. – see **Ghosts**], attack those assigned the female role who perform masculinity, and obliterate those who throw the whole game into question by not evincing either role clearly [ed. – see **Reclaim Your Queer Fucking Life!**].

The aiming of this violence originates in a one-sided war intentionally instituted by that which today no longer properly exists: an exclusively male power structure. **This structure was the Church, a proto-state that arose in at least three related societies.** The Church domesticated and administered the God virus, but where the Machine was to advance, the Church had to be defeated by the rebellions its own oppressions provoked, and then subordinated to a centralized State. Splinters of this proto-state that were not fully banished from the formal political realm, whether Shia or Catholic, typically slowed the growth of the states that grew up in their traditional territory.

Before its obsolescence, the Church accomplished a transformation of society that would prove indispensable to the development of capitalism and the defeat of the many rebellions against the emerging State: this transformation was the reanimation of patriarchy. Patriarchy had largely eroded in the cultural chaos and heretical rebellions that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg41**]. The mixing of so many nations – Germanic, Celtic, Italic, Iberic, Slavic, Hun,



Words of Roman imperialist Ammianus Marcellinus on prominent status of Celtic women in resistance: "A whole band of foreigners will be unable to cope with one Gaul in a fight, if he calls in his wife[... she] begins to rain blows mingled with kicks, like shots discharged by the twisted cords of a catapult"

Sarmatian, Semitic – each with their own specific patriarchy, some stronger, some weaker, and even a few that were not patriarchal, led to a peculiar historical situation in which there was no homogeneous blueprint for governing gender relations. On a world scale, what an odd society that would need such a thing as a will to indicate the distribution of one's inheritance, that it should not be culturally predetermined how one's lands or debts be parcelled out, but that this should rather be an arbitrary decision. The resulting European societies are equally rare among patriarchies in that they combine patrilineal and matrilineal forms of organization.

By the late Middle Ages, homosexuality and queer love were openly accepted in many places; women practiced contraception and abortion and even the Church was forced to respond with lenience; women could live alone or with other women in the growing towns and cities; women were present in most guilds and occupations, they held land and inheritance, and within marriage were full equals in many areas; they were healers and midwives and witches; in the heretical sects women and men practiced free love and lived together as friends or lovers without marriage; in the peasant and anti-clerical rebellions [ed. – see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**] they played leading roles and fought in battle – among the Taborites³ in the thousands, for one example.

3 ed. – "At a hillside near Prague, the radicals of the newly-risen community consider themselves Hebrew contemporaries of the Apostles, and they call their hillside Mount Tabor, after a place in the Levant where some expected Jesus to reappear.

But the Taborites are not waiting for Jesus to reappear. Each member of the newly risen community is already her or his own Savior, and even those who were blind and mum until they reached Tabor begin to see and to express their visions soon after their arrival. [...] They say the Pope and all his cardinals as well as the Emperor and all kings, dukes, princes and bourgeois magistrates are usurpers and imposters. They say the only Purgatory is the poverty in which so many people are forced to live. They say Christians are idolaters because they prostrate themselves to a cross and to images of saints. [...] Taborites converge on Prague from their hilltop communities and take over the guilds, which promptly install themselves in all the seats of power.

There is not much fighting. The Emperor has few loyal followers in Prague. The few who do defend Church or Empire, whether bishops or imperial dignitaries, are killed by being thrown through the windows of their offices.

Emperor Sigismund appeals to the Pope, who proclaims a Crusade against the Infidels in the heart of Central Europe. This extends the era of the Crusades into the age of gunpowder and of the Italian Quattrocento, the so-called Renaissance; it makes the last Crusaders contemporaries of Portugal's overseas commercial empire.

As Silvia Federici has documented [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg92*], the Black Death reduced European population by one-third, replacing the land shortage that gave lords the advantage before the mid-14th century with a labor shortage that gave peasants and urban workers the advantage. The lower classes disrespected their masters like never before, many opted for self-sufficiency instead of work, and when they did work they exacted wages up to six times higher than before, with men and women often paid equally. Increasingly, peasant and worker rebellions actually succeeded in the long run, as in Flanders.⁴

[...] Most of the Taborites abhor violence. Tabor is itself a refuge from the daily violence of Leviathanic constraint [*ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'The Temple was Built Before the City'*]. In Tabor, as a radical puts it, people “cannot be commanded by anyone, or excommunicated, or forbidden anything; neither the pope nor any archbishop nor anyone alive has authority over them for they are free.”

But the Taborites abhor the prospect of a reimposition of Leviathanic constraint by the Empire’s armies even more than they abhor violence. And the Imperial Crusaders do not even promise to reimpose former constraints; they are out to exterminate the Taborites. [...] The preparations for the first armed confrontation do not announce a reversal of Tabor’s direction, an end to the ever-deeper movement of liberation, a turn toward militarism. No lordly generals are invited to institute military machine among the Taborites. Peasants with revelations, wandering radicals and [poor] priests, namely the very militants who have tended to monopolize discourse and define priorities all along, are the people who call for and organize the defense. [...] Perhaps, if the war had ended after the first battle, the Taborites would have returned to non-military activities, to the problems of living in Paradise on earth, to the problems of reconstituting free communities based on love and kinship.

But the defeat of Sigismund’s army at Vishehrad is not the end of the war; it is the beginning. The Emperor’s anachronistic army is Leviathan’s army and, like the weather of Sumer, it goes on attacking, it goes on threatening to flood and destroy the “five cities” [as the Taborites refer to their league of more than five communities]. Leviathan is nothing but a machine for grinding out armies. And the Taborites go on defending themselves, forming an alliance of communities similar to that of their Moravian ancestors, placing their trust in military leaders” (Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!)

4 ed. – “In Flanders, weavers who have for generations been clothing European Burghers and Knights while themselves becoming denuded, rebel against the entire coalition of priests, nobles, patricians, merchants and master craftsmen arrayed against them[...] seize the palaces of the powerful and try to destroy the power of the civil institutions, forming themselves into associations or brotherhoods they call Compagnonades. [...] Flemish weavers are practiced insurgents; in an earlier uprising they hung priests, seized the properties of the Church and distributed the wealth of the otherworldly institution among the poor.” (Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!)

“For men to “enjoy” the benefits of patriarchal masculinity, their capacities for vulnerability and care must be eviscerated, replaced by a violent and disconnected way of being built upon shame and woundedness. [...] Most of what is called privilege has nothing to do with thriving or joy; this is why privileged white men are some of the most emotionally stunted, closed-off people alive today. None of this is to deny that there are pleasures, wealth, and safety associated with whiteness, heteropatriarchal masculinity, and other forms of privilege. Instead, it is to insist that everyone, potentially, has a stake in undoing privileges – and the ongoing violence required to secure them – as a part of transformative struggle.” – *carla bergman & Nick Montgomery*

“Man exists castrated, desperately reaching out for his balls and ever attempting to convince himself (and everyone else) that he still has them. To quote Tyler Durden “our fathers were our models for God. If our fathers bailed, what does that tell us about God? [...] Fuck damnation, fuck redemption. If we are God’s unwanted children, so be it!” This quote perfectly encapsulates the economic crisis of recent years and its immediate responses. Has not the hipsterism of hyper-masculine commodity culture – where manhood has become fetishized object for consumption – of recent years not been a direct result of the death of the capitalist dream? Man can no longer seek his balls through the economic means he was led to believe he could. So now he seeks it through making a Spectacle of his body as an act of recuperation – hipster beards, gym cult(ure)s and incessant broing. This is the nihilism Nietzsche [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg52*] forewarned in the wake of the death of God; Man exists devoid of the phallus that once constructed meaning in his life and in pure passivity. This symbolic ideological social category, that has served as the means of Man’s domination through patriarchy, colonialism, statism, morality and ecocide, and its current collapse – with hyper-masculinisms desperate attempt to retain the old orders – mirrors the crisis civilisation faces now. ISIS [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg97*] and their desperate attempts to grasp their dick and balls, and shove them in the faces of all westerners are part of this process. Donald Trump and his masculine narcissistic attempts to get us to believe in the phantasy of his gigantic penis, in whatever ideological form it might take, is too. Man is no longer a warrior, not even a soldier – just a mere unit of production – and so must technologically mediate himself from this fact through his ability to enact his role in video games [*ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; The Atrocity*]; sublimating his anxiety and lack within the bullshit symbolic theatre. What are Men to do in this situation? [A]bandon the Symbolic phallus and all that entails (stop oppressing women, destroying the planets ecosystems, colonising and dominating through violences supported by “moral” and legal apparatus).” – *There Are No Real Men*

The end of the 14th century saw the beginning of a counterattack that would form the motor for the development of capitalism.

Farther east, Islam waged a distinct, less intensive disciplining of the new state subjects in response to different but related pressures. This process is visible to us, but only from a distance that would make our more detailed commentary on it inane. In theorizing, we necessarily focus on the stories we descend from. We don't want to transcend this limitation through pretensions to a universal expertise that will inevitably slide into orientalism [ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification**], nor do we want to ignore this limitation by constructing a pure mythical lineage in which we haven't all gotten tangled up in the descent. The surest proof that history is still myth is in how earnestly it tries to keep its genres from mixing. To the contrary, we will try to err on both sides of caution.

In the Christian parts of Europe, the aristocracy and the patricians, the new bourgeoisie, began to intermarry and exercise power jointly. These same merchants at times joined the rebellions that shook up the old structures, unseating the clerical and military classes, but time and again they betrayed them before the aristocratic State could be destroyed, signalling a pattern that has continued to the present day. The bourgeois allied themselves with the princes, the new figures who coalesced out of a fragmented aristocracy and around whom a new centralized State could be built, and they impelled a new science of statecraft alongside the other sciences of categorization and control they were birthing at this time [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg27**]. Protestantism, obviously, was a great enabler of this process.⁵

In a couple [of] countries the bourgeoisie would

5 ed. – “Heirs of the first Taborites will at last shatter the catholic dominion of the Church, [but a] Luther [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg124**] and a Calvin [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg23**] will repeat, this time consciously, the Franciscan feat[...] [ed. – *the Franciscan Order of monks, “a cudgel against resisters” aiming to divert heretics*] By the time self-styled Protestants gang up with nobles and burghers to eject every trace of freedom, kinship and community from their simulated withdrawal, counter-reformed Catholics are already devouring the last remaining freedom, kinship and community on the planet, they are appropriating what they lack by eating it. [...] The Taborite communities that commit slow suicide are contemporaries of communities of Guanches murdered by mercantile Catholics. The Guanches are the last free inhabitants of Atlantic Ocean islands called Canaries, the first non-Europeans exterminated by seekers of Fortunate Isles. [...] The Canaries are not far from the continent's shores, but they are already part of the New World in the West, they are already America” (Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!).

overthrow the princes who pretended to become caesars, but the immediate compatibility between the constitutional monarchies and the new democracies proved they were both developing in the same direction and with a shared project.

A major part of the repression against popular rebellions throughout this period – drawing again on Federici – targeted women and was specifically designed to divide the lower classes and prevent rebellion. In a wave, nearly every municipality across Europe founded brothels, prohibited or at least discouraged homosexuality, and decriminalized rape, with the blessing and often the instigation of the Church. Meanwhile, the Church banned clerical marriage, cementing its male exclusivity by preventing the considerable political influence women exerted on their husbands. More dramatically, the Church instituted the Holy Inquisition [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg23**], which was perhaps the first international agency to scientifically develop, employ, evaluate, and redeploy policing, intelligence, torture, and other repressive practices. Today's FBI owes much of its *modus operandi* to the Inquisitors. The Inquisition especially targeted women, and the witch herself became the symbol of the heretic. Heretical meetings, pagan ceremonies, independent midwifery, contraception, abortion, rebelliousness, and non-married status were some of the main offenses that brought women to the rack or to the fire, and over two centuries tens of thousands of people were killed. **When we speak of a self-circulating patriarchy in the present day, we must recognize that this was the level of violence necessary to establish the alienation and damage that would allow a scarcity dynamo to develop its full potential.**



Amidst this violence, women were pushed out of the trades; home labor (or reproductive labor) which had been as important as labor in the fields and workshops was devalued by the institution of the wage (given only to the now masculine labors performed outside the home); while at the same time the new class of male laborers was weakened with laws that set maximum wages, reintroduced slavery,

legitimized the pressing of work gangs from those considered idle, and criminalized vagrancy, backed up by punishments that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. The Church assisted and to a certain extent coordinated all of this, by intensifying its demonization of women and the body, extolling labor, and ending its once generalized charity and favorable attitudes towards poverty.

[...] It could easily be thought that the social unit most cut off from the outside world – the home, the family in its private sphere – might have some measure of autonomy. But it's nothing new to assert that the family is just a reproductive unit that keeps capitalism going. In its simplest traditional form, the husband carries out paid productive labor, the wife carries out unpaid reproductive labor to replenish the labor power of the husband (feed him, clean for him, provide him a place to rest) and develop the labor power of the children, raising them up to be workers, though in practice women frequently bore a heavy burden of secondary waged labor as well. It has been demonstrated often enough that the changes in the needs of the market throughout western history have played a determining role in the size and fluidity of the supposedly pristine family. TV commentator Glenn Beck's outburst that *The Coming Insurrection* is a manual for destroying the family is hilarious because the Invisible Committee [ed. – authors of that book; see **Return Fire vol.3 pg58**] argue that in fact the family is already destroyed. What is revealed is not a misreading but a cover-up. The family has long since been a discursive strategy to hide its own nature behind seemingly universal values of care and community.

Capitalism is the last white piece on a chess board played by a master against a novice. It always knows how to flee in a way that opens up new directions of escape. To protect itself from a growing yet partial feminist resistance, the Machine decreased much of the pressure placed on the family to serve as a tributary control structure, while simultaneously externalizing the household economy so stagnating capital could increasingly move through the vital tasks that had previously been managed in the dark, unwaged side of production. The autonomist feminists Precarias a la Deriva of Madrid signal these tasks to consist of care, attention, and sex, now carried out by an increasingly female workforce.

But care, though it truly must be re-placed at the center of social activity, can also be alienated from its own logic and bound to follow the logic of production, which is far from tender. Speaking of care in industrial terms, as the Precarias nearly do throughout their text, is as self-defeating as the project of harnessing production for our own ends [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg59**]. **Within an industrial logic, everyone**

and everything is harnessed. As Frere Dupont signals in "Dark Passage," speaking of the hospital apparatus:

Institutionalised services in the end, and at the beginning, always serve as a matter of priority the programmed requirements for the processive reproduction of the systems themselves as distinct from any stated goal of the service; which becomes just one measurable output to be set against others. This means that the tolerable level of patient mortality is indexed to cost thresholds. [...] Biopower [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg47**] forecloses on all discourses of redemption and seeks instead to realise, or manufacture, the tangible potentials which it identifies in individuals. Where no useful, achievable, measurable potential is identified its institutions find no purpose, nothing to work on – the shadow, the potential that is care for care's sake, is dispersed.

In a burst of rage, one might cry out that "capitalism is fucked," a sentiment they may later feel to be inconsistent with a sex-positive outlook. But in truth, capitalism *is* fucked, and that's the problem. Another control loop in the circuitry of the Machine is its ability to have us all fucking Capital and not each other, dedicating our erotic energies and the insecurities that arise from their inevitable frustration to elusive signifiers and their chimeric signifieds. The fact that pornography is the major user of bandwidth on the internet and thus a principal motor in the development and expansion of the same (which has become a greater producer of greenhouse gases than the airline industry) is not significant because of some resident evil in the act of sweating over the sight of naked bodies but because of the tragedy implied in all the alienated bodies uploading themselves to a virtual network in the impossible hope of encountering other bodies, while the subordinate set of bodies are saddled with an ingrained suppression of pleasure and a commodification that subjects them not to a scarcity of attention but to a dangerous and threatening abundance.

Consumer capitalism has often been something like the joyful New Testament to the Old Testament austerity of the State and its earlier mercantile capitalism. Capitalism seeks forgiveness and renewal whereas the State never forgets a grudge. The market, through the vital industry of pornography, offers an alienated release to the sexual control instituted by the State and its old partner, the Church.

The institution of this sexual control was a major offensive in the early development of capitalism. Entirely new forms of socialization had to be manufactured in order to achieve the Cartesian [ed. –

see **Return Fire vol.5 pg71**], self-disciplining individual, or, failing that, the disciplined Hobbesian mass [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg20**], both of which were necessary for the participatory, democratic government that already in the late Middle Ages was taking shape in the dry docks of the Western project.

The Puritans [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg89**] excelled in the assault on popular celebration and sociable sexuality, though the Catholics also became more austere in order to create their own version of a work ethic. European and subsequently colonial populations began to grow sharply, while the amount of time spent working more than doubled. For all their juvenility, early CrimethInc. texts were theoretically right on the mark when they signalled ludic rebellion [ed. – see **Skills & Sabotage**] as an indispensable motion in the war against capitalism. Indeed the festival, as a celebration of worldly rhythms, a mode of communal socialization and cornucopia, a seizing of public space, and as distinct from leisure, is a contradiction of capitalism's very origins [ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**].

As Silvia Federici has argued, at the birth of capitalism responsibility for the reproduction of laborers abdicated from the obsolescing feudal lords, but was not taken up by the new class of employers. The capitalists externalized the costs of their workers' survival and the tab was picked up by the new State. Thus, the bosses could brutalize those on whose labor they depended, even working them to death, while the State would keep busy enforcing reproduction or capturing new laboring populations, accounting for the systemic contradiction between murderous exploitation and a tendency to protect. The population crisis of the late 1500s in the colonies and the 1600s in Europe was the first international economic crisis, according to Federici. What we find, in the second great population crisis to affect the modern development of the Machine, is a great triumph for the forces of control.



Whereas the population crisis provoked by the Black Death only strengthened the position of the serfs, peasants, laborers, and artisans, already standing atop a swelling foundation of revolt, the population crisis provoked by genocide in the Americas and early capitalist impoverishment in Europe demonstrated the ability of the modern State to manage crisis to the favor of the Machine. The first crisis impelled the elite to create an absolute State to ensure a level of social control that was beyond them, and they only narrowly succeeded through a series of bloody wars. **It was the new State they created that animated capitalism as a strategy of control.** With the State and capitalism in place, the Machine was ready to institute new measures to coerce population growth and criminalize the working class while simultaneously assuming responsibility for its welfare. Theorists in subsequent centuries would see population growth as a natural force, but in fact population growth in the face of crisis must be coerced by means of a vast array of techniques and implements of social control. Lacking this, at all other times in world history, population crises have led to overturnings of the social order, to a new equilibrium which is impossible within the paradigm that caused the crisis. **In other words, the logic of production, which necessitated the growth of human population and the bulldozing of all negative feedbacks, overcame the final obstacle to converting human beings from a species in the world to nothing more than the fuel of the Machine that dominates us.**

And in this process of coerced growth, women were assigned a particular instrumentality, taking on, in some sense, the importance of factories. [Martin] Luther, one of the Machine's most brilliant technicians during this critical phase of development, summed up the productive role of women plugged into the Machine: "whatever their weaknesses, women possess one virtue that cancels them all: they have a womb and they can give birth". If states were to judge their wealth by the number of subjects, as the contemporary European thinkers did, then birth had to become a form of production, and the family itself to be reshaped into a sort of factory. The managerial principles in this factory were the subordination of unwaged female labor to waged male labor, the channeling of sexuality exclusively into monogamous reproduction, and the prohibition of contraception and abortion. Conservative family values, it turns out, are nothing more than admonitions against sabotage.

It is telling that contemporary academics insist on referring to all creative acts, from the renewal of culture to a baby's vocalizations, as forms of production. They are, after all, duty-bound to naturalize production in order to develop capitalism's

alibi as a complex of neutral and necessary processes. **But production is not only distinct from creation, it is in fact antithetical to it.**

Creation is the realization of our needs and desires in the world. Production is obedience to an instrument that has been put in our hands and whose purpose is beyond us. Production moves towards dependence on greater infrastructures, and leaves a trail of destroyed ecosystems in its wake. Those who seize the means of production, as opposed to those who reclaim their capacity for creation, are always faced with the choice of starving or returning to work in a world that looks very much like the one they've just left behind.

[...] With the strengthened division of public and private spheres and exclusion of women to the latter, collective women's activity that had previously built solidarity and counterbalanced male power was suppressed. Primitive accumulation [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg96*], in other words, was contrived largely as a political measure to divide the lower classes and stimulate waged production that could provide a fledgling hierarchy with the resources it needed to develop its repressive potentials.

The reformed State proceeded to develop a mythology in which the evolution of hierarchy was a natural and unilineal progression, the relative equality of the Dark Ages was literally obscured, and the merits of chaos and decentralization [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg48*] maligned. The technological advantages developed by this new power complex abetted the doctrine of the superiority of hierarchy, while network-based modes of domination continued to restrict and divert outbursts of rebellion, until nearly all insurgents could be disciplined to embrace the ideology of the Machine within their own imaginary. **The patriarchal revolutions only innovated new techniques of control.** Thus, when the Machine trembled in the powerful and knotty hands of the proletariat, in the words of Renzo Novatore [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg89*], the victorious insurgents overthrew the Machine's engineers, only to keep the technicians and the techniques.

Winning, they lost, again and again and again [*ed. – see 23 Theses Concerning Revolt*], until an old Idea that did not promise any easy victory rose from the grave, at a time when the peoples of the world had no mechanisms left to channel their sisyphian [*ed. – i.e. endless, unavailing*] combat against the Machine – they had only their own hands, their own thoughts, their own rage, and suddenly, at the pinnacle of its triumph, the Machine was beset by new rebellions it could neither understand nor contain, and was forced, discreetly, to recognize the fragility of hierarchy, and relearn the ways of networks.

THEIR SUSTAINABILITY IS A DISASTER – LET'S SMASH IT

Since the '70s, we've been told that climate change is a global environmental issue that needs to be solved on a global scale. That this "technical issue" needs to be dealt with some governance within which the ecological issue ends up recycled to become a global market. Therefore some people actively promote a Green New Deal. Nicely comforted by the fact that climate change is discussed in the infinitely numerous COPs [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg7*], they are congratulating themselves on the illusion that ecological matters are finally placed on the political agendas.

We are not fooled by their declarations of intent and we have understood that the critique of greenhouse gas emission merely constitutes another technological evolution. We have witnessed how the carbon credit market was another excuse for companies worldwide to keep opening mines or fusing atoms, while being thanked for their "ecological commitment". Indeed, tearing down forests for industrial mono-cultures, expropriating local populations and polluting the whole planet is well worth a nice green polishing isn't it?

Exploitation & Protection are Essentially Two Sides of the Same Coin

We could have been seduced by the "eco-responsibility" argument: and tried to act as "consumer activists", put some efforts into "sustainable development" and some other scheme that reduces our individual footprints. We then would have to pretend that we don't see the underlying class domination and oppression behind all these candid efforts for an ecological transition.

So here is their "Sustainability 2.0"... The social and environmental damages caused by a fundamentally patriarchal and colonial capitalist system are being turned into simple technical issues, externalities that managers and engineers must account for in their plans and algorithms, so everything can remain business-as-usual. The technical world wants us to believe that the earth can be perfectly and totally controlled. The idea of an "energetic transition" could have charmed us, convincing us that it is possible to save the planet while fueling economic growth rate!

Furthermore, the virtualization operated at every level of our societies that is supposed to make the transition possible, requires very real infrastructures that impact and pollute our environment, the living beings and our ways of relating to the world. We can't close our eyes anymore. Digital technologies are devastating and energy intensive: extraction of rare earth materials, industrial fabrication processes, data collection and transportation infrastructures, international logistical flows ...

They wish to have us believe that the electrical greed of these technologies could be satisfied by the so-called energetic "transition": wind, solar, hydro as free and magical energy brought to us by the elements! Even better, the digital and electrical infrastructures would be complementary to each other. But this would require more data, more sensors and algorithms to feed the artificial intelligence that is becoming more and more important in our lives. Just like the market's invisible hand which is supposed to regulate human conflicts, the invisible hand of digital technology is supposed to make the system more fluid and manageable by reducing reality to flows of encrypted data.

It is a matter of optimizing the productivity of the earth and its inhabitants. By avoiding traffic jams, pollution and consumption peaks, inflations, suspicious behaviors, there would be no more obstacles to the continuous operation of the productive system and the circulation of its flows. No interruption, no intermittency: the electrical order ensures it. This is becoming the mandatory condition of life on earth.

The very term "energy transition" is fallacious. While it assumes a shift from one energy resource to another, it hides a uncomfortable truth: the new ways of producing electricity (use of biomass, photo-voltaic panels, wind turbines, methanisation plants, etc.) are not only adding to fossil fuels, but they also rely on them heavily [ed. – see *'The Ecological Transition is a Hoax'*].

Whatever the Source, Electricity Production Contributes to the Ongoing Disaster

We have been lulled to sleep with the refrain of slavery abolition and decolonization. However the



energy market is largely owned by state backed multinational companies. Under the pretext of "pacifying" African territories, France continues to send its army to ensure the unimpeded extraction of uranium necessary to the "French energetic sovereignty". Our Western, urban and technophile ways of living rely on a relentless extractivism. Industrial wind turbines, electric vehicles, smart-phones and computers depend on materials available in very low concentrations in the ground and whose extraction is therefore based on extremely harmful industrial processes. Local populations are exploited and poisoned, their environment is irretrievably polluted. Deprived from the means of their own subsistence, they often have to flee toward cities and their urban surroundings.

European companies like Vestas or E Énergies Nouvelles F implant hundreds and hundreds of wind turbines over thousands of hectares in the entire Latin America, showing the same voracity as their ancestors did with sugar cane and tobacco. It is hard to imagine how violent these European companies can behave while taking ownership of places.

From legal seizures to ecological damages, turning an inhabited area into an industrial zone necessarily implies robbing and oppressing local populations.

In Mexico, political instrumentalization, bribes, corruption and involvement of armed groups are common practices, leading to murders when people resist. Their goal is to ensure "social acceptance", and above all to break up communal ownership of land [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; 'Centering Relationships'*]. Once private property is established, it becomes easier for companies to pressure isolated owners. It is a very efficient counterinsurgency tool, leading to tensions and conflicts. Local indigenous

communities end up broken, while their ecosystems and associated ways of life are being destroyed. The social vacuum produced this way finally favours the domination of narco-trafficker.

Through electricity industry, the French state (and also the Danish one [ed. – like others]) is shamelessly perpetuating colonization and is responsible for murders under the guise of global ecology.

They try to make us believe that participative wind farm projects allow us to impact political decisions.

That taking part in democratic energy projects would be the path to empowerment and autonomy. We are offered the opportunity to go to public consultations when companies ask for our voice, and to give our opinion about the location of new infrastructures. We are invited to install solar panels on our roofs and initiate our own wind farm project in our village. Everywhere, whether in industrial or in urban projects, it's all about "participation".

It is clear to us that a wind turbine connected to the national grid and installed on our territory doesn't lower our bill nor enhance our autonomy. We are fully aware that we depend on EDF [*ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg18***] and its subcontractors to extract, build, transport and install this wind turbine or solar array. That we still need them to maintain, dismantle and recycle those devices. **We will have no control of this technology, no new practical knowledge, no autonomy.** The electricity will be thrown on a high voltage distribution network, it will never be ours. Sold on the market, it will supply distant infrastructures that will in turn produce polluting devices.



These processes only serve an illusion of democracy. When expropriations, expulsions and finally land grabbing happens, the mask falls off.

Participatory renewable energy is only a democratic varnish to hide the lie of the energetic transition.

If Electricity Seems So Essential to Our Way of Life Nowadays, it is Only Because We Have Forgotten How to Live Without It

During the 19th century, an important change in the history of energy occurred: industry shifted from using the living force of water, towards coal and its new converter, the steam engine. By the same time they dug it, the mine's worker-towns gushed out the bowels of the earth, right in the middle of the countryside. Completing the proletarianization of farmers, these cities kept transforming pastures into slag-heaps, turning hamlets into ghettos. Despite the fact that its extraction involves human and financial costs, the relocatable and storable aspect of coal made it the perfect energy to tame the proletarians: it allowed the centralization of production with a constant and regular rhythm, whereas the use of hydraulic force was necessarily organized on the periphery, depending on the fluctuations of water; which led to irregular working days.

It was the time of the "Industrial Revolution", of the exodus of rural people, of the scientific organization of labor and its centralisation in factories designed on the model of prisons. As a real instrument of domestication, it ensured hierarchy and dependence of the workers. It was during this same period that the new science of "thermodynamics", emerged. It helped strengthen the growing industrialization, as it took part in building the concept of energy.

The energy of bodies at work became the new standard by which energy would be measured and quantified from now on. In other words, this concept allowed to measure the work capacity of all things, and turned the world into a vast flow from which it is possible to draw a production. It is now possible to

compare a horse and a coal wagon, a river and a sunny plot of land, an oak forest and a pile of rubbish, according to an objective and quantitative criteria. From the ton of coal equivalent to the franc, from the kilowatt-hour to the euro, energy allows a direct economic equivalence.

The electric network that appeared in the 20th century visualized this homogenization. It transformed eclectic and capricious materials into homogeneous and manipulable resources. **It was the basis for a promising investment: energy is the blood of industry, the nerve of war, the foundation of modern civilization.** Time and space would now be subjected to the continuous temporality of production.

The electric metastasis spreads, and becomes invasive. There came the time of Very High Voltage lines that conquered the countryside, in the direct line of their railway and telegraphic elders [*ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; 'The Steel Road'***]. If these were among the first colonial infrastructures, making it possible to transport raw materials, the Very High Voltage (VHV) lines that appeared in Europe after WW2 were the renewal of these processes of colonization. Only that this time, as an internal colonization.

Until the inter-war period, one could still find in the countryside autonomous systems of mechanical energy production, pumping and electric windmills, tide mills. Then the VHV lines invaded the countryside under the guise of "public service" and connected most of the energy uses to an increasingly

centralized grid that squared off the territory.¹ As a consequence, populations lost autonomy, and "unproductive" spaces were put to work. Power plants imposed themselves in available rural spaces. Now industrial wind and photo-voltaic farms are intended to cover the smallest "unexploited" hectare.

Technological networks are indeed closely linked to urban development. They are part of a logic that is historically determined by the principle of growth and the myth of progress [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg11*].

The heart of the metropolis is as smooth and gentrified as possible, painted, greened with a few new trees. It became the privileged place for consumption and absolute connectivity, while peripheral neighbourhoods saw the erection of housing blocks, industrial zones, electric transformers, garbage dumps and polluting industries... and the deployment of police repression.

The counterpart of their beloved connected and smart city [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg31*] is the "safe-city". Cameras are spreading [ed. – see *'Mobilising Disaster Relief'*], enhanced by big data: facial recognition and video fining, drones and movement detectors on the borders, thermal and infrared cameras, profiling on the internet and anticipation of so-called "abnormal" behaviour. Nothing should escape the omniscient eye of control technology. Multinationals, states and armed forces are working hand-in-hand to ensure this.

Aristocracy and rich landowners already subjugated,

1 ed. – "As Thomas Hughes showed in his classic book, *Networks of Power*, electricity systems all over Europe and the Americas experienced a dramatic transformation in the first third of the twentieth century, evolving in scale from small lighting systems extending just a few city blocks to complex regional generation systems combining diverse power sources with extensive distribution grids operated with sophisticated managerial methods. Hughes explains this transformation as the result of a double process of *concentration*, led by technological innovation, and *centralization*, spurred by intercapitalist competition. The improvements in electricity transmission made possible the concentration of electricity production in increasingly large power plants (mostly, hydroelectric dams) supplying distantly located urban-industrial centers. In turn, this made possible a techno-managerial innovation in *load management*: the electricity produced through myriad technologies and resources was managed as a single load of bulk power, an undifferentiated magnitude to be maximized by adjusting it to the variegated end uses of electricity – private lightning, industrial power, urban transportation systems. In so doing, large electricity utilities were able to create economies of scale that expelled smaller, local providers from the market, creating the conditions for the centralized control of the electric system in fewer hands" (Power Struggles: Dignity, Value & the Renewable Energy Frontier in Spain).

educated, taxed and standardized agricultural practices. They forced mechanization, destroyed soil, provoked exodus, broke communities. Natural and social ecosystems in these peripheral areas didn't matter anymore. The agro-industrial model continued to optimize yields and allowed more land to be nibbled away with the help of petrochemical materials and genetic manipulation, as well as through land consolidation [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg34*]. Today, farmers are no longer peasants but industrial actors, armed with camera drones and calculation softwares for each square inch of land. Wind farm here, anaerobic fermenter there, solar panels everywhere... They produce food no more, but energy; completing the general industrialization of the world.

The centralization of energy networks leads to a loss of social and communal practices, while growing digitalization fosters individualism and creates a multitude of solitudes in place of our communities. We lost our interdependence links. For example, hydroelectric dams integrate rivers into the electricity grid for the sole purpose of producing electricity. This happens to the exclusion of other practices that used to draw a whole social organization within the watersheds. They related directly to the other beings sharing this environment: the river and its seasonal variations, the mills downstream, the fish...

Electrification and intensification of flows also changed our relationship to time. If nothing should ever stop, the heterogeneity of biological, socio-cultural and ecological rhythms doesn't matter anymore. The only concern is about controlled and accounted time of production. We are indoctrinated by the concepts of optimization and yield.

The digitalization of the world and the prostheses it requires generate new dependencies and modify our cognitive capacities. Now we access the world through machines. The 21st century's individual progressively let itself become a cyborg, achieving the dream of modernity with the transfer of the human to the machine [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg43*]. Human being is the last frontier to overcome: she or he is not fast enough, not smart enough, too sensitive to affects; which legitimates the use of machines to think, predict and take decisions in his/her place.

If we cannot separate the technological networks from the engineering thinking that gave them birth, it's because they are grounded on rationalization itself. They are the incarnation of "graphic reason", the way

of interconnecting paths and mountains, lines and points. They are a perfect tool for a politico-military control of territories and flows; a perfect technological matrix now superimposed on the land; an interface between human bodies and technology; the vehicle of progress. A utopia that became true. It is not by chance that today RTE (the French energy net) is the star of their energy transition: its grids allow to turn all the territory into resources.

As you hopefully have understood by now, we are not among those who are campaigning for a state of climate emergency. The decision-makers will not suddenly find themselves with a humanist streak. Above all, they are announcing that we will have to delegate to a centralised and paternalistic power the monopoly of the management of a new crisis that they have largely caused.

The only answer given to all these crises, whether economic, security or health-related, is restrictive measures for civil liberties, violence, and brutal advances in the centralisation of political power. There is no reason to believe that the climate or biodiversity crisis will be any different.

