

RETURN FIRE

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

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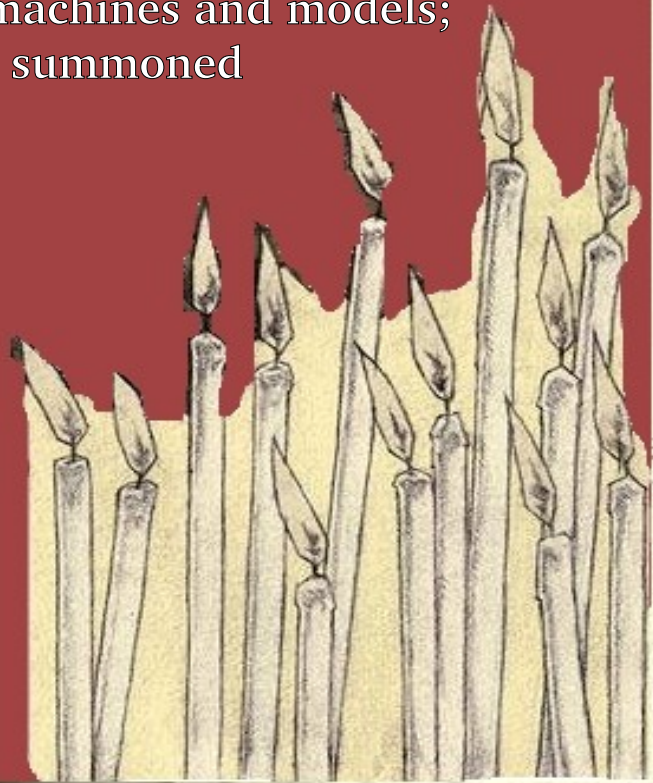
...and more!

VOLUME 6, CHAPTER VIII
WINTER 2024-2025 (part 2/2)



Do you remember when “land” meant something that wasn't the hell of “sustainable development”? Do you remember who told you the lie? Do you remember when “freedom” meant something that wasn't a property of “individuals” and “markets,” not of relationships between beings of-and-as this earth? Can you feel the twitch of a memory you have probably never in your lifetime experienced in your outer surroundings? How, then, could it come so intuitively to your mind? Or what does that say about where memory might live? Let's leave the neuro-scientists to their machines and models; we know that our visions are summoned

with **courage,**
connection
& FIRE



GREEN ANARCHY IN THE UK

Some questions.

How can we agitate, radicalise, activate and weaponise the increasing anger of those woken from slumber by the acrid smoke of a burning planet?¹

How can we spread and intensify moments of rupture in the social order that allow us break free and create spaces of liberation? How can these be used to weaken the forces that oppose us, not just momentarily, but enduring wounds to the systems of domination that can be exploited to magnify and multiply our movements?

How do we support the suspicious minds, those who know something is not quite right, revealing the hidden-in-plain-sight conspiracy of capitalism behind the alienation and dysfunction of our nonsensical society? How do we captivate their attention instead of dismissing their misdirection?²

How can we forge connections with other struggles here and around the world so we can learn together and nourish each other,³ respecting our diversity of context while strengthening our unity of purpose?

How do we spread our branches while deepening our roots?

How do we weave the social warp with the ecological weft, one binding and reinforcing the other instead of pulling apart? How do we learn to reconnect with nature, seeing our selves as vital components of our ecosystems, proud members our biological communities, beautiful biospheric inhabitants?⁴

How do we move from shallow climate populism⁵ to radical ecological anarchism? How do we build mass movements without sacrificing our ideals, finding the quantity needed to be effective without losing essential quality of being radically affective? How do we set our sights higher while keeping view of the beautiful idea ever on the horizon?

How do we shift the strategic terrain from civil disobedience to ecological resistance,⁶ from accountable to anonymous, from public disruption to property destruction?⁷

1 ed. – see **'We Cannot Share This Planet with Them'**

2 ed. – see **About the Reactionary Drift of Some "Comrades"...**

3 ed. – see **Follow the Fires**

4 ed. – see **Unruly Edges**

5 ed. – see **On Staying Woke in Polycrisis Futurism**

6 ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics'**

7 ed. – see **'Good Skills to Practice'**

How do we do all of this in the shadow of increasingly powerful authoritarian states and corporations, with rapidly advancing technologies of surveillance and social control?⁸ How can we maintain a spirit of defiant resistance in the face of such threats and not succumb to their attempts to project omnipotence and crush our imagination?⁹



Once the cradle of capitalism, the historic heart of empire, the nursery of neoliberalism,¹⁰ how do we transform the belly of the beast into the hotbed of insurrection and sedition, of genuine rebellion?

How do we foment green anarchy in the UK?

'INTO THE WILDS' [UK]

7th October 2024

We made a choice to saw into 2 hunting towers in Staunton and the other NR St. Briavels, both in the Forest of Dean. This simple action was taken with the thoughts in our minds of pine martins in Germany and Switzerland that chew into brake cables whilst keeping warm and snuggled up to cooling down engines and also not forgetting the martins in the UK that were pretty much wiped out for their taste in game bird, their eggs and caged poultry, but now some 60 pairs have been released back into the wilds of the Forest of Dean.

*So this bring us to welcome Toby Shone who's to be released from HMP Garth NR Manchester early next month (9th Nov) who before his imprisonment [ed. – 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**] enjoyed over a decade of his life in this beautiful countryside. Good luck with your future Toby!*

– **Eco-Anarchists – The Pine Martins Cell**

Ps These towers and others were attacked previously in the past, but metal straps were attached to protect them since the last attack. These straps were cut all in the day time, while the chair and hunting clothes we found there have been put to better use

8 ed. – see **Hong Kong: its Relevance to the Rest of Us...**

9 ed. – 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**

10 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

L'ESPOIR C'EST LA LUTTE

– reflections on the night demo of July 19th

The march lasted sixteen minutes. Fireworks were set off upon reaching Square Victoria, site of the Al-Soumoud camp [ed. – one of multiple (including in the same city)



06.10.24: another Montréal night demonstration in solidarity with Palestinians attacks Concordia University, smashes luxury shops & keeps cops at bay with molotovs

On July 19th, under a calm night sky, over 60 people assembled in downtown Montreal to march for Palestine. The demonstration was publicized without using social media, resulting in no police presence visible at the gathering location. The account that follows comes from a couple of participants in the demo. **We hope to share an understanding of what went down for those who weren't there and make some suggestions for next time.**

Around 10pm, the march set off, a front banner announcing "L'espoir c'est la lutte" [*hope is struggle*] alongside a circle-A, and a banner reading "Liberation to the people, liberation to the land" bringing up the rear. Snaking through streets beneath skyscrapers and chanting, the energy in the crowd gradually rose as we acclimated to the strange reality: no bike cops, no riot cops, no cops in front, in back, or on the sides, just us and our friends and comrades, and their friends and comrades, and theirs, our black bloc and *keffiyeh* bloc protecting us from the hundred or so surveillance cameras that would inertly record our stroll.

protesting the Israeli genocide in Gaza], dismantled two weeks prior. Demonstrators quickly began breaking bank windows, hitting a CIBC and Scotiabank. **Heading against traffic on Saint-Jacques, we were greeted ecstatically by Friday night party-goers, who stepped into the street to cheer, and drivers who rolled down their windows to high-five black-gloved militants.** Some supportive passersby began excitedly following the demo as it continued towards the Caisse de Dépôt et Placement du Québec (CDPQ). The CDPQ, which had been singled out by the Al-Soumoud camp a block away, has \$14 billion invested in companies complicit in the genocide in Palestine. Though its windows appeared challenging to break, several were tagged, several others shattered, and a smoke device was tossed through an opening into an office space, hopefully setting off sprinklers and causing water damage.

Police sirens could be seen and heard from multiple directions, but before SPVM [ed. – Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal] commanders understood what was happening, the crowd dispersed and disappeared into the night. There were no arrests, and no one was injured.

While corporate media ignored the demo, video showing the march and direct actions circulated widely on social media, including on an arabic-language account with hundreds of thousands of followers.

The local struggle in solidarity with Palestine has seen a fair variety of tactics tested in short order over the past nine months. Night demos organized without inviting the police are a new one in this context. We may want to consider doing more of them.

A week earlier on July 12th, the SPVM sent riot cops to flank both sides of a small night demo announced on social media following the dismantling of the McGill camp.¹ The cops entered the street alongside

1 ed. – Another in Tiohtia:ke (so-called 'Montreal') against the Zionist project, at the notorious university implicated in arms development and other noxieties (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg63**). February 5th, 40-odd comrades mobbed the campus, smashing over 30 windows on multiple pavillions and cancelling an exam then in progress. They cited McGill still refusing to divest from Israel, historic psychiatric experimentation on indigenous children and present purchase of the site of unmarked graves, contempt

the march and pre-emptively attacked a side banner, ripping the banner out of people's hands, swinging batons and deploying enormous quantities of pepper spray. The crowd's tenacity was impressive, but it was not possible to overcome this degree of police violence and begin transforming the march into something greater. **One role that a night demo without police can play is to respond to events like these, tending to our militant spirits and repairing our confidence, while showing that the SPVM is putting its units in danger for nothing by intimidating and brutally repressing demos, because our targets will get smashed regardless.**

We also want to reflect on how different forms of demonstrations make it more or less possible to reach beyond our existing networks. What is striking in the interactions with enthused passersby on July 19th is how the normal police presence at a combative demo would have rendered these interactions impossible. Police doing traffic control typically redirect all vehicles away from a march, and the scale and aggression of police units on all sides of a demo is extremely intimidating, limiting the possibilities for action in the minds of onlookers – and objectively, no unprepared civilian in their right mind would try to join us. **Without the separation imposed by the police, we can imagine doing more in the future to enable willing passersby to take the street with us.** This could look like bringing a supply of masks to distribute to people, explicitly inviting them to join, and quickly sharing any important safety information in a friendly way with joiners.

A number of windows on the demo route unfortunately withstood the blows of hammers and rocks. This raises a question of tools. **Chunks of porcelain as projectiles are more effective at breaking windows than either hammers or rocks. They're also harder to source (ask a comrade), and more care must be taken when throwing to avoid injuring anyone.** In the



shown to anti-colonial activities on campus and the general transphobia and racism of the administration. Two were momentarily detained by private security during the action, only to be “gloriously de-arrested” by the crowd.



New York City, 10.09.24: pro-Palestine black bloc blockades streets, tags storefronts & buses, chanting “ELON MUSK MUST DIE” (see 'Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!') & “WHOSE STREETS/NO STREETS/TEAR UP THE CONCRETE”

future, perhaps “hammer teams” could make the first attempt, and if a target proves too challenging, hand it off to a “porcelain team”.

The enthusiasm for this new tactic shows that the community is looking for a new format for demos. Beyond shattered windows, exploring what autonomous groups can do within demos without police suggests new horizons. We can test new tactics and mixes of old ones, or even police response times around different strategic areas in the city. We can also improve our speed and comfort level employing different tactics so we are not attempting things for the first time with cops breathing down our neck.

With the challenges of the past few months in demos announced on social media, even in contingents, perhaps this new format can also be seen as a mobilizing strategy. If we play our cards right, we can use it to speak to the public, spreading anarchist ideas and practices, so when we show up as a contingent in a public demo our orientation is known to those around us and they might be more encouraged to join us in actions. Hopefully, it will allow us to strike a balance, to be ready to raise the stakes and be strategic in enacting a successful plan, as well as being ready to respond combatively to police violence in bigger public demos alongside hundreds or thousands of others.

Friday raised morale, built confidence and strengthened bonds of complicity. **We need to find opportunities to achieve wins even when they are small and celebrate them.** The same tactic can be utilized at strategic moments like a major event in the city, or to achieve strategic goals on short notice, or in response to significant police repression.

'THE POSITION OF THE EXCLUDED'

[ed. – An interview conducted in 2017 by The Brilliant podcast with Andy Robinson, which we've had pending to transcribe and publish ever since. The years that have passed since have only convinced us that it is vital to keep some of these experiences and histories alive and in circulation, especially for the generations joining us who have not sought out or been provided with veterans (however imperfect) of past cycles of struggle and survival, so as usual we've added various footnotes for further explanation if needed.

The meat of this conversation revolves around neo-liberal exclusion (also among anarchists), focusing on the affects of anxiety generated as a result, which we would agree with the Institute for Precarious Consciousness are an under-studied reason for lack of momentum in our spaces. Since it was conducted, we have seen ever more novel regimes of exclusion and selective inclusion play out to similar effect, not least during since the start of the COVID pandemic; see **'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping at All"'**. First though, a word from another essay by Andy ('Democracy vs Desire') on the terms: "An insurgent understanding of inclusion and exclusion is distinct from the conventional meanings of these terms, although related to them in a complex way. The idea of social exclusion has become fashionable [as of 2005], mainly because of a double discursive trick used by the neo-liberal power-elites. Firstly, the issue of poverty is shifted out of the political mainstream by replacing it with exclusion. And secondly, this new "problem" is blamed on the victims of capitalist/industrial society, treating the excluded themselves as the problem. This occurs, ironically enough, at just the point where new forms of biopower [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg47**] are being imposed in such a way as to render exclusion harsher and more pervasive than ever. [...] Against this regime of intensifying control, Crisso and Odoteo rightly counterpose the "new barbarians" – those who are so radically exterior to current social forms that they do not even speak the language of these forms [ed. – see **'Something Different Than the Reflection of This World'**], who can engage with these forms only as a threatening force emerging as if from outside."

Since those words were written the technological means for exclusion have only become more refined and distributed; indeed, often self-administered. Take the New York group of anti-fascists who, around the time this was recorded, helped develop a YouTube plug-in for viewers of the streaming video site to more easily alert the authorities to fascistic or otherwise problematic content; an almost comically optimistic move when viewed from the vantage of 2025, as the proprietor of one of the largest social media platforms in the world (having opted to purge various

anarchists instead) openly throws out Nazi salutes while the tech oligarchy line up to greet the incumbent US president, but even at the time a predictable contribution to the control architecture to be used against us all (see **Calling It Terror**).

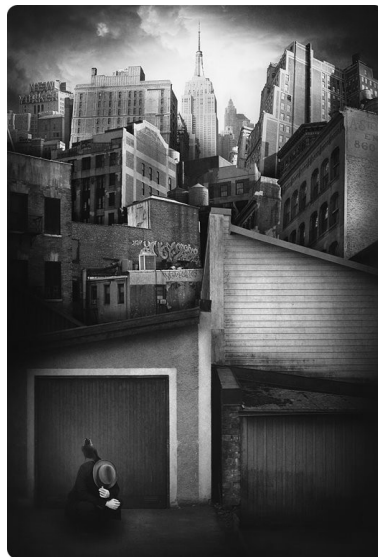
Would the calls from some on the Left to nationalise the alienation and friendship-commodification machine of Facebook have put us in a better position today in the rising authoritarianism had they been successful? What of the laid-bare illusion that liberal institutions cared enough about the readily-marketable identities they tried to commercialise our struggles into (see **'Identity Precedes Ideology'**) to actually defend them once the queerphobes and imperial revanchists feel free to let their colours fly ever-more-openly? Clearly, our struggle is elsewhere.