The ongoing disaster is not an engineering problem that could only be solved with technological solutions. It's not an external feature that managers should take into account and integrate in their algorithms to continue as if nothing was happening. In *The Thing* [ed. – '*Le Chose*' in French, '*chose*' meaning '*thing*' but also in this case an acronym for *Coordination Hétéroclite pour l'Obturation des Systèmes Electriques*, authors of this piece (which appeared under the same name but in a different form in the French- and Spanish-language versions)] we assume that we have to go through the disaster by accepting to walk into the unknown. We don't know how to live without the current way of producing electricity. Right now it's true that we are dependent on it, but it doesn't prevent us from fighting against what is destroying us.

If today governments show an increasingly clear authoritarian drift [ed. – see ***Capitalism & Electrification***], it's because they have to face social movements that questions their foundations: police [ed. – see ***On Sexual Murder & Police Sadism***], patriarchy [ed. – see ***Iranian Anarchists on Protests in Response to Police Murder of Mahsa Amini***], gender binary [ed. – see "***We Notice When Bigots Get a Win***"], racism [ed. – see ***Lies of the Land***], colonialism [ed. – see ***'Gállok is the Name of a Place***']. We think that it's also time to tackle the electric order. Today, sitting around a table, we cultivate complicities while growing the dream of one Thing...

This *Thing* was born a long time ago in the past autonomous struggles. **It appeared in the anti-nuclear struggles when one could still find there a radical criticism of the State and the army, before it was locked up in a purely ecological argument that today advocates the renewable industry. We could find it at the bend of collective workshops by re-appropriating knowledge and know-how. It opened squats, cultivated collective lands or made bread in refugee camps. More recently, it was found bunking a pylon, building houses or climbing in an occupied forest. It confronted this world directly by hitting the streets with joy and determination, leaving behind the reformists and their tools for controlling its anger.** The roundabouts – during the Yellow Vest movement [ed. – see ***Capitalism & Electrification***] – taught that a multitude of practices, encounters and jostling were underway, that the linking of all this, that the fact of accepting to be confronted by the other, far from one's political comfort, participates in a process of collective emancipation that is hardly recuperable by the system.

For us, ecological struggles only make sense and can have an impact if they are carried out not only in connection with other struggles, but also by accepting to be crossed by them.

We have too often been asked to justify ourselves: "You are against nuclear and wind power? Very well, but what do you propose?". This world is incoherent, absurd, we will choose neither SARS nor H1N1 [ed. – *two different recent epidemics*!] Their solutions are only new problems and we won't the technicians of their disaster. We don't want to spend our time patching this system of death.

The Thing attacks EDF, its electrical order, its infrastructures and its green propaganda. We seek to re-appropriate that which is controlled and managed by the force of the State and capital at the very heart of our lives. The power grids are essential to their supremacy and all the dominations that flow from it. We want to snoop, dig, investigate, to anticipate the destructive projects that the energy planners hide as long as possible. We will expose their abuses, their setbacks and we will fracture their soothing communication. We will show that we are capable of understanding in their smallest corners these networks which lock us up, that we are able to identify its breaches and to penetrate them with uproar. We won't let them continue their technomegalomaniac delirium without shame.

Against wind industry, let's build wind turbines! Let's re-appropriate the know-how we have been deprived

of, let's take hold of these technical issues that they want us believe are too complex to understand. **Let's leave carbon neutrality to the status quo advocates and meet each other at work-camps and events.... Let's equip ourselves with sufficient technologies, let's pass on the tools, the ability and the desire to overturn a harmful order.**

Because they are spread out, the infrastructures are weak and indefensible: pylons [ed. – see *'It Is Still Possible'*], transformers [ed. – see *The 'Green' Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else*], smart meters [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg36*] and concentrators, 5G [ed. – see *The 5G Net*] antennas: none of these energy nodes can stand without the consent of the population.

The Thing is not a closed group nor a collective. It is a group of people who meet each other, coming from multiple horizons, determined to fight against the electric order and to cultivate **energetic and political autonomy.**

'THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION IS A HOAX'

In the early hours of May 27th [2022], we carried out an incendiary action against the Enjoy carpooling vehicles belonging to the multinational ENI s.p.a. (State-owned oil company) in the Tuscolana-Cinecittà area of Rome. According to local newspapers, 10 cars were completely destroyed, while four others were seriously damaged.

ENI has always been one of the pillars of Italian capitalism, and its interests coincide with those of the State and, consequently, of the governments that succeed one another in administering it, whether they are of the right or the left, because its profits and infrastructures are strategic insofar as they strengthen the State in which they are located, being fundamental for the preservation of economic power, in the contemporary configuration of the capitalist productive system.

ENI is present in many countries where local and international conflicts are active for the control of energy resources: Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Kazakhstan (note that not a word was heard against the oligarch Putin when he sent his troops to quell the uprisings that broke out in that country [ed. – i.e. before that Russian President's intensified invasion of the zones



“It is not our responsibility to sustain unsustainable ways of existence. In point of fact it IS our responsibility to destroy them.”

– Against the “Colonizer’s Burden”

of whiteness themselves, in Ukraine]), to name but a few. In these places, energy in the form of fossil fuels has been extracted from the earth for decades to feed the energy needs of Western industry, in a pattern that takes the form of true neo-colonialism. These extractive activities, it should be remembered, carry great risks for the environment and indigenous populations [ed. – see *'Gállók is the Name of a Place'*], especially in countries where controls and safety systems are consciously minimized in order to maximize profits, as in the case of the Niger Delta, an area severely devastated by continuous crude oil spills and the dispersion of gases and combustion residues in the air resulting from extraction activities.

This situation has led to various forms of resistance over time, including kidnapping technicians, sabotage and outright assaults on oil platforms. These attacks have forced states to mobilize militarily to defend their interests in the region, as well as in others where oil infrastructure and workers are located. **This is the case of the Italian army’s missions in Libya (since 2015), Angola, Ghana, Nigeria, Iraq, or behind its intention to join the international mission in Mozambique, shaken by violent unrest, with the aim of seizing a slice of the ostensible fossil fuel presence in the region.** Humanitarian missions conceal a now-routine method of resource grabbing in foreign developing countries, just as the “export of democracy” turns out to be nothing more than empty

rhetoric to annex states into the Western sphere of influence, leading us to question the very causes of the ongoing instability in some regions. There are countless cases of corruption of local politicians and administrators, in many of these countries there are private mercenary forces financed by Western states, there have been cases of ethnic conflicts fomented by foreign forces [*ed. – so many 'ethnic' conflicts in fact the legacy in the first place of colonial imposition of borders disrupting traditional territories*], with the distribution of arms and the dissemination of false news in order to destabilize entire areas and push local populations to migrate elsewhere.

For at least two decades, Western states have been waging wars and fomenting conflicts for the sole purpose of gaining control of local resources, destabilizing a strategic area and affecting the interests of rival states [*ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg9***]. It is in this sense that one can interpret the wars of invasion in Iraq, Afghanistan or the more recent conflicts in Ukraine, Libya, Syria and Yemen, where the West, with its troops or through specially financed militias, has fought for the plundering of resources and, ultimately, for its own global supremacy.

Politics and international justice have always proved useless in dealing with these events, because there is no real will to change this state of affairs. We recall in this regard the recent acquittals of the top executives of ENI involved in an international corruption case for exploration rights in Nigeria, or the case of SAIPEM in Algeria [*ed. – ENI-held firm acquitted on appeal for corruption over a gas liquefaction plant*].

The devastation and pollution caused by this company does not only affect distant territories, but also takes place here, behind our houses. In the Italian region of Basilicata, for example, warnings have been issued for years because of the presence of pollutants in the areas surrounding the oil plants. The same is true wherever there are extraction or refining plants [*ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg28***], in the Ravenna area as well as near Cagliari. A constant danger to ecosystems and local populations, increased by the fact that these infrastructures are often subject to breakdowns and accidents that, as in the case of the fire at the refinery in Gela in January this year and Livorno on November 30, 2021, cause a massive dispersion of pollutants.

All this, in the total indifference of the institutions, local or not, which are active (entrusting, for example, to the same company the task of monitoring pollution levels in the area) or passive (ignoring the alerts of environmental associations and local populations, not carrying out the necessary controls...), protecting their interests and image.

ENI, because of its dominant position in the hydrocarbon market, is at the forefront of the reconfiguration of the global geopolitical balance. In this phase of restructuring of capitalism, they revolve mainly around the supply chains of raw materials and energy, which are increasingly becoming an instrument of pressure in the various scenarios of conflict between states. To this end, its CEO Claudio Descalzi accompanies ministers Di Maio and Cingolani on their trips abroad in search of new suppliers of crude oil and gas to get Italy out of its dependence on Russian gas,¹ a goal imposed as necessary on Europe by the pressure of the United States in its permanent war for the sharing of global areas of influence at the dawn of a new crisis of capitalism. These trips have led the Italian leadership and state to conclude agreements with the governments of Congo, Algeria and Turkey, thus demonstrating the hypocrisy of the Western denunciation of Putin's dictatorial regime. The lack of democracy is, as we have said, only an excuse that

1 ed. – In that vein, recall the pre-existing struggle against the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline construction (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg83**) running to Italy from the Caspian Sea; over the last decade, opponents in Italy have “locked the security guards in the sites, dismantled fences, erected barricades, lain in ambush,” while as far away as Cannes in France some “anarchist sailors” sank the sail-boat of an engineer working for the project. Specifically regarding reducing Russian dependence, the gas fields 200km from Palestine's coast continue to motivate continued colonial domination of the latter (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg7**): ENI was granted exploration rights by Israel, the State-owned company yet again confirming Italian support of the occupation, a fact not missed by anarchists who fire-bombed two ENI offices in Rome this New Year's Eve. Further, let's consider the communique claiming the 02.12.23 sabotage of key railways in the USA: “We know that the refined oil, the modems, computer parts, semi conductors, and all other commodities traveling out of California along Union Pacific and BNSF train lines everyday for export around the world, facilitates the massacre of Palestinians. [...] Every shipyard, train line, warehouse, and trucking facility needs to operate efficiently for the death machine to be seamless.

“The genocide happening in Gaza is part of a much larger project serving the West's deteriorating hegemonic rule over international trade. The blockage of the Suez Canal for six days in March of 2021 highlighted how precarious this trade infrastructure is. It also revealed how politically dangerous it is for the US, due to Egypt's alliance with Russia, to control such a linchpin in the global economy.

“Biden and Netanyahu seek to bypass the Suez Canal by constructing their own ship route across occupied Palestine. The Ben Gurion canal project, as it is called, named after the founder of Israel, seeks to connect the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba, with its northern port of entry in Gaza. Palestinian liberation stands alone as an obstacle against this furthering of western hegemony.” See also the so-called 'Mettei plan.'

the West uses to overthrow a government when it deems it necessary, but which is not a problem when it serves its interests, as in the case of the countries mentioned or Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

At this particular moment, we are entering a new phase in this process of dividing the world, given the ever-increasing demand for energy, especially electricity, that the West needs due to the exponential spread of ever-new technological devices, a demand that has given rise to the war in Ukraine today. With it, the United States aims to wrest the European market from Russia and squeeze its allies on the continent after allowing them to do business with their historical adversary that has dominated the region for too long.

In this scenario, the oil companies play a significant role as they are materially the ones who have the right to buy and redistribute energy products at the national level. To attack ENI here and now is therefore to contribute to attacking the war in its local ramifications, hitting our own capitalism, which also participates in this umpteenth confrontation between opposing power blocs for the expansion of their zones of influence.

In this framework, which seems to us to sufficiently describe its role in the plundering of resources, the devastation of the environment and the human exploitation it entails, as well as in the complicated game of geopolitical interests of which the Ukraine is only the latest and most visible episode, **the question arises of the ecological transition that the political elites have imagined in order to relieve themselves of responsibility for the ecological and climatic disaster in progress.** It is to be done through ostensible investments in technological innovation and so-called “green” energies, or even through measures as absurd as they are emblematic, such as the inclusion of nuclear and gas in the green taxonomy by the European Union last February.² The real objective is to keep alive an economy that is constantly in crisis by injecting new liquidity and developing new production sectors or modernizing them through continuous subsidies to companies. ENI is clearly participating in this process, trying to grab as much as possible of the billions made available to Italy through the new generation EU, especially by promoting its projects within the framework of this PNRR [*billions of euros ‘Italian Recovery Fund’ investment and reform plan for COVID-19 recovery*], which is the new big business of politicians and

2 ed. – See also, for example, the German Green Party's classification of a liquid natural gas terminal as “hydrogen-compatible”; its pipeline construction has been sabotaged with 1.6-million-euro holes in various places in November and in the rush to reduce Russian dependence deemed “critical infrastructure” as prosecuted as such if attacked.

various leaders. In recent months, many meetings have already taken place between representatives of the energy and fossil fuel industry and the institutions responsible for distributing these funds.

The institutional trips to increase fossil fuel extraction projects and supply, as well as the economic contributions that will be provided for the “transition” to the industry, clearly demonstrate the willingness of the institutions to protect the companies to which they are inextricably linked (there are countless cases of Italian politicians who have obtained administrative positions in companies linked to state interests, and vice versa) and their refusal to take effective action to reduce the industry's impact on the climate. **Rather, it is a monstrous work of “greenwashing” on the part of institutions and multinationals that, after years of promoting, organizing and encouraging the plundering and devastation of territories for profit, with the damage that this implies for the environment and people's health, are now seeking to address the situation that they themselves have created by spreading a false intention to remedy it.** In recent times, there is no company that does not present itself publicly as environmentally conscious. This is why ENI is also trying to give itself a “green” image through misleading advertisements and the promotion of fake ecological projects.

It is clear to us that the ecological transition is a hoax whose only purpose is to contain the growing popular awareness of the climate issue. We recognize as the primary cause of the pollution that is undermining the climate and ecosystems this energy-intensive industrial production system that no one has any intention of questioning, but which is on the contrary being pushed towards renewal, which means its growth through the production of new technologies and new sectors of production that will require the extraction of new raw materials, and will lead to greater energy consumption. Thus, the positivist logic that sees technical progress and capitalist development as the only possible path for human society continues. The ecological transition, as well as war, are only great opportunities to increase profits and to redefine the geopolitical modalities and the distribution of raw materials. It is common knowledge, for example, that the fossil fuel multinationals maximized their profits through the financial speculation that followed the war, while they had, on the contrary, recorded a decline in their profits since the pandemic.

For these reasons, and despite the institutional support and coverage it enjoys, ENI is often at the centre of strong criticism, scandals and more or less independent investigations, which have led various components of society, including

anarchists, to openly speak out against its work by organizing rallies, demonstrations, as well as direct actions and sabotage. These activities have consequently attracted the attention of the repressive institutions responsible for protecting its interests. The latest case is the Bialystok operation, in which an anarchist was accused of setting fire to three Enjoy carpooling vehicles belonging to the said multinational. In the prosecutor's request for conviction, particularly high sentences were requested: eight years and hundreds of thousands of euros in material and image damages to be paid. The aggravating circumstance of terrorism was also requested, a novelty for this type of action, placing the attacks within the framework of a "campaign of intimidation" [ed. – a novelty in Italy at least]. This is intended to increase the penalty in case of conviction, creating a dangerous precedent to intimidate direct action practices. In addition, it aims to make one individual pay for the wave of attacks against ENI in Italy in recent years.

We will not stand idly by in the face of yet another repressive manoeuvre designed to scare us. We will not be intimidated by the increase in the penalties, the repressive measures, nor by the threat of 41bis, an infamous regime of annihilation legalized in the permanent state of exception artfully created by the Italian institutions where our anarchist comrade Alfredo Cospito has recently been transferred [ed. – see '**Our Anarchy Lives**']. And it is not because we are strangers to this feeling, but because it is the passive acceptance of this normality made of environmental devastation, of endemic plundering of resources, of massive exploitation of ecosystems and living beings, of wars, of social control, of massive migrations and of consequent thousands of deaths at the borders of the West [ed. – see **Statement on the Melilla Massacre**] that terrifies us. **It is in this state of terror that we were raised and grew up, and it is through this that fear is transformed into the will to act and the determination to attack.** In recent times, the Italian state has escalated its repression of the anarchist movement in an unprecedented way, using charges never before used in the history of this country (the charge of political massacre, which requires life imprisonment for Anna and Alfredo in the Scripta Manent case [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Sentence of Anarchist Prisoners in Scripta Manent Appeal Trial**]) and imposing extremely heavy sentences (as in the case of Juan [Sorroche]'s 28-year sentence [ed. – for a non-injurious attack on a far-right locale; on appeal becoming "only" 14 years and 7 months]). **But the State may not know that we are now vaccinated against the fear that it would like to impose on us, and that its repression can do nothing.**

Through this action, we want first of all to bring our solidarity to the comrade accused in the Bialystok operation of having burned cars belonging to ENI, because we believe that solidarity consists above all in continuing the practices of attack that the state would like to discourage with its repressive work. The struggle against ENI must not stop, especially now that the contradictions that capitalism has created by producing climate change are calling this company to take its responsibility before the population, and that it is an actor-promoter of the interests of tricoloured capitalism in the conflict in Ukraine and in the redefinition of the structures of global power. To strike ENI today means to sabotage the ongoing war and to act concretely to make those directly responsible for the situation of climatic and environmental instability that we are living pay.

To the comrades on trial for the Bialystok operation who face sentencing in September [ed. – on appeal: 1 year on parole, three 3-month terms, and acquittals].

To Alfredo, Anna and Juan, against whom the state's vengeance has been unleashed. This aggravation of repression must not pass! The interests of the Italian State must be struck everywhere!

*To Giannis Michailidis, anarchist imprisoned in Greece, on hunger strike to the death since May 23th [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Anarchist & Migrant Detainee Struggles Intensify Once Again**], to obtain access to the probation provided by Greek law.
Courage, comrade!*

*For the freedom of Claudio Lavazza [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg62**; now extradited to France for a 10-year sentence] and all long-term prisoners.*

For all the world's anarchist and rebel prisoners.

*For the 13 dead in Italian prisons during the revolts of March 2020 [ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification**]. Revenge!*

**SOCIAL WAR AGAINST THE WARS OF CAPITAL
DEATH TO THE STATE, LONG LIVE ANARCHY
– Rebels for the Extinction of the State & Capital**



**JUNE
11TH**
June11.org

Annual international day of solidarity with Marius Mason (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg70**) & other long-term anarchist prisoners, which the action in Rome ran up to, soon to enter its 20th year

“WE NOTICE WHEN BIGOTS GET A WIN”

[ed. – A conversation from May, hosted by *The Final Straw Radio*. The group of whose members are here interviewed are based in the English city of Liverpool, scene at that time of local and national far-right mobilisations against refugees being housed in UK hotels, using the usual racist tropes about crime and safety, dovetailed with State and media demonisation of migrants crossing the channel from the mainland on small boats. This autumn, the same sentiment ignited across the sea in Dublin, with protests blocking in the Irish parliament and an anti-migrant “white riot” (though doubtless some of the associated looting was opportunistic) after a school stabbing. Aside from the first bystander to intervene in that incident being recently-arrived Brazilian, blame of migrants for the housing crisis there – previously manifested in the burning of hotels and camps housing them – also rarely mentions the gentrifying effect of big tech companies (see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**) flocking to tax breaks of the State.]

TFSR: Hi there! Thanks for coming and talking to us. Can you introduce yourself with your name, any pronouns that you want to use, and any affiliation that you want to share with the listeners?

Puppy: I am Puppy, she/her.

Thigh-highs: I’m Thigh-highs, they/them.

P: We are representing Femboys Against Fascism, an anti-fascist, absurdist joke, starting up in Britain quite recently.

TFSR: That’s a great group name. I’m really happy to have you here. Before we get into the group itself, let’s start with the situation that’s kicked things off. Can you give us some background information about what’s been going on, particularly in Liverpool? What’s caused this conflict, and what’s at stake in it?

P: The government had been ramping up anti-refugee rhetoric in the month before, and they’ve been previously housing migrants and refugees in hotels and having specific deals with private hotels. Like the Suites Hotel in Knowsley, where a fascist riot happened on the 10th of February. They burned a cop car. I’m kind of jealous of them. There were about a hundred anti-fascists to counter 400 to 500 fascists, mostly older people. There was some weird gender stuff going on that night, where the anti-fascists asked the young men to go front, which sounded

very... not what you’d want. From that riot, there’s been more anti-refugee backlash in the media. The politicians have had “Stop the Boats” on their plinth. There’s been a wave of fascist protests across the country outside hotels and a rising fascist movement.

T: And these hotels are often in racist areas. They’re not nice places to stay. They’re quite far from anywhere the people being housed in them would really want to be hanging out.

TFSR: Who’s deciding where the refugees get to have housing? Do you think they choose those, in particular, to put them in a place that will cause conflict?

P: Specific politicians have their own deals and relationships with small businesses and big businesses around the city. Mostly it’s just a governmental issue, Parliament and the MPs, but local councilors have played a role, mayors have played a role. Right now there’s a thing with one of the fascist leaders, because they owned hotels, and they wanted deals with the government, but the mayor worked with different small businesses and different hotels. All the politicians play a role. I don’t know the extent to which any individual ones do.

T: I think some of it’s just the government takes hotels, and it’s done by bureaucrats, and they don’t really care about where these people are being put. Some of the more rundown areas that have a lot of racism are the cheaper places.

TFSR: It’s just striking me that it’s a place that’s particularly going to cause conflict, huh?

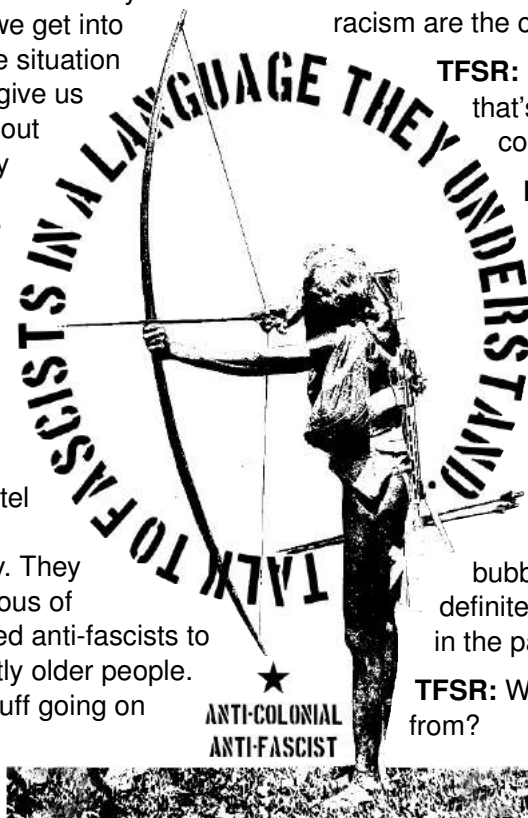
P: Yeah, out in the boroughs, not near the center of the cities, out in rural areas that have also been quite deprived since the ‘80s and austerity in Britain [ed. – see *‘The Position of the Excluded’*].

T: Also, very white areas.

P: Very white areas. There’s been a reactionary backlash bubbling up for a long time. It’s definitely more intense than it has been in the past 20 years.

TFSR: Where are the refugees coming from?

P: Right now there’s a lot from Yemen...



T: Yemen, Syria...

P: Kurdistan.

TFSR: It's not Ukrainian refugees, right? We're talking about people fleeing conflict regions in the Middle East and those areas.

P: Yeah, the people targeted are definitely brown migrants. Ukrainians still get a fair bit. The far-right is also very pro-Russia and spray-paint "Z" about the place.¹ So it's gotten quite rough but definitely mostly [for] darker-skinned people.

T: The government had a separate scheme for Ukrainian refugees. I think that scheme's still got a lot of problems. But it was more trying to find spare rooms in people's houses and strange "We're all in this together" nationalism stuff.

TFSR: Also telling about how white supremacy comes out in how they treat the different migrants. But I wanted to go back to that initial riot you were talking about: the fash burned the cop car? And in that initial moment, what was the relationship between the police and the fascists? Because we often see that the police will be protecting fascists, rather than them having straight-up conflict.

P: It's been kind of weird. The fash were definitely antagonistic towards the police that night. The police protected the anti-fascists. They were definitely doing their thing, trying to maintain respectability for the violence inflicted on the refugees. They didn't want a pogrom happening. That's bad for their image, and it was quite shameful. The fash were definitely antagonistic toward the cops. I think that might be something quite local. There's a local antagonism towards the police in Merseyside.

T: Yeah, it has varying politics to it.

P: Whether you're fash or you're left-wing, you hate the police if you're in Liverpool, usually. It's a different... But then again, the cops were really on the side of the fascists in most of the protests, constantly misgendering and harassing anti-fascists, arresting anti-fascists and not fascists.

T: It was probably more the fascist [protest] was so antagonistic towards cops, they shot fireworks and brought sledgehammers.

P: And they shot themselves.

1 ed. – Letter painted in white on 1,000s of Russian military vehicles in the lead up to major Ukraine invasion, since then adopted by Russian media, nationalists, politicians and reactionary influencers; thought to stand for either for "Za pobedy" (for victory) or "Zapad" (west, i.e. from Russia).

T: It turned into more of a fight between the cops and the fascists, even though ideologically they're not that far apart.

TFSR: That's the three-way-fight analysis, too. Sometimes they side together but sometimes they don't, and we have to fight both sides as anti-authoritarians. Is there a single group that's behind the fascist demonstrations or different groups? And what's the history with that, and who's involved?

P: Mostly, it's different social media explosions. Different groups have been vaguely associated with it. One is the People's Resistance in Liverpool. They've been associated with Liberate Liverpool, the political party, and also the fascist protests. There are also North West Infidels, which are a racist drug gang, and there's Patriotic Alternative. They've been doing a lot of stuff around the country. Students Against Tyranny, they're all part of similar networks, and they communicate with each other. It seems like a solid movement built out of different groups and people on social media. I don't know who organized specifically the first Knowsley [protest], but I know that Patriotic Alternative tried to capitalize on it. They claim to have leafleted houses in the area before.

TFSR: Patriotic Alternative is also a group that does a lot of anti-trans demonstrations too, right [ed. – see *Nicolas Casaux, Transphobe, is Lying to You?*]

P: Yeah. They all do.

TFSR: So Liberate Liverpool, is that an actual party?

P: I don't know if they're registered as a political party. There was a thing about that.

T: I think they registered too late for a particular deadline, but I think they are now.

P: They're a whole other beast to jump into. Back onto the Knowsley stuff, what caused that? It would be a video spread on social media of a secondary schoolgirl being asked for a number by an older brown man. There's no evidence of this having anything to do with the hotel. So it's back to this thing of social media buzz that exploded as a thing, and local racists connected this incident to the Suites Hotel. It's been a groundswell. You hear it from taxi drivers and from your local bigots. A lot of people right now are believing the fascists' lies about refugees being dangerous.

T: Also, just... the ground has been primed a lot for this sort of stuff. It's in government messaging, and it's in the newspapers. One of the current Prime Minister's big things is "Stop the boats." You'll see newspaper headlines about refugees arriving on boats.

P: They call it an invasion in the fucking daily papers. There are concentration camps that they're being sent to [ed. – see **1 May 2021...**], and I don't think that's an exaggeration.

T: Yeah, it's fucked.

TFSR: So it's a general atmosphere that's both the media, the mainstream politicians, this social media stuff, and then these fash groups like Patriotic Alternative coming in and stoking the flames or just pulling on the energy that comes when [there's] something [like] that instance of the social media video. If there's some actual response to that in the neighborhood, then all these other groups can take advantage of that to further this anti-immigrant, nationalist, fascist idea and energy.

T: Patriotic Alternative didn't organize Knowsley. They previously tried to organize a protest outside the Suites a few days before and not got much traction. They'd also claimed to have leafleted. It's unclear if they did. But their organizing on their own didn't do this. Some of their people were at the riot, but in the footage I've seen, they're not on the frontlines doing stuff.

TFSR: As far as I can tell from the stuff I've learned about Patriotic Alternative, they come in and take credit for things that they just show up for.

P: The fascist Socialist Workers Party.

TFSR: Sounds like Nazis. But they present themselves more clean-cut and stuff?

P: That's a joke, sorry. The Socialist Workers Party [SWP] do that on the Left in Britain. [laughs]

TFSR: Right. Like the authoritarian communists do the same thing. [laughs] We've got a little bit about

what's the general atmosphere of anti-migrant stuff that's coming from everywhere and who's showing up to these demonstrations, but what do you make of the people who are countering it? Is that organized? Is that also popular and people just are pulling in? Who's part of the opposition to these fascist demonstrations?

P: It's being varied. For the first one we organized, [against] the first fascist one in Knowsley, it was 100 people turned up. That was all the Left groups and the unions. Then they got bored.

T: And scared.

P: And scared. Yeah, they got scared. From that, after the first swell... I think this happened in Knowsley and in the Wirral. I don't think we mentioned the one in the Wirral, but there was also a fascist protest outside of a hotel in the Wirral. A similar thing, Wirral Welcomes Refugees and Care 4 Calais [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg7**] and all that came out for the first one, and then it was less people by the next one. And the fascists didn't turn up that night, so that was good. But I think mostly, it's just been small groups of trans people. There were consecutive protests in Knowsley after the first one, like every week on a Friday, and you'd have under ten trans people there for five hours. And on the other side of the street, there's 50 to 70 local bigots, all revved up, shouting, "Send them back" and all that stuff.

I'm, frankly, really pissed off by the Liverpool Left, They've come out when it's been easy. They've come out in the city center, but they don't treat it like these refugees' lives are in danger. They're getting more attacks on the streets. They treat it like it's something that they can just keep to the city center. "We only have to really come out when the fascists come to the city center." I'm just very pissed off at that. A lot of people have very fancy reasons to do nothing. I'm not gonna take credit for that. The fancy reasons to sell the newspaper, and that's the most politically effective thing, and giving speeches outside empty buildings. "You don't want to put young activists in danger" and all these kinds of lines and excuses that people use to be like, "We'll leave it on you, the most depressed people, on you refugees and trans people to defend yourselves." This is my admonishment of the Liverpool Left.



The Pink Peacock café in Glasgow, Scotland, offering "free food, literature, & community" since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic: closed in June after harrasment from TERFs (see The TERFs Weekend from Hell) & anti-semitic abuse from the SWP, but asserting that "it isn't the end of our queer jewish anarchism"

TFSR: So the main Left is just sticking to more symbolic actions and not following out where all these protests are going into the different outskirts or rural areas.

P: Yeah, recently on Church Street, the main street of Liverpool, you've had the Socialist Workers Party, the Revolutionary Communist Group, Socialist Party, all on the same street. And then down the road, the racist party in the left-wing city of Liverpool, and none of them are doing anything about it. They're all ignoring it being like "Well, it's more important that we sell the newspaper here. That's how we're most politically effective." They're not going in front of the [right-wing] stalls. They're not trying to counter it. They're not counter-protesting it. It's really shameful because it's been left to a few activists to really put themselves at risk when they don't have to, when we're supposed to outnumber them anyway, when we do outnumber them, when there are twelve socialists on the street and four racists, and the four racists are just getting away with it.

TFSR: That's interesting that you're pointing out that the context of Liverpool politically is more of a Left city and known for that, but this issue is not really bringing out people. I'd like to hear a little bit about why you think it's trans people that are showing out? Is it because of previous organizations that the trans people in town have been doing? Or is it just because you find that there's solidarity amongst the trans people with refugees in the city?

P: There's a broad understanding a lot of trans people around the country are feeling, which is just "They're coming for us," that we're facing the biggest scale back in our legal rights ever in history. There was a murder of a young trans woman in Warrington, a county neighbor here. I think every trans person in the area was like "Well, it could be me or people I love next." We've come to a queer nihilist perspective with it. We'll probably go down fighting.

T: Hopefully not.

P: Hopefully not, but I think a lot of trans people have that view now of "We want to go down with some fight."² That's why it's usually those people doing

2 ed. – "Anarchists have been fighting for sexual and gender freedom for well over a century, starting long before leftists or liberals. That gives us an additional interest in this fight and a longer heritage of resistance to drawn upon. [...] In 1916 and 1917, Emma Goldman delivered sympathetic lectures on homosexuality to audiences across [the so-called US], changing the lives of hundreds of people we now might call queer who had never heard their experiences and desires publically discussed with compassion. One of them, Dr. Alan Hart, was so inspired by Goldman's anarchist and pro-queer ideas that he took a previously unprecedented step, securing what was likely

direct action.

T: I think it's also we notice when bigots get a win or have successes. We notice it a lot in the streets because they're a lot more confident harassing us and stuff. Those connections are more transparent to us as trans people.

TFSR: That makes sense. It emboldens them, and the fascists will attack refugees and trans people. We're the targets for them, too. I want to talk more about the anti-trans antagonism, but before we get there, can I ask, are [there] connections with the refugees that you are forming? What other solidarity is being done besides countering the fascists? Is there any other work going on in the city or elsewhere to support the migrants?

P: Care 4 Calais have been supporting people in the hotel. I don't really know the details of that. Different anti-fascist groups, I think. Merseyside Anti-Fascist Network, who we don't get on very well with, they've been supporting some people in the hotel. And the counter-demonstrations outside hotels did prevent fascists from being near the entrance and being audible to the refugees. There has been a groundswell of support. It's not nearly enough. Building community is a good thing in terms of supporting migrants, actually integration, not just rapid support from a megaphone or store-bought gifts. I think our support, a big part of it, would be just realizing that there are people out to get them. I keep repeating myself. Counter-demonstration is probably the most successful way of supporting them as individuals.³

T: But it's definitely a hard situation to make more personal connections because the hotel is quite locked down. They're very used to just having

the first gender-affirming surgery to take place in the US and living the rest of his life as a man. [...] A great proportion of those drawn to anarchist ideas today are trans and queer; materials that address gender and sexuality are in high demand. Many young trans and queer people are seeking out anarchist ideas as a pathway to gender and sexual liberation and many young anarchists are challenging gender and sexual norms.

"This makes it crucial for anarchist movements to confront this wave of anti-trans oppression. It's an opportunity to support a targeted population, to connect gender and sexual liberation with other struggles, and to mobilize around an issue that speaks to the priorities and needs of young radicals" (The Fight for Gender Self-Determination).

3 ed. – Aside from the limiting specifics that this interview refers to, we would point out a glaring weakness of Western anti-fascism tends to be preferring the moral high-ground of being "against the racists" to actually working out how to cross divides of racialisation; see **Memory as a Weapon; Barcelona Anarchists at Low Tide.**

random bigots try to wander in and harass people. So it's not really a situation where you want to just go approach people. You know how there are small moments in the street you get with people, where it's sometimes not nice. It's been those sorts of things more.