While exclusion is still a widening condition in general terms, justifications for explicit exclusion of marginalised groups are falling back to the more blatant chauvinism and xenophobia that neo-liberalism had previously preferred to operationalise more subtly. The trajectory mentioned during the interview has travelled much further along in terms of the near-half-century of a stable centrist consensus breaking down: it's no longer outliers like the first Trump campaign and Britain's exit from the European Union, but an international authoritarian populist surge in Austria, Italy, Hungary, Holland, Argentina, France, etc.

"For decades," wrote CrimethInc. after the 2024 US election, "liberals and conservatives have worked together to suppress grassroots movements seeking to address the problems created by neoliberal capitalism; this created a vacuum that the far-right has ultimately filled. In that regard, the Democrats paved the way for nationalism and fascism to succeed neoliberalism.

Presumably, they assume that those will be less threatening to their privileges than the end of capitalism would be."

Yet a little more attention is needed when discussing this "nationalism and fascism," especially in the supposed dichotomy between fascism and democracy (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg61**), or indeed nationalism and 'globalism' (see **Lies of the Land**). "Democratic mechanisms still provide an important release mechanism that can pacify and incorporate resistance movements before they become revolutionary," Peter Gelderloos tells us in



'Geopolitics for 2024' (one need think only of the anti-police uprising of 2020; see **The Siege of the Third Precinct**): "But in the US, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, and the UK, rightwing populist electoral victories have shown that actually, democracy is dangerous to power because it is **not** total bullshit. Up until now, electoral promises were all rubbish because no new political administration endangered the underlying economic policies of neoliberalism. The technocrats didn't have to worry: their machine would keep humming along.

"Even progressive electoral victories in Greece, Brazil, Argentina, and elsewhere let the capitalists know: nothing to worry about here. And the democratic states have proved capable of dismantling **actually** fascist movements like Golden Dawn in Greece before they proved too much of a threat. But the rightwing white populists like Trump, Bolsonaro, Orbán, and Johnson not only eroded the functionality of democratic governance, they also threatened the stability of the technocratic status quo, scaring the hell out of investors who had been living in a Candyland made just for them, and they burst the assumed durability of key political formations like the European Union or the US-European alliance."

Today as in 2017, democracy – long capitalism's optimal environment – stands in crisis: but it is not clear that fascism will be capitalism's escape route, as it served in the early 20th Century. Rather, beneath the stew of general reactionary intellectual currents and street movements that are certainly on the boil, what seems to be the mode of operation for actual populist elites is something closer to the kind of crony-capitalism already normalised in large parts of the so-called Global South; translating into what Uri Gordon memorably characterised as "fascist rhetoric and kleptocratic practice," or what we have termed the take-the-money-and-run approach to the problem of governance. In other words, this is the section of the elite with fewest bright ideas for how to save their own sinking system, even as they grasp the controls in more and more places (and 'progressives' fall in line).

But before turning in the discussion below to what more long-term projections might be, it's worth considering how the discussion during the interview of identity is present both in the reactionary and in the 'progressive' spheres; and how they converge. In April, the essay 'Cultural Identity, Class & Change' noted that "The populist, nationalist right play on people's fear of change, particularly the rapid change that has characterised the period of globalised neo-liberalism that's now coming to an end. In particular, they play on a fear of change that people feel they've absolutely no control over. Paradoxically, that fear of change is shared by pretty much everyone on this planet whose lives have been turned upside down by the adverse impact of globalised neo-liberalism. This ranges from the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa who in the face of increased desertification are forced to become refugees through to the inhabitants of the former mill towns of northern England who have seen the industries that used to provide them with a living exported to locations where workers can be more easily exploited.

"Regardless of what may seem to be massive differences between the peoples involved, they have all been severely disadvantaged by a globalised neo-liberalism that puts profits way ahead of the needs of ordinary people. [...] It should not come as a surprise that some elements in the white working class component of those left behind are starting to become more receptive to the siren voices of the populist, nationalist right. This reactionary political tendency sees cultural identity as something that's pretty much fixed and only changes and evolves slowly." The author connects this with the way in which they say that, in embracing identity politics to the detriment of class politics (we would amend, shifting their exclusive identity politics of class into an exclusive identity politics of race/gender/sexuality/ability etc., but that's another topic...), the Left failed to keep such vital struggles connected to a broader horizon of liberation for all: and in which we are all transformed in the process, without losing our particularity. "The material and social interests of the working class as a whole have been largely subsumed by a politics of identity which the right have co-opted elements of to confer upon the white working class. A united response to the depredations of a failing globalised neo-liberalism becomes an impossibility to achieve as the populist right completes the process of fragmentation inadvertently started by some elements of the left. So when a section of the white working class feel they have been left behind and are powerless to influence the forces that are changing their lives, they will be receptive to those political elements who promise them stability, self respect and so on."

Importantly, the author goes on to point out how this is not just unsoldaristic but self-defeating: "While an embittered section of the white working class may well buy into the notion that their cultural identity is more or less fixed and has to be defended [ed. – see **Lies of the Land**], they fail to see how that has the potential to be turned against them. It cannot be overstated that the populist, nationalist right sees the white working class as something to be used for their own cynical ends. Which is why the notion of cultural identity as something that's fixed being one that could also be applied to class differences always seems to get overlooked. Which is a surprise given the eugenicist literature that says class differences are more or less immutable and that if society is to 'progress', the lower classes should be 'discouraged' from 'breeding'.

"Traditional conservatives claim that cultures do not mix successfully and that different peoples are best left to get on with their own affairs. This stems from the assumption that culture is a relatively fixed characteristic of any given society and one that only evolves slowly. The same argument has been used by some conservatives to justify the continuance of class divisions, hence their making efforts to depict class as something that's more or less immutable with only some being deemed capable of making an upward move out of their class. Obviously, it is a rare conservative who will explicitly state such open prejudice – most will choose a form of language that either implies or sows the seed of a notion in peoples' minds that there's a natural and unchanging aspect to class divisions. This Guardian report (12 May 2009) – 'Don't say I was wrong' – cites an example of how these notions can be

sown with this utterance from a former chief schools inspector, Chris Woodhead, on the issue of social class and life chances: "I think it would be unlikely that large numbers of grammar school kids would come from those disadvantaged areas - the genes are likely to be better if your parents are teachers, academics, lawyers, whatever. And the nurture is likely to be better."

[...] We're facing a future where technology and automation has the potential to destroy millions of jobs [ed. – in places, this future is already here: see '**An Opening**']. [...] With the ruling elites pondering on how to accommodate millions upon millions of people who have no useful role in the automated world they rule over, the notion that the poor are poor because of their chromosomes will be incredibly useful for them..."

This is, of course, where an anarchist proposal of self-creation and expansive rather than immutable identity (while, as we wrote in our introduction to **Lies of the Land** in this double-issue, not neglecting the particularity of culture) offers another horizon. (It's important to note however that automation has not so far led to a reduction of the human labour force on any global level, but rather – as a State necessity for social control – a corresponding expansion of other sectors with which to keep people productive; see **Return Fire vol.5 pg9**.) But, in the meantime, while for the first time since the birth of neo-liberalism the capitalist class does not have a consensus on how to operate, it is at precisely this juncture of the new technological impositions where the more intelligent and hence dangerous parts of the elites (the 'progressives') may find another solution; even potentially accommodated by the otherwise-rightwards lurch if necessary.

The same year as the below interview, the text 'Long Term Resistance: Fighting Trump & Liberal Co-option' stated that "robotics threaten the social contract by undermining the historic point of unity between the capitalist logic of accumulation and the statist logic of social control: control people and profit off of them by putting them to work. Any solution to that crisis would require bold interventions by the State approaching some kind of utopian yet corporate socialism (a prediction that was already made in 2009, that socialism would not result from the development of productive capacities, as Marx foretold [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**], but rather repressive capacities, once the State had the techniques to surveil and control those who were no longer kept in line by the threat of hunger) [ed. – see '**A New Relation with Social Conflicts**']".

[...] The leftist (as opposed to anarchist or indigenous) portion of the anti-globalization movement made a similar error. Rather than spreading deep critiques of capitalism and the State, everyone from progressives to Negrists [ed. – see '**Our Anarchy Lives**'] to

anti-imperialists focused their attacks on neoliberalism. This was a way for unrepentant Marxists to avoid coming to terms with historical errors, for NGOs to make fundraising appeals without sounding like Marxists, and for elitists from the Global South to play the role of victim, casting capitalism as a purely US or European phenomenon. A chief part of this narrative was how neoliberalism violated the sovereignty of poor countries through unfair trade deals. This rhetoric is now coming back to bite the Left in the ass, with the election of a new crop of world leaders who are pro-capitalist but not neoliberal. In a greater irony, the protectionist discourse of the Left actually becomes more effective when paired with the xenophobic discourse of the Right. In the media, "anti-globalization" now means Alt-Right. So many years of mobilizations, Social Forums, and making puppets, down the drain.

[...] Given the lack of unity among capitalists, it is no surprise that Trump enjoys mixed support from the owning class. Some have recently suggested that Trump's [first] presidency represents "a victory for those sectors of capital worst at valorising themselves." Not surprisingly, articles expressing such a view are short on examples, because the argument is overly simplistic, as all positions tend to be that present politics as the mere manifestation of the needs of Capital. To be precise, Trump has significant support from the manufacturing, defense, energy, real estate, and finance sectors, some of which are facing a valorization crisis, others of which are not. These are companies with a relatively stable place in the economy, led by extremely wealthy people who trust that the deregulation Trump champions will make their lives easier and their fortunes greater. Their position as cornerstones of the leading world economy, which they have held for decades, makes them feel immune to the rising insecurity. The global scale of their customer base and operations will help them weather any trade wars that Trump provokes. And many of them don't have to be terribly worried about tariffs and immigration bans because the aforementioned decentralization of capitalist production means they have been starting to relocate manufacturing closer to their consumers. Even before the elections, some of these companies were expanding their production within the US, cutting their labor costs below even the sweatshop level by roboticizing entire factories [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg9**]. Since Trump has been loudly blaming immigrants and taking the focus off new technologies, they know they will get a free pass from popular anger over the new forms of exploitation they are using."

So-called "Artificial Intelligence" is another such field (see **Leaving the SPVM Behind to Attack a High-Tech Hub**), and one which Trump has now granted huge State funds towards to please the newly-loyal Silicon Valley moguls (as well as the oil, gas and coal magnates – and, why not, wind and solar, often the same companies and



depending on the same extractive processes – due to see world-wide production ramp up to fuel the hungry data centres; see **The Cryptoliberal Creep**). The recent article 'Good Night Tech Right' states that "[b]eyond the increasing financial and environmental costs, accelerated AI production also means creating technologies that by the admission of their own creators, will automate out of existence many jobs – and not just white-collar ones. Many fast-food chains are already working to automate out their workforce through AI, from drive through windows to inside the restaurants themselves. This reality creates a paradox: Trump barely squeaked out a win in 2024 through weaponizing growing resentment against neoliberalism; an economic system defined by corporate globalization and a declining standard of living. But as Forbes wrote, "[A]utomation technology has been the primary driver of U.S. income inequality over the past 40 years...50% to 70% of changes in U.S. wages since 1980 can be attributed to wage declines among blue-collar workers replaced or degraded by automation." The push by Trump to fuel the growth of AI will of course only accelerate this reality. In short, the Bannonite fantasy [ed. – see **Lies of the Land**] of "America First" is simply snake-oil: let's call it for what it is, neoliberalism coming home to roost." Despite the UK government's recent declaration in face of economic slump that it will turn these isles into another AI powerhouse (as if that ship hadn't already sailed, leaving the business sewn up by China and the US), ironically, Britain itself could be relegated to an extractive frontier as it diminishes in stature on the world stage, with AI implementation – in data centres, middle management, HR departments, etc. – leading to profits for automated services being skimmed off by the foreign multinationals rather than circulating in the UK, similar to we already see with PayPal but at scale.

Here, it is useful to determine in which ways up until now the break with the neo-liberal model is occurring beyond rhetoric alone. Funnily enough, once again there's an echo of an anti-globalisation era slogan from the liberal wing, demanding 'Fair Trade Not Free Trade'. Returning to 'Long Term Resistance': "While Trump is departing sharply from the neoliberal dream of the world as one large free trade area, he is by no means against free trade. To understand that, we need to acknowledge that free trade is no more free than the free market. It is simply a euphemism for a highly regulated arrangement designed to increase trade volume. This can be achieved through the multilateral agreements [and the global institutions] that were hallmarks of neoliberal politics, or it can be achieved through the bilateral trade agreements that Trump is promoting. In theory, the former require that everyone follow the same set of rules (though the European Union, for example, assigned very specific economic roles to different member states, allowing core members to protect industries that peripheral members were forced to de-subsidize). This means that the rules will reflect the interests of the multinational corporations that operate throughout the entirety of the economic area. In the past, those interests were synonymous with the interests of the US and its NATO allies, since all the multinationals of note were North American or Western European. But over time, the benefits began to generalize to the capitalists of all countries.

"A second tipping point away from neoliberalism is political in nature. Neoliberalism was doomed by the institutional primacy of state power over financial power. A globalized economy needs a global state to regulate it, but power-holders are still firmly national. Their worldviews and interests are developed at the national level, and nearly all their institutional handles pertain to nation-states. In a shortsighted maneuver to maintain their own chauvinistic supremacy, US conservatives gutted the UN – the potential world government – and therefore sabotaged the very world order they put in motion after WWII.

"While all other politicians were inclined to adhere to a neoliberal strategy that immensely benefited the US but allowed US supremacy to slowly slip away, Trump is making a gamble. The US is no longer the number one global producer, but it is still the largest consumer, meaning it has a unique bargaining position: every country wants access to the US market. If Trump can encourage "free trade" that privileges US interests, he can maintain the US position as global economic leader and maybe even recover the number one manufacturing spot (not by saving factory jobs, of course, but by subsidizing an expansion of robotic labor)."

So, if this isn't enough to stabilise a US-led capitalism, what form might it turn to next to survive? "Obviously," continues 'Long Term Resistance', "none of us know the future, and nothing appears on earth that does not eventually disappear. Democracy will not last forever. So let's entertain for a moment the scenario that it will come to an end in the next decade. A crisis of social control could certainly spell the end of democracy. While its specific strategies change over time, the State persists, and its fundamental logic is of social control. Whither will it go?"