P: Just solidarity that you can feel in other people in your daily interactions with a bigoted world.

TFSR: Right, they'll see the persistence of people supporting them, but I guess it also sounds like the conditions of housing them in a particular place that's under threat and is isolated and separated makes it harder to form solidarity. I don't know if these people are able to find jobs in town, or are they just relegated to the hotels most of the time?

T: Pretty much all of them can not find jobs because of how employment law is in the UK. If you apply for a proper job, you have to have the right to work in the UK, and that will get checked. If you're seeking asylum, or you are a refugee, you often just won't have that.

TFSR: Right, it's just total isolation.

T: Yeah, the border regime in the UK is quite awful. It's quite diffuse because if you want to rent a house, your landlord has to check you have the right to be in the UK and will check your passport. And similarly just having a job. So the border penetrates.

TFSR: Going back to your group, how did you all get together? Did your group start just particularly aiming at this confrontation? Or was there other work that you were doing previously that led to this?

P: Anti-fascists were already organizing small stuff as individuals between friends. Different people in different groups who were also fed up with how their groups have acted, some people who aren't in political groups specifically. **It's just a few people who trust each other. It's a joke. We're quite firm on, "We're not going to be a real group. We hate the real groups." They're pretentious, and**

"What does the cry-laugh emoji symbolise? At its heart, it's a symbol not of apathy, but of an active uncaring. On social media, it's used to suggest that this thing that you are so exercised about is merely a source of humour for me. [...] As journalist Abi Wilkinson wrote in 2016, what's most disturbing about the emoji isn't the transparent thin-skinnedness dressed up as unbotheredness, but that often "the topic that appears to have amused them is the sort of thing you'd hope any empathetic, reasonable person would find unconscionably horrific." [I had long suspected that] this was merely a result of social media's tendency to wring out nuance and to privilege only the most antagonistic, nuance-free of political positions, combined with the degradation of news broadcasting into a form of algo-chasing team sport. Catch any Cry-Laugh people over a kitchen table then they, like me, will surely temper their slogans and admit a little humanity, no? Now I'm not so sure. [...] After 27 people drowned in the icy-cold English Channel last week trying to claim asylum in the UK, Kent Online posted coverage of the story on their Facebook page. [Journalist Ed] McConnell decided to talk to some of the 96 people who responded to the tragedy with a 'laugh' response (Facebook's own version of the Cry-Laugh emoji) and ask them 'why?'. As I mentioned earlier, the "laughter" is a thin tissue that covers the real emotion: rage. *"rapists murders (sic) nonces terrorists and they are robbing our country left right and centre cos they come from **** all and got no morals. Don't like them never will there (sic) scum,"* replied one, while many others responded, in words both long and short, by telling McConnell to fuck off. One could argue that being digitally doorstopped on Facebook Messenger would only entrench their positions, but I have to believe that, one-to-one, many of those questioned would maintain their contempt for human life. It is, of course, possible to argue for tighter immigration restrictions without such open contempt for migrants themselves (although I would also argue that dehumanisation and violence is an inherent part of the border regime, whether couched in polite language or not). But why, in Britain, is such cruelty delivered as a form of humour? [...] Mockery of one's friends is an intimate bonding experience for the British, one which visitors and immigrants often struggle to understand as differing from hostility. [...] So where now for the Cry-Laugh Nation? It can only get worse before it gets better, if it ever does. Cry-Laugh Humanitarian Disasters will be joined by Cry-Laugh Human Rights abuses (after the recent jailing of nine climate activists, the Daily Star led with a group "hahaha" on its front page, surely missing a trick by not posting the Cry-Laugh Emoji instead). My prediction, as the rainy island gradually slips beneath the comforting waves of the North Atlantic, its food supply rotting in trucks at the Channel ports, the Royal Navy sinking the occasional French trawler every time the Tories flag in the polls, its hospital wards choking under disinvestment, is that the Cry-Laugh Emoji will solidify from instinct to politics. The Cry-Laugh Nation will discover a "if you don't cry-laugh, you'll cry" Blitz Spirit, where caring about a single other fucking person on earth will finally become totally taboo. Under a Union Jack superimposed with the yellow patriot's hideous grimace, an entire movement will surely emerge offering, as fascist movements always do, a clear manifesto for banter-based action, a simple, blunt solution to the nation's myriad problems: 🤔🇺🇰🤔🇺🇰🤔🇺🇰" – Cry-Laugh Nation

they have these pretensions of grandiosity, and they end up being social cults. They restrict people's social lives. They can lead to situations of abuse quite easily. Our way of doing this is, "We're not a real group. We're a joke." And it exists as a piss-take of, "Those are the real groups." You'll see at demonstrations now the Trades Union Coalition, the Socialist Workers Party, Femboys Against Fascism, and the Revolutionary Communist Group, but I find that quite funny. We dislike the fascists' claims to...

T: Yeah, it is a joke as well, but the concept of the "femboy" is quite fun. I really enjoy it as a non-binary person. It's very annoying, this fascist claim to "femboys." We want to disrupt that and take that back and be like "No. That's our thing".

P: Also, there are so many groups that have, especially in Liverpool, it's "Class! Class! Class!" so we just thought "Tran!" We'll throw that as our first thing. We've spoken to other groups in the city, and we've prodded them and shamed them into doing stuff. They've seen us do stuff, and they were like, "Oh, we can't have them upstage us." They've done a bit themselves. We've made friends as well. And also from the entire country, we're hearing, "Why is Liverpool's political situation so fucked up?" Our theory on that is people are comfortable, people are complicit. You've got a good thing on this?

T: Before Femboys Against Fascism became a thing, we were hearing from a lot of people we know around the UK, "First Knowsley happened. What's being done?"

P: "Leafletting!"

T: "We thought Liverpool was this left-wing place," and this just seems to be rolling on here, and the effects are being felt all across the UK.

TFSR: It is funny to reclaim "femboys" because it's so strange how that became a part of a fascist meme too. Because you're saying it's an absurdist formation, does that show up in the ways that you go to these clashes? Is it the absurdity beyond just having the signs of Femboys around the more formal Left organizations and the awful fascists?

P: We've decided to make posters. We're gonna do some absurdist stuff. I'm not sure how much we want to tie ourselves to it right now. But we've been doing mostly just direct action. Because that's what's really been missing in Liverpool, direct action against this. What came about is, we're the folk, and we've brought together the folk who were up for direct action, and that's what we're about.

T: In terms of dress, it's really dependent on what we're doing and when, because we have used black bloc and gray bloc tactics. Because we are a bunch of trans people, we do often have to be quite careful about fascists trying to dox us and stuff. But for some of the protests, we go with more of a fun look. These are usually the ones where we're not gonna have to worry so much about negative things happening.

P: We've got a bunch of cis [*ed. – i.e. non-trans*] people to shroud ourselves in.

TFSR: Can we talk a little bit more about what the clashes have been like that you've seen? What the involvement of the police has been, if it's changed over time? Because you said that, at first, it was a conflict between the fash and the police, but it's changed towards the police harassing the anti-fascists. What repression have you faced, either from the police or from the fascists because of these different protests?

P: After the first Knowsley riot, there was a second one. On the second Knowsley [one], there was a car search of anti-fascists, illegally, for information gathering. They took pictures of everything they could. There was a non-binary person who was searched by cis-men illegally. That was because there was a bunch of riot cops in a van, and they massively outnumbered the anti-fascists. Constant transphobia in every interaction we've had with them, intentionally misgendering us. We've got so much of it recorded as well and just out there.

That was quite a tough night for a lot of people. The anti-fascists managed to hold out as long as the fascists and prevent them from assembling in front of the gate. But then, from the night after that, there was a fascist protest at Lime Street Station, which is right in the city center, and the anti-fascists massively outnumbered the fascists this time round. The police were forming a line protecting the fascists. And as they got chased off, and people started to disperse, the cops started picking up and arresting anti-fascists, brutally attacking one of the anti-fascists, and constantly misgendering, intentionally misgendering, and trying to pin stuff on the anti-fascists. One person got slapped with caution, but there were no charges. So it was an illegal arrest. That's not a judgment of morality, of course. That's just by the police's own logic.

T: We think the police, when they were just arresting people afterwards, they were probably just trying to gather information, maybe intimidate as well.

P: Yeah, they tried to get into people's phones. They didn't manage to, but they were trying to get into people's phones. Then, two days after that, the

fascists organized to have a protest at St. George's Steps, which is one of those big, empty buildings that people like to get protests at. [laughs] 20 to 30 anti-fascists gathered, and fascists kept coming in in small groups and getting told to fuck off. The cops kept an eye on that and hung about the area. Every single demonstration we've attended, they're trying to rile people up, trying to get people, just intentionally misgendering anti-fascists quite constantly, going right up to them and stepping on them and shit and forcing them back, saying some really weird shit.

T: With Knowsley, there were fascist protests. After the first one, there were basically ones almost every week. I think they were just trying to repeatedly call the same thing, get the same thing to happen. The anti-fascist crowd was smaller after the first Knowsley cause I think a lot of people were quite scared and shaken up by what happened.

P: I think by the end of it, it was just trans people.

T: Yeah. There were just countless Friday nights, where on one end of the road, you've got the fascists, trying to repeat an earlier success, and a small group of anti-fascists at the other end sticking it out. It was mostly just a battle of attrition, who could hold the space and who would keep coming out every week almost.

P: The anti-fascists outlasted them. I think that's because the anti-fascists brought music and food, and [the racists] brought racist banners. And also their love is stronger than hate. I think that's cool to mention. It was a demonstration of love, as well, as much as trying to drown out the fascists.

T: Yeah. I think you're right, the fascists aren't as good at preparing for protests. They don't think about, "Oh, maybe my friend might need some water or might want a snack."

P: First aid or...

T: Or bringing a first aid kit.

P: "What if the cops talk to us?"

T: They're often not as prepared for holding a space for as long. **Eventually, the fascist protests at Knowsley did stop. I think that was in large part due to that fact that they weren't getting what they wanted to because of the anti-fascists, and their numbers were dwindling because of that.**

There were also a couple of fascist demonstrations in another area of Merseyside, the Wirral, that were less big and eventually petered out. Currently, there aren't consistent fascist protests outside hotels in Merseyside.

Unfortunately, these kind of style of protest are still making their way across the UK. I think they're getting largely beaten in other areas of the UK, but there have been a lot of them inspired by the first Knowsley one. I might be rambling, but the first Knowsley one was not the first kind of attempt at this sort of protest. Various figures had been trying this sort of thing for a while. Like Nigel Farage [*ed. – former figure-head of the pro-Brexit UK Independence Party*] tried to get a similar thing going a couple of years ago, but it didn't really take in the same way, and it didn't really explode across the country in the same way.

TFSR: Can you talk a little bit more about how the struggle is showing up in the north, in Liverpool and that area, and how it connects to things going on in other parts of the UK? Since you're saying it seemed to spread but the show-up is different in other places, which is counterintuitive because you said that Liverpool seems like a place that would be showing up more in force.

T: I think some of it is that Liverpool has this reputation. It makes a success here count more for the right-wingers because they can say, "Oh, they did it in Liverpool. We could probably do it here where it's less left-wing."

P: They've got placards saying, "We're not far-right racists, just concerned parents." So they're trying to de-tie themselves from the openly fascist movements. Or at least not make it obvious.

T: I think there is also an element of, when right-wingers and fascists see something working, they'll try and repeat it elsewhere. So you can get a rash of copycats. This even results in some silly things. Like following the Truckers' Convoy in Canada⁴, there

4 ed. – Reference to a 2022 'Freedom Convoy' movement against mandatory COVID-19 vaccines for truckers crossing the US-Canada border (though, according to 'Ill Winds from Ottawa: Thinking Through the Threats & Opportunities as a Far-Right Initiative Gains Momentum', with a precedent in "the 'yellow vests' movement in 2019, which was inspired by (an ideologically refracted view of) a decidedly more heterogenous social uprising in France [*ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification***]" - albeit, ironically, there a predominantly Anglophone phenomenon – featuring a truck convoy to the capital city of Ottawa, airing grievances over Islam, immigration, border security, and any threat to oil and gas industry: such as, for example, indigenous-led resistance; see **Eric Laursen Owes Me a Lamp**). Far-right organizers and former cops held prominent positions in this movement, which blocked several border crossings and held encampments, and earned the admiration of the far-right internationally (cop-cat actions being proposed in Belgium, Australia and the US).

The author of the aforementioned text thinks that (aside from "some truckers [being] business owners, not workers") it isn't useful to even term this as a truckers'

were fascist groups in the UK trying to do their own truckers' convoy, which just doesn't work the same way in the UK and just went nowhere.

TFSR: The "concerned parent" thing sounds familiar because that's the rhetoric that's being used by the right here, specifically in anti-trans stuff, but also in terms of fighting anti-racist education. It's interesting to hear that they're invoking that too. That's my other question. Since the UK is known for being a particular hotbed of anti-transness [*ed. – see Lies of the Land*], if you wanted to talk more about how you

protest: "The "transportation industry" has been under threat for a long time now. At some point, it is presumed, automation – that is, self-driving vehicles and delivery drones – will become the new means of delivering goods from place to place. This will significantly reduce the need for human workers who drive big rigs, if not eliminate it entirely. "The trucker" might be a reasonable stand-in for a problem that faces large segments of the working class as a whole.

"In Canada, as many have noted, the vast majority of truckers are vaccinated already. About one in five people employed in the industry is South Asian, and there are more who are non-white and/or come from other countries. The convoy, the occupation, and the aligned blockades and rallies are not representative of "truckers" at all. Certainly, there are some truckers involved, but – are we talking about hard-working people who got fired over their vaccination status? Or those who own trucking companies – capitalists with fleets of big rigs and spare time? Whatever the case, I think it's pretty clear that most of the participants in this event have historically made a living in some other way than trucking. This is especially true of the crowd that has been gathering on Saturdays and Sundays."

Distinct from the quite superficial paradox of fascists fighting police on Liverpool streets, the so-called 'Freedom Convey' represents something of a more complex issue that anarchists and other rebels opposing the new reactionary wave would do well to contemplate. The author continues (referencing the various fascist organisers present at the movement's inception): "Just because these sorts set things off, that does not mean they control the movement, let alone own it. They are probably destined to fight each other over the remains of the movement at some point in the future.

[...] If there is a contradiction inside the protests centered in Ottawa, it is that right-wing people love borders, police, and state power, but this is ostensibly a protest against the border, the police, and the power of the state under its current management. This could be a fault line along which we might force a rupture between the people who are there out of an ignorant desire to rebel and those who are there out of a cynical desire to advance a fascist, statist project. The fact that right-wing anti-mandate protesters consider vaccine passports "fascism" but also want to establish more border controls – to make it harder to get any kind of passport – should represent a vulnerability for them. [W]hen they complain about police checking for vaccine cards, but support police in arresting and imprisoning people by the million – when they object to the government placing limits on economic activity, but

see beyond just Liverpool, where it's a trans group that's showing up, but how you see connections between this migrant support struggle and support for trans people against the attacks by the right wing and the state itself.

P: The anti-fascist movement, in response to the fascist protests and the fascist groundswell, has been almost entirely trans people. Almost everyone who's been on the direct actions, especially the more risky ones, and especially some of the longer ones – trans. That's all across the country. North to South, Wales

not to the vast economic disparities that force workers to face potentially lethal risks simply in order to pay rent – they are not taking a stand in favor of freedom so much as they are willfully changing the subject from the encroachments of state power as a whole to a few details of state policy. This is part of the process through which a spurious right-wing opposition functions to redirect rebellious impulses into ersatz movements that ultimately strengthen state institutions.

"It is possible that a consistent movement opposing state control in favor of medical autonomy could serve as a space in which those who oppose vaccine passports could go through a process of political development. But for this to be possible, these movements would have to foster a systemic analysis of power, whereas in fact, they are dominated by right-wing elements intent on limiting their political horizons. Therefore, at the minimum, it is necessary to oppose and outflank the right-wing elements in these movements – which is the subject of the following text.

[...] In France, anarchists used the tactic of property destruction to carve out space in the Yellow Vest movement: much of the far right did not want to be associated with property destruction, whereas many of the random angry people who got involved in the movement were comfortable with it. Perhaps actually opposing the border itself could have a similar impact here?

[...] Considering that at least one poll suggests that a third of Canadians surveyed felt they had "a lot in common" with the goals of the convoy when it initially rolled into Ottawa, it is imperative to understand that many of the people showing up to these actions do not have fixed political identities yet. They are less politically literate, less politically entrenched than we are, and therefore less likely to recognize the telltale signs of overtly racist, chauvinist, and otherwise objectionable politics in their fellow marchers, but also less likely to understand our arguments or be moved by them [*ed. – although, somewhat contradictory to this, the same author also says that "most commonly shared characteristics of most of the resident occupiers is that they were involved in right-wing street activism of some kind before 2022"*].

"We need to identify what opportunities these events might open up, rather than simply seeking yet another confirmation that we are all doomed or that everyone else in our society has lost their minds. The political terrain itself is shifting. I do not think "the left" is going to be able to stop that shift simply by showing up and opposing the right-wing people who see themselves as opposing the current order.

[...] In April-May 2020, when the far right were

to Scotland, we're all feeling it. There's specifically a groundswell of trans anarchists, who are quite furious with the state of things. They have this understanding that Britain's against them, and we've got to build our own communities and look out for each other and look out for people we can build community with. Trans people know that they're the target right now. It's all across the country. In any direct action anti-fascist group that's not ran in a hierarchical way, where they end up doing nothing, it's trans people throwing themselves in the front of it. Makes me proud. I'm already proud to be trans. But more.

T: Transphobia is also the norm for all the political parties in the UK. Both the main parties, Labour and Tories, use it and tolerate it within their ranks and will use transphobic rhetoric. There's also subtler aspects that come out in the government messaging. When they talk about refugees, they often talk about the figure of the male refugee as this violent figure and use this idea of an essentialized male threat.

TFSR: So they're using gender as part of the attempt to whip up violence against migrants with a typical appeal to fear from racialized men. I see that connection to the anti-trans stuff, too, because when they talk about trans women, they always are just saying, "These are actually scary men in disguise."

T: Thanks, that's precisely what I was trying to say. It's this idea of essentialized maleness [*ed. – see 'The Scarcity Dynamo'*] that's placed upon people to say these people are bad and dangerous, and we should do bad things them.

P: There's a problem in the movement. I think it's worth mentioning that local political groups, especially in Liverpool, because of the history of the socialist city, the supposedly anarchist groups, the socialist groups have a massive transphobia problem. The leaders of the local socialist groups will casually misgender their trans members and then fake-apologize afterwards. The anarchists in the city...

T: Some of them...

holding armed protests at government buildings in the US [*ed. – against COVID restrictions*], anarchists didn't go and defend the city halls. Anarchists and many other people who hate the police took action on a different front, responding to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black people [*ed. – see 'The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis'*], and thereby changed the whole terrain of discourse. In fact, because of their brief friction with the police who were defending those government buildings, the far right took weeks to react to the uprising of May 2020, during which the uprising gained a tremendous amount of ground and temporarily eclipsed their entire agenda in the public eye. In short: anarchists were not reactive, but proactive, and it paid off."

P: Some of them... I'd say a lot of them have proven that they're quite not willing to stand against transphobia. They're quite happy to have trans folks come to their events and participate in their stuff. Again, for security, I won't go more into that. But there's a local massive problem in the political groups that are supposed to be pro-trans just completely ignoring trans people. We mentioned feeling more harassed in the street and getting attacked more.

T: Yeah, there are a fair amount of organized fascists in the UK. There are not loads of them, but there are some, and they don't all have the exact same ideology. You'll see, occasionally, people from different fascist tendencies will still turn up to the same demonstrations because they all have transphobia and racism. They'll still turn up at the things, but it is usually different groups organizing things. Not always. I think some of the anti-drag queen protests that have been called by particular fascist groups also usually call things around racism and trying to protest at hotels.

P: Yeah, if I could just go into the People's Resistance and Students Against Tyranny. They're two of the ones that have organizing a lot of stuff.

TFSR: The fascist groups, right?

P: Yeah, those are openly hard-right. I'm not sure how much they admit that they're fascists, but the People's Resistance, they've got a public Telegram, on that stuff you see just slur after slur after slur by all their members.

And Liberate Liverpool is closely tied with the People's Resistance. I think it's worth just having a rundown of who they are and what they're about. They masquerade as anti-corruption. **It's a classic fascist strategy to be anti-corruption because every politician is corrupt.** They can use that as a wedge. There's a dissatisfaction with Labour because it's Labour enacting the austerity and enacting the racism and the transphobia in Liverpool. Labour's had power here for a very long time, so they're feeding on people's dissatisfaction with that. The leader is basically a local business owner who wanted deals with the mayor, but because the mayor dealt with other people, he started their own campaign.

It's built around a lot of different groups. They're basically quite tied to each other with the People's Resistance and also a soup kitchen, which is quite scary because that community connection is what they've really been trying to build out. They said, "House the homeless." And by that, they mean, "House the homeless, not refugees."

They've been holding street stalls against what they call "15-minute cities." You can explain this well, yeah?

T: Oh, it's an entire thing. But the short version of it is it's...

P: Anti-semitic...

T: Yeah, well most conspiracy theories, actually, when you dig into them. But 15-minute cities is one of the current right-wing things in the UK, because of some proposed changes Oxford City Council was making to how people can drive around Oxford to make it less congested. It's quite boring, technocratic stuff, but it has some scary-sounding proposals in it, like increased use of license plate readers to divide the city into zones...

P: And what they've taken from that, I just want to mention ... "show us your papers", it's fencing off communities.

T: Yeah, when it's only really about congestion zones. Lots of cities do this sort of stuff but usually do with infrastructure, like making roads one-way, or turning them into dead ends, so that annoying people can't just drive their cars through a small street. But because these people are very car-obsessed and identify it with their freedom, any move to make things a bit nicer for other people, like people cycling or walking, is seen as an affront for them.

Admittedly, the Oxford proposal is a bit weird because it entails way more license plate readers and keeping counts of how many times people have been in certain areas and charging them if they've done particular journeys too many. So there's changing infrastructure, which is a way more sensible thing to do. There have been weird protests in Oxford about this by right-wing conspiracy groups. It's become the new go-to thing that they're trying out, even if it isn't really that interesting. So they have to make it interesting by adding on a bunch of conspiracies about how the government is going to track everywhere you are and find you if you move outside your neighborhood. And usually just admit it's about tracking where cars go.

P: Quickly on to Liberate Liverpool. They've been including on their street stall ex-EDL [English Defense League] members, known fascists. They try and keep their chants subtle, to anti-corruption and just "Liberate Liverpool." But they're trying to have a



pastiche of not being a fascist group. They've been running in local council elections. One of the people had to resign from running from that because anti-fascists went into social media and dug up them using excessive slurs and talking about the need to wipe out sexual degenerates.

There's a lot of stuff in their social media, in their networking, that's very tied to American conspiracism. You see a lot of stuff that's QAnon stuff [ed. – see **About the Reactionary Drift of Some "Comrades"...**]. It's really penetrated. That's just some stuff I thought worth mentioning about them. Also, they're trying to do a postering game. They seem to have money behind them. They seem to have small business money behind them, a bunch of different local small businesses, because they've got a lot of materials, and they've been having people put up their posters professionally, before they get ripped down, of course.

TFSR: It's interesting, too, that the Liberate Liverpool name is confusing because that sounds like a good thing, to liberate Liverpool, but what they're talking about is specifically for white Liverpool citizens, and they're actually also talking about something more restrictive than anything else. I can see how that would be confusing to recruit people who are living in such hard means because I know even just with the winter and the oil shortage and everything, things have been difficult and getting worse for everyone in the UK and everywhere, obviously, too. Continuing on this line, I'm interested in what you think is the relationship between the struggle on the street and the political struggle. How is it playing out in the political realm?

T: I think the Liberate Liverpool stuff is opportunistic for a few things. They saw what happened in Knowsley and thought Liverpool is a bit more ready for a fascist political party. There was a big corruption scandal with the Liverpool council, enough that the mayor had to step down...

P: Joe Anderson left and then Joe Anderson took over.

T: Yeah, it's quite funny. The Labour mayor was called Joe Anderson. He had stepped down and got replaced with a new Labour mayor, also called Joe Anderson. So they're really selling us on things changing there.

P: It's not hard to run against the Labour Party. That's the sad thing really. People don't feel

like they have options politically. I feel like a lot of people are going to vote for the fascists out of spite to Labour this time around, maybe not even really going into it about what they're about.

T: I kinda disagree. I'm just gonna say it. I don't think they'll get in. I think they have a few chances to maybe get a councilor or two. There are council elections coming up on the 4th of May. There are some changes to Liverpool council in that the wards have been redrawn. There are less established candidates for places.

But the way these things usually go is nobody knows who any of the councilors are that much. You walk in and be like "Ooh, I'm a Labour voter," or "I'm a Green voter," and then you tick next to those people, and you don't really think about it too much. Independents didn't get in the last time there were council elections. Maybe the right-Liverpool could get a Councillor, but I'm not too worried about it [*ed. – in the end Labour retained control of the council, their group leader Liam Robinson becoming leader of the council*]. I feel like we're on different sides of this.

P: Oh, very different. My opinion of it is there's not been a fascist movement like this in Britain for a very long time. There's so little resistance right now that I think they could take a few council seats [*ed. – though finally not*]. They're running the People's Resistance. They're trying to worm their way in as much as they possibly can into, even if it's not the local council, it will be school boards, all that kind of stuff, trying to get into positions of authority and positions of power.

TFSR: Yeah, there's a similar tactic happening here. My last question is what kind of support do you need from people who are not in the area? And do you see things going for your struggle in the coming months? And then also places to fight to connect and find you all.

T: I think there is stuff that people in other cities can take and learn from our experiences. Liverpool has this mythos and reputation about being a left-wing city. I think that's actually been quite toxic for it, or for people in Liverpool taking things more seriously and organizing to actually counter rising fascism and hate, because you'll hear people talk about how "Liverpool's a left-wing city, it's a socialist city", last time. And before Knowsley, there was a lot of talk about a time when fascists tried to march in Liverpool and they got ran out, met by a big crowd.

P: The legendary day of 2015, when we, the Liverpool people, the brave Scousers [*ed. – slang for Liverpool folk*], defeated the fascists. Mythologized.

T: Yeah, people don't talk about that so much now

because it was used to pretend that more would happen, or people rested on this mythology, instead of doing effective things. Knowsley probably wasn't the first time that showed that this mythology isn't really what it's chalked up to be. When there was a Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, there was a TERF⁵ meeting in the Liverpool, and if you believe the mythology, that would get strongly opposed by big crowds, and it wasn't. It was small crowds. People did stuff, they tried to shut down the meeting but it wasn't thousands of people. It was very small groups.

P: Yeah, and this is an appeal from both of us to anyone. Please do what you can to prevent fascists from assembling. Please don't be complacent in a city's reputation. Please engage in direct action to protect our neighbors and our friends and just other people. The big result of all this is a lot more bigots are feeling a lot more emboldened just for street harassment recently. It feels like things are just getting worse. But we can fight back, and we can bash back.

If you're local to Liverpool, you don't need to get in touch with us. That's not what we would recommend. You can, and we'll happily do stuff with you. But you can do stuff yourself with your friends and form your own little groups of people you trust and do direct actions. Don't believe in the leaders of these socialist groups and these other groups being like "We need to sit around and do nothing." Believe in what you think is right.

TFSR: Is there a place to find you to keep up with what's going on?

P: We are on Twitter! Femboys Against Fascism! The @ is @FemAntifa.

TFSR: Great, so people can see what's going on there. Is there anything else you'd to share before we end our conversation?

T: I think this is like most places, I wish there'd be more protests that weren't just shouting at empty buildings. Don't get poured into these... There are a lot of alts and not nice groups that will try and redirect

5 ed. – Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists. Although becoming something of a general term for anti-trans women, more properly a specific tendency that today is increasingly leaving its pretenses of feminism (radical or otherwise) behind in a rush to collaborate with openly far-right transphobes, some openly bragging of their relationships with street movements like the Proud Boys, others attempting to more covertly cover their hateful agenda to try to influence policy-makers and win recruits. See **The TERFs' Weekend from Hell** for an example of the latter branch and some of their opposition.

your energy. You just serve them or sell their newspaper.

P: “Preserve the group. We can’t do this thing. We gotta keep the group going.”

T: Like brand-building exercises. Try to get caught up in that.

P: Fuckin hell, the brand-building exercises... Ooof...

TFSR: There’s a lot of frustration too in just repeating the pointless march or whatever. But I think it’s important what you’re all saying about showing up against the fascists because that’s not just a symbolic chanting at an empty building but showing up where people are trying to do harm and countering it. And also just showing them that they can’t just take to the streets and be unopposed. Well, thank you so much for talking and sharing what’s going on. As things come up, I want to get update. I’m sending solidarity to all the Femboys in Liverpool who are holding it down against the fascists despite a general laziness about doing that in the so-called socialist city.

P: Thank you so much. We love you. We’ll stay in contact. We’ll keep you in the loop.

TFSR: Sending all my love to you.

THE TERFS' WEEKEND FROM HELL [USA]

[19.11.23]

This weekend members of the Trans Exterminationist “Women’s Declaration International” [WDI] and “Women’s Liberation Front” [WoLF] came to Portland to attempt a conference and rally at a public library in Portland [ed. – part of a “national tour” – actually the only other dates were San Francisco and Philadelphia – for which they celebrated the support of far-right personalities]. It went badly for them. Like really really badly.

Shortly after the TERFs arrived on Saturday, Rose City Antifa [RCA] posted an article with screen recordings of their zoom meeting, in which the pie eating [ed. – reference to pies pushed in her face by anarchists the last time she came to Portland and at other previous events], eternal enemy of anarchism, WDI and WoLF leader Lierre Keith openly admitted that the group’s “feminism” [ed. – portrayed in the event’s title, “Protecting Women & Children,” a common and ingenuous trope also used by queer- and trans-phobic religious conservatives like those routed by counter-demonstrators on Montreal streets the month before, as well as other reactionaries: see **About the Reactionary Drift of Some “Comrades”...**] is a cover to spread hatred of trans people. In that same call she ordered the group to follow her “non violent direct action” strategy in which the TERFs submit to being attacked in order to film it so as to make trans people “look bad” [ed. – a concern uniting her with the white supremacist podcasts she appears on and other far-right figures she openly courts]. More on that later.

Following RCA releasing their article, the TERFs began to completely lose their shit having realized that they had been infiltrated. They immediately started to fight viciously with each other and accuse each other of secretly being trans. **While this on its own is hilarious, it was just the start.**

On Sunday morning the TERFs woke up to find that all the cars parked at their AirBnB had had their tires slashed. Shaken by this vandalism they debated whether to still hold their rally and multiple TERFs dropped out.

The TERFs, in their endless cycle of poor-decision making, decided to go ahead with

the rally anyway. When they arrived to the area they found that the neighborhood had been covered with posters of their faces and that pressure from counterdemonstrators had caused the library to close for safety concerns [ed. – having been tagged and the glass door smashed overnight; although the group claims the library chose to still offer their event despite closing the rest of the space, just they couldn’t make it through the counter-demo].

They set up their rally a few blocks away and it wasn’t long before the counterdemo found them and according to the WDI Twitter they “pepper sprayed, punched, kicked, and threw objects at [the TERFs] while stealing and breaking their phones and cameras.”

We were delighted to hear that the TERFs had allegedly gotten their shit absolutely rocked. What makes this absolutely hilarious, is that the TERFs had unintentionally covered the bodycams they were wearing in order to capture footage of them being attacked which was the entire point of the event [ed. – in fact WDI claimed two of the three bodycams were stolen by counter-demonstrators!]

A point that some (including [a] RCA article linked earlier) have made was that attacking TERFs at the rally would only give them what they want, which is to make trans people “look bad” and to make themselves look like victims, and so people ought to have abstained from attacking them.

We have zero patience for takes like these which are essentially just a regurgitation of respectability politics and peace policing. When there are people not only spewing genocidal rhetoric but actively collaborating with the violence of the state against trans people, do not be surprised when trans people bash back. And if the TERFs want to get fucked up, that is a request that we should readily oblige, and we should oblige it in a way that makes them absolutely regret it, which it seems like is what happened on Sunday.

Nothing but love to all the violent queers who showed up to kick the transphobes out of Portland!

POEMS FOR LOVE, LOSS & WAR



New Mexico, 1931

Imagine him,
New Mexico, 1931,
pouring lead down anthills
to extract shape from negative space.
My grandfather.
We are both troubled
by what is under our feet
that we cannot see. The tiny mandibles
that bite us

while we sleep. We both feel
an emptiness and seek to fill it.
With lead, with
the hot numbness of a stranger's sex.
My grandfather's corpse and I,
so much alike. So human, so small.

But
I don't eat meat
I don't smoke
I don't pray
and I'll only drink moonshine
on moonless nights. Just like him
I shrink in the shadow of pretty girls
but I find solace and rare bit sanity
in girls who look like boys and in boys
who look like disaster. And in people.
The whole messy proletariat of them.
That's why that old man didn't dream
and why I sleep wide-eyed.

It is why, when I am overtaken
by ancestral memory,
it is not his or God's. It is how
the dirt smelled as he poured the lead,
cast the bullet caught in Sitting Bull's head,
the shattered skull looked like the cutting teeth
of a tractor blade, or maybe it was just
the lopsided smile of my grandfather
asking his bride-to-be to an Air Force dance.

The wet smack of their bodies.
The desecration of anthills.

I don't eat meat.
I don't smoke.
I don't pray.
I can't promise you anything else.
My dreams are ants
crossing the boundaries between air and ground,
dream and day, him and I
never really talked.
The same things bite us when we sleep,
like ants or how empty the sky seems.

The smell of human bodies sweating out sin
Life without god
The revolver under the bed
the sound of her smile
the broke-in-half trees
and the children who climb them
life without flesh
an old forgetful man,
emptied of his past,
told me his story of 1931,
there was a pretty girl
but she wouldn't talk to him.
So he retreated to a smaller world
where he was big and things
made sense again. And I realized,
listening to this quiet old man,
why the land is no longer sacred.

– All Hollow-Eyed & Listless: Poems by Jack

[*ed.* – Sitting Bull was a Hunkpapa Lakota figure, partaking in key rebellions against the US settler-state (such as his vision foreseeing a Lakota-Northern Cheyenne alliance's defeat of Lt. Col. Custer's force in the "Battle of the Little Bighorn" in 1876), halting the advance of the railway, and rejecting treaties insincerely offered by the colonial government. Finally he was murdered on the Standing Rock reservation (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg16**) by a cop of the colonial Indian Agency.]