BEFORE THE ELECTION

The candidate. — Voters! I'm not going to beat around the bush! I promise you the moon! I'll give it to you, I swear!

The voters. — Long live our candidate! Viva Tarteption! Long live the moon!

AFTER THE ELECTION

The voters. — Tarteption, your promise! The moon... We must have the moon...!

The elected. — The moon? Here it is...!

"I find it hard to believe that the model for institutional evolution will be the fascist dictatorships of the 20th century for two reasons: one technological and the other systemic. In the age of nanotechnology and the internet of things [ed. – see supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?**], dictatorship is not political, it is material. What's more, in the pendulum of progress and popular resistance, entire populations do actually become inoculated against certain strategies of state power. Individual institutions tend to hammer down resistance, but systems, as they evolve, seek out the path of least resistance, and their movements are guided by the mentalities of all their members. The figure of the dictator has a bad rep. Though we have not succeeded in revolution, we have at least succeeded in rescuing common sense from the authoritarian ideologies of the past millennia; a vast majority of people are once again distrustful of anyone with a great deal of power. Any system that chooses a political strategy of dictatorship will face a legitimacy crisis from day one.

"Though the ideological hardcore of the Alt Right is neoreactionary, which is to say they support a dictator, I think the evolutionary usefulness of a populist strongman like Trump is in shaking up a decaying system and forcing experts to articulate the crisis of democracy. He himself is not a model for the way forward. The model will be technocratic states like China that are weathering the economic crisis better than the US, and proving to be politically more stable. The big question, then, is whether a crisis of social control will also become a factor: will popular uprisings threaten power? In that case, which method is more effective at controlling them – authoritarian liquidation or democratic recuperation? If the latter, one-state China will fail as a potential model, and the West will have the opportunity to draw on its own technocratic traditions. Imagine a multi-party democracy in which politicians recommend policy guidelines based on electoral mandate, but it is the technocrats in Central Banks and related institutions (governing everything from environmental protection to gender relations to the borders) that draft and implement the actual policies. As Artificial Intelligence comes to play an increasing role, first in stock exchanges and currency markets, later in public health, environmental protection, traffic and transportation, immigration metrics, and so on, society will learn to accept the figure of the neutral, perfected, trustworthy technocrat."

Now, even as the Alt-Right revives on the street as its ideas find advocates within the very corridors of US power, it is precisely such a hybrid techno-democracy which could find its synthesis on a global level (though there are also serious limitations to such a model: see **Capitalism & Electrification**). But we are not in the business of making hard-and-fast predictions. Either way, in our daily struggles today we must still contend with the neo-liberal-derived exclusion described below (off-set as it is by the crumbs of belonging the populists offer the included) married with the cybernetic capitalist model which emerges, is referenced below, and which both a recommended second interview with Andy available at thebrilliant.org (#89) and **Cybernetic Mommy Milk**ers in this double-issue of *Return Fire* describe. And either way, against the techno-industrial

nightmare which has killed off over half mammal species on the planet since the start of neo-liberalism, we pose the need for what has been called a 'luddite artisanry' (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg10**), regaining land and freedom.]



T.B.: Welcome to The Brilliant podcast, this is around episode fifty eight. This is/should be the last in our ongoing series on exclusion within the anarchist space; although I have a feeling that this is going to be an ongoing topic of interest. Today I'm in a long-distance phone conversation with Andy. How are you doing Andy?

Andy: I'm doing OK thank you, just in the middle of a big research project at the moment on existentialism, but taking some time off on that to revisit some stuff I've worked on before about exclusion both in anarchism and in neo-liberal capitalism,¹ in the

1 ed. – "A quick glance at the history of capitalist development shows that the oldest and most common technology of domination at work is forceful and traumatic conquest. This is most obvious in the colonised world, e.g., Africa, where millions were enslaved, and the Americas, where in places the vast majority of the population was wiped out. In 16th and 17th century England too, and across Europe, land enclosure was brutally enforced with clearances and dispossessions [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg55**]. Enclosures were vigorously resisted, from local acts of sabotage and disobedience through to major uprisings.

"The use of overwhelming force to create and maintain markets is by no means over. At the most "macro" scale, we can see this clearly in the continuing history of interventions in the service of property by both state and mercenary armed forces. Just to take the most obvious example, since the end of the second world war US government agencies and sub-contractors have carried out a constant stream of overt and covert armed interventions overseas, often justified in the name of anti-communism or, more recently, of the "War on Terror". US foreign policy serves to support business by removing or terrorising governments and populations that threaten existing markets or resist the development of new ones.

"Naomi Klein's (2007) study of "shock treatment" in the recent "neoliberal" phase of capitalist expansion makes an interesting contribution here. Neoliberalism can be fairly well understood, as its proponents such as the Chicago School economists avow, in terms of a return to "classical liberal" laissez-faire practices after the post-war interregnum of Keynesian "social liberalism" [ed. – see **"The Difference Between Just Coping" & "Not Coping at All"**]. The core project, as presented by intellectual leaders such as Milton Friedman and political leaders from Pinochet to Thatcher, was to return to market control (privatise) areas of economic life that had become organised by state structures. But state controlled resources represent just

current stage of capitalism in particular.

T.B.: Well that's exciting because, the conversations up until now have mostly been about personal experience, and so I'm definitely hoping to round this out with a bit for of a theoretical context. So tell me a little bit about your interest, insofar as you're researching this topic?

Andy: Well, I've come at this kind of topic from a number of different angles. One of them is the question of... is it possible and how is it possible to

one rich source of profitable commodification. Other important sources in recent decades have been the creation of new "emerging markets" in the "developing world" and former Soviet bloc; and of massively expanded financial markets built on consumer credit bubbles and the "innovation" of new financial instruments involving securitisation and derivatives.

"Klein argues that this wave of market expansion is characterised by the systematic use of 'fear and disorder', of 'moments of collective trauma', as 'catalysts for each new leap forward'. She traces this pattern from the experiment of the 1973 Chilean coup, in which Pinochet's US-backed forces imposed a state of terror that was immediately followed up with an economic 'second shock', a raft of simultaneous privatisation and price liberalisation measures, to Iraq's case of 'shock and awe' assault followed by an attempted corporate takeover. However, military terror is only one way to create an exploitable collective trauma: for example, a natural disaster will also serve, as seen in the way that Hurricane Katrina [ed. – see *'The Utopia We Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark'*] was immediately seized on as an opportunity for radical reform of local housing, education and other government services. To summarise: *'This is how the shock doctrine works: the original disaster – the coup, the terrorist attack, the market meltdown, the war, the tsunami, the hurricane – puts the entire population into a state of collective shock. ... Like the terrorized prisoner who gives up the names of his comrades and renounces his faith, shocked societies often give up things they would otherwise fiercely protect.'*

"A still more current example is the effective exploitation of the 2008 credit crisis by the very neoliberal formations responsible for precipitating the collapse. The immediate aftermath of the credit crunch saw a backlash against deregulated finance, with talk of a "return to Keynes", or even a "return to Marx" [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg9*]. But this proved short-lived: in fact the outcome was a political movement towards austerity in Europe and other rich regions, not a retreat but an escalation of marketisation.

[...] In Nietzsche's [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg52*] story, after the masters inflict the original trauma, the priests appear with pseudo-therapeutic 'remedies' to assuage the suffering, but which in fact create further weakening and dependence. This is exactly the pattern we find in Klein's account of the 'shock doctrine'. The identities of 'masters' and 'priests', those who apply 'noble' or 'priestly' tactics, is only a secondary question. In Judith Herman's discussions of domestic captivity, the abuser is also the beloved partner. In austerity politics, the

have forms of social life which are not based on the types of constitutive exclusion which are fundamental in hierarchical systems. Because in a hierarchical system you always have the division between, the conformist and the deviant; the people who are living by the system's norms and the people who aren't. And anarchism aspires to be something that doesn't do that. Even if in practice it often falls short, but I think to a degree it's able to do without those forms of exclusion because of the structure it's based on.

Now, I also come to the question in terms of the position of the excluded within... Why is it that we have people who feel they're excluded from mainstream society, who are attracted to ideas like anarchism? And also the question of the ways in which exclusion has kind of reappeared in anarchist spaces (or intensified in anarchist spaces) recently because of political shifts, possibly derived from the wider context...

T.B.: Well you're racing ahead! Just to respond to the first point you were making, are you deriving your conversation around exclusion (or I guess the formation of society) sort of as a post-primitivist² set of conversations or from a pre-primitivist... in other words, anarchism obviously had a hundred years of existence before primitivism came onto the stage. Where was the history as far as you were concerned of where a non-exclusionary space existed in the theoretical constructs of anarchism prior to primitivism?

Andy: Fairly clearly in Stirner...³ I mean, Stirner is very much opposed to the idea of values attached to particular categories, values attached to 'spooks',⁴

same politicians who helped crash the system are back to inflict austerity. In contemporary crisis capitalism the same outsourcing corporations often provide the full range of functions from disaster to disaster relief.

"In other cases, though, causing damage and offering remedies may be independent roles, perhaps played by individuals and groups with quite distinct forms of life, who may even see themselves as antagonists. So: on the one hand the soldiers and cops; on the other the NGOs, educators, reformers, social workers, who reset the broken limbs and build the new norms. On the one hand the hard right, the hawks; on the other the liberals, the doves, the Left. Both have clear roles to play" (Nietzsche & Anarchy).

2 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg92*

3 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg18*

4 ed. – "This is one of the central concepts of Stirner's thought. A spook – at the risk of defining undefined and flexibly-used terms – is a concept, principle, or idea that has become "sacred." That is, it has become separated from actual persons. Stirner makes full use of the way that anything expressible in language, or thinkable in thought can, by that fact, be rendered as a concept, and therefore an alien spook. This frequently happens in the form that other people become the concept of other people, and

and therefore the idea of societies that are constructed around some kind of commonality of nation⁵ or humanity or whatever, which then necessarily excludes its opposite, the un-man or the foreigner or the Other of the group. So he's already trying to work beyond that. I think the aspiration is there...

T.B.: ...Actually how would you distinguish between Stirner and the liberal subject that was constructed in the same timeframe?

Andy: The freedom of the liberal subject is conceived in terms of the ability to act on what Freud⁶ would call the super-ego,⁷ to act on a moral imperative separate from desire, separate from worldly and social influences, and the subject was considered to be not free if they were acting on anything other than pure moral duty. So in practice (although liberalism was meant to be a philosophy of freeing people from, for example, dependence on tradition) it rapidly turns into subordination to the insistence that everyone be this particular type of subject.⁸ Now of course being

therefore a spook. The concept, rather than being "owned" or used by persons, has come to stand above and to dominate them. Stirner uses the post-Christian, atheist sensibilities of his audience [of his day] to argue that concepts being championed as the overcoming of God – like humanism, communism/socialism, critical philosophy – are really just God in new forms. That is to say, they still are based upon the elevation of abstractions that do not actually exist to a position of domination over actual people" (Entanglement: On Anarchism & Individualism).
5 ed. – Although Stirner himself was inconsistent on this, also writing that "a "German Union" is a possible and desirable thing for Stirner and that "*the Nationals are in the right; one cannot deny his nationality*" " (Entanglement: On Anarchism & Individualism).

6 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg55**

7 ed. – "In Freudian psychoanalysis, the socialization of the child is a repetition of the collective social history of the repression or sublimation of this malignant original nature. The longstanding alternative of childhood innocence, a reflex of the subdominant ideology of good nature/bad culture, could have no credence for Freud. He would have endorsed Augustine's [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg77**] observation (from *The Confessions*) that "if babies are innocent, is it not for lack of will to do harm, but for lack of strength." Freudian theory, in which the primitive anti-social instincts of the child – specifically, libidinal and aggressive instincts – are put down by a superego representing the role of the father and more largely the culture, thus takes specific Augustinian or Hobbesian [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg20**] form of the sovereign domination of man's [sic] anarchic impulses" (The Western Illusion of Human Nature).

8 ed. – "The most important element of the Enlightenment that is lost in the premature celebration of equality is the fact that these men of property, through discourses on rights and equality, were bestowing on themselves the right to define humanity. And humanity, for them, and eventually for the rest of the world thanks to a process of

this particular type of subject reintroduces normativity and the idea that there are those who conform to this well and there are other who are deviant, and the deviant have to be excluded or punished or reconditioned into the right type of person. And Stirner is really attacking that in liberalism;⁹ using some of the arsenal he's getting from Hegel¹⁰ (and via Hegel from Kant¹¹), so it's coming *from* that tradition *and* critiquing it...

T.B.: You know I often when it comes to these ideas try to avoid referring to the sort of source person,

total conquest, meant reproducing the social relationships that they considered to be good and natural, and which would quickly grant them and their political heirs dominion over the entire planet.

"Being human means being a participating citizen of a modern (Western-style constitutional) state, accepting the concepts of capital and private property and trying to acquire them, hallowing the practice of wage labor, reproducing the patriarchal family and patriarchal definitions of politics and economy, and entering into dialogue with eurocentric, white supremacist culture and learning.

"Anyone who did not accept that definition of humanity was considered to be rejecting their human rights, and was subjected to the most total forms of genocide possible for the contemporary techno-social order. Even into the 21st century, stateless peoples have never been granted human rights in actual practice.

"The prior, aristocratic and feudal system in Europe had no use for a shared category that would unite nobles and commoners. Their philosophies tended to emphasize and naturalize the specialness of the nobility. The new political class that arose in the Enlightenment, however, used calls to equality to mobilize the commoners as cannon-fodder in the liberal revolutions against the aristocratic system, replacing feudal obligations not with a strengthened commons but with the very practices of wage labor and land commodification that would utterly destroy the peasants and create a totally dependent urban lower class, both necessary conditions for enriching the bourgeoisie and favoring the economics of colonization. Until they lost access to the land, lower class Europeans didn't need to be included in and validated by the bourgeois cultural project, nor did they need to join the armies of colonization that earlier had been limited to ambitious or impoverished members of the mercenary and knightly classes. Once newly urbanized plebes had been instructed in the Enlightenment definition of humanity, they could be trusted to go overseas and force the natives to adopt the same definition, either begging for inclusion within the patriarchal, capitalist, white supremacist club of equality or facing extermination.

"In practice, defining humanity was a way of destroying that which didn't fit the definition" (Of Superhumans & Cyborgs).

9 ed. – "Stirner's idea of the "ego" needs to be clarified. [...] The egoist self is expressive and passionate – not a being of rational interests. It is ultimately something, which cannot be thought or conceptualized, since any fixed definition turns it into a representation or spook. As Stirner writes in his reply to critics: "What Stirner says is

especially when they have a name and instead try to refer to a particular body of ideas, or an idea that I like and I try to modernise it. So, one of the things I really liked about this book that we put out (and I didn't exactly catch it when we first got started on it, but I'm really convinced by now) is this book that we did called 'Enemies of Society'. And at the heart of it is basically a set of translations of French egoists who were trying to put Stirner's ideas into practice. And what I really like about the book (and really like at least about that era of egoists) is that it seems like they had come up with an idea of society, that there's a transition that happens when you perhaps surpass Dunbar's Number¹² (or however it is that it comes into being), but that there's a distinction between society – as an abstraction, as a construct that is kind of bigger than you or I can wrap our minds around – and not-society... And I bring that up mostly because I feel like that's the place that I find some affinity for egoists, is somewhere in here. But really when we're talking about the liberal subject, the liberal subject seems to be somehow connected to this, being perhaps on the pro-society side of that particular divide.

Andy: Yeah very much so I think... And very much somebody who's repressed and inhibited. Somebody who's living primarily through the super-ego.

T.B.: Talk about what that means to you. Because obviously the simple construction of the Freud id/ego/super-ego... perhaps you're talking beyond that?

Andy: Yeah, the super-ego is part of the ego that's turned against itself... The ego is all about getting satisfaction from the outer world... reality principle¹³...

a word, a thought, a concept; what he means is no word, no thought, no concept. What he says is not what is meant and what he means is unsayable". Egoists resist the use of normativity and social mediation in defining their relations. Instead, a kind of direct connection ("intercourse") or enmity arises. In essence, the relation to another is not mediated by a "third party," or a normative regime of rightness" (From the Unlearned Un-man to a Pedagogy without Moulding).

10 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg55**

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg54**

12 ed. – Theory of anthropologist Robin Dunbar that humans are cognitively equipped to function best (in trust, efficiency and self-organisation) in groups of no more than around 150 people. Fails to account – among other things – for numerous stateless societies and federations which self-organised above this scale (see **Lies of the Land**), and for spontaneous solidarity in general (see **The Utopia We Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark**).

13 ed. – "Though it could be argued that the first regulation of the child's all-out search for pleasure by the "reality principle" is more like a political order of off-setting powers, insofar as it involves the frustration of infantile desires by others attending rather to their own good. In

The super-ego is an internal part of the ego that gets its satisfaction from frustrating the rest of the ego.

T.B.: So, patriotism...

Andy: Yeah! Religious self-abnegation... subordination to a cause... self-sacrifice.

T.B.: Right, work ethic... Yeah yeah. OK, interesting. So, onward!

Andy: I think what we find in anarchist movements and autonomist movements at their best, is we find a kind of social world that is not relying on what are generally... I mean there's this discussion in sociology, there's all kinds of theories about how societies work and what is and isn't possible, but there's this really old distinction that you will still find flying around, between *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* (which is roughly "community" and "organisation"); community being usually a prescriptive social order where people are assigned roles, and community has a sense of normativity, a sense of what's normal, what's required, that is imposed on everyone through their prescribed roles; an organisation is a formal structure which has more form, it's more individualistic in that it's based on contract, it's based on rules and law and so on...

T.B.: "I had a choice in the matter"...

Andy: Yeah... It's kind of choice of two kinds of spook-based organisation really. But then you have this sort of third type, which was theorised by some people who were criticising this, called the *bund*.

Now, the idea of the bund is that there is this third form of social organisation that doesn't rely either on normativity or on this kind of organisation, contracts and rules and so on. It relies on an immanent connection which is established (primarily an emotional connection), and it's established primarily through action in common. An event, or a ritual, or a practice that the group have in common that then brings the group together feeling that they're part of a group who are united by (or in relation to) this practice or event.

T.B.: This is a German word, right?

Andy: Yep. "Bund" I think just means a group or a league.

T.B.: OK, but there's something like a "bund

any case, the infant's grasping of "reality" through experiences of pleasure and pain is a virtual replication of Hobbes' empiricist epistemology[...] So again, what should we make of the considerable ethnographic evidence to the contrary: that all round the world, other peoples know no such idea of children as innate monsters and no such necessity of domesticating their bestial instincts" (The Western Illusion of Human Nature).

uprising”, or... For some reason the Beer-Hall Riot¹⁴ era seems like there’s something that’s tickling my mind that has the term “bund” in it... But OK, go on.

Andy: Yeah, it appears in organisation names. There’s a Jewish socialist organisation called The Bund in the early 20th Century, but you also find it on the end of these German agglomerative words sometimes. I’m saying that a bund basically doesn’t have normativity, it has minimum of formal organisation (if any)... By normativity I’m meaning this idea that we have norms that make the world predictable, and there’s something that’s socially acceptable that you have to conform to; and you have a duty to conform to it, which I think is different from having an ethos, or an ethic, or values, or an idea of virtue. And I think the way this has worked in practice in anarchist and autonomist movements is often the big events, or the protest mobilisations, things like eco-camps in the ‘80s and ‘90s,¹⁵ and things like the summit protests in late ‘90s/early 2000’s,¹⁶ the squatting scene and the big street protests and clashes that can happen around that... It’s something like Greece in 2008¹⁷ (you know, the big uprising in Greece)...



14.11.90, Berlin: 3,000 police & special forces from across Germany fight several hundred squatters on Mainzer Straße defending 13 buildings with anti-vehicle trenches, molotovs & barricades, against cop tanks, gas & bullets, in its largest street-battle since a failed 1953 East German uprising

T.B.: Actually I want to get precise here. Because really what you’re talking about is the affinity group (and the affinity group model and the different variations on it)...

Andy: ...yep...

T.B.: ...But that model, especially in the North American context, has pretty much ended. By and large (along with the code-word “security culture”)¹⁸ [there] has been a dissolution of anything that even

14 ed. – Reference to the Beer Hall Putsch, attempted Nazi Party coup of 1923 led by Adolf Hitler in Munich; Hitler thereafter focused on democratic means to reach power before instituting dictatorship.

15 ed. – see 'Mobilising Disaster Relief'

16 ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg68

17 ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg17

18 ed. – see *Beyond the Screen, the Stars*

looks like a bund, [so] that when we do an action on the group nowadays, we do it as a series of whatever-singularities.¹⁹ And it seems to be that the radical distinction here has to do with this attempt to move us in the direction of the French (and especially the thinkers around the Invisible Committee)²⁰ and their idea of “friendship”... So I’m curious where you would draw the line between an anarchist position (perhaps around the bund) and this new, autonomist-type position around the “friend”.

Andy: I think they’re actually probably quite similar in

19 ed. – “[Giorgio] Agamben proposes ‘whatever-singularity’ as an alternative basis for political action, which escapes the logic of sovereignty. Taken from Deleuze and Guattari’s thought [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg55], a singularity is something which is unique and which can’t be reduced to a measurement or representation. Agamben likes it because it avoids his having to choose between universality and particularity. “Whatever” in English has unfortunate overtones of indifference (“whatever, talk to the hand”) which is not at all what Agamben means. Rather, he is referring to something mattering whatever it is, always mattering regardless of what it is – as opposed to the sovereign decision to divide life into things which matter and things which don’t. A “whatever-singularity” is neither reducible to its attributes nor expressible as an abstract generality such as universal humanity; rather, it is something which has general value as it is, with all of its attributes (and especially, as potentiality or possibility). It does not depend on any standard of conformity or subjectification or normality, or on belonging to the people or masses. It also denies that there is any particular essence which makes people human – instead, being human is a scattering of singularities. Whatever-singularity is also a kind of being which people are assumed to already have, which for instance motivates resistance to being normalised.

“In a sense, this is a radicalised version of human rights discourse, since anyone, whatever they are and whatever they do, is recognised as having a kind of autonomous ethical value. This is fundamentally an ethics of ‘letting be’ (with overtones of ‘being who you are’). It entails doing away with normativity as usually defined, with standards of good and evil which declare certain people to be valueless because of some particularly heinous deviant act they’ve committed (in contrast to the more common approach of either contracting normativity to cover a smaller range of acts, or altering it to focus on oppressive abuses). For instance, Agamben argues that ideas such as guilt and responsibility are derived from legal thought and hence from sovereignty. The ethical challenge Agamben poses is to still view every person – and, in line with the discussion in *The Open*, every animal – as fundamentally valuable in their own life, as having forms of life and particularity worthy of respect and autonomous existence, regardless of how ‘bad’ they are or what ‘crimes’ they commit. In effect, Agamben aims to take away, through choices in terms of language, ethics and philosophy, the threat posed by others’ ethical judgements in constituting a person or being as vulnerable. This does not remove human vulnerability per se, but does remove the particular risk of being made into

that key dimension. I mean, what I've read of the Invisible Committee stuff, when they talk about a commune²¹ they're again talking about something where the friendship, the affinity, is produced in practice. It's not necessarily something that's produced through an organisation.

T.B. Sure... I'm actually saying that I think there might be a fourth form.

Andy: Yeah, I think there are different forms of... I think it's possibly a different form of the bund, but you might be right that it's a kind of fourth type. I think there's probably a reason, I mean... I get the impression that possibly the type of anarchist and autonomous organisation that was about fifteen years ago (and was very strong then) has maybe gone into decline because of the difficulty in generating and sustaining the type of large-scale temporary-autonomous-zone-like events that maybe is what sustained that.

T.B.: I mean just to speak to this a bit more in depth, I feel like there was an incident here in the US that really showed the weakness of the affinity group. And this has to do with the fact that in the US context what we call the Green Scare²² was largely fed by the fact that this personal who had a personal moral weakness (i.e. they were a drug addict) basically flipped on their comrades and then wore a mic to hang out with them. And obviously it's useful to compare this in the UK context to Mark Kennedy or "Mark Stone"²³ who obviously also had a personal weakness which I guess I would take a stab at saying was the ladies, and did something very similar, where a lot of people's information was shared... And I feel like somewhere in there was built in the end of the affinity group.²⁴

homo sacer. It does, however, leave a particular ethical problem: are agents of sovereignty also to be treated as 'whatever-singularities', or as the negation of all such singularities?" (Giorgio Agamben: Destroying Sovereignty)

20 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg58**

21 ed. – Their conception of the commune is, of course, far from the only one; see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**

22 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg78**

23 ed. – see **'The Tip of the Iceberg'**

24 ed. – Actually, as has been seen in the infiltration-and-entrapment cases in the years since the Green Scare on that side of the Atlantic alone – for example, look up 'Bounty Hunters & Child Predators: Inside the FBI Entrapment Strategy' – the State has caught often young, inexperienced or otherwise more vulnerable individuals who do not seem to be in a pre-existing affinity group; precisely the reason why insurrectionary anarchists (among others) recommended and experimented with such groups (often drawn from your local life rather than far-flung contacts) that deepened their mutual knowledge in a variety of levels instead of just a one-off protest context (unlike the anti-globalisation era model of 'affinity groups'

Andy: He was actually an undercover cop who was being employed by a sort of special operations/special demonstrations squad,²⁵ and had been sent in to infiltrate and was eventually caught.

T.B.: The point I'm making is that his personal failings



that slung previously totally unknown people together with these infiltrators). This does not mean that affinity groups are immune to infiltration, but the cops themselves have long noted how difficult they are to penetrate; 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
25 ed. – The outing of Kennedy (seemingly compromised by his own handlers' deliberate carelessness) led to exposure of other undercovers of recent years to much outcry, and an government inquiry into activities since the late '60s by the undercover political policing unit mentioned here. Targeting exclusively anarchists, animal liberationists and leftists to spy, manipulate and sow division, it included figures such as a future head of the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch, multiple officers who had deceptive relationships with the people they spied on and fathered children with them before disappearing, or joined anarchist papers and wrote articles, opened files on anti-fascist school-kids and other legal minors, and seemingly engaged in actions as consequential as the 1987 arson of a major Debenhams store in London during a campaign against the fur trade (sending the other participants to prison as a result). During the early '80s they investigated supposed links between anarchists and radicalism in the north of Ireland, under British occupation; in modern times, the support group for anarchist (formerly Dissident Republican) John-Paul Wooton and another co-convicted with him on weak ground for a fatal ambush of a cop was also infiltrated by an undercover.

Much media sensationalism has focused on the predatory sexual behaviour of male 'spycops', but while this is hardly unique among police forces (see **On Sexual Murder & Police Sadism**, or indeed the "hero" of UK TV show Call the Cops consequently being reported for various assaults on women and a girl), it also glosses over agents such as the still-unnamed 'Officer A', known to the activists she spied on as "Lynn Watson". In 'We Need to Talk about 'Officer A'', one person "*who was extensively targeted for over half a decade*" writes that "*Lynn is minimised by most of the discourse surrounding infiltration, (in both the mainstream and so-called 'alternative' media) as she doesn't fit within the spycop narrative. When she is mentioned; it is often only as a footnote, a joke: someone who was a fluffy clown[...] That does not correlate with the Lynn that I knew: meticulous, cynical and uncompromising woman [who] coordinated several large scale site-takes and land occupations, and orchestrated a motorway blockade[...] Like many of the infiltrators, Lynn was many things to different people. We*

'THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG' [UK]

[*ed.* – An exposé released the year after the above interview. Consider the information dated, but the potentials the investigators opened up as real, if – to our knowledge – unfulfilled beyond the exposure itself. Successful location of the previous undercover investigator Astrid Oppermann (who spied on radical circles in Hamburg and beyond during 2006-2013 as 'Astrid Schütt') led to her car burned in front of her flat in 2022. We can only echo the call of those responsible: "No time off for informants."]

This document is a release of basic information about the former police infiltrator, Mark Kennedy. **It describes his whereabouts, and his work and hobbies.** It also includes a note on the former police infiltrator 'Lynn Watson'. We hope it will bring them, and those like them, a sense of fear and insecurity. May it also provide those willing to act on such information with a good starting point....

Mark Kennedy infiltrated anarchist and activist groups and campaigns between 2003 and 2010 under the name of 'Mark Stone'. As far as we know, he was involved with groups and individuals in the UK, Iceland, Germany, France, Denmark, the US and Spain where he gathered information for different police forces, sometimes unofficially, sometimes as part of formal international operations. He continued in similar roles for the private sector after leaving the police, and set up at least two of his own companies.

We are not attempting to fully document his activities here, nor could we expect to represent the harm he has caused. We are not linked with the initial exposure of him or of other infiltrators. Extensive information already exists online relating to their activities. **Because the information and the campaigns relating to the exposures was highly problematic and controversial, we have not included websites here, but there are numerous resources on line.**

However, we strongly encourage individuals to familiarise themselves with this information.