Sirventès of the Beast

I am no citizen
I am no consumer
I am no tax-payer
I am no employee
I am no convict
I am no beneficiary
I am no person of color
I am no lesbian

I am no mother
I am no wife
I am no erotic writer
I am no poetess
I am no anarchist
I am no woman
I am surely no Human
That vile and ethereal being
Which has never been spotted elsewhere
But in universal declarations

I don't want to stay seated and raise my hand
I don't want to wait for the teacher to tell me to speak
I don't want to wait for a break to take a piss
I don't want to press 0 to speak to one of your
representatives
I don't want to open a box or tear away plastic
wrapping to feed myself
I don't want to drink from a bottle or tap
I don't want to go to the second counter to collect my
order
I don't want to smile because the customer is always
right
I don't want to sign my performance review
I don't want to sell my time my limbs my voice my
orifices
I don't want to lose five kilos and find love
I don't want to prevent the signs of ageing
I don't want to smell like spring
I don't want to fill in the right form
I don't want to use the reserved lane at 5pm
I don't want to be the guardian of household and
decency
I don't want to be a factor of production
I don't want to be an extension of a tool
I don't want to be a target audience
I don't want to act in my own interests as defined by
the relevant authorities
I don't want to wipe my arse with the three-layer
version of boreal forest
I don't want to produce and consume
I don't want to be produced and consumed
I don't want my survival to be a pretext for destroying
everything around me

I want to hold you in my arms
I want to be able to love you without fear, without
reserve, without pretensions
I want to draw my nourishment directly from the
earth
I want my actions to be without bounds
I want to live and laugh and cry and love
I want to enjoy to the point of losing my mind to the
point of losing track of myself
I want to do it the way we've been able to do it for
millions of years
I want to do it with you
I want you to be with me

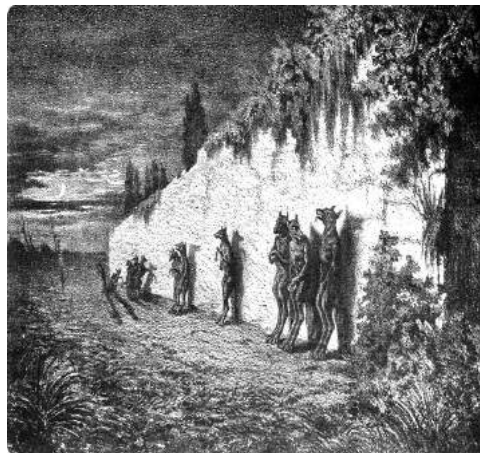
I want us to stop our race to devastation

I love you
I desire you
I want your skin against mine
We don't need all this shit
This filth that we produce in tears
That we consume without pleasure
That we throw away with a guilty conscience
We don't need this cardboard life
Of these stuporous vigils
Of these dreamless slumbers
Of these indistinguishable days and nights
Smothered in concrete, street lighting and plastic
Muzzled by alcohol, stimulants, sedatives,
antidepressants
Distracted by screens, fashion, social networks,
glamour
Restrained by sexual roles, politeness and conformist
originality
Double-locked in this universal jail called Civilisation
Beneath this thin armoured varnish
lies a wild beast

Despite thousands of years of domestication
I remain a savage
Full of passion and fury
So are you
And it's this beast that I love
I'm flesh, bone and blood
I am a body, an animal
I am a wave of intense desire
I am desire incarnate, uncontrollable, and thunderous
I am your mad lover
I am sphincters, fluids, tendons
I am a goddess
I am your partner in crime
If you want to stop surviving
If you want to live
If you want to unite with me

If you don't, I'll be, happily and without regrets,
the enemy to be **put down**

– Anne Archet



[*ed. – Sirventès were a genre of Old Occitan lyric poetry (usually parodies, borrowing the melody, metrical structure and often even the rhymes of a well-known piece to address a controversial subject, often a current event.)*]

'WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE CANCELLATION OF THE PROJECT?'

"Against the Airport and its World!!" was the Zone-to-Defend (ZAD, *Zones d'Aménagement Différé* [deferred development zones] or just *Zones à défendre* [Zone to Defend]) slogan that rattled central-west France (Brittany), outside Nantes¹, for over a decade. A proposed airport here faced resistance beginning in the 1970s, which was later resurrected in the mid-2000s. By 2010, the site became one of political rupture, land defense and anti-capitalist living. *We are 'Nature' defending itself: Entangling art, activism and autonomous zones* by Isabelle Fremeaux and Jay Jordan, is the second book in English about the ZAD after *The Zad and NoTAV* [ed. – see **An Update from the No TAV Campaign & Thoughts on its Relevance for Stop HS2**] by the Mauvaise Troupe Collective (MTC, 2018). This time, however, long-time organizers and self-defined activists Isabelle Fremeaux and Jay Jordan embed the story within their own political lives, living in the Notre-Dame-des-Landes Zone-to-Defend (ZAD), also referred to as the Zone. *We are 'Nature' defending itself* offers a glimpse into what remains of the territory after the cancellation of the airport project, and remains one of the most important stories in insurrectionary political ecology in Europe.

The book's forward, introduction and first chapter situate the initiatives and struggles of the authors, offering a bit of an activist curriculum vitae, which contextualizes their political development, praxis and arrival to the Zone. "When you become attached to somewhere, when you realize that you can become territory, freedom no longer floats in the air but lives in the relationships and the ties of need and desire that you build," they write (p. 24).

Delving into the politics of territoriality and inhabiting, the first chapter elegantly weaves a damning criticism of the art industry (and specific artists), demonstrating how this artistic practice typically reaffirms nature/culture dualisms, class structures (and inequality), business as usual and, most of all, "representing the world rather than transforming it" (p. 20). This includes reviewing direct action and connecting this to the lessons the authors have gain from seeing swallows on the ZAD and

1 ed. – Nantes belongs historically and culturally to southern Brittany, but controversially was omitted from the modern administrative region of Brittany by the French State.

drawing metaphors with struggle and their existence – "We know the birds will return in spring, but in their departure is a shadow of a deathly future, a prefigurative feeling of this world if they went extinct" (p. 26). The authors, in discussing the beauty of swallows and the ZAD, also reveal the horrors of industrial life, detailing the life – and existences – that are lost with urban sprawl and the construction of the airport, although it was eventually defeated.

Further detailing their life and political struggle, Fremeaux and Jordan narrate their existential dissatisfaction and political self-critiques, which eventually led to them moving to the ZAD. This entails a reflection on their activism, and their inherent urbanized disconnection from the land. "We are split from our food sources, from our soil, from our plants, from our weather and water" (41), *We are 'Nature' defending itself* then delves into the history of the ZAD, and how they first arrived there during Operation Caesar, the first large-scale eviction attempt by the French state in 2012 [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg81**]. Detailing this struggle, the "extraordinary diversity of complementary tactics" (p. 57) – from Molotov cocktails and barricades to singing songs – they recall the over 100 solidarity actions took place across France (and more internationally) and how 40,000 people came to help rebuild what the police had destroyed in 2012.



The infamous D281 intersection and barricades, May 4th, 2013

Fremeaux and Jordan narrate how the good/bad protestor dichotomy was dissolved, how "[t]here were no binaries of spectator and actor" (p. 59) and the importance of including destructive – "no" – and

constructive – "yes" – to defending habitats and fracturing capitalism. "Utopias without resistance become laboratories for the new spirit of capitalism", explain Fremeaux and Jordan (p. 63). Humans are nature defending itself, according to the authors, who underscore this reflection by considering Alzheimer's disease as "a mirror image of the ravages of capitalism" (p. 69). **Continuing into the trials and tribulations facing the Zone in 2016, *We are 'Nature' defending itself* discusses the projects, actions and turmoil at the ZAD until 2019.** This entails conjuring "everyday magic" and "acting as if the desired future already exists" (p. 76), but also of the "composition" – diversity of actors – on the ZAD and how "political purity" was eroded and turned into "compost" (p. 80-83).

This discussion on composition in the ZAD largely avoids discussing the internal political tensions, discord and events that took place in 2017. Instead, the authors explain the highly controversial period that preceded the government's cancellation of the airport project in January 2018. The authors discuss their experience with the government's counterinsurgency [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg5*] strategies, the application of coercive force to the Zone and the government's proposed land regularization schemes. **The cancellation of the airport project reads like a means for crushing the ZAD, which raises the question of what happens after the cancellation of the project?** The French Government proposed a legalization scheme for some occupants of the Zone, which consisted of mapping the land, registering land plots to legal names, drawing tax lines and subjecting and enforcing zoning laws on the territory. **In short, laying out the grid of state visibility and preemptive control,² which would allow the state greater knowledge of the terrain, its inhabitants and serving to divide people who would then cooperate with the French government's territorial control schemes.** Land registration threatened the existing housing constructions and anonymity of the ZAD, but also the autonomous commons [ed. – see the supplement to this volume of *Return Fire*; **'Centering Relationships'**] so many had struggled to create with everything they had. Fremeaux and Jordan recognize that accepting any type of land registration and state regularization scheme was hotly debated and viewed by many militant inhabitants in the Zone as "an act of dishonorable surrender" (p. 95).

2 See Scott J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* and Vidalou J-B. (2017). *Être forêts: Habiter des territoires en lutte*

Fremeaux and Jordan, however, disagree with this view of "dishonorable surrender." This surrender, instead, took the form in their mind as a collectively devised "elaborate gamble" and to transform "the odious [land regularization] document meant to be a trap" which "would be hacked" (p. 96). Select Zadists altered or "hacked" the proposed land legalization proposal from the government. This was accomplished by select Zadists creating "The Administrative Self-Defense Bureau", which did everything they could to bend the regularization scheme to their will: and "the portfolio [handed to the government] presented a more realistic picture of our complex entanglements," the authors write (p. 97). **While the word "hack" might be a polished term for 'negotiations', the authors justify their decision as follows:**

The 'gamble of the forms' was a ploy that aimed to prevent the zad from becoming just another flash in the pan of history, another free commune shining briefly but ending in bloodshed, a martyred experiment scarified on the altar of radical purity. If all had refused to sign the forms, we have no doubt that all the zadists would have been evicted, dispersed back to the four corners of the world. (p. 99-100).

We are 'Nature' defending itself thus nods to the ever-present contentious tensions within the Zone, yet employs fear of eviction and territoriality – and the connection to land – as a justification for renovating and complying with the land legalization deal.

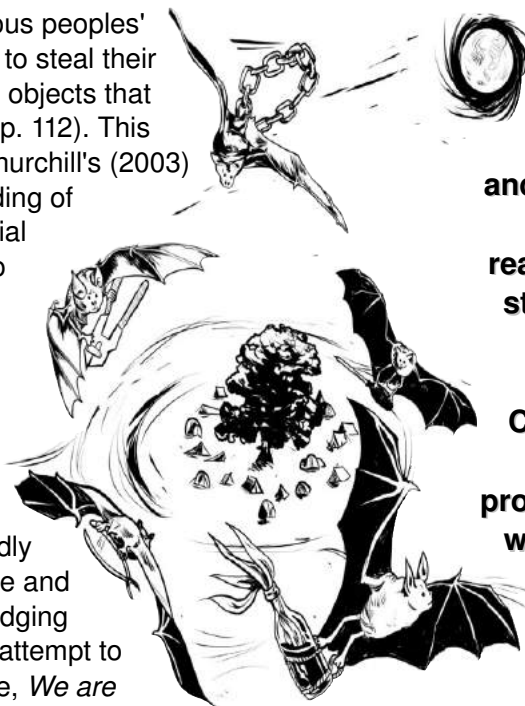
The book goes on to discuss convivial agroforestry processes, rooted in the understanding that "we are not in the forest, we are part of it and it is part of us" (p. 107). Inhabiting the Zone and connecting with seasonal cycles and nonhuman inhabitants, as well as dissolving the gaze of the technocratic manager or "surveyors and eye-in-the-sky paper maps" [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; **'Here or Anywhere Else'**] is instrumental for constructing commons and re-enchanting a world disenchanted by genocide [ed. – see the companion piece to *Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation*] (e.g. wars, witch-hunts [ed. – see **'The Scarcity Dynamo'**]), enclosure [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg55*] and eradication of knowledges [ed. – see **'With Whom One Relates'**] (p. 112). This continues today with some regularized farms and projects still in the Zone, but navigating the terms and conditions of the legalization process has imposed on what remains of the ZAD a process of constant negotiation and circumvention.

The European experience of development, according to Fremeaux and Jordan, "is no different from the violence of the colonizers around the world who

outlawed Indigenous peoples' ceremonies so as to steal their land and the ritual objects that linked them to it" (p. 112). This relates to Ward Churchill's (2003) critical understanding of colonialism: colonial powers first had to colonize and consolidate within [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*], establishing centralized state powers, before they could outwardly colonize elsewhere and abroad. Acknowledging the government's attempt to eradicate the Zone, *We are 'Nature' defending itself* discusses trauma, learning to heal, the necessity to reinvigorate the ritual of magic – the real art – and "replace extractivism with care, representation with reciprocity" (p. 117). Revisiting the problem of "art-as-we-know-it", embedded in anthropocentrism [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg11*] and colonial dualisms (e.g. mind-body, sentient/non-sentient, male/female, straight/gay) and its connection to biology, the book approaches the harms of objectification and separating ourselves from our habitats, thus affirming the necessity of rejecting the objectification and separation of lifeways.

We are 'Nature' defending itself brilliantly weaves art, activism and autonomous zones. The authors thread together struggles, lives and the authors' own developmental praxis magnificently, offering a rich narrative immersing the reader into the feelings and sensations of repression, becoming 'nature' and feeling life in struggle. Displaying committed "stages of activism," moving from mainstream social protest, innovating it, and moving toward combative immersion into the Zone over a span of thirty years, the authors include critiques of art, anti-authoritarian politics and autonomist living into a cogent and enriching narrative.

The beautiful wordsmithing, threading of themes, flow and content of this book is truly impressive, a work of art to admire. My familiarity with the Zone makes me feel concern about the textual magic and beauty of this book, which applies a beautiful veneer over a highly contested and heartbreaking ending to the Zone. To the authors' credit, they are clear: "...it is just one version of that [ZAD] story, and others who lived through it would tell it radically differently" (p. 14).



The ZAD story presented in the book is consistent with earlier Mauvaise Troupe Collective,³ whose accounts were repeatedly critiqued for painting a rosy and misleading narrative.⁴ Weaving – instead of revealing entanglements – misleads readers by omitting important aspects of the story, normalizing the highly contested left-wing strategy employed by liberal and dominant factions associated with the Committee for Maintenance and Defense of Occupations (CMDO). The references to proliferating committees and bureaucratizing within *We are 'Nature' defending itself* hints at what is downplayed within the narrative. The suppression of internal dissent (for political unity [ed. – see *'Not Fighting the Same Fight'*]), censorship practices and presenting the land legalization scheme as a spontaneous "hacking" remain controversial features of this book. By other accounts,⁵ this "spontaneous hacking" was not so spontaneous but has been a vision in the Zone since 2017, and possibly much earlier.

The imposition of a left reformist strategy, naturalized and justified by Fremeaux and Jordan's narrative, was experienced differently by other Anonymous inhabitants residing on the Zone, who felt the process "drained the life out of a thriving community, leaving behind some state-sanctioned agricultural project." "We were not here," an Anonymous *communiqué* explained,

to save a couple acres for a sustainable eco-friendly agriculture project, nor to add some weight to the balance of a process of negotiations with the state. We were here, we were here [sic], to try to defend the possibility of creating our own spaces, geographic and temporal, outside of the framework imposed by capital and the state".

- 3 See Dunlap, A. (2018). Resisting development: The politics of the ZAD and NoTav entitleblog.org/2018/09/06/the-politics-of-the-zad-and-notav
- 4 See Anonymous. (2018). From the ZAD in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, February 2018: The "Movement" is dead, long live... Reform! zad.nadir.org/IMG/pdf/splash3-a4.pdf
- 5 See previous footnote, plus Anonymous. (2021). The Mohawked Salamanders burn down the Salamander's School: Why we attacked the ZAD actforfree.noblogs.org/post/2021/09/12/the-mohawked-salamanders-burn-down-the-salamanders-school-why-we-attacked-the-zad and Crimethinc. 2019. Reflections on the ZAD: Another history crimethinc.com/2019/04/23/reflections-on-the-zad-looking-back-a-year-after-the-evictions

Said simply, the version of the ZAD story presented in *We are 'Nature' defending itself* is highly contested, and meanwhile oppositional voices are absent within the book.

This book, however, is Fremeaux and Jordan's story, their projection and setting an intention in the late 2010s to repair (or naturalize) the internal trauma and salvage what remained after an intense state-led counterinsurgency strategy to take the ZAD and build the airport. The process narrated by Fremeaux and Jordan omits the level of internal violence, betrayals and internal politicking within the Zone, instead writing off legitimate political concerns as "toxic individualism" (p.91) and "narrow mindedness" (p. 96). **The dreams and lifeways crushed by the political strategy glossed over by Fremeaux and Jordan have generated an enormous amount of pain and hatred in so many, which I have repeatedly seen and tasted personally.** This pain and anger have resulted in actions against those who legalized the Zone – or the "victors." On July 5-6, ex-inhabitants burned down the Salamander's School (École des tritons) under construction. "[T]he action," according to the Anonymous (2021) *communiqué*, was dedicated "to all the people who have suffered from the noxious and repressive logic imposed by the CMDO and its world."

We are 'Nature' defending itself extends the CMDO's vision, attempting to refute the critiques of the *communiqués*, sometimes successfully, but mostly unsuccessfully through the reification of the collectivity, the commune and omitting the finer insurrectionary political ecology discussions within these terms: or relying on the Zapatistas [ed. – see **"It Was Wartime"**] as their reference point. Fremeaux and Jordan's position exemplifies criticisms that political divisions on the Zone largely operate along class lines between the so-called "east" and the "west" (see Anonymous, 2018; Crimethinc, 2019).⁶ **The authors offer important lessons through their reoccurring life narrative, but the level of societal adjustment and material status achieved roughly 20 years before living on the ZAD, with tenured academic jobs and a mortgage (p. 40) is jarring.** The early societal success, and presumably subsequent adjustment the authors had relates to their subjectivity and politics, which is illuminated by one separation, or binary, symbolized with the term "activism" placed in the book's subtitle. Despite (rightfully) chastising binaries throughout the book, the term "activism" is still preserved, even though it is a term that separates political activity from life in permanent conflict – which ironically was the whole purpose of the book!

6 See previous footnote

The critique of activism – as separating life, tokenizing political activity and mimicking market processes – was initially made as a result of the Reclaim the Streets demonstrations co-organized by Jordan in 1999 in the UK (as explained in the book), in Andrew X's famous text "Give up activism" (1999) [ed. – *although the Situationists (see 'Not Fighting the Same Fight')* and, before them, individualist anarchists (see *Return Fire vol.1 pg89*) had been making similar points up to a century and a half before]. The emergence of activism, in addition to the divisions of labor [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg6*] celebrated by the authors (e.g. the press group, etc.), reveals a political subjectivity distant from the non-compromising people who lambast the "despicable betrayal, which took place behind the backs of those who confronted the police on the barricades".⁷ A betrayal that is rationalized and justified by Fremeaux and Jordan in this book. Separations appear tolerable when they support the divisions of labor common to traditional forms of organizational politics with which social movements are most familiar.

We are 'Nature' defending itself, in all of its eloquence (and truly important messages), demonstrates again how the romanticism of collectivity – often reinforced through reference to the Zapatistas and other Indigenous led struggles in the Americas – can be used as a weapon. Fremeaux and Jordan, after justifying the land regularization scheme with the government, explain:

We who signed could not just let go of the ties we had built here to the locals, farmers, pensioners, city works, and wanderers of all sorts. We could not leave the owls, the black and yellow squirming salamanders, the gnarly oak trees, the mud, and the swallows.... A community is always more than the sum of its parts, more than its political ideal (p. 100).

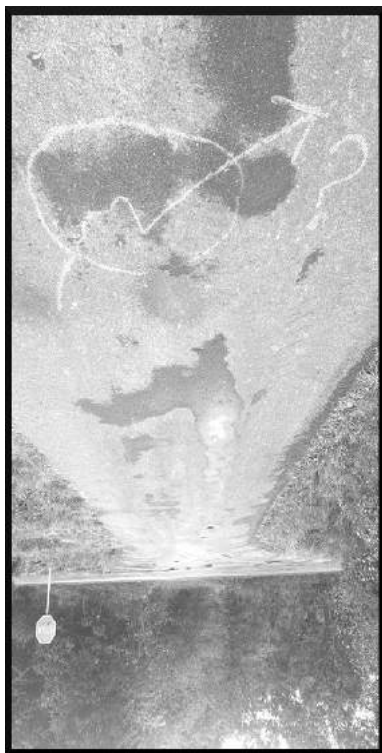
Territoriality, and connection to land, while often related to militant land defense can, in the end, play into government divide-and-conquer counterinsurgency strategies and potentially betray that land, and the autonomous and self-determined political tensions attached to it.

This story of the ZAD remains highly contested, conditioned by fear and omitting an enormous number of political perspectives and contentions. Yes, the CMDO engaged in typical leftist authoritarian maneuvering to control irreconcilables or the "others" or "a sort of 'zone in the zone' called the east". **Yet, these irreconcilables – or the "pirate party" as my friend calls them – played into the political traps of the CMDO and their associates.** In simplistic

7 See The Mohawked Salamanders burn down the Salamander's School, above

terms, both sides are responsible and together created a tragedy that does not appear in Fremeaux and Jordan's narrative. Leftists employed a predictable organizational strategy, and "the pirate party" let it happen through their exposition of anarchist identity and anti-politics (not to be confused with being apolitical) being in permanent conflict. *We are 'Nature' defending itself* is a belated attempt to hold to a legalized territory on the ZAD, but this space is built on the hopes, struggles and political corpses sacrificed to regularize the Zone to a process still being negotiated and under bureaucratic attack in the early 2020s.

Overall, *We are 'Nature' defending itself* triggers a deep tear. In one sense, it is eloquent, sensitive and educational, revealing political strategies, stages of activist development and the tensions and feelings mainstream "climate youth" [ed. – see **Why is Youth Liberation So Important in the Climate Movement?**], "concerned citizens", disillusioned Extinction Rebellion [ed. – see **Rebellion Extinction**] members and confused academics would be wise to feel and tap into. On the other hand, the book pushes a nuanced (decentralized) eco-Leninist strategy [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.3; Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism**] against the lesser-known voices and stories at the ZAD, notably the less eloquent, non-academic, traumatized, drug friendly people and (rightfully) hate filled anarchist combatants in the Zone. As an observer of the Zone since 2010, visiting it and sporadically living in another ZAD in southern France,⁸ this book invites heartbreak and internal discord. This review, I hope, alludes to the contestation and complexity largely omitted in *We are 'Nature' defending itself*, which are tensions and struggles people should anticipate as part of their own participation within autonomous projects and political struggles.



⁸ See Dunlap, A. (2020) Bureaucratic land grabbing for infrastructural colonization: Renewable energy, L'Amassada and resistance in Southern France

STRUGGLING AND/OR BEING MANIPULATED IN THE NAME OF THE STRUGGLE?

– *Earth Uprisings vs. the State: Same Struggle*

[ed. – Found in the pamphlet 'Breaking Ranks: Subverting the Hierarchy & Manipulation Behind Earth Uprisings'.

From the intro: "Soulèvements de la Terre (which translates to "Earth Uprisings," aka SDT). Exploiting the momentum of groups like Extinction Rebellion, and the broader youth climate movement, SDT offers activists a militant alternative to civil disobedience: mass demonstrations against ecologically destructive targets. While these have included some notable acts of sabotage, it is important to notice that their actions are often just as limited to symbolic engagement as those of the non-violent environmentalists, designed to promote the organization through sensationalism aimed at capturing the attention of the mass media. A recent mass action against a water basin on March 25th [in Sainte Soline] resulted in serious injuries, prompting anarchists to more broadly articulate warnings about this organization's political foundations and motivations. The authors of these texts are careful to critique the centralized forces behind SDT and not the participants, clarifying that they are not telling anyone to stop attending SDT actions, but rather encouraging them to maintain a critical eye towards how the actions are organized and what they are being asked to do." A note on terminology: the "tiqqunism" this article references is a revolutionary communist tendency often circling around/feeding from anarchist scenes, forming a distinct scene yet not simply defined (largely because they are opposed to identifying themselves as such; at best a statement against getting trapped into political identities, at worst a careful hedging of patterns of (crypto-) authoritarian practices: see **Return Fire vol.3 pg58**). However one constant is their reference in literature to the late '90s quasi-academic theory journal *Tiqqun*.]

It is imperative and essential to root ourselves in the protection of life, water, and land, to fight against the commodification of the world and of our human relationships, to fight against all forms of domination, to support international struggles that are in line with these perspectives, and to welcome all those who have long been paying the price of neoliberal warfare around the world. We are all grappling with anxiety-inducing situations linked to the accelerating drive to subdue our lives by rulers who are ever more greedy for power and money. **So we're desperate to create and/or contribute to dynamics of struggle that can halt the prevailing destructive madness. And so, how can we not lose track of our judgment a little bit, carried along by the momentum of our burning desire to live, when siren songs flatter our need to act on this world and our wounded pride?**

We're here to talk about the methods used by political enemies: inhabitants of the former ZAD of Notre

dame des Landes (NddL) who have become generals of *Soulèvements de la terre* (SDT), and who are affiliated with tiqqunism, at least in their practices.

— Those very same who worked and/or contributed to the destruction of the cabins on the *route des chicanes*.¹

— Those who signed papers with the authorities while others fought the police on the paths, barricades and in the fields to keep the zone out of the state's hands.

— Those who were carrying out propaganda on the ZAD website in April 2018, calling for people to come and defend the ZAD... all the while concealing all information on the negotiations underway that aimed to take over the squatted land. The result: people come out, exposing themselves to the State's weapons, are arrested, mutilated, and subjected to other delights typical of confrontations with state terrorists.

— Those who, in April, May and June 2018, kept a watchful eye on the rd 281 and 81 to ensure that no barricades were blocking traffic... including the movements of the cops!

— Those who dismantled their neighbors' barricades, without their knowledge, endangering the squatters, and arguing that "barricades attract cops" (sic)!

— Those who mapped out all the sites that agreed to officially declare themselves for an agricultural or cultural project for the authorities, thereby establishing a map of the unyielding ones who refused to negotiate with the state (many thanks to them for this audacious collaboration, we would have preferred them to put their audacity elsewhere), which facilitated the work of identifying the sites where it was necessary to repress!

— Those who enacted and/or approved of the beating of a comrade who, rightly judging that asphalt doesn't make for good food, had the impudence to rip up a stretch of it during the asphaltting of the d281 route in March 2018.

— Those who, while calling for donations for the purchase of land in the area to turn it into common land, have never stopped privatizing cultivated areas and community life for the exclusive use of those who claim their political allegiance (tiqqunists and other authoritarians) or those who pledge their allegiance to them.

— Those who censured any attempt to question their rush to acquire land at the expense of those who wished to maintain an occupation outside institutional and market rules.

The list of their deceptions is too long for us to be

1 transl. – The *route des chicanes* was the name given to the main road passing through the ZAD that tiqqunists cleared for the police to aid their negotiations with the State.

exhaustive; the links at the end of the text are more comprehensive.

SDT includes these individuals, comfortably installed in an imagined SDT position of professionals of struggle as they brandish their resumes that mention the ZAD of NddL, which unfortunately is synonymous with, in many people's imaginations, glorious struggle.

That's forgetting a bit quickly that on the ZAD, we fought against the airport... *and its world*, until some individuals, measuring the spoils of war they were coveting, joined forces with citizens, farmers' unions and other political parties to build a return to the abnormal: the re-establishment and development of farms with a commercial vision, animal exploitation everywhere, the end of illegal occupations, the re-establishment of commercial activities in the area well before evictions, the privatization of spaces, the legalization of buildings....

If there was any glory at the ZAD, it was in being able to live there for more than 5 years outside institutional control, and in being able to develop, for those who wished to do so, human relationships devoid of commercial interests, a place where it was possible to organize, live, eat and take care of oneself, free of charge.

The SDT generals are working today as they did on the ZAD: welcome to the ZADosphere... authoritarian and dangerous for all those who are unaware of its inner workings.

Some of their methods:

Seductive Revolutionary Propaganda

— To reach a wide audience, e.g.: "common lands" which are common in name only – go take a walk on their common lands and see how you'll be welcomed! They had no intention of collectivizing these lands. Even before the 2018 evictions, many of these legalists had already registered agricultural activities including squatted plots, without informing the squatters living on these plots... oops. Today, these residents are legalized and properly registered with the MSA [French Agricultural Social Protection scheme] and other coercive bodies. And as a reminder, the precarious occupation agreements signed by these ZAD residents in 2018 stipulated that they **authorized the State to evict anyone whose presence was unrelated to the legalized activities on these plots of land, and would willingly report any activity not listed in the agreements.**

— And on the SDT website: "Thousands of people invaded infrastructure that is emblematic of the privatization of our most precious common good."

Water has been privatized and paid for for a long time, hasn't it? And as for invading, this military vocabulary says a lot about their megalomaniac masculinity.

Marketing

— Telling a hyped-up story, to give a sugarcoated vision of reality. It has been, and still is, very common to hear the ex-ZAD referred to as a place where people developed horizontal relationships. Yet from 2012 to 2018, when we were among the squatters, there was no horizontality in interactions. While some of us wanted to move away from relationships of domination, particularly the anti-authoritarians, a large proportion of the occupants did little or nothing to question their ways of interacting; it's not easy to let go of one's privileges!

— To make people believe that the relationships are devoid of hierarchies, as conveyed by the myth of the ZAD promoted by Mauvaise Troupe or by texts that were circulated on the ZAD website (which has long been controlled by authoritarians) is to present a (false) willingness to move away from relationships of domination. At best, this is a misunderstanding of what relations of domination are. At worst, it's a manipulative means of seduction, aiming to amass people who come to consume seltzer thinking that it's top shelf whiskey... Unless it's a denial of reality, though reality speaks for itself. Since the beginning of the occupations at the ZAD and up until today, classist, sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ageist, speciesist and ableist relations are a daily occurrence, especially as the ex-squatters who are still present quickly positioned themselves in authoritarian, power-grabbing positions, with all the contempt required for this kind of behavior.

— Selling the dream, using a whole variety of revolutionary, megalomaniac and flattering vocabulary: snatching victories, holding banquets (no picnics, that's for the proles!),

— Joining forces with people from the worlds of entertainment, "culture," politics and trade unions, to gain prestige, even if these individuals or groups don't share the same political outlook.

Hierarchy

— At the ZAD, these authoritarians seized power in countless ways: imposing demonstrations and demonstration locations, taking over the ZAD website, taking over assemblies locked down by them, taking over spaces, imposing marked paths, beating up and using violence against people who dissent from them, showing contempt for those who do not pledge allegiance to them...

— Pyramid-like organization of events: SDT generals

don't get a scratch during demonstrations; they hide out at rear bases, commenting and disseminating spectacular information in order to legitimize their methods of action, while concealing the human costs required for results that are often highly questionable.

— Building up central powers, by giving lessons in struggle in accordance with the experience and know-how that comes with a diploma in ZADistology.

— Joining forces with power-holding structures: unions, informal groups, citizens' collectives to use their power and networks.

Mass Manipulation

Manipulate: to act on people in such a way as to get them to do and/or think what you want...but is it what they want?

On several occasions on the ZAD, we've seen techniques used to manipulate meetings, demonstrations, individuals and groups; the January 9th, 2016 demonstration on the Cheviré bridge in Nantes is just one example [*ed. – where disbanding of the blockade was negotiated with the cops, who then fired water-cannon and gas on who remained*], but let's stay with more recent burning issues.

How do they do it?

— blurring political lines: mixing the lexicons of anarchist sympathizers with those of communist sympathizers, without omitting the jargon of citizenists, to cast a wide net and give the illusion that all these people could do well together in the struggles;

— nurturing the myth of unity [*ed. – see 'Not Fighting the Same Fight'*]: the recent call to sign a text entitled "We Are the SDT" bids everyone to line up behind them, as if all those in revolt today were operating identically and could not act outside of this political apparatus;

— calling for demonstrations by saturating the networks of ecologists, alternativists, trade unionists, in short, of the "respectable" Left, in order to get as many people as possible to come and add to the count. In short, attempting to demonstrate a fighting force to the State, amounting to a symmetrical position against a government whose bellicose intentions against civilian populations no longer needs to be demonstrated. The problem is that they don't have weapons as harmful as those of the State.



How does the call to demonstrate on March 25th 2023 constitute mass manipulation? “The aim of this demonstration will once again be to have a concrete impact on the basin projects,” and, from “On October 29-30, 2022, all of France learned of the existence of megabasins thanks to the mobilization of thousands of people. After a few days’ pause, work on France’s biggest basin continues. But, for how long?”

This was the challenge issued to the demonstrators on March 25th, to try and bring the worksite to a definitive halt? With COVID masks, scarves, a few molotov cocktails, fireworks and stones? Against 3200 police armed with explosive grenades, stun grenades, rubber bullets, assault rifles, some mounted on quads to chase down people who were on foot?

Isn't that both arrogant and terribly dangerous?

How could a half-day demonstration, even if sabotage took place, put a definitive stop to such a project, when we know that the FNSEA (National Federation of Agriculture Union) lobby, which is at the helm, is largely endorsed by the government, which goes so far as to speak of water reservoirs that are beneficial to ecosystems (their bad faith knows no bounds).

If it hadn't been for all these cops, what would the demonstrators have done? They would have ransacked the gates and the pump, because that's all there was to ransack, which obviously wouldn't have put a stop to the project.

How well informed were those present on Saturday morning about the militarization of the site and the weapons which they were facing? Who knew about the site well in advance of the action? How could people assess the appropriateness of going to the central locations on the 25th, given the state of the site at the time? **Who** was in charge of the big game?

Who drew up an action plan, including 3 processions that were supposed to gather around this basin? **Who** knew that, apart from an empty hole and a pump, there would be no possibility to impact this gigantic structure, only an armada of State terrorists? *The staff.*

The people who hide away in their rear base and observe, out of harms way, the police charges against all these civilians. How to manipulate the masses? — by exploiting existential inactivity and making people believe that they have tried and true methods of operation: these authoritarians never cease to tell a romanticized story of the struggle at the ZAD, colonizing imaginations with beliefs that are totally disconnected from what actually happened there; — by giving essential information at the last moment, notably by hiding what repression to expect; **this is the hallmark of a commanding, manipulative**

leadership. People went to Sainte Soline partly unaware of what was planned, and for good reason. Information concerning the detailed organization of the day was given piecemeal, leaving out everything about the police mobilization they were going to face, exposing people to risk of injury beyond what they'd ever imagined.