So... Kennedy plays guitar in a pub

rock band called The Barnstormers (<https://www.facebook.com/barnstormerstheband>). **They play semi regularly at The Anchor Inn on Bridgewater Rd in Bleadon.** They have also played at The Ciderbarn (<https://www.facebook.com/ciderbarners>) in Draycott on multiple occasions. His collaborators in this are Lian Simmons, Jacob Monro, Corne van Touder and Tim.

He has been working as a Procurement manager for Darwin Escapes who manage several resorts around the country. We have to reason to believe he still works at their property near Cheddar. <https://www.darwinescapes.co.uk/parks/cheddar-woods-resort-spa> <https://www.facebook.com/CheddarWoods>

He has been seen driving a 2017 silver Hyundai Tucson with the registration HT17AUK. We have reason to believe he is living in Worle, a suburb of Weston-Super-Mare.

We have reason to believe that the infiltrator known as 'Officer A', or 'Lynn Watson' lives in Hull. Here is a picture of her: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jan/19/undercover-police-officer-lynn-watson>

We believe that this information should not remain the property of a small minority who feel that they are able to choose who does or doesn't need to know. **We ask all those who may have withheld information regarding Mark or any other undercovers to release it to enable others to act.**

Mark Kennedy's exposure led to multiple infiltrators to also be confirmed by the police, for example Watson, and 'Marco Jacobs' (picture - <https://bristle.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/marco-jacobs.jpg>) who were both active when he was. Since then many more infiltrators have been confirmed. The cases have gone back over decades, and the cases continue. These must be regarded as the tip of the iceberg, the crumbs that the state has chosen to share.

We are not surprised by the use of



Mark Kennedy, after traumatising a generation of activists, roaming free – for how long?

infiltration as a state strategy. It would be a mistake to understand the singular case of Kennedy as something unique or extraordinary. Of course, there are certain factors that stand out but, unfortunately, it is not unusual. **He merely continued the tradition, in a long history of unscrupulous individuals, who have been groomed, trained and employed to invade and undermine the lives of those who seek to challenge the status quo.** These individuals are responsible for all their actions and all the orders and instructions they follow, or followed. We have no sympathy for them. They are responsible for their personal daily decisions and the damage caused to anarchist and activist projects such as struggles against environmental catastrophe, animal exploitation, fascism, capitalism and the state.

We do not seek recognition. We do not want an apology or seek justice inside or outside the courts [*ed.* – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; 'The Temple was Built Before the City'*]. We find no merit in speaking truth to power, but it is important that these actions have consequences.

We will strive to ensure that their lives are filled with misery and constant insecurity. A life where they can never be sure that they are not being watched and where they always fear that they may be recognised by someone who hates them. We hope that they will be made to remember, for years to come, the people that they hurt, the lives that they damaged, and the trust that they broke.

Please translate to other languages!!!

is probably why he continued doing it, rather than that he loved his job so much.

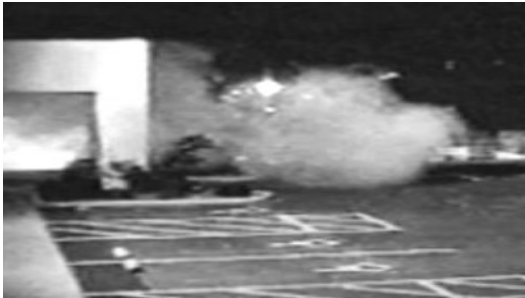
Andy: Yeah, but we also have a situation here where we had a massive crackdown on the animal rights movement not long before the Green Scare happened, or around the same time.



2009 arson of Austrian hunting lodge of CEO & chairman of HLS customer Novartis; whose private sports facility, vice chairman & lead director (twice) targeted before dropping HLS

trials, late 2000's. (I think a bit after the Green Scare actually.) But SHAC was pretty much destroyed, and up until then they'd been an inspiration for a lot of the other direct action that was going on. But it's also partly generational I think: the people who'd grown up in the generations of the '80s

T.B.:
Right... was that the 'Gandalf' trial²⁶ or something else?



2003 bombing at biotechnology firm Chiron, also linked to HLS, in California: last November, Daniel Andreas San Diego was arrested in a north Wales anti-terror raid after a 21-year FBI manhunt for him over it

Andy: No, the SHAC²⁷

forget this adaptability of "legends" at our peril."

Despite key participation of UK undercover in repressive cases on mainland Europe, Iceland and across the Atlantic, the inquiry refuses to investigate their activities off British soil. The inquiry has been split into chronological 'tranches' and so far over near 10 years has only studied activities up to the early '80s, foot-dragging to the maximum. There are fears that it will be mothballed entirely before reaching the era of Kennedy et. al. Although seemingly thwarted, a Home Secretary in 2023 attempted to change the inquiry's systematic nature into a "sampling method" of simply considering the unit's impact in general. A further report is due late 2026...

The author of 'We Need to Talk about 'Officer A' reminds us that "[i]t is also important to remember that not all infiltrators are state agents; and that even if they lose their badges (as in the case of Mark Kennedy) they can still continue to spy on people in a freelance/corporate capacity (see his 'Tokra' company). This has been investigated by various campaign groups; but it doesn't change the fact that these shifting careers fall outside the remit of the inquiry... and it is increasingly these types of careers which are more profitable than the risky and expensive use of an undercover officer.

"Freelancers, informants, grasses, and snitches pose as much of a threat as the police. The CHIS (Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct)) Act of 2020 means that 'human intelligence sources' are legally allowed to commit crimes and operate outside the law."

26 ed. – 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

27 ed. – Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, a campaign against Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS, the most protested vivisection lab in history and which was the largest in Europe) which systematically targeted investors in the company – one of which was Britain's Labour Party

– leading around 250 companies (among them some of the world's largest financial institutions) to cut ties, running them into over £100 million in debt. This was off the back of successful campaigns closing down animal breeders in previous years. In 'The SHAC Model: A Critical Assessment', author/s note that "The campaign offered participants a wide range of options, including civil disobedience, office disruptions, property destruction, call-ins, pranks, tabling, and home demonstrations. In contrast to the heyday of anti-globalization summit-hopping, targets were available all around the country, limited only by activists' imaginations and research. The intermediate goals of forcing specific investors and business partners to disconnect from HLS were often easily accomplished, providing immediate gratification to participants.

"Whereas an individual might feel insignificant at an antiwar march of thousands, if she was one of a dozen people at a home demonstration that caused an investor to pull out, she could feel that she had personally accomplished something concrete. The SHAC campaign offered the kind of sustained low-intensity conflict through which people can become radicalized and develop a sense of collective power. Running in black blocs with friends, evading police after demonstrations, listening to inspirational speeches together, walking through offices yelling on bullhorns, reading other activists' reports online, the feeling of being on the winning side of an effective liberation struggle – all these contributed to the seemingly unstoppable momentum of the SHAC campaign."

The UK government ultimately saved HLS with a huge loan once the pharmaceutical industry threatened to take their business abroad, and HLS became the only commercial business in history to have received private banking and insurance from the British State. Activists in the UK, Belgium and Holland were charged with "conspiracy to blackmail" as part of a what was then the largest police operation in UK history (parliament passing the 2005 Serious Organized Crime and Police Act specifically to protect animal experimentation companies), with sentences of up to 11 years and a transphobic media campaign against a defendant. "Primarily," reads 'The Future of Insurrection' when speaking of the SHAC campaign, "it operates at the level of the basic logic of capitalism, which is instrumental and inhuman: it imposes costs. Capitalists make decisions to disinvest, because the risk of suffering losses outweighs the profit which can be made. This has proven very effective in pushing HLS to the point where it can no longer function in the capitalist market. SHAC's vulnerability is that, while it imposes

and '90s and then the people who'd sort of become active during that big summit protest wave were getting older, and for a lot of them I think Occupy²⁸ and the 2011 stuff was probably their last big movement. And the generation who are taking over now are people who've grown up in this very securitised post-9/11 context. They have a very difference relationship to themselves, the system...

T.B.: ...to each other...

Andy: ...yeah; to anarchy, to the idea that anarchism is based on, and to the older generations. And they seem to have the kind of fetish of security and this kind of safe spaces stuff;²⁹ but at the same time to be

costs on animal abusers, it is open to retaliation by the state, on which it does not, on the whole, impose costs. [...] In the case of the UK animal rights movement, the state did not intervene to save various small operations such as Hillgrove Farm, but was prepared to go to very extreme lengths (from government financial bailouts to bogus trials) to protect HLS itself, viewed as central to an accumulation strategy based on biotechnology."

Undercover police were also employed in the operation.

After moving its financial centre to the US (where there's greater anonymity for shareholders), HLS finally merged into a company now called Inotiv. Their mode of operation remains the same; in 2022, they were fined \$35 million for abuses against the US Animal Welfare Act at their dog-breeding facility.

28 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'Centering Relationships'

29 ed. – We think that 'some anarchist feminists' said it best in their 'Letter to AFEM 2014': "*To be anarchists and feminists means to fight, to confront the structures of domination. That means taking on the repressive violence of the status quo. It also means confronting our own fears, traumas, habits and fixed ideas, the ingrained passivity, shame and guilt, all the little comforts and rewards for being good girls and boys, and all the other shit that has been screwed into us through our lifetimes. It is by challenging ourselves to fight back and destroy what destroys us that we become more powerful.*

"When we come to think about spaces, more or less safe or dangerous, this is where we're starting from. Being safe is not an end in itself. You might be relatively safe locked up 'for your own protection' in a timid life of conformity and earned privileges. That's not what we want. On the other hand, we don't love danger or conflict for its own sake. What we want are spaces and encounters that empower us, that help us grow, that help us fight, because only by fighting can we make lives worth living in this world. [...] On the one hand, yes, we need some safety. For example, we want to have discussions without cops, fascists, loudmouth macho idiots, or other abusers barging in. And we want to make spaces that are welcoming, where a wide range of people feel able to come and participate, including, for example, people who feel vulnerable or traumatised, intimidated by meetings, or are new to our events.

"On the other hand, a good gathering also needs a bit of danger. Empowering encounters often involve an edge of confrontation, challenge and expose us and push

more open to things like social media³⁰ and constant self-exposure and self-branding and so on.³¹ That doesn't fit well with the affinity model, DIY [*do-it-yourself*] politics or social centres or things that *had* been done. So they're really sort of transforming everything into their way of doing it or going off in a different way; I think that's really what's shifted. But yeah, when Kennedy was exposed the network in his local town and a lot of other people then burned out, or dropped out... It did have a big disruptive effect.

T.B.: Well, what I'm really trying to tease out here

us out of our comfort zones. It is often through arguments with our comrades that we have learnt most, either changing our views or affirming them.

"Maybe a half-decent analogy is how we learn martial arts: you don't want to break your bones every time you train, but you expect a few bruised muscles and egos. Of course, we can't be sparring all the time. You need to rest and recover between sessions. Get a massage, get a hug. Sometimes you need a longer break, time to recover from an injury. But, if we want to be fighters, we can't be in recuperation mode all the time. Not if we want to grow, become powerful, able to defend each other and take on our enemies.

"We don't want to stretch this analogy too far. There are many kinds of gatherings, many kinds of spaces. But our worry is that the idea of 'safer spaces' is pushing us much too far in one direction. It's pushing an image of meetings, encounters, exchanges as all about safety, retreat and recovery, with no element of risk or confrontation. Like every time we meet we need to be wrapped up in a warm fluffy blanket of caution, to protect us against all the sharp words and edges.

"And the more we seek to legislate on safer spaces, enforce 'correct' terminology, insist that harmful words come with a warning attached, the more we become accustomed to the comforts of our cliques and detached from the harsh world outside it. We find it harder to relate to others, and when people outside our self-referential bubble express themselves in the 'wrong' way, they are snapped at impatiently. Even other anarchists and feminists are intimidated and excluded by the language required at these events.

"Far from being inclusive, such events are exclusive to those versed in the (frankly complex) and shifting debates around 'correct' terminology and behaviour. Is this empowering new people to action, or merely entrenching the power of well-read feminists to define our oppression?

"When the state talks about increased safety and security, it means we're about to see new anti-terror laws, police powers, and surveillance systems. When anarchists and feminists write rules for safer spaces, who sets the lists of forbidden words? And who is going to make sure we conform?

"Years ago, "get out of your comfort zone" was an oft-banded about phrase. It meant: be prepared to take risks, be prepared to annoy and upset people if you want to take action that threatens the status quo. We need to be prepared and willing to do this where necessary. At a time where actual action seems so lacking, we wonder if we have given up on that idea."

(which you're obviously on the same page) is that I see that this gap that we're talking about between these... where you're talking about the *bund*, I think this friendship category is also a place that I at least want to explore because I actually think that there's been a lot of pain in it; but that hasn't been explored that much. And then this: we're not talking about yet a third category, which I would describe myself as having to do with the internet and this generation of people who weren't raised hanging out on a street corner with their buds (and then it naturally turned into something political...). Instead, the new generation of people have basically... their first exposure to other human being people is via politics on the internet.

Andy: Yeah, that is increasingly what's happening. And initially that took quite an anarchic form.³² You had things like #Anonymous,³³ and before that other 'hacktivist' groups, some things like Indymedia,³⁴ but I think as it's gone on it's increasingly become... I mean, the way social media in particular is structured (social media is a relatively recent, sort of really starts to grow in the late 2000's): there's a tendency to people to cluster in very densely clustered networks, in which they're clustered with other people who share their beliefs and interests. And they tend to share information, points of view and social pressure, which reproduces – and even radicalises and polarises – those particular views and interests; and I think it's in that context really that you get a very different style of politics, of this almost micro-nationalism of different groups and factions, whether that be identity politics,³⁵ whether that be alt-right and ultra-nationalism, whether that be people with very intense political loyalties. We've got a newly-emergent traditional Left, a sort of socialist Left, who have also got that kind of structure. And it seems to be structured into the social media that the community takes this particular form – that there is very strong... what Jean-Paul Sartre used to call fraternity terror. There is this relationship where you commit to the group: by committing to the group you are committing to do your part in the group, to uphold the group norms...

T.B.: ...this is gang logic.

Andy: Yeah. And if you don't, you're out. And worst case scenario, if you don't you're dead. But usually, these days, you're out of the group: you're shunned,

30 ed. – see **We Close the Door**

31 ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**

32 ed. – see **'From Fringe Prophecy to Voguish Ideology'**

33 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg48**

34 ed. – Activist open publishing platforms with comment-boards, which in many ways social media went on to copy.

35 ed. – see **'Identity Precedes Ideology'**

you're ostracized – or you're banned.³⁶

T.B.: Well, and that does bring us back around to people's modern experiences; which is that more and more social categories seem to be taking on these characteristics. So why do you think that's the case and relate it back to Sartre, because that's interesting and I haven't heard that before.