Many people returned from the Sainte Soline rally in October 2022 traumatized by police repression they hadn't expected. Of those who came back wounded, few spoke out and questioned not only the State practices, but also the organizational practices at work in this situation.

How do you gather a lot of people together and silence any criticism? By providing those planning to come with a ready-made program: starter, main course, dessert guaranteed!

In the rear base booklet you'll find this:

— a ready-made team to monitor sexist/sexual violence... but not other forms of violence?

— a day-care center to be available,

— care and legal rear bases,

— a “general organization” entity... by the generals, no doubt.

Very seductive. A ready-to-struggle kit, giving the illusion of total control over what might happen at this event, with festivities to complete the program that invites us to a militant-tourist weekend: thrills to scare us a little, and comfort to celebrate a hypothetical victory, but which ends up with so many injured that the organizers and the State blame each other for the endless carnage...

In their recruitment propaganda in the run-up to the weekend, there's nothing about the formidable weaponry of the state terrorists, which will inevitably be used against the demonstrators in abundance? Though these events have been widely documented, nothing is mentioned about their dramatic consequences, known only to those who have lived them; forgotten the carnage inflicted on the ZAD in 2018? Forgotten the carnage inflicted on the Yellow Vests [*ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification***]? Have you not seen the current carnage inflicted on demonstrators against the pension reform?

The program is presented in such a way that as many people as possible agree with the event, perceiving it as reassuringly comprehensive, as if the medics were going to tape up mutilated limbs and torn flesh, and remove shrapnel lodged in bodies with their tweezers! These major risks are silently passed over.

The concealment of part of the information, combined with propaganda that saturates their information channels, annihilates all critical thinking. This is the hallmark of the manipulative techniques usually employed by governments and authoritarian structures.

Why are the organizers of the March 25th rally railing against the unbridled repression, counting the injured: “we’re outraged by the violence of the cops in defense of an empty mega-basin.”.. “the government only knows excess and brutal repression”? Aren’t they outraged to have sent so many people to be bruised and beaten in front of an empty crater? The SDT generals can’t be unaware that, while they’re organizing a mass movement that’s well publicized in the media, the government is also planning a repressive response commensurate with the mobilization it fears...² So the police are pulling out all the stops, just as they pulled out all the stops for us at the ZAD for the evictions in 2018, where serious injuries and mutilations punctuated our days for several weeks... But these generals were no doubt at home reading [philosopher António] Damasio, or at the mayor’s office groveling in front of “officials” to obtain a few acres of land?

The perfectly legitimate condemnation of this outrageous monopolization of privatized water does not mean that we shouldn’t give ourselves the means to try to assess what we are up against, be it lobbies, the state and its unrestrained militias... This is required in order to build effective responses that also minimize the risk of paying dearly for our search to regain a horizon.

Hating one’s enemies is one thing, but underestimating them is a big mistake that the ZAD collaborationists make while pretending to be experts in ecological struggles. And what would be their interest in being manipulative like this? It’s quite clear, take for example Basile the traitor, spokesman for the SDT, who’s been wagging his tail in the media lately (whether Right or Left) because the show must go on. At the ZAD, he showed himself to be particularly thirsty for power and quick to make any move that feeds his reputation. We’ll soon be seeing him as an MP, with his SDT acolytes as parliamentary attachés!

But entering the political arena through careerism requires... human sacrifices, because without the sensational images that followed the carnage of March 25th, our dreadful Basile wouldn’t have been able, once again, to come and display his empty words woven from the politics of

2 ed. – Indeed, after the action the French State rounded up over 30 alleged organisers of Earth Uprisings, banning and criminalising the movement.

politicians. Diversion by not answering questions, lies: “SDT is an imaginary minority.” Just like his enemies, whom he dreams of supplanting, another lie won’t make much difference.

If we are part of those who take action to counter this destructive system, it seems to us much wiser, in view of the many forms repression takes and the human cost of our actions, which we hope will be as low as possible, to align our practices in the direction of greater autonomy through self-determination. What if we took care of everyone at all times, and anticipated the state violence that we know has been and will continue to be at the locations of our revolts? What if we fought on terrain we could explore, where we could assess the challenges, the ins and outs? What if we didn’t wait for a mass gathering, for instructions to do what we have to do: whether it’s the agro-industry or any other deadly production, the opportunities for sabotage are innumerable, because they’re everywhere. What if we shared operational methods that enabled us to act while circumventing repressive measures, because any comrade who becomes targeted by repression is much less available to put their ideas into action. Seeing comrades terrorized by beatings, surveillance, trials, injuries, mutilations and deaths, brings us pain and undermines our joy of fighting. The less we are affected by state violence, the more effective and available we are to pursue and nourish our dynamic struggles.

This doesn’t mean that we can master the outcome of everything, but that we must, at the very least, give ourselves the means to share our information. Acts of revolt are not more effective just by nature of being more visible. Claiming (or not) our actions by self-organized means allows us to be visible and does not feed the debauchery of sensational images typical of the entertainment world. What if we left behind the masculinist cult of visible performance [*ed. – see 'The Scarcity Dynamo'*] and the hysteria of sensationalism? What if we decolonized our imaginations, impoverished by heroic romances, and refused all allegiance to so-called stars? Let’s not lose sight of the fact that a dominant narrative most often belongs to the dominant. And what if we were to accept the fact that we don’t know everything, and take the time to learn, so as to build up resistance wherever we are? Do we need to travel hundreds of miles to sabotage these crazy projects as they emerge just about everywhere? Let’s be curious, let’s learn.

During the evictions, the ZAD collaborationists deemed that we don’t fight where we live... because of cowardice, so they let rotten things happen where they live... they accept compromises so they can play war leaders a few miles away?

What if we weighed up the meaning of words and left behind the sheep-like behavior we've been trained to adopt? What if we dispensed with all these self-proclaimed or instituted leaders? **Let's not confuse urgency with haste** [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.3; Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism*], **let's refuse the urgency that the purported thinkers would like to impose on us.** Speed and the imposition of a rhythm are among the weapons of the authoritarian. Let's be the experts of our lives and our desires: nobody knows better than each of us, in our innermost secrets, what we aspire to.

Let's not delegate our ability to reflect on our needs and ways of fighting to anyone, let's be creative and unpredictable. Police aren't everywhere all of the time.³ Let's find the weaknesses in this deadly system – they exist, and are countless.

And when it comes to knowing how each and every one of us wants to go about putting meaning back into our existence and regaining some control over the course of our lives, blind obedience to instructions from supposedly super competent warriors is not going to bring us the Holy Grail!

These people's governance techniques are dangerously statist. This is what motivated us to write this text, because we are appalled to see so many people being trapped by these purveyors of dreams!

A word to the wise!

3 ed. – For example, you could compare the head-to-head with the cops at the mega-basin mass action with the fire that broke out at a new Gondrecourt-le-Château police station (built against the backdrop of the Cigéo nuclear-waste burial project and associated Bure laboratory, some 15 minutes away and site of determined and ongoing opposition). The multi-million-euro building was devastated: no injuries, no arrests. However perhaps ideally successful actions like the above would build confidence and skills to be able to engage in more open confrontations in the future; and both strategies face the same challenge to be able to generalise past the same usual participants.

'THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO RESIST' [UK]

THEN

A reminder to those whose memory fails them....
On Saturday 13th June 2020 large numbers of people defied lockdown restrictions to resist the eviction of Glenfrome Road. GRC Baliffs attempted to clear a big traveller site on the old gas works site in Bristol.

Despite the large police presence, and the increased use of state power through the 'Coronavirus Act', [ed. – see '*Everything is Sanitised, But We Are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands*'] the eviction went on for over 12 hours and solidarity was strong. GRC failed to evict the site.

NOW

The company that paid for the eviction was Wales and West Utilities. They have just built a new £4 million Gas Haulage Depot on the Glenfrome Road site, and it's up and running so we thought we'd pay them a visit.

In the early hours of Friday 26th May [2023], shots were fired with a slingshot over the perimeter fence of Wales and West Utilities, taking out two large first floor windows... A small reminder that we hold grudges, and that there are many ways to resist.

Wales and West Utilities talk of 'sustainability' (the site is part of their "commitment to biodiversity") and new gas tech [ed. – see '*The Ecological Transition is a Hoax*']... Bristol City Council have helped fund the site. Wales and West own 35,000km of gas pipeline.

Near the depot (unconnected to us) we noticed some graffiti: "Power to the Peaceful!", but we don't buy that concept... and have no time for "pacifism" [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg16*]... in the face of ecological collapse we call for rage and rowdy responses [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics*']. Not peacefulness...

The police were not peaceful when they used grenades at Saint-Soline against those who resisted the mega-basin. Solidarity with Serge Duteuil-Graziani who is in a coma and sustained major head injuries due to the grenades.

The police were not peaceful when they killed Kyrees Sullivan and Harvey Evans in Cardiff this week [ed. – *chased off their scooter (at 15 and 16 years old respectively) by a police van; crowds then smashed and burned cars, erected barricades, and launched rocks and fireworks at the cops, hospitalising several*]. Solidarity with the Cardiff rioters!

Many companies with a shiny public image like Wales and West Utilities pay baliffs to do their dirty work... Evicting people is big business, and there will be many more in Bristol this summer. There were beautiful riots when the 'Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill' (PCSC) was passed [ed. – see *May 1, 2021...*] (strength to those inside or awaiting trial!).

This action is a reminder that the Bill doesn't just effect those resisting, it also criminalises people's way of life if they choose not to live in homes made of bricks.

For a summer of disobedience and anarchy!

See you on the streets!

REBELS BEHIND BARS

– text by prisoners & repression news

December 8th Case: Anti-Terrorism Attacks Social Struggles (France)



"THE STATE MURDERS" (& names of various people killed by French police this century; see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg58)

[*ed.* – Concerning an important trial over the Chanel, over arrests made during the aftermath of 2020's international anti-police rebellions (see **The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis**). In France, as in other places, talk of the need to abolish the police was gaining unprecedented headway, and resistance was underway to the "Global Security Law" (which strengthens the powers, rights and weaponry of the cops), and this serious attempt to intimidate rebels must be seen in this light. The accused did not even all know each other; rather, they were all friends of (or relatives of a friend of) one of the targeted, Libre Flot. During his detention he was subjected to sustained "white torture" (solitary confinement), leading to severe memory loss, inability to concentrate, chronic migraines; none of which the judge admitted as a barrier to their ongoing interrogations, although finally forced to grant pre-trial release (on tag) for "medical reasons" after an international mobilisation and Libre Flot going on hunger strike for 36 days. As of a year after this, his psychological damage had not recovered. Various French-language links – removed for brevity – available in the original at solidaritytodecember8.wordpress.com. See update below. For a wider analysis of the tool of "counter-terrorism" as a cudgel against social struggles, see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; **Open Letter from Return Fire Magazine to the 2024.03.29-31 International Anti-Prison/Anti-Repression Gathering.**]

September 27th, 2023

Detailed political analysis of the case file.

Soulèvements de la Terre [*ed.* – see **Struggling and/or Being Manipulated in the Name of the Struggle?**] activists detained by the Sub-Directorate for Anti-Terrorism (SDAT), anti-terrorist units mobilized against anti-nuclear activists, CGT trade unionists arrested by the DGSJ [*transl.* – *The General Directorate for Internal Security*], RAID units [*transl.* –

elite tactical unit of the French national police] deployed during urban uprisings... The recurrent mobilization of anti-terrorist investigative resources to repress social movements, combined with the dissemination of unequivocal language – "ecoterrorism", "intellectual terrorism" – leave no room for doubt.

The aim is to confuse terrorism with social struggles, so as to prepare public opinion for the fact that the perpetrators of political illegality will soon be charged with terrorism. And to give free rein to political repression, by giving it the benefit of the most complete repressive arsenal the law offers today: anti-terrorist legislation.

It is against this backdrop that the first trial of leftist activists for "terrorism" since the Tarnac affair [*ed.* – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg58**] will take place in October. The stakes are high. A sentence would legitimize the government's repressive shift. It is the symbolic dividing line between what can and cannot be qualified as terrorism that the government is seeking to shift in this trial.

Because, as far as the law is concerned, there is nothing to protect social struggles from anti-terrorism. As Olivier Cahn reminds us, "the vagueness of the notion of terrorist" – combined with the preventive nature of anti-terrorist justice – leads to a situation where "the law has been put in a position to allow an authoritarian regime to get rid of its opponents without having to change the law".

This warning is illustrated in a caricatured way by the December 8th case, in which seven people, selected on the basis of their political opinions, have to defend themselves against having taken part in an... unknown project. Faced with this Kafkaesque situation [*ed.* – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg52**], the aim is to take a look at how an anti-terrorist case is put together. It is about showing the extent to which the place given to the police narrative complicates any defense and opens the way to unbridled political repression. Finally, it is a reminder of why anti-terrorist justice is a legal monster that must be fought in its own right.

Terrorists...

Without Any Terrorist Plan

In this case, the charge of "association de malfaiteurs terroristes" (terrorist criminal association) has been upheld, even though the prosecution admits... that the accused had no "plans for violent action". At the end of the two-year investigation, the anti-terrorist prosecutor's office admitted that the investigation had not "brought to light a finalized plan for violent action". An admission shared by the investigating judge, who

wrote that “no imminent act of violence seems to have been envisaged”.

And yet, the DGSi had not skimmed on the means of surveillance. In addition to the use of audio-surveillance in living places, there were thousands of hours of phone surveillance, real-time geolocation, dozens of IMSI catching operations [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg7*], hundreds of skiptrace operations¹ and, of course, the analysis of dozens of digital media seized during arrests and associated accounts (e-mails, social networks...). **In other words, seven intimacies violated to satisfy the unhealthy curiosity of the 106 or so intelligence officers who worked on this case.**

Thousands of hours of audio-surveillance will then be mobilized to identify political statements and thus establish “profiles” of individuals “driven by the same ideology”. Paradoxically, the most intrusive means of surveillance are used to highlight... what none of the accused are really hiding.

The prosecutor and examining magistrate note that one defendant calls the police an “armed fascist militia”, while another refers to the police and military as “watchdogs”. In a private conversation, they note that one defendant pours out “his hatred of the police”, going so far as to denounce their “supposedly endemic racism”. Elsewhere, they point to a “violent diatribe against France, the French Revolution and all its republican and democratic values”, “remarks stigmatizing State violence” and an accused’s tendency to display “virulence in systematically challenging laws and institutions”.

All for nothing... No target, no date, no place. Not even a single discussion suggesting the preparation of any violent action. In other words: the investigation file is empty.

A void which has not, however, prevented this “justice of exception” from using all the violence the law allows. More than three years of pre-trial detention accumulated, the use of white torture via solitary confinement, systematic strip-searches, friendships destroyed by communication bans and travel restrictions. Unusually, sexist remarks by the examining magistrate were also reported during the interrogations themselves.² As for surveillance, it has

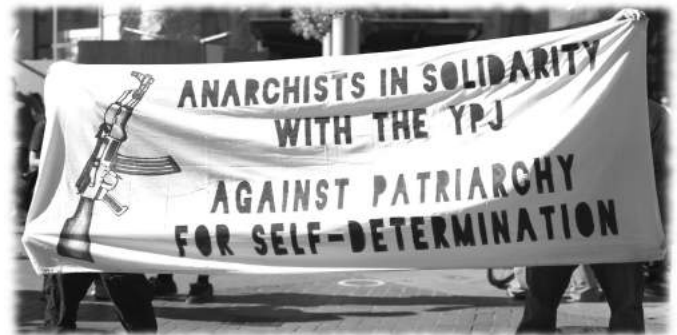
- 1 ed. – Techniques used by debt collectors, bounty hunters, police investigators and others to find those who have “skipped” town; combing public records like arrests, property tax, marriage or business licenses, social media, employment or vehicle records, credit data, social security numbers and more, contacting families or co-habitants of the one being traced, etc.
- 2 One defendant denounced the investigating judge’s

never stopped, and the accused must prepare their defense under the inquisitive eye of their accusers.

A Story for Each Accusation (in Collaboration with Mediapart)

In the absence of a terrorist project, the entire prosecution rests on a narrative constructed by the DGSi surrounding the “returnees from Rojava” where LibreFlot, the main defendant, left to fight Daesh for 10 months [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg97*].

This story was circulated by Mediapart [*ed. – French investigative website*] several months before the investigation began. In an article written by Mathieu Suc – whose bias was strongly criticized³ – he relayed the police discourse on the “threat” posed for “French institutions” and “law enforcement agencies” by these “ultra-left activists” “who have undergone military training” in Rojava. In particular, the DGSi was concerned that these “returnees”, “deploying solid clandestine techniques”, could, once back in France, use their “experience” in “violent actions by the revolutionary ultra-left” aimed at “attacking symbols of the State and its forces of order”.



Banner refers to the Women’s Defense Units (YPJ) in Rojava; for notes on the complicated nature of such support, see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; ‘The Temple was Built Before the City’

- behavior as “degrading for all women”.
- 3 It’s interesting to note that one fact was not known at the time. In his article, Mathieu Suc mentions that “according to our [his] information” “ultra-left” militants had travelled to Colombia to meet with the ELN [*ed. – National Liberation Army; Marxist-Leninist guerrilla founded by radical Catholic priests in 1964*], a way of reinforcing the anxiety-inducing nature of his story. As it happens, this information was used against one of the accused in the December 8th affair. There is every reason to believe that one of those charged on December 8th was among those concerned by this “information”. Throughout the investigation – the information appeared in the note opening the preliminary inquiry – the DGSi used this argument to characterize the dangerousness of this individual, and to justify its demands for ever more intrusive means of surveillance. After two years of investigation, it turned out that this person had simply gone... on holiday in Colombia. The examining magistrate timidly wrote that “there was therefore no evidence to support the initial information”. But the damage was done.

The entire investigation file is literally built around this narrative. As for the “terrorist project” that the investigation was unable to uncover, this too will be borrowed from the article.

The prosecutor will argue that LibreFlot, now a “veteran of Rojava”, has been working since his return to France to “set up an armed group” whose aim would be to carry out “violent actions particularly against the forces of order and the military” in order to “destabilize republican institutions”.

Aware that this formulation is a little vague – even in anti-terrorism – he will lose himself in conjecture as he seeks to clarify it. Sometimes the project will be a “guerrilla war aimed primarily at police officers”, sometimes “violent operations targeting symbols of oppression or, to a lesser extent, capitalism”, or even... a “project of intimidation or terror aimed at oppression or capital”.

The examining magistrate summed it all up in a sentence whose grandiloquence barely masked its emptiness. LibreFlot and his “acolytes” were said to have the aim of “provoking a revolution, overthrowing the State and attacking the lives of its representatives”.

A Staging Grotesque...

Ten months of surveillance, despite the use of the most advanced technical resources, yielded just four “facts” from which the whole story was staged:

- Two airsoft games – paintball without paint, one of the most popular activities at bachelor parties – which became “para-military training”.
- A few rifles and shotguns – most of them legally owned – add to the image of an “armed group”.
- The use of encrypted messaging systems for the general public (Signal, WhatsApp) will be transformed into proof of the existence of a “tiny clandestine group” whose members are said to live “in a cult of secrecy”, as demonstrated by La Quadrature du Net in a detailed article.
- A fortuitous connection during a weekend between LibreFlot and a friend specializing in special effects at Disneyland and a playful experiment in making firecrackers during lockdown – based on YouTube videos, as many teenagers do out of simple curiosity – will serve to anchor the story in the collective imagination of the bombings of the 1970s.

Those four elements will be carefully selected from all the information gathered during the surveillance, then decontextualized to give substance to the pre-

written scenario. To achieve this, the prosecution – led by the examining magistrate – will adhere to a strict principle: all facts that could undermine the police story can be ignored.

...& Misleading

Starting with the fact that the investigation has shown that no group exists. The accused do not all know each other, and *a fortiori* have never met. The only thing they have in common is that, to varying degrees, they all know LibreFlot, and crossed paths with him at least once in 2020.

In reality, the accused seem more likely to have been selected after a casting operation to equip the so-called group “with the skills needed to carry out violent actions”, in the words of the DGSJ. In other words: a Disneyland artificer with knowledge of pyrotechnics, a friend with “solid” knowledge of “encrypted communications”, two “survivalists” with – legally – a few shotguns, and a childhood friend who seems to have been reserved the position of lieutenant, with LibreFlot promoted to the rank of “charismatic leader”.

The importance given to the two pillars of the prosecution’s case – the firecracker experiments and the airsoft games – is inversely proportional to their importance in the time of the investigation. Their place is conferred by a simple effect of repetition, resulting in a few hours of one-off activities filling hundreds and hundreds of pages of the investigation file.

The criminal scope of airsoft games – and the same applies to firecracker games – is also produced by a pure stylistic effect: the use of the lexical field of war. They become “tactical progressions”, training for “urban warfare” or “progression in a closed environment”. **The reader ends up forgetting that the “weapons” referred to on every page are... only ballpoint pistols.** Moreover, the fact that a game of airsoft – each game having involved different groups – still seems a rather light “para-military training” for those who want to “overthrow the State” – protected, for its part, by over 200,000 police officers with real weapons – isn’t even addressed.⁴ **In anti-terrorism, it’s the intention that counts.**

As for the statements of the accused, no value is attached to them (unless they serve the police narrative). One example among many is the description of the firecracker experiments. The perfect concordance of the accused’s statements describing how they stopped at the first “bang” obtained, the

4 The desire to criminalize these airsoft games is particularly ironic at a time when the government is multiplying measures such as “global security defense classes”, when the army organizes laser pistol shooting games for high-school students...

range of which “surprised” and “frightened” them, will not sway the examining magistrate. A terrorist lies.

Finally, the criminalization of digital practices to characterize the “clandestinity” of the accused serves both to activate the imagination of the 80s and to excuse the lack of evidence gathered. In the words of La Quadrature du Net, they support the conspiracy narrative that “this evidence exists, but it can’t be cracked”.

Criticism of the State; Evidence of an Unknown Project

This staging would be incomplete without an appropriate setting to anchor the story in the imaginary world in which all the actions of the accused are to be interpreted. In this case, it will be the “Years of Lead” [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg98*]. This backdrop will be built up over dozens of pages, detailing every violent action carried out in the 70s and 80s.

Historical continuity will be ensured by assimilating all the emblematic struggles of recent years – ZADs [ed. – see *‘What Happens After the Cancellation of the Project?’*], collective defense, the dismantling of harmful infrastructures [ed. – see *‘It Is Still Possible’*], the struggle against police violence and even help for migrants – to so many harbingers of a return to “ultra-left terrorism”, as Serge Quadrupanni has shown.

It is on the basis of this imaginary world that the political opinions of the accused will be criminalized and transformed into evidence of the existence of a terrorist project. It is this imagination that will enable the DGSJ to write that, beyond the facts, what proves that a “violent act” is envisaged by the accused is that it is “in line with their ideology”.

What’s more, the examining magistrate noted that the comments made were “in line with several of the books seized”, testifying to “total adherence to the anarchist cause”. The prosecution cited texts by Auguste Blanqui [ed. – see *‘It Depends on All of Us’*], Kryptokin [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg96*], Malatesta and Alfredo Bonanno, articles criticizing anti-terrorist justice and DNA profiling, as well as CNT [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg102*] and [French] Anarchist Federation monthly magazines.

In his indictment, the prosecutor went so far as to transcribe the lyrics of “politically committed rap songs” – recorded from the audio-surveillance in living places – which he commented on at length, insisting that their “targets” were “representatives of the forces of law and order”. Finally, special attention is paid to the “anthology of songs belonging to the anarchist repertoire” found on the phone of one of the accused.

Surveillance & Narrative Construction

We can see how, far from contributing “to the ascertainment of the truth”, as the DGSJ puts it on every request, surveillance is used in counter-terrorism as a tool for distorting reality.

It allows the prosecution to have access to a phenomenal quantity of information from which it can simply pick and choose the few elements which, once decontextualized, will serve to materialize the police fiction. The rest being carefully ignored, surveillance is in no way intended to reflect any reality, but to increase the probability of rendering a pre-established scenario plausible.

This “reductive process”, in the words of one accused before the examining magistrate, is used in particular to inscribe those under investigation in the roles assigned to them by the police narrative, generating a feeling of dispossession and denial of their experience, which he describes as follows: the “months of investigation[...] clearly served only to paint a falsified portrait of my person, retaining only a tiny part of my words and activities, always decontextualized and intended solely to incriminate me, to the detriment of any other element characterizing me”.



COVID to the Rescue of a Shaky Narrative

About the arrests, they illustrate the arbitrariness of the concept of preventive justice. When arrests are made, there is no “imminent threat”, but rather an investigation that is stalled and an intelligence service that has to justify the human and technical resources mobilized. Antiterrorism is also a question of “profitability”.

In fact, almost all the “facts” of the case – airsoft and firecrackers – took place during the preliminary investigation (closed in April 2020 at the same time as the judicial enquiry was opened). As the months go by, none of this is repeated. Worse still, the “group” never met. As a result, there are fewer and fewer surveillance reports in the file.

The embarrassment is all the greater given that, at the close of the so-called preliminary investigation,

the DGSJ drew up a summary report in which it is written that “no plans for violent action seemed to have been defined”, going so far as to add that “the constitution of a group dedicated to setting up guerrilla actions was not apparent”.

Clearly, the investigating judge and the prosecutor prefer to act in bad faith. The examining magistrate will write that the “second national lockdown” “complicated the possibilities for the suspects [...] to find each other”. The public prosecutor will explain that the projects were “hampered or complicated by the occurrence of the COVID-19 virus”.

COVID saving France from dangerous terrorists, that was daring. All the more so as the arrests were made 3 weeks after the start of the second lockdown, and it was during the first that the DGSJ was able to observe one of the airsoft games and the play around the firecrackers...

Putting Anti-terrorism on Trial... or Giving Up Political Freedoms

Make no mistake about it. The absurdity of an accusation without an object, and *a fortiori* without evidence, is the hallmark of anti-terrorism. Years of Islamophobic jurisprudence have transformed anti-terrorism into an ideal tool for political repression, while a succession of security laws has given intelligence agencies the surveillance powers they need to feed the accusatory narratives of their choice.

And today, anti-terrorism is seeking to extend its reach to social struggles. Last July, the director of the DGSJ explained that, in a context of diminishing “Islamist threat”, his services were now focusing more on “extremes”. While the DGSJ has doubled in size in ten years, it is now “looking for new outlets” in “ecology” and “extreme violence”, as the SDAT recently explained to a defendant in the Lafarge case.⁵

The multiplication of far-right terrorist trials should therefore not make us happy,⁶ but alarm us [ed. – see **Calling It Terror**]. It is merely the premise of

5 ed. – French cement company that between 2013–2014 was secretly paid Daesh/ISIS and similar groups in Syria to protect their facilities in the area and stifle competition.

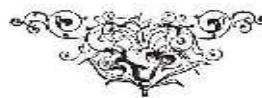
6 A caricatured example of this position by the “Left” press is, here again, offered by Mathieu Suc. See in particular his coverage of the Barjols trial [ed. – *far-right anti-immigrant group (named after words locals in Mali used for soldiers taking part in France’s 2013-14 military operation there, and including ex-military) that planned but never executed killings of migrants, Muslims, and – less upsettingly – France’s President*], and his uncritical presentation of the DGSJ’s “cyber-infiltration” units here and here, which in passing relays the police discourse aimed at making “encrypted private messaging” the reason for the spread of far-right radicalism.

what lies ahead us. To welcome the progressive extension of anti-terrorism in any direction is to dig the grave of our political freedoms.

On the Left, the December 8th affair is the first test of a repressive movement whose violence promises to be terrible. At the Senate hearing following the Sainte-Soline crackdown [ed. – see **Struggling and/or Being Manipulated in the Name of the Struggle**], Darmanin had already brandished this case as an example of a “foiled attack” by the “ultra-left” to justify the violence unleashed on environmental activists. If convicted, we can expect to see an increase in the number of left-wing activists charged with terrorism.

The trial will be held every afternoon from Tuesday to Friday from October 3rd to 27th [2023] at the Paris Tribunal de Grande Instance. Calls for mobilization have been launched for the opening and closing of the trial, but it is public, so anyone can attend as they wish. If it is to be the trial of anti-terrorism, it will also be a trying time for the seven accused: any help, support, smile or helping hand will be welcome.

Come one, come all!



Update: In December, the judge announced his verdict: terrorist criminal association for all the accused. He immediately orders the court-room evacuated, but supporters occupy the space for almost two hours. **The sentences are as follows:**
L: 2 years probation. Not entered as FIJAIT [transl. – *Fichier des auteurs d’infractions terroristes*, terrorist offenders file].
M: 3 years. 15 months suspended. FIJAIT.
C: 3 years including 2 suspended. FIJAIT.
B: 3 years suspended. FIJAIT.
W: 3 years 20 months suspended. FIJAIT .
S: 4 years including 25 months suspended. FIJAIT.
F: 5 years including 30 months suspended. FIJAIT.

All except the convict who was not entered as FIJAIT have launched appeals.

**AGAINST THE
TERRORISM OF
THE STATE,
ACTION NOW**



Between Weichan & Social War: an urgent & necessary path of encounters (Chile)

[ed. – Written to be read at the 12.12.21 event *Complicity in Resistance, in Santiago, in solidarity with the Mapuche struggle*; see **Return Fire vol.3 pg59**. As well as claiming his own heritage (in a way obviously not available to all), the author refers to an increasing reality in lands dominated by the Chilean State, as in others: collaboration and solidarity between anarchists and indigenous resistance. To learn about more recent developments, see the recently-translated book *'Between Oceans, Forests & Volcanoes: A Glimpse into the Radical Mapuche Struggle'*.]

I was born in a country that bequeathed me a nationality that doesn't represent me, and that I've rejected practically since I embraced the path of struggle and from which I've received only punishment, repression and death.

A set of codes and values of a history that feels alien to me, a hybrid identity written with ancestral blood, made up with hegemonic western European rationality [ed. – see **'The Principle of Reciprocity'**] until now and with strong identity ties between the existent, its supporters and false critics.

I am from the *warria* [ed. – *Mapuche word for city*], a classic son of the urban working class, growing up among people where the daily struggle was and is for survival in the midst of always-precarious material conditions but with strong bonds of community solidarity as a practice of life.

In the last 30 years, this path full of resistance has coincided in encounters with the growing and unstoppable advance of the Weichan [ed. – *Mapuche struggle*] that has reawakened that sleeping drive of deep convergences with essential aspects of Mapuche being.

Respect for the Ñuke Mapu [ed. – *mother land*], the search for a harmonious relationship with the planet, the recovery of spaces and territories for the building of an autonomous path with values that collide with the bourgeois mode of instruction and the ideology of the great God, capital, perpetuated with blood and fire by the Chilean nation-state and all its death machinery... all of these are aspects that make it impossible for me to ignore ties and essential sympathies with the struggle for the liberation of Wallmapu [ed. – *the totality of Mapuche lands*].

These are times for clarifications and definitions. The positioning of autonomous, anti-authoritarian and anarchic subversive practices in this part of the planet cannot ignore the conflict for this land, nor

remain only in general and tepid solidarity. Besides aspects associated with the Mapuche's *rakiduum* (thought) and *feyentun* (spirituality) – that are their own – there are other aspects that allow us a clear and necessary encounter for the construct of another life, in resistance and the advance of liberated spaces that are undoing the presence of the Chilean and Argentine states throughout all Wallmapu (Gülumapu [ed. – *those Mapuche lands west of the Andes*] and Puelmapu [ed. – *those to the east*], where the Weichan reaches different intensities but both are on the rise).

We fight the State, prison and Capital in all its variants and possibilities ... It is an impassable principle, through which we meet different *compañeres* [ed. – see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**] of different tendencies and generations, of different latitudes. Above labels and closed circles, and on this multiform path the present demands us to be aware of the rising conflict that is expressed in each territory where *compañeres* and siblings walk. And there my voice and conviction, over the years, have extended a deep kinship to the Mapuche resistance and attacks on the logging industry [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg59**], the *Yanaconas*,¹ cops and soldiers of the Chilean State.

**Destroying the Chilean State is our goal.
Walking with and among those who do it
from a communitarian, harmonious,
confrontational, anti-capitalist perspective,
and in permanent creation – listening to the
voice of the ancients – is our choice.**



12.10.14, Santiago, demonstration in traditional dress: "I DON'T DANCE FOR THE SAKE OF IT DANCING, WE STRUGGLE"

- 1 ed. – Originally those among the subjects of the Inca Empire to the north of the Mapuche – and who never succeeded in colonising the latter – who directly served the elite (often becoming officials) rather than cultivating their own lands communally. After Spanish conquest of those lands, *yanaconas* entered European service. When they arrived in the south, the Mapuche they encountered there had no word for traitor; so Mapuche use this one.

Not undertaking it in this way would be to lose the meaning of conflict, marking the eternal passage of general definitions, of empty circular discussions and charity work which spaces and practices have maintained for a long time and which are necessary to overcome.

Kinship in the struggle for the liberation of the earth and against capital means looking to the enemies of Wallmapu who move with total tranquility in the *warria*. It means being clear where these enemies are and not letting them live. It means taking steps that overflow the always-fertile terrain of words, and become rising, multi-form action.

The path of confrontation is our inalienable choice in jail and on the streets. We are not victims of circumstances but conscious warriors of a struggle to the death for the total liberation of peoples, individuals and communities. Here all our efforts and *newen* [ed. – force or strength, of the kind that flows from nature] are gathered.

A complicit hug to the peñi and lamien [ed. – Mapuche comrades/brothers and sisters] of the struggle.

Freedom for subversive, anarchist and Mapuche prisoners!

Calling to social war!

Amulepe Taiñ Weichan [ed. – the struggle continues]!

As long as there is misery there will be rebellion!



– **Marcelo Villarroel Sepúlveda**

La Gonzalina Prison Factory, Rancagua region.
December 2021.



For the background of Marcelo's case, see **Return Fire vol.5 pg92**. In July, Marcelo and other anarchist and subversive prisoners in that State's cells

reminded us of the legal absurdity of his continued detention, having already spent the last decade and a half in the sensory deprivation of the high- and maximum-security units: *“Regarding the situation of comrade Marcelo Villarroel Sepúlveda, arrested in Argentina in March 2008, who has been in prison for almost 16 years, serving 29 years in three different periods, we have been clear and insistent: today he is a hostage of state logic and not a prisoner of the rule of law that power itself claims to defend.*

“He has been given hefty sentences, amounting to more than 46 years, emanating from Pinochet's military courts of transitional Chile in the early 90's [ed. – after that dictator died peacefully in his bed] for various armed actions such as attacks and harassment of the torturing police of the time, explosive attack on the Spanish embassy in the context of the 500th anniversary of the European colonial invasion, seizing trucks transporting food and distributing it among communities, and bank robberies in the context of his former militancy in the defunct urban guerrilla group MAPU-Lautaro.

“The current validity of these sentences is only possible as a result of the maintenance of the legal apparatus of the dictatorship and the silent modification, at the beginning of 2019, of decree-law 321 of conditional liberties. This measure changed their time of fulfillment and allowed the Gendarmería to have carte blanche from the Ministry of Justice of the Piñera government [ed. – previous right-wing president] to implement this legal aberration. Since the Chilean state illegally applies this modification retroactively, contrary to the international criminal law that they claim to defend and equally, subsequently and under the current administration of the Boric government [ed. – new “progressive” Chilean president], the Courts of Appeals and Supreme Court and the Public Ministry through its democratic judges and prosecutors have explicitly and openly, and without any shame, through recent rulings, defended Pinochet's military courts.”

Therefore, as Marcelo himself wrote this January, *“According to the gendarmes, I must serve 12 more years of imprisonment to be able to apply for some intrapenitentiary benefit only in 2036. According to their retroactive modifications of the illegal Chilean law, in 2056 I will definitively expire my sentences, all of them from events that occurred more than 30 years ago.”*

*Let the comrade know he's not alone: **Marcelo Villarroel Sepúlveda**, Complejo Penitenciario Rancagua – Módulo 1, Calle La Gonzalina s/n, Rancagua, Región O'Higgins, Chile*

MEMORY AS A WEAPON

'The Steel Road'

[ed. – This is taken from a longer piece, 'Resistance to the First Railway', published on negreverd.blogspot.com.es and originally written in Catalan. This version was translated from the book '12 Luddite Histories', a collection of tales relating opposition to industrialisation on the Iberian Peninsula; some of which predated the Luddite campaign in England (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg85**) to which that monkier makes reference. This covers an important moment in the history of the Spanish State; that of the liberal "revolution" (and the period preceding that revolt) in the 1850s, limiting royal power and ushering in the 'bienio progresista' (progressive biennium) of 1854-1856 – featuring, as in other liberal revolutions, increasing enclosure by ascendant capitalists of commons (see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; '**Centering Relationships**') previously held by the very peasants whose blood paid for the change in regime. Then as now, this vaunted 'Progress' (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg11**) was an elongation of the disaster experienced by the Earth and its beings; some of whom (in this case, the dispossessed fishers, workers and other locals) revolted in turn.

While this segment looks at the literal machinery being introduced, the book takes care to remind us that just as important to this phase of capitalism was imposing new social machinery; "a life divorced from the seasons and the sun [ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**], jobs far from loved ones (family, friends, neighbours...). Monotonous and unvarying work, submitted to rigid and intensive schedules..." Two centuries away from that moment, also in Catalunya, Josep Gardenyes observed that this still holds true: "today, the most relevant machines for sabotage are not mechanical looms but social machines, those that mediate communication, that produce and control the networks of socialization and sociability, and that define a way of being in the world [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; '**Here or Anywhere Else**']." Yet as that piece (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg8**) also underlined, the themes below of increased connectivity, diversified means of transport, the enclosure and military dominance of new spaces for capitalism have a strong resonance in our era; that space, in at least one case, being extra-terrestrial (see '**It All Came Crashing Down**'). As the world-system (see **The 'Green' Farce Everywhere and Nowhere Else**) seeks new options for renewal, certainly including socialistic ones (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg13**), new commons come under threat which we might have scarcely noticed we enjoyed. The hammer of Luddism still beacons, before it is too late.]

Currently the network of domination leaves very few gaps. Matter, energy and information circulate through its mesh: roads, highways, railway lines, telephone lines, fiber optics [ed. – see the

supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**], 3G networks [ed. – and now more on top; see **The 5G Net**], Wi-Fi, DTT [ed. – pesticide], various repeaters, telephone antennas, high voltage towers, gas pipelines, oil pipelines... And we are advancing, more and more, towards ubiquitous domination where the network will only have nanoholes, where spaces of freedom will hardly have room.

Through this network of domination, the land becomes territory, dominated space, domesticated space.

Domination and domestication, like their resistances, have followed a gradual development over time. The "history" that functions as an academic instrument of domination should not prevent us from knowing what our grandparents and great-grandparents did, although it does not prevent us from making the same mistakes or repeating their successes... even if only as a sign of identity.

"Yes, see that immense number of giants with fair hair of smoke, incessantly spewing their beautiful and well-formed industrial manufactures; and that fast-moving engine that crosses the mountainous and wild fields of Catalonia. The fertile and delicious plains of the rich and perfumed garden of Spain, the peerless Valencia; and so many other provinces that look over their lands at the railway conduits that have them gripped in an immense network; and all that set of wonders shorten distances. They break borders; they multiply capital a hundredfold, and perfect man.

Nothing compares to electricity, which transmits words from one area to another and makes humanity a single universal family..."

(El Obrero, no.1, 4/9/1864; a reformist society and politics newspaper, ending up as mouthpiece for the socialist party and the UGT [ed. – *Unión General de Trabajadores*, major Spanish trade union historically affiliated with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party or PSOE], without leaving aside the cooperative and Christian sectors).

Need we see which the editors of "Obrero" would deserve, a medal as the most naive and disingenuous workers in their analysis or another as the most competent servants of the system? In this short paragraph an entire strategy of the State and capital is synthesized: the factory (production of goods for mass consumption), the railway (rapid communication, the ICT of the time) "that has them gripped [ed. – also with double-meaning of "imprisoned"] in an immense network" (how prophetic...), and finally "electricity", an indefinite and versatile term [ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification**] like those now used with



nanotechnologies or nebulous “smart” devices [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?**], the universal solution to all tensions, sorrows and misfortunes.

At the beginning of industrialization, the networks woven over the country were lax and were limited to communications by roads and highways, waterways and coasts (leaving room for robbers and bandits). They were traveled by innumerable vehicles powered by animals (including by humans), boats, rafts and coastal vessels (rowed and sailed). In fact, the network did not differ much from that inherited from the Roman empire [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg76**] (another milestone of civilization [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**]), although the increase in population made it denser.

Industrialization implied the need to increase the number of nodes in the transportation network and their interconnections, as well as the adoption of new technologies that facilitate information exchange and energy distribution. **It is not, then, that some technologies arrived and found a favorable space in which to develop, but that the needs of the State/industrial/capitalist complex of the 19th century had needs and sought technological solutions**, in the same way as the corporate/global system that we suffer now also has needs and develops technologies to satisfy them (nanotechnologies [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg26**], new materials, biotechnologies [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg34**], global control of communications, artificial intelligence [ed. – see **Leaving the SPVM Behind to Attack a High-Tech Hub**]...)

Thus, throughout the 19th century, the fabric begins to be built which is now woven so fine that it is difficult to find a hole large enough to slip through... Transport and communication networks that reach ubiquity with “wireless” technologies.

In the past, domination started from centers of power (generally cities), and crystallized in centers of production (generally agricultural). Energy was mostly animal... the network of domination had wide holes [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg119**].

It is not surprising that the territorialists [ed. – term used in Spain for non-radical environmentalists who problem-solve for industrial society] spend so much time finding alternatives for the network, or that they ask for underground passages, diversions, alternative routes, “rational uses”, energy alternatives [ed. – see **‘The Ecological Transition is a Hoax’**]... their actions cause the mesh to be tighter, for domination to be more efficient... they lead to a more domesticated world.

The railway, the steel road, was one of the first great

innovations in the networks of domination. Its expansion was matched (in the most powerful countries) to that of the telegraph network (optical and electrical). Each railway line was accompanied by a telegraph one.

The two networks (railway and telegraph) that began their journey had strong military and police involvement. The railway, wherever it was built [ed. – see **Poems for Love, Loss & War**; or where it continues to be built: see **‘Since Colonial Times’**], played a very important role in transporting, mobilizing and demobilizing men on the fronts [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Ruslan Siddiqui Charged With Railway Sabotage & Military Airfield Attack**] and in crushing revolts. And telegraphs, for their strategic and police use, connecting the centers of power with their executing arms. In fact, the first [public] telephone lines, beyond the local level, encountered strong opposition from the Ministry of the Interior and the police.

The railway engine had such a strong impact on the imagination that it is still used today as a reference for progress and power (especially that of industry): “the train of progress”, “the engine of the economy”, “the engine of Europe”, “the engine of science”... train rides are taken (good) or missed (bad).

The industrial capitalist State was consolidated through these two networks. We can make a chronology of how the framework of domination in which we now live developed:

- 1761: Royal Decree approving a radial plan for roads in Spain
- 1805: General Road Plan of the Mayor of Catalonia
- 1816: Road Plan of the Barcelona Board of Trade
- 1834: the first modern highway begins, from Barcelona to Vic
- 1842: the gas network for public lighting begins to be extended, gas lighting is inaugurated on Las Ramblas in Barcelona
- 1843: the Catalan Gas Lighting Society was founded
- 1844: Royal Decree to establish a radio network of optical telegraph from Madrid to all provincial capitals
- 1844: Royal Order for the creation of railway lines
- 1845: the road from Barcelona to Sabadell/Terrassa begins
- 1848: the first Barcelona/Mataró railway line was inaugurated
- 1848: an optical telegraph network was established between the military establishments of Barcelona city, connected to some surrounding towns
- 1849: the construction of the optical telegraph network of Catalonia is completed
- 1851: Areta law of the “State Highway Plan”
- 1851: the Madrid Aranjuez railway is inaugurated
- 1852: Royal Order for the construction of the Madrid/Irun electric telegraph

- 1853: implementation of the electric telegraph on the Barcelona/Mataró railway line
- 1854: the railway lines from Barcelona to Granollers and from Barcelona to Molins de Rei are inaugurated
- 1855: the Madrid/Irun electric telegraphy line came into service
- 1855: General Railway Law
- 1856: the railway from Tarragona to Reus is inaugurated
- 1857: first modern population census
- 1857: Royal Order for the development of postal services
- 1860: implementation of the daily postal service in all the municipal capitals of Catalonia
- 1867: the "Compagnie des Eaux de Barcelone" is founded in Liège
- 1877: first telephone trials in Barcelona
- 1881: first electrical distribution networks in Barcelona (linked to public lighting)

Right now, we are in a similar situation, a supra-State power establishing a network of radial domination [ed. – see **Their Sustainability is a Disaster – Let's Smash It**], and "local" powers establishing radial sub-networks of domination; in principle subordinate to the first, although with the appearance of being antagonistic to it. Both types of networks have administrative and, above all, military control functions, although today they are called security (a synonym for military) [ed. – see **Calling It Terror**].

As in the case of resistance to the factory and the destruction of machines it is very difficult to obtain data on these issues, it was not something that they wanted to publicize and, furthermore, it was not, as it is not now, a topic of the taste of chroniclers and historians. On the other hand, both the destroyers of machines and those who resist the communications network are considered in the leftist imagination as enemies of progress (which they really were), and their actions are episodes with which it is not possible to identify or establish relationships of empathy with.

The few documented conflicts (by chance or accident) are very interesting in that they establish a bridge with current conflicts such as the TAV [ed. – see **An Update from the No TAV Campaign & Thoughts on its Relevance for Stop HS2**] or the MAT [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg39**]. It is possible to find news of resistance to the railway referring especially to the Barcelona/Mataró (1844 and 1854/1855) and Valencia/el Grao (1852) lines, surely there were

more episodes that we do not know about... If you have info about any of them do not hesitate to write to us.

The Mataró Line

*" As fast as the wind
the line takes you to Mataró
in a moment.
Such a thing has never been seen:
Having lunch in Barcelona
And having dinner in Mataró "*
Verses of a fan of the time.

Seeing the expansion of the railway through Europe and America, in the Spanish State interests and speculations began to move in the same direction. They were very large investments to be assumed by local private capital, and, for the most part, they had the participation of the State and foreign (especially French) speculative capital. Although in the case of the Mataró line a good part of the capital and technology came from England, in Catalonia we have Miquel Biada y Bunyol as the main promoter, not the English engineer who directed the works and the company... and faced attacks on that company.

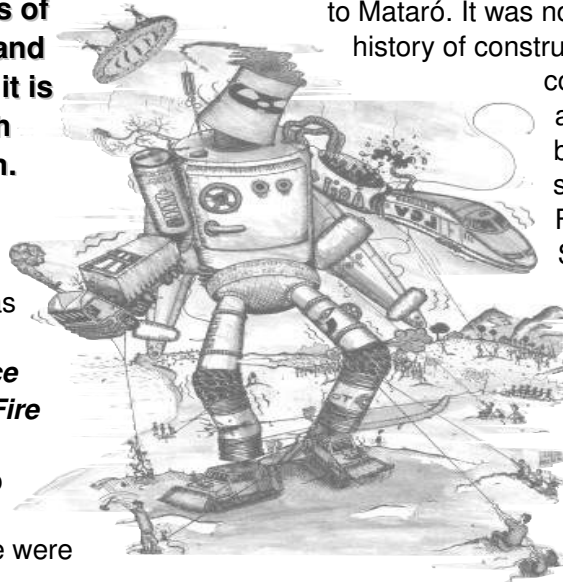
Miquel Biada was a naval pilot, shipowner and merchant born in Mataró. At a very young age he "went to the Indies", where he took direct part in the fight against the independence fighters of the Viceroyalty of Colombia. From there he went to Cuba when Spain was defeated.

In Cuba he continued with his businesses, and it seems that he participated in some way in the construction of the sugar railway from Havana to Güines in 1837. **Miquel Biada was an active slave owner, speaking before the Board of Commerce in defense of slavery... and it is likely that he traded in humans in Cuba.**

He returned to Mataró to continue doing business and began promoting the trainline from Barcelona to Mataró. It was not an easy job; the history of construction was full of

conflicts, lawsuits and complaints between shareholders. Finally obtaining State concession, capital and technical resources, the works began.

The Barcelona/Mataró route obtained a very notable indirect



subsidy. The expropriated public land did not have to be paid for; and the beach, being public (despite the fact that many owners had deeds to some parts) was free... And for that reason, the train passes at sea level... to not have to pay!

What was not taken into account was that the beach had many users, on the one hand fishermen (in Badalona about 100 boats), small coastal boats, shipyards... and also the coastal towns used to use it for the weekly market.

There were also many people who worked directly in transportation along the coast, such as cart drivers, coachmen, post office workers, muleteers... and indirectly such as employees of the inns, stables and workshops, blacksmith shops... In Sant Adrià there was even a Society of Passengers that helped travelers cross the Besos River when it was swollen. **All these people saw their way of life in danger with the appearance of the railroad.**

The resistance manifested itself in the form of sabotage and theft of material. What was done on the worksite during the day was undone at night, even uprooting the tracks themselves.

The workers and technicians were threatened and booed. The houses where they stayed were even stoned, especially those of the English (engineers, managers, technicians...).

The place where the most information about the resistance is preserved, and where the intervention of the army was necessary, was Badalona. Therefore we will treat it separately [*ed. – see original*].

Along the entire route, the fences that were installed to isolate the track were torn down and the rails were taken up. The most serious incident was the burning of a bridge shortly before the inauguration, on the night of October 21st to 22nd, 1844 (the official inauguration was on the 28th of the same month). It was the bridge over the Torrent d'Antich in the Masnou. Three residents of the town were summoned by the judge, but nothing else is known.

The company was forced to hire private security reinforced with the sheriffs of the different towns and the military forces sent to Badalona. These guards were considered a public force... During those nights there were shots fired and detainees... There is no record of people wounded or convicted, although there surely were.

Once the line was inaugurated, sabotage and actions against the railway continued to the point that, for many years, it did not run at night and the company was forced to maintain private surveillance, especially to control the tracks in the late hours of the night.

Shortly after the inauguration (two months later, on 12/1/1848) a group of “trabucaires”¹ destroyed part of the track in Masnou and two days later the first accident occurred at the entrance to the Montgat tunnel. It is said that due to sabotage by a cart driver, the train derailed.

Years later, around 1855, conflicts arose again with the extension to Arenys and the construction of breakwaters to defend the route in Vilassar and Masnou. It had been built too close to the sea, but the defenses posed a new obstacle for fishermen.

In Mataró the conflict was also with the fishermen and a small shipyard. As in Badalona, the road cut off the passage of boats and isolated the beach, so despite repeated orders from the government for the works to begin, the opposition of the fishermen postponed them for some years. **In November 1855, the boats were taken from the beach and placed on the railway line and on December 20th, a crowd of more than 300 people invaded the Mataró station and paralyzed some renovation works, destroying some attached facilities.** It was not until 1857 that the construction of the line to Arenys could be completed.

Despite all the promises of development and wealth, the line did not succeed economically. Most of the goods continued to circulate through the well-organized (and surely cheaper) traditional transport system, which had the added value of door-to-door delivery. In fact between the period 1848/49 and 1854/56 the transport of goods fell by 16%.

As for passenger transport, despite being relatively important, it never met the expectations of investors; although it was the main economic support of the line. **Far from being a “democratizing” tool for communications, its cost made it prohibitive for most of the population.** Thus, travelling third-class the ticket from Barcelona to Mataró was 6 reales; the daily salary of a switchman was 8 reales. If we



1 ed. – Catalan cultural tradition commemorates these 17th Century bandits, who still feature in popular festivals.

compare the current price of the same route (€3.80) and the average salary, the equivalent of 1848 would be between 50 and 70 euros; not to mention the first-class ticket that was 10 reales.

It is not surprising that the well-off people of Mataró (the main users in the end) asked the company to adapt the schedules to the theater performances in Barcelona, so that they could go and return on the same day.

The railways throughout the Spanish State turned out to be a ruinous business (like the TAV right now), stimulated by the government and local politicians and bigwigs. They were mostly unprofitable and went bankrupt in a few years, having to be taken over by the State to clean it up (does this sound familiar to you?). The resemblance to the current model of High Speed Trains is therefore surprising.²

2 ed. – Our thoughts naturally go to the UK government's High Speed 2 (HS2) rail project, Europe's largest current infrastructure project and the biggest and most expensive post-WW2 development in the UK, trading an increased hegemony of the capital and wealthy south-eastern commuters for ripping apart over 100 ancient woodlands, chalk aquifers and waterways, at huge public cost while contractors line their nests. It's worth reminding ourselves of the measures taken to push through such unpopular projects, reading from Andrea Brock and Jan Goodey's 2022 'Policing the High Speed 2 (HS2) Train Line': "Infrastructures are not only integral to state building and state legitimacy, but also key for pacification and domestication of subjects – whether we look at early water infrastructures and their importance to the very first state building exercises and emergence of social hierarchy, or the importance of 'lower-carbon' energy infrastructures to the legitimization of 'green' capitalism and pacification of ecological resistance. [...] The ecological and social destruction and dispossession have long triggered resistance. For years, locals fought against the line and the loss of their land through legal and judicial means. The first protest camp was set up along the route in 2018. [...] This resistance is heavily policed, by police forces and private services often working in collaboration. By 2021, an estimated £75m has been spent on policing direct action against ongoing HS2 developments – a small but significant percentage of the official £100–£109bn budget.

[...] Since 2018, HS2 Ltd. has a formal arrangement with the police that is known as an Enhanced Police Service Agreement (EPSA). It sets out that the British Transport Police 'second' an analyst, a researcher, and a National Police Liaison Officer to this joint operation – these three state employees are thus being paid by a limited company and indirectly managed by corporate executives, although they remain ultimately answerable to the British Transport Police. Similar agreements were used during the London Olympics in 2012 and the major London rail link project Crossrail since 2009. This partnership enables HS2 and police operatives to coordinate tactics across all 16 police forces along the route and to draft in officers from different forces, with climbing teams and plant machinery. [...] Yet, this control is not complete, as the company's lack of

[...] Once the line was in operation, the conflict remained at a lower level, taking the form of stoning by children and sporadic sabotage. There were also frequent confrontations on the bridges, especially on the Besos bridge, which was the only bridge there was: the guards of the company did not allow travelers to use it.

In any case, thanks to all the support it had, the railway prevailed and in the years that followed a whole series of sections were inaugurated, most of them from Barcelona. In 1854 the one from Barcelona to Granollers and the one from Barcelona to Molins de Rei were inaugurated, in 1855 the one from Montcada to Sabadell and in 1856 from Tarragona to Reus, in all cases there was a certain conflict centered on the expropriations, but not even close to as strong as that of Badalona. Or at least, there has been no written memory of it.

[...] The railroad had to pass, and passed; the fishermen, the carters, the farmers had no choice but to give in and – much to their regret – they gave in, and entered the man-eating factories or the fishing crews where the feudal lord was transformed into a capitalist, to travel thousands of kilometers like automatons for the new transport companies or to break their backs on modern farms to produce on a massive scale and poison the land. Or, maintaining crumbs of the past autonomy, going into debt and self-exploiting as **self-employed workers**.

awareness of the London Euston tunnels proved, when a small group of activists dug and lived in a network of tunnels beneath the HS2 Ltd. groundworks at Euston and kept between 12–25 NET team operatives busy for a month in early 2021. The costs of the operation for policing and operational delays spiralled to over £140,000.

[...] In 2016 it was uncovered in the Sunday Express that an internal HS2 Ltd. document stated that the company was looking to gather information on the sexual orientation, sex lives, mental health, criminal records, and political views of protesters, complainants, and litigants including those seeking compensation or objecting to the project as part of the company's Privacy Notice. The information could be volunteered freely but it could also be aggregated from 'doctors, the taxman, lawyers, the courts, security companies and credit agencies'; third parties including 'healthcare, social and welfare advisers or practitioners, HM Revenue and Customs, law enforcement and security agencies and bodies, and relatives, guardians or other persons associated with the individual'. This illustrates the involvement of different parts of the (welfare) state in policing dissent.

[...] Other incidents of violence [during camp evictions] resulted in broken fingers through police officers stamping on them, broken noses through security services, activists losing consciousness after being choked high up in tree canopies, or inability to move after a bailiff stamped on an activist's head."

'IT ALL CAME CRASHING DOWN' (Germany)

Space Tech Europe takes place from November 14th to 16th, 2023, for the sixth time in the exhibition halls of the city of Bremen. It is Europe's largest and most important exhibition and conference for space technologies and services. Here, the facets of the aerospace industry are brought to life through in-depth discussions and the companies involved. The aim: business, networking and presentation of new developments. Halls 4 to 6 of the show are dedicated to space production and services, components and systems engineering for spacecraft, as well as space launchers and satellite programs. More than 650 exhibitors from over 40 countries are present. A significant proportion of these exhibitors operate under the Military keyword. Alongside the five largest space companies Ariane, Orbitale Hochttechnologie Systeme (OHB), Airbus Defense and Space, the German Aerospace Center (DLR) and the Center for Applied Space Technology and Microgravity (ZARM), DSI Aerospace, Polaris Spacecraft, Shieldex and Ferchau, the city of Bremen and its university (Humans on Mars) will also be represented. Parallel to the show and at the same venue, a conference is held to discuss technical, political and strategic details.

Attack from the Rear

We took advantage of the trade fair to take an offensive action by an anti-capitalist and anti-militarist climate movement in the late afternoon of November 14th. As participants gathered inside for networking, we met to express our hostility. We blocked off the street behind the exhibition center with barricades of burning tires, and threw bottles of paint and fireworks against the glass facades of the halls. It all came crashing down. The aim was to interrupt their comfortable exchanges with an offensive intervention. Representatives of the arms industry had to be confronted with the consequences of their business.

Bremen, the Bastion of Armaments

It's no coincidence that the Space Tech Expo takes place in Bremen. Bremen is a bastion of armaments. No other city in Germany has such a high density of armaments. With satellites and drones,

electronics for the navy and army, and the construction of naval vessels and warplanes, Bremen's armaments companies make a considerable contribution to the development of the German army's ability to intervene worldwide, and to the distribution of weapons of war and armaments to the four corners of the globe. The city benefits from crises and wars, and the weapons exported from here fuel conflicts all over the world.

Bremen is home to five national, and in some cases European and even international, armaments companies: Atlas Elektronik, EADS Airbus, Rheinmetall Defence Electronics, Friedrich Lürssen Werft and OHB. Despite criticism and anti-militarist attacks against OHB, this company is developing major projects to make the Bremen/Bremerhaven axis more attractive to the high-tech arms industry. The German Offshore Spaceport Alliance consortium, to which OHB belongs, was recently established. The insane goal: a floating spaceport in the North Sea. **Over the next few years, thousands of small satellites will be sent into space for commercial purposes. The first missions are already scheduled for April 2024.**

With this initiative, the consortium aims to turn the Bremen site into an international hub for commercial aeronautics. But how high will the ecological costs be if thousands of liters of rocket fuel are permanently burned in a space as fragile as the North Sea?

War, High Technology & Masculine Fantasies of Omnipotence

Satellite technology is marketed as a research tool for monitoring disasters and environmental change. Space agencies such as NASA and ESA present themselves as scientific research institutions. In fact, from its very beginnings to the present day, aerospace has been dominated by the military sector. Communication and imaging satellites are an important infrastructure for monitoring other states or one's own population, for locking down Fortress Europe, for reconnaissance of the enemy during war or in preparation for it. They are an indispensable component of military communications and industrial

processes. The aeronautics industry is one of the key players in the arms industry! War, high technology and masculine fantasies of omnipotence have a long patriarchal tradition. In space, various forms of oppressive power structures are dangerously intertwined. **From military virility to the egocentric symptoms of turbo-capitalism, from misogyny to colonial thought patterns, the problems of our world are connecting and extending into new spheres.** The personification of this evolution in the form of Elon Musk [*ed. – see 'Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!'*] is not an accident but the logical expression of this realm of capitalism.

Climate

At least since 2022, it has been clear to global public opinion that, if the current trend continues, by 2100 the earth will be warming not by 1.5 degrees Celsius but by 2.5 – 3, and that many tipping points will soon be reached. This will result in the chaotic collapse of climatic and ecological systems, the devastation of entire territories, extreme weather situations, rising sea levels, species extinction, famine and the flight of hundreds of millions of people. Technologies such as satellite technology are touted as a solution to climate catastrophe. Yet, as usual, something else lies behind this ideology [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg33*]. **Dynamic entrepreneurs sell their start-ups as planet-saving machines and, fearful of being too late for capitalist space colonization, politicians the world over finance their megalomaniac plans.** We must act now to limit the consequences of climate change!

Instead of catapulting capitalism into a new orbit, we should – no, we must – do everything we can to sabotage it! To do this, we also need to unmask the ideologies that sell us the destruction of the earth as the engine of humanist progress [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg11*]. The Space Tech Europe exhibition is part of this propaganda strategy. Let's stop it! By all means!

Switch-OFF the system of destruction!

– some anti-militarist ecologists

Barcelona Anarchists at Low Tide

[*ed. – original introduction:*]

This is the third part in our “After the Crest” series, studying how we can make the most of the waning phase of upheavals. This installment analyzes the rhythms of struggle in Barcelona over the past several years, discussing the complex relationship between anarchists and larger social movements as popular struggles escalated and then subsided. **It concludes with practical input on how anarchists can take advantage of a period of ebbing momentum.**

For best results, read this in combination with our earlier features on Barcelona: “Fire Extinguishers and Fire Starters,” describing the plaza occupation movement of spring 2011, and “The Rose of Fire Has Returned,” focusing on the general strike of March 2012. Together, the three pieces trace the trajectory of an upheaval from its inspiring but ideologically murky inception through the high point of confrontation and into the aftermath.

Anarchists in Barcelona played an important and visible role in the social upheavals of September 2010 to May 2012, which in their turn were an influential contribution to the global upheavals taking place in those same years. By the summer of 2012, in the Spanish state and elsewhere, these upheavals largely appeared to have subsided. Anarchists in Barcelona have faced a number of important questions and difficulties as a growing social disintegration contrasts with the earlier times of social coalescence. Will the gains won in those moments of rebellion be lost now that the prevailing social mood is one of resignation?

Whether it takes months or years, such gains are never lost, only surrendered. Social rebels can hold on to the strength they have won if they allow it to transform rather than expecting it to accumulate. It would be self-defeating to predict, from this vantage point in 2013 [*ed. – year of first publication*], whether the anarchist struggle in Barcelona will lose ground or go back on the offensive [*ed. – see **The Fight in Catalunya***], because that future rests largely on our own decisions.



Timeline of Events

2007: A conflict arises within the squatters’ movement when one sector seeks legalization within a reformist discourse of housing rights. As a result, anarchists redouble their efforts to elaborate a critique of capitalist housing. They also question the practice of squatting for the sake of squatting.

End of 2007: CGT-led [*ed. – see below*] bus drivers’ strike, with critical use of sabotage and anarchist solidarity, wins many of its demands.

Spring 2008: A campaign begins for the freedom of longtime anarchist prisoner Amadeu Casellas. A year later, a similar campaign begins for Joaquin Garces.

September-October 2008: US stock market crashes.

October 2008: In an action two years in preparation, populist but nonetheless practical anticapitalists in Catalunya use half a million euros robbed from banks through fraudulent loans to print and distribute hundreds of thousands of copies of a newspaper (published in three different volumes over the next two years) that criticizes capitalism and suggests alternatives. About three years later the group begins a complex of consumer and producer eco-cooperatives.

December 2008: Greece is gripped by an insurrection [*ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg17***], with solidarity actions and important consequences in anarchist practice in Barcelona.

Spring 2009: A huge student movement against Plan Bologna austerity measures is killed off by pacifist leadership. Once occupied universities are evicted, the radical part of the student movement turns to squatting empty buildings and self-organizing a “free university.”

2009: Barcelona witnesses a growth of coordinated solidarity actions and attacks in solidarity with anarchist prisoners and anarchists in Chile and Greece, as well as daylight attacks against targets that can be easily associated with housing and job precarity. The support campaign wins the freedom of Joaquin Garces.

Spring 2010: The government in Madrid announces the first of many rounds of austerity measures. In preparation, major and minor labor unions, along with anarchist and other groups, begin preparing resistance across the Spanish state. In Barcelona, the first neighborhood assemblies are also formed to organize the upcoming general strike.

September 29, 2010: General strike, with major participation and heavy rioting in Barcelona.

January 27, 2011: Minority unions, primarily the anarcho-syndicalist CNT and CGT, launch their own general strike, without the major unions. Participation is significant though far from total, and complemented by several significant sabotage actions.

May 1, 2011: In a collaborative effort between anarcho-syndicalist organizations, socialist Catalan independence organizations, and insurrectionary or informal anarchists, a

combative May Day protest successfully wreaks havoc in a rich neighborhood for over an hour.

May 16, 2011: A day after major protests across the Spanish state, a group of 100 activists begin an occupation of Plaça Catalunya in the center of Barcelona. Within a few days, the occupation grows to 100,000 and beyond. The 15M movement is born [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg45*]. Subsequently, new neighborhood assemblies appear across the city, and a series of massive protests and blockades are organized.

Fall 2011: The movement against the privatization of healthcare in Catalunya peaks with numerous blockades and occupations of hospitals and clinics.

January 2012: Public transportation workers, largely organized by the CGT, betray their promises and sell out a week-long strike before it begins, making a deal that meets none of their initial demands and wasting weeks of organizing, much of it carried out by allies and transportation-users. Fortunately, that same week, a student strike takes over the streets. Students disobey their leaders, riot, and attack the media.

March 29, 2012: A general strike paralyzes the country. In Barcelona and other cities, protesters engage in the biggest riots yet.

May 1, 2012: The police militarize the streets, expecting possible rioting in the anti-capitalist May Day protest. Most anarchists, however, prioritize countering media and government discourses around the earlier general strike. Thousands of flyers are distributed.

October 31, 2012: The minority unions hold another general strike. This time, the CGT organizes peace police to prevent riots. Most anarchists do not solidarize with the strike, and it passes practically without notice.

November 14, 2012: The major unions together with the smaller unions carry out the next general strike. The neighborhood assemblies, largely weakened, and the informal anarchists, doubtful or uninspired, do not play a major role in preparing. In Barcelona, the protests during the strike are massive, but the police control the streets and brutalize people from one end of the city to the other. The general mood after the strike is of disappointment or powerlessness.



Rhythms of Struggle

The social upheavals in Barcelona were not caused by material conditions. The structures and traditions that became most important in the space of the revolt were already in place before the economic crash. And the greatest spikes in popular participation in the revolt were direct responses either to movement initiatives that resonated with people's perception of their problems, or to a perceived attack on their living conditions. Specifically, spikes occurred when the

government announced an austerity measure – not when austerity measures took effect or the economic crisis as a whole began to be felt – or else when an initiative such as a strike or an occupation attracted many people and went off successfully. In other words, people's perception of their living conditions and the possibilities for resistance has proved more real than any objective measurement of those conditions on a material level, whether evaluated in wages, unemployment, or otherwise.

The key to gaining strength in times of social disintegration can be found in this approach. We are not mere subjects of social forces. On the contrary, we actively and confrontationally position ourselves to contradict the narrative that justifies or hides those forces. When the narrative depicted social peace and prosperity, we occupied a network of cracks in and margins of that prosperity, demonstrating that we were not content with the wages society was willing to pay us and that we knew we were not the only ones in refusal. When the narrative depicted change and reform, we positioned ourselves at the juncture of the mass of bodies beginning to appear in the streets and an imaginary horizon that contradicted the democratic ideology [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg61*] that mobilized and homogenized those bodies. When the narrative depicts disappointment and powerlessness, we approach the collapse of social movements with joy, because it unmasks the false promises of populists and reveals what is truly lacking for us to regain our lives.

Just as our actions had meaning in times of social peace – just as revolutions were not inevitable in times of austerity – our actions, our projects, and the positions we choose in relation to events can sometimes tip the scales to determine whether a social disintegration erases everything that was won in a period of revolt, or whether the lull that always follows the storm will soon be interrupted by another wave of revolt.