Andy: In Sartre's theory, basically we start out in seriality (which is atomisation, alienation, everyone's a separate person, the relationship to the other is competition or is one of being a series; like people queuing for a bus). A fused group (which is basically the same thing as a *bund*) happens when a group comes together for something in common, in relation to an object or project or an immediate threat. Sartre's example is the storming of the Bastille;³⁷ so, a big uprising would be an example of this. But the problem with that is that it's somewhat fleeting and it breaks down when you've lost that immediate focus. And the way people try to keep organisations going (obviously you've got the French and the Russian revolutions in mind here) is by forming more rigid organisations which then attempt to enforce loyalty to the group norms through taking an oath, or taking a pledge, making a commitment: you join the party and you have the party commitment, you'd have to sell the paper so many times a week and whatever. And when you do this you get this fraternity terror.

Now, it eventually evolves through two others; there's the organisation then there's the institution, which are different but that doesn't really matter that much... What I think we've undergone is this process of... Anarchism and autonomous movements (and identity-based movements really) in the '80s, '90s, 2000's are really fused-group type: and they flip toward pledged group I think partly as a result of social media, partly as a result of scarcity in the social context, partly as a result of movement defeat and difficulty producing... I mean, the fused groups are really held together by those emotions. You have those big events, you have powerful emotion, exhilaration, and empowerment, and this feeling you could do things that you couldn't do before: and that really is what holds the movement together. But then when you get this big counter-insurgency³⁸ wave and suddenly people feel like you can't do that anymore; you're not getting those emotions anymore: and the new generation coming up I think have never had them. Other people have had them but have burned out, they've been traumatised by repression or they've just... It's too long since they've had their big event, it's lost that inspiring force; that glue of the social movement has come apart.

36 ed. – see **'Between Punishment & Vengeance'**

37 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg6**

38 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg5**

T.B.: Actually I'd like to hear your thoughts... Of course, when we have this conversation in the US it entirely hinges around the failures and the defeats since Occupy. But you didn't really have a parallel to the Occupy movement; what you had instead at that time was literally a month of social unrest.³⁹ Can you talk about what the consequences of that were?

Andy: The British movement had had... there had been a wave of militancy in the '80s and '90s deriving from [*then-Prime Minister*] Thatcher imposing neo-liberalism; that had led initially to a lot of labour revolt, then there was a big green movement. There was a huge eco-camps wave in the '90s, and then Britain had its kind of little bit of the summit protest wave with J18 in London in 1999.⁴⁰ That wave kind of fizzled out around 2003-ish, but what we then had was the Iraq war:⁴¹ and there was a massive, massive demonstration, hundreds of thousands of people against the Iraq war. Not that much direct action; RAF [Royal Air Force base] Fairford was occupied at one point, but mostly sort of just huge marches. And the government just ignored it. And ignored public opinion, and ignored expert advice, and ignored legal complications, and ignored media hostility, and just went ahead regardless. And I think the effect that had is, if we can get hundreds of thousands out, we can



April 2013: jubilation across the UK & beyond at the awaited death of Thatcher; in Bristol, smashing of the Conservative Club, torching of a police 4x4, & a raucous street party attacks police & their vehicle with missiles & burning barricades when they try to break it up

But the movement then kind of dwindles; you then see the SHAC model comes into fashion, and you have small-scale groups carry out actions, ranging in the degree of militancy but something like that kind of Italian affinity group model.⁴² And that starts to fizzle out when SHAC is destroyed in the late 2000s. And then at just that point you have this

social crisis, which I think by the way is stemming from [the] 2008 financial crash; and up until then the poorer and middling groups had been kind of treading water. People weren't getting any better off, you didn't really have a chance of the good life, but you could survive: and after that it really became increasingly difficult for people. [In] 2011 there was that huge wave of... it was actually only about four or five days, but huge wave of street revolt which there was really very little anarchist or activist involvement in,⁴³ this was coming from marginalised communities, coming from working class people.

T.B.: I just happen to know people in Brixton who very much felt like anarchists were involved.

Andy: Yeah? Quite possibly on the ground then.

T.B.: But you didn't feel like there was enough there for there to be a large feeling? Because it sort of prefigured our Black Lives Matter movement here in the States, because it was about police violence.

Andy: Yep, very similar phenomenon in that sense: wasn't really a movement, it was kind of...

T.B.: Eruption.

Andy: Yeah, eruption over a few days. It starts in this one area in London where the guy [*Mark Duggan*] had been killed (basically assassinated by the police) and then the police were mistreating people who



39 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg61**

40 ed. – An occupation of the City of London (the notorious financial district) in a huge Carnival Against Capitalism to coincide with demonstrations in forty different countries, from Belarus to Israel, Uruguay to Switzerland, Port Harcourt to Sydney, Prague to Gujrat. The first of the most significant set-piece battles of the anti-globalisation movement, it saw hand-to-hand fighting within the London International Financial Futures Exchange itself, sound-systems on the streets, and various targets and surveillance cameras smashed before police got control.

41 ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification**

42 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg35**

43 ed. – Indeed, some UK anarchists disgracefully distanced themselves from the revolt, although in London, Nottingham and Bristol other anarchists were on the streets participating; see **Return Fire vol.2 pg58**.

were protesting against it and it erupts in this area; then spreads to the rest of London; then to the rest of the UK. But I got the feeling... I don't know the dynamics in London so well, but other parts of the UK it just took people so much by surprise that people didn't really have time to respond...

T.B.: Especially the movement people.

Andy: Yeah. Occupy also happened, on a very small scale. There was a lot going on around... there'd been some very militant student protests in 2010-11 as well, Tory party headquarters was occupied and this kind of thing,⁴⁴ but I think what really happened is

⁴⁴ ed. – During a large official demonstration that majorly disrupted traffic in the capital, around 100 charged into Millbank, the Conservative Party building, smashing windows and chanting “Tory scum, here we come!”, while thousands – overwhelmingly school kids and undergraduate students, some in black bloc – flooded the courtyard, cheering the occupiers above. Conservative Party chairman Baroness Warsi was inside the building at the time. Riot cops arrived and came under immediate fire from the crowd both below and above with eggs, sticks, bottles and a fire extinguisher, while demonstrators wearing captured police hats danced on tables to sound systems for several hours. As effigies of Tory and Liberal Democrat (their coalition partners) leaders burned, representatives of the student union (who'd called the demonstration, and whose president – soon to become a £125/hour education consultant – designed the route in cooperation with the cops and denounced the subsequent actions) linked arms to try to stop more joining the occupation, earning heckles of “You're all Tories too! Shame on you for turning blue!”

The movement saw clashes with riots cops on and off campuses and escalating property damage from this point on, with around 35 new occupations (in Brighton, even encouraging walkouts at schools), and a further major disturbance in London smashing multiple banks, the Treasury and Ritz Hotel windows, torching the Christmas tree in Parliament Square, looting Fortnum & Mason (the Queen's favourite grocery shop) and attacking the Prince (now King; see **Lies of the Land**) and his partner on their way to the Royal Variety Performance, shouting “off with their heads!” A major milestone was Liberal Democrats receiving many student votes on a pledge not to raise tuition fees, only to do just that: the day of the Millbank storming, disorder was also cleared from outside that party's headquarters as well. Many youth were involved as a grant enabling poorer young people to study vocationally (rather than academically) was slashed by 90% by the Tories, who'd promised not to; in this way, along with closing of youth centres, this segment of the movement segued into the nationwide August 2011 riots. Though often framed in the context of cuts to spending as a result of the 2008 crisis, for some universities the 'restructuring' plans had been set in place well before that crash. The movement took inspiration from forerunners during those years; in Austrian, German and US universities, adopting their anarchic slogans such as 'Demand Nothing, Occupy Everything', and occupations against Israeli attacks on Gaza shortly before. Anarchists

the government cracked down really hard after that wave of unrest and started giving out draconian sentences, and that kind of put the lid on it for the time being, and nothing after that seems to have been all that... There's been little upsurges; the #Anonymous marches on 5th of November are always a bit... some of those have been quite interesting⁴⁵ but there's not a huge amount goes on.⁴⁶

T.B.: Well obviously this is a useful time, since you're talking about 2008 and there's maybe been a malaise in the UK since then, this is a good time to talk about neo-liberalism and the impact of neo-liberalism on the topics of exclusion. Because it does seem to relate back to the talk about the liberal subject.

Andy: And of course neo-liberalism has effects on anarchists and activists the same as it does on everyone else; and one of the things it has done is undercut both some of routes into anarchism (particularly, it's a lot harder to live on benefits now, it's a lot harder to be a student and be politically active, it's a lot harder to have temporary part-time work and not be massively overworked by it)... But I think in general the climate is based on... neo-liberalism is based on generalised anxiety. And the source of a lot of that anxiety is... Basically, if people are living by active desire, if people are living by the things they want and the things they feel, capitalism and the State are not going to be sustainable. So capitalism and the State have to find ways to decompose, block, stop those kinds of feelings; and it varies over time what they do. In Fordism⁴⁷ it was sort of monotony, it was these very entrenched institutions



were involved at Millbank and other movement moments.
⁴⁵ ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg51**

⁴⁶ ed. – Obviously this was before UK events such as the re-born wave of ecological action (see **Stop HS2 & Extinction Rebellion**), mutual aid from the start of the pandemic (see '**Mobilising Disaster Relief**'), more anti-cop violence (see **On Sexual Murder & Police Sadism**) and anti-racist protests (see **The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis**), resistance to the 'Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts' Bill (see **1 May 2021...**), etc.

⁴⁷ ed. – see '**The Difference Between “Just Coping” & “Not Coping at All”**'

that didn't seem escapable; in neo-liberalism I think basically... Fordism broke down with the autonomist waves of the '60s and '70s, the flight from the workplace, refusal of work, drop-out culture; people started to escape from the factory as a site of work, and the education system and so on. **Capitalism has tried to deal with that by bringing itself out into the rest of society, turning it into one big social factory and closing and controlling all society. But the other thing I think it's done is it's tried to undercut that level of minimum guarantee which lets people drop out without immediately coming up against survival problems.** And that's how it's undermined the activism of that period.

T.B.: I don't want to dwell too much on living in the UK, but obviously the big counter-argument to this conversation is the fact that Brexit is the way in which the UK is "fighting back" against neo-liberalism, just like here in the US of course Trumpism is the way in which we're fighting back against neo-liberalism. Does that feel comfortable to you, or does that feel ridiculous?

Andy: Yes, that's exactly what's happening; and in France it's Le Pen...⁴⁸ it's this kind of right-wing populism in a lot of places. It's a slightly different constituency; the people you would get in autonomous social movements tend to be... there's a BBC survey that uses the term 'emergent service worker'. These are people who are on the lowest rungs of the service economy (the 'New Economy'),⁴⁹ tend to be university-educated or at least educated to some degree, tend to be involved in the New Economy, tend to living in cities where there's a little bit going on. The people who are into Brexit and things like that tend to be the people who were relatively included under Fordism, but they've really been hurt by the transition to the so-called New Economy. These are people who live often in small industrial/post-industrial cities, cities that used to have industry that has been run down because the country is moving towards competing in a global economy; or also sometimes rural areas. It's traditional working class people who are manual workers, who haven't got the education to work in the service economy but the jobs have been taken away as the industries have been taken away to China and places like that.⁵⁰

48 ed. – see **Lies of the Land**

49 ed. – see **A New Luddite Rebellion**

50 ed. – "The Royal College of Psychiatrists – the principle professional organisation for psychiatrists in the UK – summarizes that those who are more likely to harm themselves are those who feel: that people don't listen to them; hopeless; isolated, alone; out of control; powerless – it feels as though there's nothing you can do to change

T.B.: Obviously our society is a bit more racialised: we refer to these people as the remnants of the white working class.

Andy: Yep. That's exactly who we're on about. And it's the same phenomenon [which] in France they call *France Peripherique*, the peripheral France. They're the people in the towns that are just too small to be part of the global economy. In Britain people tend to say the north of England, although it's not just the north of England, but sort of ex-industrial... but basically London is booming because it's a global

anything. As the mental-health charity *Mind* outline, one possible reason for people to self-harm in response to these feelings is to exert 'a sense of being in control'. Faced with the visceral experience of hopelessness and an inability to exercise control over ones life, a dangerous or destructive act of self-harm becomes the only way for an individual to feel like they can exercise control and gain a sense of 'presence' in the world. However risky or destructive it may be, and however paradoxical or illogical it may appear to the observer, an act of self-harm is commonly a way to experience having agency.

[...] Given the abundant rhetoric of self-harm in the lead-up and analysis of the referendum, it was – perhaps surprisingly – David Cameron that asked the question that most needed to be answered: 'why on earth would we do this to ourselves?'. From the perspective of a calculated economic act (which is what pure neoliberal ideologists *think* is the fundamental character of human thought), to vote Leave in the EU Referendum *appears* to be an irrational impulse. How and why would people that stand to (potentially) lose so much, expose themselves to such risks? It was after all some of the poorest areas of the UK, many of which also receive the highest amount of EU funding (namely Cornwall, Wales and the North East), that commanded some of the highest Leave votes.

"What Cameron missed – along with all the other commentators and politicians – was that the language of self-harm being mobilizing contained an insight into what may have underpinned much of the Leave vote. This referendum was only ever a proxy, a way for a disenfranchised and hopeless sector of society to experience a *feeling* of control after decades of declining living standards and no feasible method of affecting change. Indeed, the Leave campaign were (at least inadvertently) aware of this hidden subtext to the whole charade, having heavily branded the whole referendum as an opportunity to 'take back control'. [Yet] the 'statement' of the Leave vote offered no *real* control whatsoever. To the contrary, the Leave vote was a symbolic act that, in the process of providing an opportunity to *feel* in control, triggered a highly predictable and damaging economic shockwave that would affect most those that were also most likely to vote Leave.

"What the Leave vote fundamentally offered – and perhaps the one promise that it didn't break – was a way for the most disempowered and disenfranchised to experience the ephemeral *feeling* of being in control. The fact that the campaign was a hatchet job of lies and mistruths, or that the Leave campaign didn't offer any real control, matters very little in understanding the outcome of the referendum" (Brexit, Self-Harm, & a Method for

city, the rest of the UK's kind of left behind, but the dynamics are really complicated because you've got regional nationalisms, you've got little development hubs in other areas, you've got certain social groups that are very conservative anyway...

T.B.: Let's turn this around back into a conversation around exclusion within the anarchist space. Because obviously, it does seem like a "monkey see, monkey do" problem where we're not exactly innovating at this moment... Where what we in the US call call-out culture,⁵¹ identity politics, seems to be chasing the dog. And so let's talk about that a little bit.