A simple comparison of events in the United States and events in Catalunya suggests that a highly disintegrated society is likely to sustain a single brief flare of resistance before normality resumes, whereas a more coalesced society can sustain multiple intense waves of revolt in relatively close succession before exhausting its hope and rage. Some of us hold that the activity of social struggles – understood broadly – is the best way to reverse the social disintegration caused by capitalism. The farmers and artisans who blindly resist modernization [ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; 'The Steel Road'*]; the insurrectionaries who connect with popular rage; the

“The insurrection has an emotional foundation. We struggle because we feel rage and hope, not because we drop below some minimum of income or nutrition or because the unemployment rate has exceeded a certain percentage. Many people who die of hunger obey up to the very last day. And we don’t struggle because we are playing a role in a rational historical process - the materialist predictions of the Marxists have been as inaccurate as those of the economists. [...] But if we speak of our feelings, if we search out our friends instead of leaving them alone with their “personal problems,” if we take care of ourselves, then we will smash the capitalist-patriarchal isolation. We will create a collective force, and that is exactly what we need in order to struggle.” – *Antisystema* #25

activists who overcome themselves by spreading an ethic of mutual aid rather than the specialization of charity; the old people who insist on telling the stories of their defeat; and the artists who evade their own recuperation – all of them help society¹ to coalesce in the face of the disintegrating force of capitalism.

Just as the more densely knit society can sustain the reverberations of revolt for longer, the places within that society where comrades seek and generate conflict as part of an ongoing effort will not fall back into silence as quickly. In Catalunya as in the United States, a successful projectuality has allowed certain towns and cities to maintain more intense struggles where all around them the social peace has already returned. **Revolt moves through the social body, but its specific functions may be performed by any of that body’s cells. We are not external to the body, as a surgeon, a sociologist, or a vanguard, but neither are we its prisoners.**

We imagine that it will be the concussiveness of repeated outbursts of revolt, and not the geometrical growth of a social movement, that will destroy the current structures of governance, the way the intense vibrations of an earthquake or avalanche liquefy the hardest materials.

If this is correct, one of the vital tasks of rebels is to unlearn the mechanical motions of the Left and the fatalistic expectations that a mechanical worldview

1 While it does encourage us to think of the ways that power is diffuse, not simply a top-down imposition that we suffer passively, the identification of “society” as the enemy reveals a disturbing ignorance as to what exactly the State forcibly disintegrated and reconstitutes with the bonds of nationalism and the Spectacle. It is this same unknown that palpably coalesces in the space of the riot and of struggle more generally. Margaret Thatcher’s [*ed. – infamous UK neo-liberal '80s Prime Minister*] assertion that society does not exist, only the Market, was less an observation than the mission statement of capitalism.

inculcates, and to relearn rhythmic cycles of struggle.

The Anarchist Space

A couple years before the new social movements broke out, many anarchists had already begun to change how they interacted and how they positioned themselves in relation to the rest of society. This enabled them to be much more effective in the social coalescence that occurred from the general strike of September 2010 through the 15M movement to May Day 2012; to play a role in extending and radicalizing that coalescence; and to hold on to a good deal of potential as it began to fade away.

In the previous century, the anarchist space in Barcelona – the terrain of struggle which anarchists inhabit and help to create – has changed in shape and density numerous times.

I would identify three different forms this space can take: a **unified** space, which is held together by an organizational center of gravity, with communication occurring primarily within a singular organizational set of boundaries that can presume to represent an anarchist movement; a **segmented** space, which is divided between multiple centers that generally do not overlap or communicate; and a **fragmented** space, which is comprised of numerous distinct groups or currents that, despite differing and often conflicting, intersect and overlap to an untraceable degree, so communication and connection are networked intensively. **In their long history in Barcelona, anarchists have always been most effective when their space was fragmented.**

An increase in their strength, or the potential loss of that strength, has generally led them to unify their space of struggle. Unified spaces have generally precipitated major defeats, as the weaknesses of a single line of struggle can affect the entire movement.² The contrasting interpretations of those

2 A classic example of this would be the disastrous strategy of collaboration with the republican government chosen by the CNT in July 1936, and their ability to suppress other strategic tendencies, such as the illegalist tendency of some Italian and Catalan anarchist expropriators in Barcelona, and the insurrectionary tendency of the Friends of Durruti group – not to mention the critical voice of Durruti himself, before he was killed by the Stalinists [*ed. – see footnote #12*]. The anarchist space throughout the Spanish state was far more heterogeneous and fragmented before the Civil War than is generally recognized. Dozens of different currents and tendencies were active, sometimes in conflict, sometimes in harmony. When the FAI succeeded in its important mission of blocking the syndicalist takeover of the CNT, around 1934, they also initiated the unfortunate unification of the anarchist space within and under the CNT. It is possible that this unification already bore rotten fruit in 1934, when the anarchists failed to show effective solidarity with the insurrection in Asturias, although it would take more

defeats have repeatedly led to the appearance of a segmented anarchist space. In the last thirty years, the anarchist space in Barcelona has gone from unified, to segmented, to fragmented.³

The last change occurred primarily between 2008 and 2012.⁴ It was visible in the exodus of anarchists from the squatting bubble, in the bus drivers' strike of 2008, in increasing attempts at citywide or regional coordination through 2009 and 2010, and afterwards in participation in neighborhood assemblies, plaza occupations, citywide coordinating groups, campaigns against foreclosures, campaigns against immigrant detention centers and raids, and labor assemblies for the organization of strikes. Clearly, the increase of popular resistance and the erosion of social peace helped to strengthen the anarchist space and created many more opportunities for methods of non-unified coordination to be put into practice, but the fragmentation of the anarchist space – which also made it impossible for any one part to dominate the others, and compelled anarchists to seek shared spaces – was already a fact.

Throughout these moments of growth, a major strategic tension has played out between those who sought to unify the anarchist movement and those who fought to preserve its fragmentation.

Neither Recuperation Nor Repression

In part because of the change in how most anarchists are positioning themselves, neither recuperation nor repression has been able to suppress the upheaval.

Initially, most anarchists positioned themselves in such a way as to not have any hope of nourishing or influencing the revolt. They either accepted it uncritically, happy that other people were finally taking to the streets no matter what their motives or expectations were, or else they dismissed it as reformist.

This dismissal reveals an important miscalculation. By correctly characterizing the new neighborhood

reading to confirm whether the CNT's organizational hegemony hindered solidarity.

- 3 ed. – For an insightful reflection by one participant on these topics (and more) in Catalunya in the years since 2013, we recommend the essay 'Organization, Continuity, Community' by Josep Gardenyes; English version out soon.
- 4 Of course, its roots can be traced back further, as when insurrectionary anarchists were expelled from or broke with spaces controlled by anarcho-syndicalists (1996), were subsequently defeated by repression in the space they had created for themselves (2003), and took refuge in the space created by squatters or returned to resume a direct engagement with the anarcho-syndicalists in the space of the CNT. This interpenetration helped lay the groundwork for the subsequent shattering of the previously segmented anarchist space.

assemblies or the occupation of Plaça Catalunya as “social democratic,” radical anarchists obscured what proved to be the more important characteristic: that these spaces were spontaneous and not institutional (at least, not yet). Characterizing people or spaces as reformist is erroneous, even if factually accurate, because reformism is an institutional force that captures people and spaces, rather than an essence that emanates from them. **Anarchists who were justifiably concerned with avoiding reformist strategies walled themselves off from new relationships, not realizing that spaces of encounter always have revolutionary potential.** The people who fill those spaces initially enact reformist strategies because that is what they know. The structures that institutionalize those spaces are imposed afterwards by internal or external recuperators.

The mistrust of reformism was overcome the same way in Plaça Catalunya and in the neighborhood assemblies. First, a couple of the more adventurous, eccentric, or leftist anarchists began to participate. Some of these felt comfortable in the new spaces, others were wary, but all of them were able to share space with reformists, either out of tolerance or thick skin. Then they spread the word within their circles, and soon it became popular for most anarchists to attend these heterogeneous spaces, though how they participated varied greatly.

This pattern defied a number of my expectations, though it makes sense in retrospect. Those with the sharpest social intuition, who arrived early in the spaces that later proved to be of great importance, were hippies, leftists, and, only very rarely, combative anarchists. Later, the insurrectionary anarchists and the intensely activist [*ed. – see **What is Insurgency?***] anarchists⁵ flooded in. The activists tended to build up the structures of the assemblies and occupations without trying to distill their revolutionary potential or criticize their social democratic anxieties; on the whole, they avoided practices that would generate conflict with their newfound allies. Of the insurrectionaries, some denounced the hypocrisy of a spontaneous movement that in one moment called for revolution and in another discussed getting rid of bad politicians or rescuing the welfare state. **Not realizing that incoherence is a constant feature of life under capitalism, for anarchists as well as vaguely upset citizens, they turned their back on the new movements.** The others stayed, seeking a balance between conflict and connection. Their conflictive approach drove them to seek fault lines and drive

- 5 Those who, in my mind, have carried on the methods of the antiglobalization movement without learning most of its critical lessons.

them open, while also trying to be part of a constantly expanding web of relationships.

Simultaneously, the new practice of engagement dovetailed with anarchist support for the general strikes. The strike was already an accepted tradition of struggle, and anarchists in particular have a long history of organizing them, so it was less a leap of faith for anarchists to work with unionists, influencing the outcome and character of the strikes. Their distrust of unions (which many CNT members share) helped rather than hindered their ability to radicalize the strikes, as long as they were willing to engage in some way.

As anarchist engagement in non-anarchist spaces brought clear results, many anarchists adopted a practice of participating in spaces of encounter and fostering relationships with people in institutionalized dissident organizations, while never joining those organizations. This positioning enabled anarchists to keep leftist institutions in check, holding them up to the radical values they purport to espouse and criticizing their betrayals more directly. It is possible that this is one reason why the social struggles in Barcelona have not been recuperated.

Another reason is that there has been no unified strategy of recuperation. The labor unions once occupied the critical position, enabling them to recuperate the most threatening of struggles.⁶ But

6 One might argue that a change in the physical content of labor has made unions less relevant. But in the case of Barcelona, while factory labor has clearly declined and the service industry blossomed, this does not seem to provide a satisfying explanation. In the '20s and '30s, two of the largest (and most radical) sectors in the CNT, as well as two of the largest trades on an absolute scale, were the wood workers' and bricklayers' unions. The workers in those unions were (un)employed overwhelmingly by the construction industry, which was far more precarious and short-term than factory work. Construction work tended to be given out on a per job basis. It did not generate either the sense of neighborhood or the relatively stable collective relationships that the factories did. And for the dispossessed peasants who made up the ranks of those unions, the new forms of mass construction hardly constituted skilled labor. In other words, work in the construction industry a hundred years ago was not so different from work in the service industry today, an industry that employs the vast majority of Barcelona's underemployed anarchists. Yet those anarchists do not have a union. I would argue, in very unmaterialist terms, that the key shift has been cultural. The proletarian identity has been eroded and replaced by a democratic identity, aided by the strategic extension of commodities into the lives of the poor, and by the even more strategic

new activist formations like Real Democracy Now have shown the most potential to capture popular outrage and redirect it towards superficial democratic complaints that focus on politicians and civic forms of participation. It has been in the organizational interests of unions to pull the focus of complaint back to the terrain of economics and labor – though this seems to have infected that terrain with the practice of assemblies and self-organization that was being co-opted by democracy activists. Thanks to the jockeying between competing would-be recuperators, the hollow discourse of the democrats has been contaminated with questions of economy, while the vertical terrain of the unions has been undermined by a renewed tradition of self-organization.

Recuperation is still a danger, and some would say the anarcho-reformist CGT (the third largest labor union in the country, a split from the anarchist CNT) is the most capable of synthesizing these two strategies of recuperation. In the meantime, both the terrain of labor and the terrain of democracy are constantly destabilized by radicals who bring an anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist vision. **However, as labor and democracy are recuperative lenses placed on top of the fundamentally radical fields of sustenance and organization [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg55*], it is probable that even if nobody employs a successful strategy of recuperation, as long as radicals do not succeed in shattering the recuperative lenses already in place, ongoing social conflicts will not be able to develop a truly revolutionary character.** Nonetheless, a conflict that cannot be recuperated will continue to destabilize the State.

One of three things could happen that would make anarchists incapable of preventing ongoing attempts at recuperation. If the media, aided by anarchist arrogance, succeed in isolating anarchists from broader movements, then the unions, activist organizations, and left-wing political parties will be able to bind social struggle within a discourse of democracy, rights, and reform.⁷ If anarchists give up

universalization of bourgeois culture through television. In fact, it was probably the survival of strong feudal characteristics in Spanish society, and not the reality of factory labor, that enabled the exploited to identify so clearly as proletarian when they came to the city a hundred years ago. Although the unseen purpose of their wage labor was to unify them with their bosses, they transposed the peasant/lord division from the countryside to the apparently similar but essentially different inequality they found in the city.

7 ed. – Note that this is precisely what the Spanish media attempted (albeit with the help of the judiciary, or is it the other way around?) from 2013 onwards when covering anti-anarchist counter-terror operations in that country; see *Return Fire vol.3 pg82*. Notes on their failure feature

their conflictive attitudes out of fear of some greater evil (such as fascism, which will be discussed presently), they will not be able to expose and criticize recuperators in the movement. Finally, if they unify and become a movement with which the unions or activist formations could negotiate, they will end up legitimizing the power of would-be leaders, and they will lose the ability to interact in a fragmentive way with other sectors of the movement. A fragmentive interaction is crucial in that it allows anarchists to criticize and create relationships simultaneously, thus generating a multiplicity of forms of both criticism and relation, undermining homogeneity and discipline in non-anarchist sectors of the social movements and potentially extending fragmentation well beyond the anarchist space.

Repression has not failed for lack of effort by the police. Police harassed neighborhood assemblies occupying plazas or marching in the streets, they brutally evicted the Plaça Catalunya encampment, they arrested twenty-two people for attempting to blockade Parliament, they arrested large numbers of people after every riot including over a hundred after the March 29 general strike, they have imprisoned people, they have inflicted permanent injuries upon several people, and they have introduced new laws and surveillance measures that constitute a serious crackdown on popular struggle.

But at every step, spreading resistance has discouraged the authorities from continuing these campaigns of repression. When they arrested a list of mostly anarchists for spitting on or assaulting politicians during the June 2011 blockade of Parliament, spontaneous solidarity protests numbering in the thousands took to the streets, covered the walls with graffiti, and rained abuse upon the police. Neighborhood assemblies took up collections for their legal costs. Even though the pacifist leadership of the 15M movement, together with the media, succeeded in demonizing the violence of blocking streets and spitting on politicians, when specific people were arrested for that violence – people whom their neighbors and other protesters had gotten to know in the neighborhood assemblies or elsewhere – the entire movement claimed them as their own. When the repression failed to isolate the bad protesters and only brought more people out into the streets, the government quickly scaled down the attention they were giving to the case and quietly left it on the back burner.

A similar thing happened with their new public snitching website, inaugurated to encourage good

in one of the supplements to this chapter of Return Fire; **'Open Letter from Return Fire magazine to the 2024.03.29-31 International Anti-Prison/Anti-Repression Gathering'**.

citizens to identify rioters from photos taken during the March 29 general strike. On the whole, anarchists responded with a clandestine mentality, assuming the reality of repression and staying low or preparing to go into hiding. Fortunately, socialist *independentistes* [ed. – *Catalan separatists*], parents, and neighborhood assemblies protested the snitching website publicly, flooding the streets in indignation or refusing to accept the criminalization of rioters. After a few weeks, the government took the website down.



Metamorphosis: Shifts & Seasons

If the social upheaval in Barcelona was neither recuperated nor repressed, why has it faded away? Although some important errors and weaknesses did contribute to its decline, the decline was inevitable and even healthy.

Both leftism and the rationalist worldview it stems from [ed. – see *Riots & Eagles*] train us to view the world in an unrealistic way. This generates false expectations and false criteria with which to evaluate our struggles. The crux of the matter is that we are not the abstract value both Capital and the Left see in us: we are living beings with our own autonomous rhythms that constantly fly in the face of managerial strategies and social mechanics.

People took to the streets with a social democratic idea of revolution. Encouraged by pacifist assurances about “people power,” by media misrepresentations of the Arab Spring [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg87*] or the Color Revolutions,⁸ by Hollywood fantasies like the revised ending of *V for Vendetta* which subsequently found its way into specifically cyber-activist portrayals of revolution [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg48*] like the one projected in *Zeitgeist 3*, they thought they could bring power to its knees simply by taking to the streets.

When this proved false, they experienced the great emotional force of disappointment. This

8 ed. – i.e. Serbia's 2000 "Bulldozer Revolution," Georgia's 2003 "Rose Revolution," Ukraine's 2004 "Orange Revolution," Lebanon's "Cedar Revolution" and Kuwait's "Blue Revolution" in 2005: mass-movements demanding no more than regime change (and getting it, each with the crucial backing of already-willing pro-Western elites), with strict adherence to non-violence and top-down direction, based on viral media strategies based on the simplest of slogans and, of course, a colour code.

disappointment was delayed by the initial rush of overcoming alienation in the blossoming neighborhood assemblies, or by the recurrences of the dream of people power fostered in the massive protests organized every few months out of the 15M phenomenon. **But when the assemblies shrank and the protests did not bring the results they were looking for, there was nothing left to hold back the disappointment.**

When people disappear, it turns out that their eyes go first, and their ears linger a while longer. We can react to their disappearance as a completed fact, concluding that the others were never really in the struggle to begin with and giving up on the conversation that had begun with them. Or we can recognize that the disappeared are really only half-disappeared, that they are still there, blind and invisible, listening. When we continue the conversation, banging on bank windows, taping open the gates of the metro, setting off fireworks at noise demos, the half-disappeared can hear this, and they understand it to be an invitation back into the streets. That invitation is first of all a demand that they rethink their vision of the struggle. Those who do come back, come back stronger.

And even those who never go away do not stay in the streets consistently. They are for ever coming and going, deciding whether to let their projects die or try once more to resuscitate them. We have to recognize that even those who dedicate their entire lives to the struggle must also have their seasons [ed. – see *The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time*].

Earlier, I described the struggle in a time of social



coalescence as a constantly expanding web of relationships. That expansion gave people a new pulse. It contradicted the unflagging march of alienation. But when it seemed to subside, people lost the collective heartbeat they had only just found.

They did not lose the pulse because it had disappeared, but because the expansion that gives it meaning is not quantitative. It is no mistake that the science of Capital [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg33*] teaches us to recognize only one form of expansion. Because we are blinded to the horizons towards which the social body expands, we lose hold of it and fall back to the flat reality of alienation. Sadly, the same magic that makes the social body stronger than the chains of the State also shakes off those who have been trained to think geometrically, as much as they would like to remain in the presence of that new and growing collectivity.

When One Catches a Dragon by the Tail, One Must Never Expect a Smooth Ride

The intensification of relationships that goes hand in hand with the coalescence of society is never a quantitative growth. It occurs in multiple dimensions at once. The tendrils of the web surge forward, capturing new space, linking new bodies, and then contract, deepening the intensity of those links. Just as the visible growth of a tree needs the attendant growth of the roots, a social struggle needs moments of subterranean expansion.



In Mediterranean Barcelona, the heat of high summer makes it easy to recognize that the dog days are not moments for going on the attack or sitting through meetings, but for relaxing, exalting the body [ed. – see *In Praise of the Dancing Body*], and reflecting on recent struggles and the upcoming autumn. But the leftist obligation to produce motion often deprives us of winter. All people in struggle need a time to confront their despair, lick their wounds, and to fall back on the comforting bonds of friendship. Not realizing this animal necessity, many anarchists exhaust themselves by trying to maintain a constant rhythm, or they mistake a slowdown for a loss of strength, and they allow their gains to be washed

away. But winter can be an important time to hunker down, to carry forward the projects that sustain us (and realize which those are), to test the strength of new relationships, and to sound the depth of one's community of struggle.

These rhythms are not uniform, just as one winter is never the same as the next. Some winters, people light fires in the open and stand by them until spring, as the Greek comrades did in 2008, which we tried to imitate, in a way, in 2010. Other winters, everyone retreats to their private hearths, as at the end of 2012. But was that a defeat?

After the general strike of September 2010, anarchists discovered that there was tinder everywhere. They stayed busy in their burrows and prepared another great fire before the winter was out, and the general strike of January 2011 lit the way to May Day and the plaza occupation movement. With all the activity, that summer was short, and people were beginning to tire by autumn. The fall of 2011 was not the *"otoño caliente"* (hot autumn) everyone was expecting, informed by the logic of geometric growth. In their shrinking neighborhood assemblies, some new spaces of encounter, and the persisting spaces of coordination with the unions, people just managed to hold on through winter, riding the last of the wave that had begun in May. They kept their dreams and memories intense through lively debate, so that when the two major unions were finally forced to call a new general strike by an even greater round of austerity measures, people threw themselves into organizing it, and what was created exceeded everyone's expectations. Through force of will, people stayed on their feet despite heavy blows of repression. Striding forward, they made it through May Day, 2012, long enough to take the streets without being intimidated by the immense police presence, and to counteract the media narrative about the March 29 riots with an onslaught of flyers, posters, and graffiti.

After that, the social body fell asleep. The summer was long and pacific. In the fall people rallied to prepare a new round of strikes or to stop the growth of fascism, but could not see clearly how to carry those struggles forward. The next general strikes sputtered forward ineffectively, and in winter people holed up in small group projects they had created with friends, whether or not those projects had proven effective in the last months. These included specifically anarchist assemblies that organized debate and propaganda, neighborhood social centers, distros, free stores, or mutual aid networks intended to encourage anarchist responses to problems of job precarity or home foreclosures.

Narrated as the movements of a great social body, this rhythm of rise and fall makes perfect sense. After such gigantic efforts, the collectivity needs to sleep, and that sleep is not a form of weakness but a necessary activity in which gains can be solidified. Yet many people experienced the exhaustion of the social body as defeat, as loss. In accepting this as reality, they will learn all the wrong lessons, rather than identifying the activities most crucial to the moment.

To a slight extent, because conversations about a rhythmic rather than geometric resistance had already begun to take place, comrades in Barcelona were able to shift their focus, despite widespread feelings of defeat. Anarchists gave priority to groups of a newly expanded affinity, in which they worked together with comrades whom they had gotten to know in the recent upheavals. They debated, they recovered their energy, and they strengthened friendships new and old. If the recognition that a slowdown was inevitable and healthy had been generalized, they might have carried out these activities with a sense of triumph and innovation. Instead, most comrades had the attitude that they had to be content with an inferior kind of activity, because it was the only activity that seemed possible in the moment. Thus, they correctly took advantage of the lull to debate the hot moments of struggle of the previous months, but they failed to recognize the particular value of that moment of social slumber.

The moment also demanded that anarchists strengthen their relationships of difference, seeking out the sincere neighbors, coworkers, and other people they had gotten to know in heterogeneous spaces such as the neighborhood assemblies. These were the people with whom they were losing contact due to social disintegration. **It is of the utmost importance to resist that social disintegration, to seek out recent acquaintances and continue solidifying relationships.** Obviously, it is much easier to struggle together with comrades of affinity in moments of social peace or defeatism, especially because so many other people ceasing struggling in these moments. But we must not confine our method of struggle to the "hot" moments of upheaval and coalescence. We must also learn a long, abiding struggle, and this requires reaching out to those we met and learning what practical things we can share when they no longer continue to participate in assemblies, debates, and protests.

As noted earlier, it is also important to keep making noise, whether via protests or attacks, to invite the

disappeared to return to the streets. In Barcelona, this has happened with continued student strikes and actions enabling people to ride the metro for free. However, if these actions are not undertaken as a conscious invitation, but as an attempt to maintain lost momentum, they will only contribute to the exhaustion and disillusionment of those in the struggle.

Finally, moments of defeatism and disintegration need to be seized as opportunities for propaganda. After a strong wave of struggle, people often fall away because they are exhausted and because they are disappointed at how little they have accomplished, how much farther they have to go. This is the time when anarchists have to unmask the false promises of the recuperators and reformists. This is the time to show that all the politicians, all the government, have to be thrown out, that the police and the media are our enemy, that revolution is not an easy affair. This is the time to celebrate our collective bravery in the streets, to remember what we were fighting for, and to point to promising directions that were revealed in the recent struggle, whether those include a practice of assemblies and self-organization, a defense of houses from eviction, the expropriation of food and clothes from capitalists, the occupation of land, or the burning of banks. **It is rare that the death of a struggle does not leave behind some bones that can be fashioned into new tools.** We should not leave them lying in the dust.

On the whole, anarchists in Barcelona did not seize on the temporary collapse of the struggle to point out the false promises of the recuperators. In fact, the opposite happened. When one of the neighborhood assemblies that functioned on largely anarchic lines started to flag and disappear – as had all the neighborhood assemblies at that point – some Trotskyists⁹ who had been saving their energy for that moment, and who had not committed their time and energy to keeping the assembly alive in the prior months, swooped in like vultures to blame the weakness of the assembly on the informal structure that anarchists had won in debates more than a year earlier.

9 ed. – Followers of the Bolshevik military leader Leon Trotsky, responsible together with Lenin (see '**It Depends on All of Us**') for constructing the police-state and outing anarchist influence; eventually too purged and murdered.



Healing ourselves, strengthening friendships, building consistent and practical relationships with people we met in the upheaval, inviting the disappeared back into the streets, showing that the disappointment only reflects the false promises of reformists and recuperators: these are the essential tasks in the moments of exhaustion, defeatism, and disintegration that nearly always follow social upheavals. These are the tasks that can set off a new wave of struggle after the inevitable low – that prepare the way for subsequent peaks and plateaus to reach ever higher. At the very least, they equip us to stay strong and be prepared for whatever comes next.

We also need a culture of lively debate to hone our social intuition so that we can keep up with changes in context. Struggle has its cycles, but these cycles are not repetitions, and not every metamorphosis in the social struggle is cyclical.

The context in Barcelona has shifted several times over the last couple years. At some points, anarchists cleaved to this shift like naturals, whereas they missed other shifts and had to spend months catching up – or simply lost in a terrain that suddenly behaved differently.

The struggle shifted after the first general strike. It shifted again with the plaza occupation movement. It shifted yet again when the plaza occupation dissolved and the neighborhood assemblies blossomed. That shift was recognized and to a certain extent even precipitated by anarchists, whereas the activists and would-be politicians entirely missed the boat: they stayed on in Plaça Catalunya, trying to salvage their precious structures. After wasting a lot of effort, they partially succeeded saving those structures, but happily their absence meant they were not there to recuperate all of the neighborhood assemblies.

Some time in summer or fall 2011, there was another shift. Most anarchists missed it. I certainly did, as I can't even identify when it happened. The growing strength of the struggle was not matched by a growth of opportunities for waging it. The labor unions would not call another general strike, despite our attempts to pressure the minority unions to make it happen. The struggles against austerity in education and healthcare would not take a radical direction, even

though they had moments of intense support and had moved towards building a practice of road blockades and occupations.

The strategic clarity of the previous months evaporated. It became necessary to identify what we needed to struggle. We were also forced to interrogate our relationships with others in struggle when a transportation strike was betrayed (by its leadership? by its own base? the argument continues) and a student strike unexpectedly cast off those who were managing it. Clarity returned when a general strike was finally announced for March 29, 2012. We knew how to organize for that. But the questions of the winter had not necessarily been answered.

If the growth of a struggle can only be traced geometrically, then we can only interpret it as defeat that the March 29 general strike was so strong, and the general strike of November 14 the same year was so weak. March 29 offered important lessons about organizing a strike and fighting in the streets. Given that the unions successfully pacified the November 14 general strike and the police dominated the streets, does that mean that our enemies learned their lessons, and we did not learn ours?

Looking back on the March general strike, a friend succinctly identified the proper question, though his attitude only depressed and confounded me at the time. Three weeks of incredibly exhausting preparation went into making the March 29 strike and riots possible, and afterwards all that energy dissipated, rather than coming back to us. Was it worth it?

Our exhaustion, along with the fear that the riots had produced in the unions, precipitated another shift. The general strike called for October 31 by the small radical unions and the general strike called for November 14 by all the unions were not unfolding in the same context as the glorious 29M general strike. Most anarchists could not find the motivation to throw themselves into preparing for them. **Fortunately, this pessimism arose from a lucid social intuition.** For our part, we had still not answered the question of how to make the energy of the riot return to us rather than dissipating as a cathartic outburst. And the unions, for their part, were less concerned with getting a lot of people into the street and more concerned with proving to the police that they could keep things under control. The failure of the October and November strikes – the fact that they were boring, under-attended, and ultimately demoralizing – is a victory for the struggle as long as we follow up by exploring how to effectively create a visible, large-scale confrontation that cannot be pacified by the unions or the police.

Unfortunately, there is a time limit for finding the

answer. If it takes too long to create another street confrontation, the collective lessons learned in the rioting of 29M will fade away.¹⁰ The answer may lie in convincing the radical unions to return to their previous combative stance, to agitate for confrontation from within the masses summoned by the major unions, or to return to large-scale occupations.

Whatever the outcome, anarchists were wise to save their energy rather than try to reproduce a previous victory in changed circumstances.

Unsubstantiated Dreams

One factor that has repeatedly made it possible to force struggles into dead ends is the refusal of anarchists to substantiate their dreams. While Barcelona's nihilists have frequently graced the ongoing discourse on strategy with caustically cautionary warnings against optimism or planning the future, they have insisted on including dreaming in the list of luxuries that true revolutionaries are not permitted.

Unsatisfied with the implications of a strategy of total destruction for the growing group of people who urgently need to figure out questions of access to food, shelter, and healthcare – a group that includes many comrades – most anarchists have differed with the nihilists to address the question of self-organization as a positive practice that might satisfy all life's needs.

Well into the rise of the movement for healthcare, some anarchists began to participate critically. Even though the dismantling of public healthcare affects them directly, they generally did not perceive the movement as relevant to them, as it was mobilizing primarily to preserve the welfare state and reinforce Western medicine.¹¹ Later on, some anarchists discarded this apathy and began to hold debates on the problem. A small minority took the lessons of those debates and intervened in the movement for healthcare. Unfortunately, that intervention took place after the movement had already broken apart on the

10 ed. – In the end, from December '13 there was a riot every month in Barcelona, climaxing in the historic rebellion following the eviction of Can Vides social centre in May '14: machinery demolishing the social centre was burned, the site reoccupied and rebuilt, and rioting spread across days and towns in Catalunya. "Tens of thousands of people have won transformative experiences," reads the report 'And on the Seventh Day': "When they see a cop, an intersection, a construction site, a dumpster, a bank, a surveillance camera, a journalist, new meanings and new possibilities appear unbidden before their eyes."

11 By "Western medicine," we should not understand every European tradition of healing, but the proactively patriarchal and capitalist practice of medicine that was institutionalized in the Enlightenment and subsequently globalized.

rocks of its own impotence.

What some comrades discovered in the course of the intervention, nonetheless, is of great importance. Many of those active in the movement harbored strong criticisms of Western medicine and were amenable to critiques of the welfare state. Most of the movement seemed to agree that healthcare was not organized in our interests even before privatization. In group conversations, nearly everybody had stories to share about disrespectful or harmful treatment at the hands of doctors and hospitals. A few participants in these conversations had even created projects for self-organizing healthcare outside and against capitalism. What's more, many of them were friends of anarchists, or anarchists themselves – yet most of the anarchist space was characterized by an ignorance of their projects.

This ignorance proved not to be a coincidence.

Even after the intervention made these projects better known, anarchists almost unanimously failed to make use of them. This was not a political decision, as not a single critique of these projects (at least, not the more anti-capitalist ones) ever appeared. Rather, it seemed to be entirely a question of habit and rhythm. Anarchist militants were simply too busy getting beaten up by cops – and skipping meals for meetings, and subjecting themselves to who knows how much stress to support prisoners or attend assemblies with syndicalists and socialists – to help support an anarchist healthcare project that at some points was even offering free massages and other forms of therapy to any participant in social struggles who would show up. Saint Durruti, martyr of our cause [*ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time***], may you smile in your grave.

These were not additions to a long list of projects that needed more labor power to keep from collapsing. They were projects that needed the encouragement of people walking through the door, projects that could give greater strength and wellbeing to anyone willing to stop being a robot for the revolution and take a sick day every now and then.

To be clear, we are not talking about anarchists who do not know how to stop. The impossibility of holding a debate on a Sunday morning, because of the evident sacredness of the previous night's party, attests to the dependence of Barcelona anarchists on leisure. It is not a question of being unable to replenish themselves, but of replenishing themselves in the manner of workers or machines. Once again, we are faced with a contest between the imposed

rhythms of capitalism and the rhythms our bodies and struggles demand.

But it is not only a question of rhythm. Across the board, anarchists have been hesitant to approach any question of material self-organization. A group of people centered around the Crisi newspaper and Enric Duran's white-collar bank robbery have formed la Cooperativa Integral Catalana, a Catalan cooperative complex that includes consumers, producers, healthcare workers, and eco-communes. Unlike the United States, where cooperatives have either been a rational business decision for farmers or an innovative form of self-managed exploitation for radicals, cooperatives in Catalunya have a radical history. From the 1860s to the 1936 revolution, cooperatives were explicitly anticapitalist, sometimes utopian and often revolutionary, and fully integrated into the anarchist movement – supporting prisoners, helping create a libertarian culture, and equipping proletarian families to take care of themselves in a way that set them at odds with the demands of capitalism. **They also spread practical visions – dreams, if you will – of how society might feed itself after a revolution.** The CIC is also anti-capitalist and entertains revolutionary pretensions. It is by no means immune to becoming a structure for recuperation, but that is all the more likely to happen if it is shunned by revolutionaries who have a critique of recuperation.

While anarchists are quick to criticize or physically attack capitalist forms of housing, food production, and healthcare, they have generally not joined the CIC or any other project that puts anarchist social relations into practice on a material level. By staying away, they avoid conflict with those who would turn the cooperatives into reformist or anodyne [*ed. – i.e. palliative, harm-reduction*] structures, just as they avoided conflict with those who kept the healthcare movement in the dead end of pleading for mercy for the welfare state.

Capitalism is failing an increasing number of people in their simple desire to sustain themselves [*ed. – see **'The Difference Between "Just Coping" and "Not Coping at All"'***]. This creates a ready opportunity to put other forms of sustenance into practice, but it also poses a problem. Other countries that suffer worse economic conditions than Spain have already shown that precarity can precipitate mass emigration that weakens social struggles. The same force that is beginning to oblige anarchists and their neighbors to take extended or even permanent trips to Scandinavia to work in kitchens or fish factories will also disintegrate the bonds that hold together a newly coalescing society.

Voline [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; 'The Temple was Built Before the City'] identified the anarchist failure to create structures in which new social relations could be put into practice on a material level as a key factor that allowed the Bolsheviks [ed. – the Soviet Communist Party] to hijack the Russian Revolution. The same weakness has prevented Barcelona anarchists from enabling the major social upheavals to become revolutionary.