Andy: Yeah... What I'd like to say first about that is I think there are these shifts within neo-liberalism which are based on exclusion and threat of exclusion as what normalises the labour-capital relation for those people who are included. And what I mean by this is, people are treated as disposable; and people can be arbitrarily fired or punished (and excluded from that layer of people who are included and exploited) on very little basis. And this is quite different from Fordism, which had near-full employment and which had things like welfare state.

Taking Control).

51 ed. – "It is no secret that "Left" social media is dominated by the act of "calling out", where "problematic" behavior is publicly exposed and punished by social isolation for failing to uphold a perfect image of social justice. This spectacle of politics crosses into "real life" organizing spaces as a common source of conflict. As extra-state models of "justice," call outs echo failed accountability processes, which only end with exile from community. But call out culture owes more to neoliberal identity politics and its performance of righteousness. Call outs operate through the carceral logic of punishment, identifying someone as a problem with a solution of isolation. They end up consolidating identity positions created by anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and cisheteropatriarchy, and do nothing to build the communities and world we want to live in. We want to discuss experiences anarchists have with call out culture and its entanglement with modern identity politics. How can we find effective ways to organize without replicating systematic oppression? How can we hold bad behavior accountable, while understanding people cause harm and can learn from the experience? How do we create space where ideas and behavior can be constructively challenged with compassion? How can we build non-hierarchical infrastructure, while not knowing what will work? Can we embrace failure, confusion, and the need to keep starting again? Call out culture creates unrealistic standards that ultimately hinders true revolutionary action and change. It is our responsibility as anarchists to create situations grounded in the present that open up possibilities to alter the way we interact with the world and each other for the future [ed. – see '**Between Punishment & Vengeance**']" (abstract for 'Call outs, Identity, and Punishment in Anarchist/Radical Communities', NAASN conference 2019).

And you see this series of practices: basically, we're under an obligation to be communicable, in order to be employable and so on, but we don't have a right to be communicable. Basically, we don't have a right to be included. That's something we had to earn as a privilege that can be taken away.

So you see everything from, like, capital will disinvest: disinvest in Greece because they've had a revolt or because they're not paying their debts back, will disinvest in swathes of Africa, forcibly de-link. Workers who don't behave as they're supposed to will be fired. Kids will be kicked out of school. Social services will be cut off. Areas will be occupied, put on lockdown. People will be put in destitution, just not have any money at all. Prisoners get put in solitary confinement, these kind of regimes like Super Max and Guantanamo: this is really social death, cutting people off from communicability. And this is hitting particularly the excluded, the surplus population, the people who don't have jobs in the economy at all: and this is what's causing revolts like the Arab Spring.⁵² And it has in it this kind of logic – I've seen it called democide⁵³ – killing people by letting them die, by taking away the basis for them to survive in a context where the system is monopolising the basis to survive and making it as hard as it can for someone to live outside it; at the same time telling people there's no outside, pretending to be the social totality (which really it isn't, but it passes itself off as).

T.B.: OK. So again, I want to stay focused on the micro-politics of this rather than the macro. Because... the one thing I am enjoying about this is that it's very unusual in the US context for us to link neo-liberalism to capitalism and to explicitly capitalist social relationships, because identity politics in much more the *lingua franca* here in the US context. But to put it more bluntly, what you are saying is that to the

52 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg87**

53 ed. – Aside from battle deaths, collateral damage in attacks on military targets, capital punishment, and killings of armed rioters, basically any deaths caused by the State in fact fit under the definition of democide created by R. J. Rummel to cover that not covered by genocide because those who were killed were supposedly not selected on the basis of their race (though this is open to question in many cases). By his metric, democide surpassed war as the leading cause of non-natural death in the 20th century. While importantly, as Andy recounts here, leaving a daily body-count from quidodian capitalism, some of the more spectacular examples of this would be the Great Purges carried out by Joseph Stalin (see **Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies**) in the Soviet Union, the deaths from the colonial policy in the Congo Free State, and the Bengal famine of 1943 perpetrated by the British government (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg87**). Rummel concluded that "*concentrated political power is the most dangerous thing on earth.*"

extent to which... well, are you comfortable with the term social capital?⁵⁴ Do you like that term? Do you think it's useful?

Andy: I suppose we could use it, it's a bit dubious...

T.B.: Yeah, I don't love it, but I guess the idea or at least the political parallel that we're seeing is that there are particular people who seem to have control over modes of conversation or modes of thought, who are attempting to constrain people. Or at least harness the political energies around what liberation

54 ed. – “For example, the “privilege theory” that is fashionable in left-wing circles at the moment can work with a view of power in terms of resources. See, for example, Peggy McIntosh’s discussion of ‘white skin privilege’ as ‘like an invisible knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank checks’. Appearing white, or male, etc., gives you a store of resources that you can use to wield power or dominate others.

“Resource based approaches to power really reach their height in economists’ and sociologists’ theories of human, social, or cultural *capital*. “Human Capital” theory was pioneered by the neoliberal Chicago School economists Gary S. Becker and Theodore Schultz: very roughly, the basic idea is that education is investment in one’s future earning power. See Foucault’s lecture course *The Birth of Biopolitics* for an important discussion of human capital theory and its role in developing a new stage of the conception of humans as ‘subjects of interest’, in which now the pursuit of ‘interest’ is understood specifically on the model of rational investment in future (self-)production. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was largely responsible for introducing ideas of social, cultural and symbolic capital. Many power resources involve reinforcing and cumulative structures. E.g., occupying a social status position gives me power to threaten, offer, persuade, or simply be accorded certain forms of treatment as an unquestioned right, etc. And then I can use these powers to maintain my status or even develop it further. So I can grow my power, in a similar way to capitalists accumulating economic capital.

“While it may sometimes be useful to think of power in this way, Foucault insistently reminds us of its limitations. Foucault’s first thesis on power in *The History of Sexuality* is that ‘power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds onto or allows to slip away’. Instead, he emphasises the ‘strictly relational character of power relationships’.

“For example, money only gives me power within a complex context of property norms, a functioning money system, and people who desire or need to trade for goods, etc. Take away that context and it becomes worthless. Similarly, whiteness or maleness carry power within specific contexts of norms and scripts. These contexts are certainly widespread, though their features also differ widely across cultures and localities. But be careful to remember that gold or printed paper or skin colour in themselves aren’t the “sources” of power. A possession or resource view of power is a handy, but limited and potentially dangerous, abstraction” (Nietzsche

would look like, in a way that looks very similar to what would happen if they were in fact capitalist classes owning a limited resource. The problem of course is that they’re not.

Andy: In a sense they are. I’m in myself unsure about how far... There is this commodification and artificial scarcity around social validation, attention (because of course there’s so much information now, people competing for attention and try to get attention, trying to get validated): to what extent that’s really commodified and an aspect of capital or to what extent it’s something that capital is trying to bring in... But certainly that’s how people experience it, I think a lot of people. And it’s tied in with survival. Your ability to be visible, to be validated, to have social capital, to have networks, to have recognition as somebody who counts, somebody who’s life matters, is absolutely vital to being one of the people who gets selected for and survives rather than one of the ones who gets demoted or forcibly de-linked out. So there’s that competition as to who gets included, and that’s happening at every level from the very top (the stockbrokers, the CEOs, the politicians) right the way down to the struggle to survive in gangs, among homeless people, and the struggle to be recognised as a benefit claimant not have your benefits cut off, this kind of thing. And this has got into the social ethos on such a level that it is being brought in to I think anarchist spaces, into I think other kinds of horizontal de-centred spaces; I think also Left spaces and things like universities it’s been in for a while.

There’s these tricks and dynamics that come up. First off you have this kind of horizontal policing, which I think is initially introduced by neo-liberal states as a way of cutting down on policing resources by forcing (for example) pubs, football clubs and so on to police their own users. That gets brought over by people like identity politicians as “the community should be enforcing against racism etc.”. Then we have the idea... the State isn’t able to provide security anymore. This isn’t Fordism. So it’s providing an illusion of safety based on exposing other people to greater risk, supposedly for the protection of the supposedly-privileged: which in fact is not providing them with protection, but it is providing them with validation and a sense that the State cares about them.

T.B.: This is basically an assertion you’re making post-terrorism. In other words, the State can no longer be seen as protecting people (and that’s

& Anarchy).

evidenced by attacks in London and attacks in different metropolises all over the world).

Andy: Yeah, also the fact that people don't have stable jobs. The fact that people don't have welfare rights. This kind of thing as well.

T.B.: Yeah, I will say in the US context since 9/11 we really haven't had... I mean, what's strange is how cognitively we disassociate the mass shooting from terrorism: because one would think that one could be terrified by a mass shooter!⁵⁵ But there is a strange disconnect on this level, where – again, this is kind of an Adam Curtis point – where he talks about how politicians are managers of the chaos that they're benefiting from in the particular way that they are. But I think that you are trying to turn this in a different direction to talk explicitly about exclusion in our spaces. So continue.

Andy: I think the identity politicians are basically doing a “me too” on this. I know we have a #MeToo campaign at the moment that means something else... but I think we're getting “me too” securitisation.⁵⁶ I think we're getting “if you're going to do this to stop terrorists from killing shoppers in New York or whatever, you should also be doing the same thing to the same extent with the same extensiveness and the same overreach in relation to rape, in relation to black people being murdered”, you know...

We have two theories I think that are linked to this. One is broken windows theory⁵⁷ or order-maintenance policing which appeared in the '80s. And this idea; you try to prevent serious, gang-related crimes such as murder (and serious crime in general) by enforcing zero-tolerance on petty so-called “quality of life” offences: things that aren't even really crimes, like loitering in the street and trespass and graffiti and yeah, broken windows. Another is conveyor-belt theory, which has been the dominant counter-insurgency theory since 9/11: which is the idea people become terrorists or insurgents on the basis of becoming gradually radicalised on the basis of something like a deviant career (exposure to increasing degrees of extremity of their views and actions), and attempting to cut that off by cracking down on the process, the conveyor-belt. So for example: banning glorification of terrorism, banning terrorist content on social media, banning ideas that are not themselves terrorist but might lead to that later, banning preparatory acts, banning association. And this has been going on really since 9/11.

T.B.: So the modern way in which this is being talked about within our circles is called no-platforming.

55 ed. – see **Calling It Terror**

56 ed. – see **'A Lose-Lose Situation'**

57 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg18**

Andy: Yep. I mean, no-platforming I think originated as a tactic specifically against violent neo-Nazi organisations that would physically control territories; and it's been expanded to cover anybody who is deemed to have said or done something oppressive by the standards of whoever is doing it. And in Britain at least this had actually evolved through... [It] begins against Nazis (as far back I think as the '70s), gets expanded for use against radical Islamists as part of the State 'Prevent' strategy⁵⁸ in the mid-2000's (often with involvement of the student Left – who were often in with Blairism⁵⁹ – and of feminist, gay rights and Jewish groups on the basis that Islamists are often homophobic, anti-Semitic and sexist). So this was used to shut down radical Islamist speakers as the next stage from the Nazis and then it's gone from there initially to other racists, pick-up artists, misogynists, etc., and then gradually to somebody who said the wrong thing about the Julian Assange case,⁶⁰ or somebody who has got an outstanding accusation against them that they're considered not to have dealt with properly...

T.B.: Yeah, I'm not sure how familiar you are with the controversy around *Atassa*, but essentially *Atassa* has been referred to as a neo-fascist group because they have taken claim for killing people and they've used certain terms, like because they've killed a woman they've used the term femicide, and that has been expanded to be a sort of fascistic modality. And so therefore by publishing *Atassa*, or by publishing anything associated with ITS,⁶¹ we have been argued against for platforming fascism.⁶²

58 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg13**

59 ed. – see **'The Difference Between “Just Coping” & “Not Coping At All”'**

60 ed. – Australian liberal journalist, early 'hacktivist' and founder of Wikileaks (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg48**) with the aim to “*make capitalism more free and ethical.*” At the time, he was in the UK wanted by Sweden on rape and sexual assault charges but had been granted asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy, on grounds that Sweden would extradite him to the US – where he faced major charges after unveiling US espionage against the UN, war crimes in Iraq, sales to Syria for repression of revolutionary movements by Finmeccanica (see **'Our Anarchy Lives'**), etc. – and his claim that Swedish culture had a “crazed radical feminist ideology” (perhaps surprising to Swedish comrades). While there he launched the WikiLeaks Party and unsuccessfully stood for the Australian Senate. Falling out with the Ecuadorians, he was arrested in April 2019 and spent 5 years in a UK prison fighting extradition, ultimately taking a US plea deal and avoiding jail-time there. Swedish prosecutors ultimately dropped their case despite saying they were confident in the complaint.

61 ed. – see **Calling It Terror**

62 ed. – This was, of course, before the main figure behind *Atassa* (and ITS and other self-described 'eco-extremists' which that journal focused upon) made actual reference to esoteric Nazis – though still seemingly looking to provoke

Andy: Yep, this is the way this kind of drift has happened. I think the drift also involves this kind of... the rules become more and more vague as time goes on. I mean, the terrorism stuff is already vague, but all this sort of harassment, anti-social behaviour, and now this kind of view of oppression that you get in identity politics: it's not just "you must not break this rule", it's "you must not break this rule that is not really that defined as to what breaking it would be and if I say you've broken it that means you've broken it; but you can't know in advance." And this creates this kind of... Classical totalitarianism relied on this system where they had rules which were vague, they had rules that were broad, they had rule which you had to break in order to not break other rules, in order to live up to your production quota: and not fall foul of that rule you had to break about six other rules. (Which also happens in modern workplaces by the way.) And as a result of this basically everyone relies on the discretion of the power-holder to turn a blind eye to the rule they're breaking or to make these discretionary grey-area judgments in their direction. Which leads to massive discretionary punishment-by-process, managerial bullying, huge power to just blackmail people.⁶³

T.B.: But this is at the heart of policing mentalities from day one. I mean, an anarchist who doesn't have a critique of this: they're not an anarchist, basically.

Andy: It's always been going on; I think it's probably been intensified. I'd say this horizontal policing, this attempt to conscript the civilian population into acting

and generally get attention from the anarchist space that tendency declared hostility towards – before being doxxed.