Eventually, people get tired of just protesting. For a long time, anarchists have used the inevitable failure of protest movements as proof of the weakness of pacifism [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics*] or any other practice of dissent and demands. But people also get tired of going on strike, attending assemblies, and burning dumpsters. If the principles of self-organization and mutual aid are constrained to mere slogans on posters or formulations in debates, they lose their force.

Yet these constraints derive from very real weaknesses. Something as complicated as the self-organization of healthcare could only become reality on the basis of a profound reskilling [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg59*] and widespread participation. It has to grow from simple words to detailed dreams, and from small-scale to larger projects. Nor will this growth be unilinear: like everything, it will have ebbs and flows, setbacks and disappointments. But if we are not open to this growth, if we do not start these projects or spread these dreams, nor take part when others do – then who will?

The Problem of Nationalism

Predictably, the State has deployed a new set of mechanisms to make up for the collapse of social peace. Nationalism has been foremost among these. In Catalunya, this has manifested in two very distinct ways: fascist political movements, and the movement for Catalan independence [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg47*].

As early as 2009, there were some in Greece who identified xenophobia as perhaps the most important state strategy to enclose and counterattack the insurrection. But they were few. Anarchist responses to xenophobia and fascism were too little and too late to prevent the concerted flood of media propaganda from redirecting popular angst away from the owning class to the most marginalized.

In Catalunya, the situation is different. Solidarity with

immigrants was already a priority among anarchists and leftist activists before the crisis. At the same time, the state contains powerful forces committed to a progressive strategy of social control. The media, therefore, have not been unanimous in encouraging xenophobia and building a base for fascist political parties.

There is another factor that may have put fascists at a disadvantage. Events in Catalunya forced the fascists to reveal their hand several years earlier than might have behooved them. This deprived them of a period of invisibility in which to build a base before going on the offensive. The factor that forced their hand was the expansion of the Catalan independence movement.

It could be argued that the movement for Catalan independence as such arose during the transition from dictatorship to democracy, in order to recuperate the struggle against the State and sap support for radical anti-capitalists. That argument is beyond the scope of this article. In any case, the independence movement predates the economic crisis and does not exist as a merely recuperative force, but rather as a struggle in its own right [ed. – see *The Fight in Catalunya*]. However, in September 2012, the conservative political party in power in Catalunya jumped on the bandwagon and put their support behind a referendum for independence, which political parties in Madrid subsequently declared illegal. Spanish military officials and then fascist parties and street organizations have gone public declaring war on the movement for Catalan independence.

This creates a number of conflicts, none of which is easy to understand. Much of the Catalan elite has entered into conflict with the Spanish elite, which further erodes the illusion of social peace and political stability – even forcing the European Union to deal with the impossible question of national independence, a can of worms that appears on the menu of many member states aside from Spain. But the conflict revolves around a fictitious community of resistance that is easy for people to join and easy for politicians to control. Just as the fascists present the immigrant as a scapegoat to misdirect people's rage, the independence movement presents the bad government in Madrid, to be replaced by a good government in Barcelona.

A second conflict occurs within the independence movement itself, which has traditionally been socialist and has now been hijacked by conservatives. Who will seize the opportunity to take power? Who will remain true to the lurid dream of socialism, continuing the fight for a sort of Catalan Cuba? **As the movement inevitably betrays itself, the principled**

part might radicalize, but as long as anarchists fail to address the forms of oppression faced by occupied linguistic-cultural groups (dare I say it; nations), the *indepes* are likely to adhere to a nationalist vision of revolution.

Some of them are sincere allies in the fight against repression, against austerity, and against fascism, but this is not without its own set of complications. As anarchists work alongside socialist *indepes* to fight the rising tide of fascism, they come face to face again with the question that was first highlighted by the 2010 general strike: how to position themselves in relation to events.

A functional component of fascism is its exceptionalism, not only in the juridical sense meant by Carl Schmitt [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg64*], but also in how it is integrated into capitalist systems of governance. Even though fascism and democracy are fully integrated as complementing strategies of control – the unleashing of fascism by Capital is not exceptional, but systematic and functional – the structure of democracy predisposes us to experience the threat of fascism as exceptional.

Although Barcelona should be the first place on earth where anarchists would mistrust antifascist common fronts,¹² this time as other times the threat of fascism has convinced anarchists to work together with political opportunists in uncritical alliances.

In a curious pattern, anarchists who knew very well in the plaza occupations how to deal critically with socialists suddenly started issuing common propaganda with them, working in the same organizational framework. **They forgot that before the crisis broke, they were already engaging in the most effective form of organization against fascism – the work they were carrying out against xenophobia.** It goes without saying that anarchists always have and always must stand against fascism. Sometimes, this requires us to occupy common spaces of struggle with leftists. If we can only defeat the rise of fascism by pooling our strength with leftists, it makes sense to do so. But just because we share a common problem – fascism spells the

12 ed. – During the ill-advised Popular Front government engaged by certain 'anarchists' in alliance with republicans to fight the fascists, Barcelona saw some of the worst of the infamous May '37 atrocities committed by the various Communists – until then fairly marginal in the attempted social revolution, but with new-found military and covert political direction from the Soviet Union under Stalin (see **Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies**) – in a planned and bloody purge of hundreds of anarchists and revolutionary workers. Tragically, the CNT, strongest in the region, could've defended themselves ably but seem to have repeatedly chosen not to break supposed anti-fascist 'unity' (see '**Not Fighting the Same Fight**') under attack.

annihilation of both anarchists and leftists – does not mean we have a common destination.¹³ We should never stop prioritizing the communication of specifically anarchist reasons to oppose fascism, which include our arguments against capitalism, against the State in all its forms, and against borders. Once some of them got scared into a common front, anarchists in Barcelona as elsewhere put their forces behind discourses that were essentially social democratic – attacking fascism as a violation of human rights, thereby distinguishing it from democracy rather than revealing the many common projects that the two systems of governance share.

Not only is this dishonest, it is also stupid. Fascist parties and movements begin to flourish precisely because people are losing faith in democracy. That loss of faith is a good thing. In treating fascism as an exception, antifascist common fronts serve to reassert faith in democratic values. The people who are suffering the most from the crisis in capitalism have already lost faith in those values, which have already failed them. **It is no coincidence that antifascist fronts typically exclude the most marginalized in order to present the face of the normal citizen.** They want to hide the very real crisis of immigration, in order to pretend that democracy can still work. Anarchists should not be arguing that we could all just get along if we protect human rights, but rather that the crisis of immigration is a problem of capitalism rather than ethnicity.

Even if fascism is defeated or averted, if anarchists have to abandon their struggle against capitalism to stop it, then it will have succeeded insofar as fascism is a tool deployed by the State to defend capitalism in circumstances when democracy does not suffice.

When the Tide Rolls Out

When the labor unions tried to abandon the growing social upheaval after the first general strike got out of their control, people organized a strike through the small, radical unions, and then created entirely new spaces of confrontation through the plaza occupations. When the plaza occupations disappeared, anarchists intentionally organized new assemblies conducive to debate via which we could refine our different strategies and take measure of our collective force, countering the dispersion that previously characterized the Barcelona anarchist space. Though there were some attempts to unify, on the whole we resisted the effort to create a new organization, a movement-coordinating body that would stave off the feelings of isolation or the appearance that the movement was disintegrating.

13 ed. – This has proven especially prescient to anarchists in the so-called United States since then, to which this report was primarily addressed; see '**It Depends on All of Us**'.

Such organizations tend to generate campaigns that exhaust our energies, rather than facilitating a collective process in which we find the struggles that rejuvenate us. They generate visibility for their own organizational existence rather than illuminating the fault lines that run between society and the governing apparatuses that interpenetrate it. These new assemblies did not attempt to create a social struggle for those who did not know how to find one, but to allow those already participating in struggle to sharpen their strategies. **Although anarchist structures should support the participants, they should never encourage weakness, and the inability to find lines of conflict or to initiate a revolutionary project is a weakness anarchists cannot afford.** Struggles are not started by activists, anarchist or otherwise. Those who seek an organization to compensate for their alienation or lack of initiative can only be a burden to assemblies oriented towards confrontation.

By adopting this approach before the economic crisis broke, anarchists were poised to radicalize struggles when larger numbers of people began taking to the streets. Carrying on isolated battles in the depths of social peace and capitalist prosperity [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg40*] makes perfect sense: it limits the options for capitalist accumulation, hastening the crisis, and puts rebels in a stronger position when the crisis breaks.¹⁴ Anarchists betray that strength when they focus on the narrow economics of austerity as soon as the opportunity comes around. Those who tend towards populism will immediately tie their discourses to precarity and poverty, forgetting that capitalism is equally odious in its moments of peace and prosperity. They will lose all the strength they have built if capitalism passes into a new era of prosperity, or if fascism or some other political movement offers an apparent solution to the problem of precarity.

We are anarchists specifically because we do not water down our critique of social ills. We seek to strike the system at its roots. Positioning ourselves in conflict with both the dominant system and its potential recuperation also means not focusing on the conflicts that are the most visible, and sometimes illusory, like the conflict between workers and austerity measures. In fact, work and austerity exist in harmony. The true conflict is harder to elucidate, but it is our job to reveal it.

¹⁴ Given the worldwide recession that forms the backdrop of today's social struggles, this formulation only deals with the possibility of economic crisis. But struggling in times of social peace can also provoke a crisis in governance that is not directly caused by economic recession, as in the rebellions of 1968 [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg96*].

One way Capital has mediated this conflict is by imposing its rhythms on our lives, including our struggles. Social upheavals will always be followed by lulls of disappointment and apparent inactivity. Accepting these troughs and knowing how to take advantage of them is the key to preventing upheaval from being merely a flash in the pan.

To spark new upheavals, or at least be present at their beginnings, we need to hone our social intuition. When we understand how other people perceive their problems, we will be able to make or at least recognize a call to arms that speaks to them. For these upheavals to push past stagnation, they must avail themselves of structures for the revolutionary self-organization of life. We may create some of these structures, but many more will arise independently. Anarchists should connect with those who create them, even and especially if they are not revolutionary. Recuperation is not inevitable in spontaneous structures; it is the successful institutionalization of the structures that do not succeed in connecting with a struggle for the destruction of the existing order. The tendency towards creation is an essentially liberating tendency that capitalism consistently harnesses. But it is the harness, and not the creation, that constitutes recuperation.

What We Can Do after the Crest

- **Strengthen the new relationships that formed in moments of rebellion.** Learn to care for one another in practical ways.
- **Identify which obligations neither sustain us nor succeed in inspiring new bouts of struggle, and give up on them.** In Barcelona, this has meant activist projects like the mutual aid networks that made sense in a certain moment: projects that in theory should put us in contact with others who want to struggle, but in practice rarely do.
- **Create spaces of encounter, debate, and fun for anarchists and other radicals.** The purpose of these spaces is not to generate action, but to encourage reflection on our ongoing practices. Such spaces also strengthen new relationships of camaraderie. If people have the energy to go back on the offensive, these spaces will provide the necessary density to avoid dispersion and inspire action.
- **Carry out withering yet humble propaganda against populists and leftists.**
- **Continue to send signals of revolt to those who are listening.** Consider the benefits of highly visible, daytime sabotage actions, or actions that

serve as invitations to illegality while also making people's lives easier, like forcibly opening up the metro for free riders or raiding supermarkets to distribute groceries. Do not feel obliged to keep up a high rhythm of attacks.

- **Organize visible low-key actions that don't demand much energy, that keep people seeing each other and remind neighbors that the struggle is ongoing.** These might include noise demos in support of those facing repression, or setting up a literature table in a public place.
- **Learn a material skill that would be useful to you if the State and capitalism were destroyed,** like carpentry or dentistry. Encourage your friends to learn such skills. Discourage them from embarking on a life path that is premised on the persistence of capitalism.
- **Join existing projects that potentially constitute a material intensification of relations of collective self-organization,** like clinics, gardens, and workshops. If none exist that suit your talents, talk with friends about starting one. Begin the discussion with questions like these: How we do this in such a way that it sustains us rather than exhausting us? How can this serve as an invitation to our neighbors to begin to abandon capitalist ways of life? How can this support those on the front lines of the social war?
- **Challenge the legitimacy of all campaigns of repression.** Cultivate awareness and outrage among your neighbors, coworkers, and other people you interact with. Organize visible events such as potlucks in a public place at which people can symbolically support those facing repression. Go door to door if you have to.
- Tell stories of resistance. Organize neighborhood anarchist history tours that weave together the heroic battles of the previous century with those of last year. We've been fighting this war for hundreds of years [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**]; we will be for hundreds of years to come. Every scarred revolutionary who resists burnout and holds true into old age, and every young anarchist who does not have to start from scratch, constitute a victory against oblivion.



"Solidarity will lengthen our lives"

RIOTS & EAGLES

– *my world opened*



[ed. – First posted to mtlcounterinfo.org, as part of a proposed series of anarchist story-telling and collective memory. From the original introduction: "While Riots and Eagles is a tale of riotous joy, celebration, and magic, we hope to also create space for accounts of small everyday victories and failures, as well as the depths of isolation and despair that mark anarchist struggles. We want to transmit stories that will be shared around a campfire. The moments that inspired us, that made us feel more alive than ever, that challenged us to our core. There are innumerable moments that shape our history. Let us carry them forward through our fractured generations."]

No Gods! No Masters!

Whether this most fundamental of classical anarchist slogans is simply a hollow iteration of Western enlightenment philosophies [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg48**] and scientific progress, or is instead a cry directed towards the destruction of all that binds us, in life and death, to the world of exploitation and domination, is really a matter of interpretation [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of **Return Fire**; '**The Temple was Built Before the City**'].

I was raised with the former firmly rooted in my consciousness. All that might have been wondrous and with endless meaning was imprisoned in a linear progressive ideology in which "mankind" was to triumph. My Marxist father, with his historical determinist faith [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**], did not give me the tools to smash both god and master at once. Instead of the Christian God, rooted in authoritarian tradition, that my anarchist ancestors declared war against, it was the state, science (controlled experimentation) [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg33**], and an alienating submissiveness to expertise that was to shackle my imagination and agency.

I began to break with all this many years ago. And it is with full recognition that I sound far too similar to all the other white-boys who have found themselves in some exotic religion or culture, when I say that my break came as a result of struggling in close proximity to Indigenous people.

One of the first and most profound experiences I can remember that cracked my mind ajar came at a march for missing and murdered Indigenous women. This is an annual event with a great deal of pain, grief and warmth involved. This time, thousands of people had crowded around an intersection with drummers and singers in the centre. The crowds vary in size from year to year, the drummers, singers, burning sage and abalone shells are consistent, and it is common to see eagles circling above. The moment is always powerful. On this particular occasion, while I began with the usual feeling of intimate connection through pain and grief to those around me, I noticed the eagles circling above. This time there were more than I could count, circling upwards and downwards, far above the intersection. So far, that some seemed to be disappearing and reappearing.

At this moment, I felt profoundly foolish in the most liberating way. Would I fall back on the scientific rationalist religion in which I had been raised? The same world-view which drives the horrors that people were gathered here against? How could I explain away the presence of these eagles and the way my eyes observed them? Why would I deny the profound spiritual meaning of what was in front of me? Is there somehow something more anti-authoritarian and rebellious in reducing all meaning to a one dimensional reason, or in reducing all the world to dead things in a mathematical equation?

This experience was a long time coming, and in a moment I felt something had changed in me.

Some time later, I was with some friends in a downtown financial district of a major capitalist metropolis. We were there because a global financial and government meeting was going to take place in the next few days. The police state was gathering and preparing, and so were we. We wanted to acquaint



Poster of the Anarchist Assembly of Biobío: "BEFORE THE RACIST ADVANCE OF THE STATE AND THE PARA-STATE, SOLIDARITY WITH THE MAPUCHE PEOPLE [ed. - see 'Gállok is the Name of a Place'] AND WITH THOSE WHO OPPOSE CAPITAL"

ourselves with the surroundings and streets, and one of my friends, at the request of one of their Indigenous comrades, had asked that we spread around some tobacco for the spirits while we went on our way. We took care to do so as we moved through the concrete commodity cathedral. For me this felt right. Although I'm not Indigenous myself and I didn't have the cultural context for the specific meaning of this offering, it stuck with me as the following days passed.

A few days later, I found myself standing in an intersection with the largest black bloc I had ever been a part of. The mood was understandably foreboding and intense, the police mobilization that stretched for miles around seemed insurmountable, and in spite of all this there was a hint of celebration in the air.

Suddenly, we were charging in one direction, a cop car was swarmed and smashed with a pig still inside. A bit further down the street, with that boost of confidence behind us, a rock garden was discovered. A corporate news van took a couple rocks, a line of riot cops were backed up against a building by a few more and the rest were saved for later.

Aside from what the bloc discovered along its way, it seemed we were woefully ill-prepared to confront the cops head-on. **We used the best weapon we had: mobility.** Even considering the usual advantage this would have given us, it really felt like we were stronger than ourselves, like there was an invisible force that gave us greater powers of evasion and intimidation. I thought back to the tobacco. I thought of the spirits.

We continued along a jubilant path of destruction, eventually finding ourselves stopped in another intersection surrounded by giant financial temples and surrounding a burning, recently abandoned cop car. I remember feeling nervous as it seemed like we were hanging around far too long and it seemed like cops were moving to block off all our exists in the distance.

We started moving again, running in the direction that a slight breeze was blowing the thick black smoke from the fire behind us, turning the overcast midday nearly into night. I screamed to build my courage

towards the line of riot cops who were blocking our path ahead, “You’re gonna fuckin’ die today, pigs!” As we got within twenty or thirty metres of them they appeared to back away in fright, and we took a sharp left turn up another busy commercial street.

As our merry way of revenge continued, more stores and banks than I could have possibly counted were smashed, small groups of cops were sent running in the distance, and one of the main police stations was attacked. **It was impossible to believe we had been able to carry on the way that we had without significant intervention. Again, I couldn’t help but think back to the tobacco, and think of the spirits.**

We eventually vanished like spirits ourselves after about ninety minutes of mayhem in all, to the point that it had almost gotten boring. This was profoundly inexplicable to many and yet many different explanations followed.

The various enthusiasts for state control [*ed. – see Eric Laursen Owes Me a Lamp*], from right-wingers to liberals, to social democrats and some communists, preferred the explanation that the black bloc themselves were a secret covert government operation and/or that the cops had intentionally let them go around and do what they wanted in order to justify the brutal repression and mass arrests of everyone from pacifists to random people who came to enjoy the chaos.

Some more vocal anarchists and other radicals preferred the cops’ explanation that there was a lack of communication, and confusion stemming from a centralized command that couldn’t adequately respond to such a dynamic situation.

Privately I had my own explanation.



26.11.04: indigenous insurrection in Palm Island (traditional territory of the Manbarra people, turned into something between a reserve & prison-camp under so-called Australia) torches local police station, court & police housing barracks after island resident Mulrunji Doomadgee is beaten to death in custody

All explanations help to prop up the explainers’ worldview. I no longer feel a great need for a rigid scientific explanation of all events. We can all agree these situations defy common sense as we know it. Meaning is powerful and my life is far richer now that I am more open in my interpretations of the world.

It has been years since the events described above, and they were profound events in my life. They provide two examples of how spirituality can enrich one’s experiences. **Significantly, they also show that spiritual power is neither to be reserved for peaceful moments of grief, nor is it strictly to be weaponized in a warrior culture.** However, both these examples are mass events in which my intimate relations with those around me are still limited. I may or may not have shared these experiences with anyone that I know very well. What I think is missing in these examples is the importance of smaller events: interactions with a raven, butterfly, or extreme weather, giving thanks to the ecosystems around me, privately or in small groups. **I believe both mass cathartic events and everyday quiet events are vital to an enriched spiritual life.**

Since those moments, my spiritual path has looked a lot more personal and based around small, quieter events and rituals. The way I offer what I can to these interactions is informed by much of what I’ve seen from Indigenous comrades, and from bits and pieces I have picked up from European pre-Christian practices.

Of course I cannot say that I am now completed or on some kind of true path. Let’s be real, I come from a culture of near complete alienation. The fact that I, like so many of the gross hipsters and new-age hippies we see around, need to be “awakened” to other ways of thinking about ourselves and surroundings, is because of this. This being said, I believe a struggle on these lands is necessarily going to have to confront Western perspectives of separation from and dominance over “nature” (the fact that I can even write the word “nature” as a separation from my own life is a result of western thinking [*ed. – see ‘Dispersion & Timelessness’*]).

And of course I would never dare to claim a specific Indigenous spirituality. This would be as absurd as claiming an Indigenous identity for myself. These spiritual practices and world-views come from living cultures and communities that are fighting to re-establish themselves. They come from a concrete social context that I have not been socialized into, and am simply not a part of.

Strangely I feel even more clumsy when I reach for European pagan traditions. The way I see them practiced and the teachings I attempt to understand

from them, clearly are from a social context that has not existed for over a thousand years [ed. – see *'The Principle of Reciprocity'*]. I am also suspicious that much of the available information that we use to educate ourselves on these cultures is heavily tainted by the Western, Christian, and patriarchal thinking of the missionaries who wrote down the oral teachings of these cultures before they vanished.

Neither have I ever been satisfied with or receptive to the Western astrology that attracts so many of my (often urban) alienated fellow travelers who are open to spirituality.

And so, ironically, I continue to walk this lonely and alienating path. I yearn for the intergenerational group context and ritual that would make for a more complete and fulfilling spiritual world. I look towards our indigenous comrades who use a framework that focuses on seven generations. I think of one of my favorite quotes in *At Daggers Drawn*, that so many of my comrades seem to be influenced by:

Life cannot simply be something to cling to. This thought skims through everyone at least once. We have a possibility that makes us freer than the gods: we can quit. This is an idea to be savoured to the end. Nothing and no one is obliging us to live. Not even death.

“Those who have bought into Western civilization, who, for example, treat their smartphones with more respect than they do people around them, are never going to be able to come up with adequate, rooted answers to the question of surviving-together. Anyone who scoffs at the idea of listening to migratory birds, to forests, to mountains, have no fucking clue and will not even be capable of finding the real conversation that is providing these answers. Here is an analytical tool that might help. What defines a person? We should consider that a person is any being with whom dialogue is possible and meaningful. Therefore a cop or a millionaire, while human, are not people. The blue jay outside my window is a person. Let’s give our attention and care to people, since if they are people we can share a world with them. Let’s aim our rage and our destructive abilities at the institutions and their loyal robots, because they will never share a world with us. [...] We need to put our tumors, our inflammations, our breakdowns, our tears, our dead, carry them with bloody hands and put them on capitalism’s doorstep. Not to demand compensation or redress, but as the only explanation we need, the only possible word of truth, before we burn it all down, Leviathan [ed. – see *'The Scarcity Dynamo'*] and all those who choose to defend it instead of defending life.” – Peter Gelderloos

For that reason our life is a tabula rasa, a slate on which nothing has been written, so contains all the words possible. With such freedom, we cannot live as slaves. Slavery is for those who are condemned to live, those constrained to eternity, not for us. For us there is the unknown – the unknown of spheres to be ventured into, unexplored thoughts, guarantees that explode, strangers to whom to offer a gift of life. The unknown of a world where one might finally be able to give away one’s excess self love. Risk too. The risk of brutality and fear. The risk of finally staring *mal de vivre* in the face. All this is encountered by anyone who decides to put an end to the job of existing.

...and I wonder if these are all so mutually exclusive. If my life is a blank slate, then I must be free to break with the alienation I am expected to reproduce. To destroy that which I hate, and create a world absolutely other. And it is here that I direct my thoughts.

‘WITH WHOM ONE RELATES’

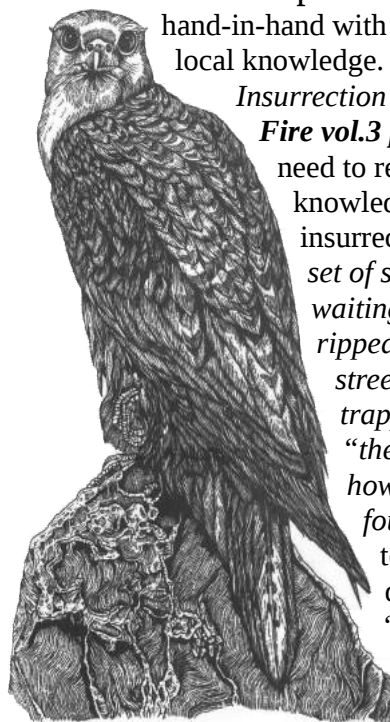
The recomposition of subsistence goes hand-in-hand with the recomposition of local knowledge. *The Coming*

Insurrection [ed. – CI; see *Return Fire vol.3 pg58*] recognises the

need to recreate and draw on local knowledges in order to sustain insurrection. “There’s a whole set of skills and techniques just waiting to be plundered and ripped from their humanistic, street-culture, or eco-friendly trappings,” not to mention “the intuitions, the know-how, and the ingenuity found in slums.”

Such techniques will have to be deployed both to “repopulate the metropolitan desert” and to sustain insurrection beyond the

early stages, in fields such as food, transport and communications. At present, our ability to attack the metropolis is compromised by our dependence on its services. Escaping this situation requires a long “apprenticeship” in a wide range of practical skills. Communes should seek self-sufficiency, and should seek to limit their own size to prevent hierarchies emerging. In effect, what is proposed here is a recomposition of local knowledges, corresponding to



a recomposition of [band society].

This is excellent, as far as it goes. But it needs to go a few steps further. Band societies and subsistence economies do not begin and end with *practical* knowledge, though they have plenty of it. They also have very different epistemologies [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg118*] and cosmologies from those familiar in metropolitan societies. In practice, this always includes a spiritual element, which if examined closely, turns out to be a way of managing and reproducing emotional states. **The question is not only practical but cosmological, because cosmology is necessary to sustain indefinitely the emotional states which produce insurrection.**

Indigenous cosmology interconnects with local knowledge, providing the frame within which it has meaning, and creating narrative structures which render local knowledge memorable and emotionally resonant. This is a situation where the truth which the band society refuses to renounce is not empty. It is, rather, the truth of a local context in its entirety. Similarly, it is not entirely the case that “[e]verywhere it's the same chilling void, reaching into even the most remote and rustic corners” (CI). There are still places where stones can speak.

“Walking through the Witches Market in La Paz - a day after the road barricades were cleared on January of this year – I realized how deep the Western view has been inoculated in my mind... I realized that my perception of reality has been modified and trained according to one model of interpretation, which standardizes the notion of the world in order to impose on us a set for socialization... In this world, life is about something else. If you cannot hear the murmur of stones there is no way you can communicate with this secret world.”
– Jesus Sepulveda, 'Stones Can Speak'

This re-localisation also changes the nature of knowledge. **Local knowledge does not function like global science. Instead of recording a set of facts, it diffuses the power to create knowledge.** There is much in the process of insurrection which must necessarily be a matter of situated, local knowledge and which thus, cannot be expressed in articles or books. Local knowledge has characteristics very different from those in dominant forms of knowledge in the global North. Studies of local and indigenous knowledge reveal that it usually involves a very reflexive sense of locality, situatedness, and relationality, i.e. the fact that knowledges are produced by particular people in particular places [*ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire;*

'Here or Anywhere Else'], and are relative to their process of construction and the place where they're produced [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg53*]. Indigenous languages tend to encourage all claims to be situated in the speaker's social position, and use words which refer to relations instead of things. (And it is quite possible that we will need to create a new language, or at least, inflect our existing language-use in ways which restore these characteristics). **The Andean conception of wealth emphasises wealth in connections, not in things.** An emphasis is placed on the practice of 'doing' knowledge-production, rather than the outcome. Hence, local knowledge is not a set of facts, but rather, a process of learning and sharing knowledge located in particular ways of life. It is often expressed in practices rather than communicated through books. It usually takes a holistic perspective on knowledge, rejecting the division of the world into spheres or categories, the separation of humanity from nature, and the separation of both of these from the supernatural (whether through the disenchantment of reality or the abstraction of transcendental religion). Local knowledge tends to be expressive rather than instrumental. And it tends to prefer inconclusiveness and difference to rapid decision, involving for instance long consultative processes when reaching decisions.

[...] How can local knowledges be recreated? It is not a matter of simply importing content from other local knowledge systems – borrowing DIY skills, indigenous medicinal knowledge and so on – because this misses the importance of process in local knowledge. Nor is it about copying the rituals of other groups, or playing at being like them, which turns the immanence of local knowledge into a transcendentalism of social roles. Of course, the importation of particular knowledge-content and of techniques such as rituals can play a crucial role. Yet is it more important to recreate the generative level of local knowledge, its construction as process in an intensely situated locality. **The concepts of local knowledge should not belong to the massified world, but to an intense connection to a local ecology and to those with whom one relates to this local ecology.** Other aspects of local knowledge need to be recovered: an intense awareness of relationality (and corresponding rejection of 'unmarked terms' of privilege), and a replacement of instrumental orientations with a cosmology oriented to expression. Both the reifying tendencies of existing language (to focus on things instead of relations), and its pressures towards universalism and generality (towards taking one's own subjectivity as “obvious” and meanings as shared), need to be resisted.



English-language
anarchist news &
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Act For Freedom Now! (Greece
& global) actforfree.noblogs.org

Anarchist Library (multi-lingual, open-
source catalogue of print-ready texts)
theanarchistlibrary.org

Anarchy in Action (global, anarchies
past and present and their inspirations)
anarchyinaction.org

Anarchy, Secession, Subsistence
(rejoining rebellion with the land)
anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca

A-News Podcast (weekly curation of
selected posts and topics for those
without time to read anarchistnews.org)
podcast.anarchistnews.org

Bad News (collaborative presentation
every month from audio shows across the
world) aradio-berlin.org/en/tag/badnews

Clydeside Anarchist Noise (Scotland)
noisenoisenoise.blackblogs.org

No Trace Project (security techniques,
multi-lingual) notrace.how

Earth First! UK (direct-action,
leaderless eco-defence) earthfirst.uk

Indigenous Action (radical perspectives
from occupied homelands)
indigenousaction.org

Knowing the Land is Resistance
(re-enchantment and reconnection)
knowingtheland.com

The Local Kids (compiled translations
from international voices in struggle)
thelocalkids.noblogs.org

Montreal Counter-Information
(Canada, bi-lingual)
mtlcounterinfo.org

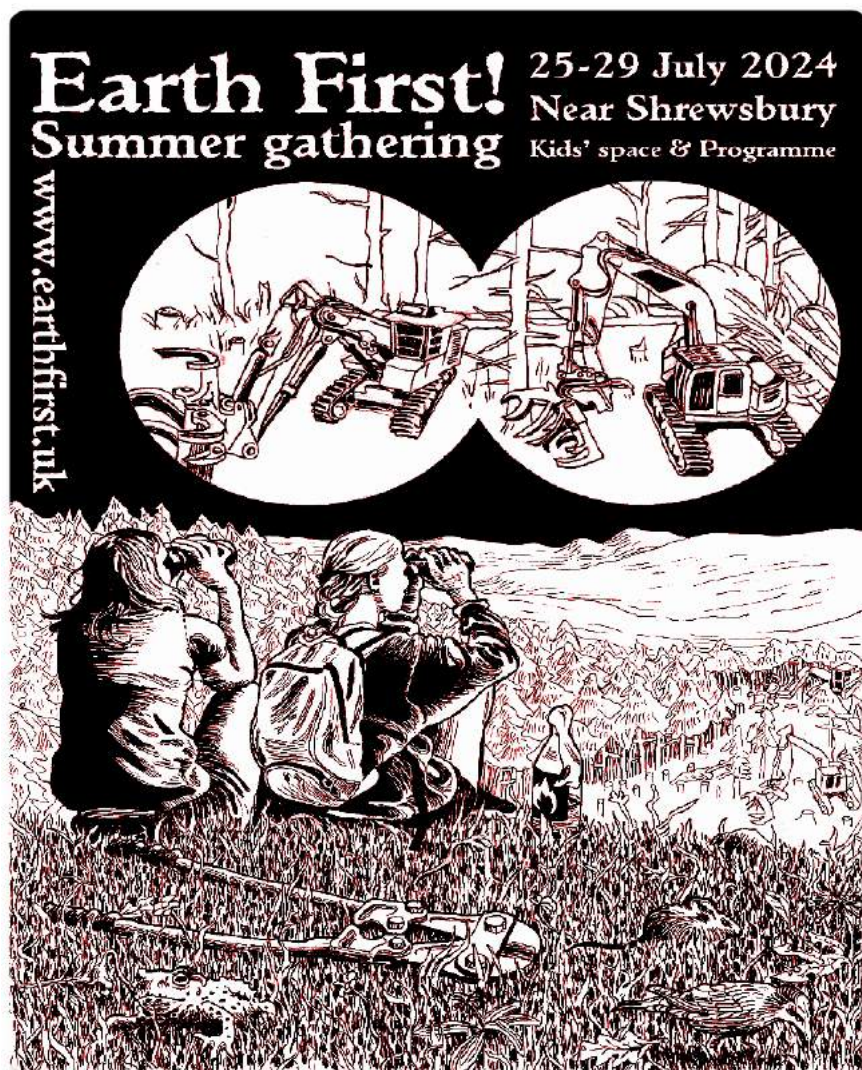
Non-Fides (France & global, multi-
lingual) non-fides.fr

Oplopanax Publishing (a cache of
handsome and engaging printable zines)
oplopanaxpublishing.wordpress.com

Resonance Audio Distro (various
readings as MP3s plus source files)
resonanceaudiodistro.org

Squat.net (multi-lingual, from
occupation front-lines) en.squat.net

Warrior Up (sabotage techniques)
warriorup.noblogs.org



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'The Scarcity Dynamo'

– from *Here... at the Center
of the World in Revolt*

**'Their Sustainability is a Disaster
– Let's Smash It'**

– from lachose.noblogs.org

'The TERFs' Weekend from Hell'

– from rosecitycounterinfo.noblogs.org

**'What Happens After the
Cancellation of the Project?'**

– by Alexander Dunlap

**'Barcelona Anarchists at Low
Tide'**

– from crimethinc.com

'With Whom One Relates'

– from 'The Future of
Insurrection', by Lupus
Dragonowl

Articles referenced by title throughout this
chapter in **[square brackets]** which do
not appear in the previous pages appear
in the other chapters of this volume.

This chapter of Return Fire
comes with 6 supplements:

– **Open letter from Return Fire
magazine to the 2024.03.29-31
International Anti-Prison/Anti-
Repression Gathering**

– **'The Temple was Built
Before the City'**

– **The Swell**

– **'Centering Relationships'**

– **The Atrocity**

– **'Here or Anywhere Else'**

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