63 ed. – Basically, what has become known as 'cancel-culture': *"now that the social justice language associated with cancel culture is becoming a standard feature of corporate HR culture, with prominent companies like Disney and Google using social justice reasons as excuses to fire people, that means that it's going to start affecting tens of millions of workers, which to me means that it is something worth talking about. [...] And while the term cancel culture is new, there's nothing new about these techniques – they're the same one that hierarchical institutions have used for thousands of years, whether it's the medieval catholic church, modern day cults or 20th century ruling communist parties. [...] And keep in mind that political correctness is historically most often a straight up right wing affair, with no left wing pretense – like in the 1950s for example, the things you'd get in trouble for was criticizing capitalism and sympathizing with socialism, or in the early 2000s people like Donahue or the Dixie Chicks were getting literally cancelled and banned for criticizing the Iraq War, and today you get professors fired or denied tenure for their positions on Israel Palestine politics, or you have Colin Kaepernick blacklisted for criticizing the police"* ('Cancel Culture' is Management Culture).

as unpaid police under threat of being held indirectly responsible or liable for something someone else has done that they've failed to prevent or failed to report: that I think has been brought over into anarchist spaces.⁶⁴ And this is really quite new; this has only really been happening in Britain for the last perhaps 3 or 4 years [*at the time of the interview*]. Up until then, it was like, anarchist spaces: this does not happen. It happens in Blairite spaces (you know, the Third Way, what would be like our version of Clinton), but it was really, like, "anarchism doesn't do this". It's only (strangely enough) once the Blairites are actually out of power and then this wave of 2011 fizzles out, you then start to get people bringing this in to anarchist spaces. And they're quite often younger people and they're quite often people who've grown up with this idea "security matters more than freedom; I'm not safe; there's all these threats around me: and all these little things that threaten me are actually little precursors or elements of these huge things, so we have to have zero tolerance on using bad words because there isn't a difference really between using bad words and killing someone or raping someone."⁶⁵

T.B.: What's to be done?

Andy: What we really need to do is find a way to revive those types of affect that are the ones that underpin what I was calling the bunds (or maybe we'll say friendship, the whatever-singularity). We need to find ways to reconnect people on the basis of, first off, making that step of rejecting the system, which identity politics doesn't do: it's all competition within

64 ed. – see '**Between Punishment & Vengeance**'

65 ed. – Another aspect of this completely counter-liberatory quick recourse to ostracism (see '**Between Punishment & Vengeance**') relates, says Peter Gelderloos responding to commentators, to class: *"I think it's a fairly common analysis that people who grow up within systems of power and oppression learn and reproduce certain ways of being that can invisibly support oppressive power dynamics, do damage to movements, or harm those around them. One of those dynamics is the behavior that (upper) middle class people typically learn with regard to conflict. If they don't unlearn it, we can see a huge entitlement to space, a belief that they are entitled to zones of comfort, and a belief that people are disposable. This is related to growing up farther away from the frontlines of the prison system and without much daily violence, and with the privilege of not having to rely on imperfect people or damaged relationships for their survival.*

This practice of treating people like they're disposable means giving up on relationships that are no longer convenient. Ironically, that often means being quick to cancel those who have caused harm but also ghosting people who are suffering from trauma, marginalizing differently abled and crazy people, or vaguely labelling as "problematic" people who make them uncomfortable (and it often turns out their discomfort stems from class or race privilege)."

'DEPARTED FOR THE SPIRIT WORLD'

[ed. – During bail hearings for the action described below, cops deliberately exposed an undercover cop in local radical groups for chilling effect. Matt wrote since how comrades can “reduce the damage done by infiltrators by being principled in their actions, respectful and accountable in how they organize with others, and by keeping in mind that distrust is usually more harmful than infiltration.” This distrust may have proved fatal.]

Ottawa, Canada. On March 16, 2021, our comrade Matt departed for the spirit world. **We have lost one of the most committed anarchists in our part of the world, and the loss is felt intensely due to the tragic circumstances of his death.**

Many people who did not know Matt well will probably remember him as the guy that bombed the bank back in 2010. At this time, there was a major mobilization of anarchists preparing for the G20 summit in Toronto [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg55*]. Several months prior to the summit, a group calling itself FFF (Fighting For Freedom) released footage of the firebombing of an RBC branch in Ottawa. The footage was dramatic – a black-clad figure runs out of the bank minutes before it explodes in flame.

Although he never confessed to the action, I think that Matt would have wanted to be remembered for this action. He was arrested for it, jailed, and put on trial, but charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence. Six years after the bombing, he posted an article entitled “6 reasons I support arson (as a tool of social change)” on his blog. “I think it’s an example... of direct action, and I think that social movements in Canada are far too pacified, they are way too comfortable with the ideology, with non-violence as an ideology [see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4: 'Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics'*], not as a tactic, but as the only possible way forward,” he said. “I think social movements need to become more militant and I wanted to highlight that, which I think the action does.”

The communique released by FFF explained the reasons why RBC had been targeted. They had been a major sponsor of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg26*], which had involved a massive crack-down on the street population of that city, and RBC was also a major financier of the Alberta Tar Sands [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg29*].

It’s important to note here that Matt was one of the anarchists who was at the forefront of indigenous solidarity organizing. 2010 really was the year that anti-colonial politics came to the forefront of anarchist analysis in so-called Canada. It was through the relationships that anarchists formed with indigenous people around that time that began to significantly shift anarchist discourse. Matt was one of the pioneers of this, and he remained active with IPSMO (the Indigenous People’s Solidarity Movement – Ottawa) for the better part of a decade.

Matt was a committed activist. Serious, principled, and intense, he knew what he believed and had the courage of

his convictions. His stubbornness often led to him butting heads with other activists, as for myself, I usually

found myself agreeing with him and supporting his stance. He thought that radical politics should be about action. When it was time to throw down, you knew Matt was game.

It is difficult to grieve Matt, partly due to the tragic conditions of his death. I have not spoken to anyone who had really spoken to him in the past two years. Not only was he estranged from his family, it seems that he was also estranged from his friends. It would seem that his mental health deteriorated, and he was living in a tent by the Ottawa river [ed. – colonial name for the Kichi Sipi], close to the War Museum, and not far from Asinabka, the Algonquin sacred site currently being desecrated by a huge condo development.

The circumstances of his death were mysterious. Apparently, the police told his mother that he had fallen out of a tree. I was a part of a group that visited the tree, and we all agreed that it just wasn’t possible that that had happened. Not only was the tree not very tall, it was a spruce tree, and it would have been impossible to climb without breaking branches, and no branches were broken. What is known is that he died of blunt force trauma and the police didn’t rule it a suicide.

We are still trying to put the pieces together, so if you do have information that would help us understand what happened in the last two years of his life, we would encourage you to write us. Even though we can’t change what happened, understanding what happened can be an important part of the grieving process.

We also have some soul-searching as a movement to do. There have been a significant numbers of deaths of despair amongst activist men in the past few years. To name a few: Derek, Dave, Hugo, Jean, and Charles. **What is leading our comrades to such depths of emotional pain?** Is it the state of the world, or it is something about the way that activists treat each other?

The reality is that, despite our best efforts to change the world for the world, things are not improving on planet Earth, and in fact, many of the gains made by previous generations of activists are now being undone. This can be deeply disheartening, especially for people who have based their whole lives around struggling to make the world a better place.

There is another question that is more disturbing, and that is whether it is something in the activist scene [that] is killing us. Has the anarchist culture become deeply toxic? **Both Dave and Matt were being excluded by their respective activist communities at the times of their deaths.** In both cases, it seems likely that this was a factor in the deterioration of their mental health. Is a toxic activist culture partly to blame?

In any case, Matt’s body is gone, but his spirit has moved on. Perhaps the freedom that he desired so passionately was not possible in this world, but I hope that where he is now, his spirit will know true freedom.

the system.⁶⁶ Secondly, we need this tolerance of low-level nuisance and the fact that we're around people who are different from us, who've got their own will, who've had different lives: that's going to be sometimes... people aren't always going to understand one another. People are going to say things that are insensitive. People aren't going to have the same norms. And we need to develop networks of dispersed power; we need this kind of web of rhizomes where people are quite happy to... maybe some people will have to group with people who share their particular set of triggers and have to avoid certain things, but we're able to connect those groups without it turning into an antagonistic competition of "you have to do it exactly my way or else you're racist, you're sexist..."

T.B.: But it does seem like you're referring to what I would call an existential leap. Speak to your thoughts as to how that would happen...

Andy: ...How you do it. I think what's holding this together... If you look at what happened last time; because in some ways we're living through this re-run of the '30s. We're living through a re-run of what happened to the Left. What happened basically if you look at the 1920s, you'd got this huge outpouring of everything from council communism,⁶⁷ anarcho-syndicalism, little Nietzschean projects going on,⁶⁸

66 ed. – While this is certainly true of aspirational neo-liberal identity politics (see **Follow the Fires**), it does not hold for all identity: we are not so sure there is any escape from that per se; see '**A Question that Will Never be Solved**'.

67 ed. – A strain developed following the debacle of the Russian Revolution's capture by the Bolshevik party, and especially after the latter openly announced State Capitalism as the economic policy; it promotes working-class organisation in the councils (soviets, in Russian) which organised many strikes in that experience, outside of unions, and recognising that in the post-WWI world parliamentary efforts were unlikely to lead to gains. Strongly criticised by its enemies such as Lenin (see '**It Depends on All of Us**'), it was essentially a non-State socialism. Largely a current in Germany and the Netherlands, few council communist organisations survived the rise of the Nazis, despite a brief resurgence in 1960s France, Italy and Germany.

68 ed. – "Although there are differences (certainly in terms of terminology), there are also broad compatibilities between the Nietzschean and anarchist perspectives because both – although Nietzsche would have denied this point – are of the "party of life." Both see that radical psychosocial transformation can only be effectuated through "necessary wars," whatever the nature of those conflicts might be. Both recognise that a higher "breeding" (or human development, in anarchist terms) can only come about through the destruction of limits (power) and the eradication of parasitic elements (or the entire ensemble of State and Capital, in anarchist terms). And both acknowledge that only through such a process can there come about the conditions for creating a superfluity of life

drop-out culture, theosophy,⁶⁹ all these kinds of things. And then a lot of it gets closed down and put into Stalinism. And that then becomes the big thing; you're a closed-minded Stalinist, or you're a Nazi, or you're a social democrat (which also becomes increasingly closed); and the anarchists either get kind of shunted out, killed...

T.B.: Yeah, they get clobbered, one side or the other... Sure.

Andy: What eventually brings this down is when we get to the '60s and we start to have... we've got people who've been growing up under this system who are like "actually, this is not very nice; this is existentially..."

T.B.: ...sucks!

Andy: ...sucks. And who start trying to do something different. It's a different context to now. I mean, we're talking maybe the context we'll be in twenty years time or thirty years time might be like that, but...

T.B.: ...but you're saying that basically all the pressure and the constraint at some point just pushed the kids into saying "fuck this" and rejecting the squares and the parents.

Andy: Yeah, I think it may be when they were

which in turn is capable of generating the Dionysian condition (or anarchy, in anarchist terms)" (Attentat Art: Anarchism & Nietzsche's Aesthetics).

69 ed. – An international philosophical system significantly popularising interpreted Eastern religious knowledge to the West (and with the effect of encouraging cultural pride in South Asia), linked with the occult revival in late 19th Century Europe. "*The theosophy of Helena Pavlova Blavatsky (1831–1891)*," writes Erica Lagalisie, "which intrigued many anarchists, involves a teleology of divine evolution represented by successive "root races" and whose finality was cosmic union. Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), a Theosophist and anarchist himself, also admired Fedorov (1828–1903) who wrote that the common task of humanity was to use science to resurrect its dead fathers from particles scattered in cosmic dust. [C]ontemporaries of both Fedorov and Tolstoy during the Russian occult revival [posited] a "mystical anarchism" that equated political revolution with realignment in the cosmic sphere. In England, union organizer and early feminist Annie Besant, who organized women match-makers [was] inspired [by theosophy] to fight for Home Rule in India[...] [S]piritualists and mediums of all kinds, who were disproportionately women, were led by their spiritual views to engage the "social question". [...] Not every anarchist was a theosophist or enamoured with the occult. Emma Goldman, for example, wrote an entirely scathing account of Krishnamurti's arrival in America as the supposed Theosophical avatar. However, the fact that Goldman's *Mother Earth* and a variety of other anarchist periodicals bothered to criticize Theosophy at all should tell us something – nothing is forbidden unless enough people are doing it in the first place."

actually getting kind of the success when they were able to get the American dream and they're like "actually it's not that brilliant." But I think probably... I'm a bit lost as to the way to do it now; we need to find a way to make people basically less anxious and less hyper-sensitive about other people.

T.B.: I do think a little bit about the... At the end of World War Two, people who were paying attention to the extent that which perhaps we're paying attention today must have been miserable. Because basically the "victory" that happened was no ideological victory, it was just a victory of illusion; and the fact that so much of the German machine got taken up by the prominent powers of the time,⁷⁰ and that the thinking did not clarify itself for another twenty years. And that is a terrifying lesson to take away from today, when it does feel like these modes of thought that we're talking about seem extremely dominant, extremely... like they've rationalised all comers.

Andy: That is another element of it I think: people who've lived through... first off, you're coming out of World War Two, the narrative of progress has been shattered because of the Holocaust...

T.B.: ...and the bomb.

Andy: Yeah, the atomic bomb. And you're in this Cold War that never seems to end. Communism then gets kind of discredited when Secret Speech and Stalin's crimes get admitted;⁷¹ that increasingly

70 ed. – "Fascist jurisprudence – and to a large extent its social organization – works on the principle of a state of exception [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg5*]. In fact, this was one of the main contributions that fascism made to the post-war democracies, alongside rocket scientists and security apparatuses in Italy and Greece. Democracy took the state of exception, not as a general legal principle but as an exceptional one, and worked it into its anti-terrorism policies as a way to control subversives, first in Germany and Spain, later in the US.

"Exceptionalism under democracy proves to work both ways. Whatever threatens it is perceived to be a danger of unique proportions, both in the eyes of rulers and subjects. Even people who are supposedly critical of democracy see fascism as something infinitely worse, momentarily forgetting that fascism is currently a tool of democracy and even in its heyday, from 1922-1945, fascism was a tool of the same class of people who elsewhere were using democracy to pursue their interests. By portraying fascism as exceptional, the defenders of democracy can obscure the root of the problem" (Long Term Resistance: Fighting Trump & Liberal Co-option).

71 ed. – Reference to the speech by new head of the Soviet Union, as Loren Goldner recounts: "World Stalinism was rocked in 1956 by a series of events: the Hungarian Revolution, in which the working class again established workers' councils before it was crushed by Russian intervention; the Polish "October," in which a worker revolt brought to power a "reformed" Stalinist leadership. These uprisings were preceded by Khrushchev's

undermines that closure that the Stalinists built. So yeah, you see that kind of opening in that period. And then the rejection of Nazism within Europe then empowers anti-colonialism, that's one of the things... There's a definite relationship there.

T.B.: I mean I guess the other part of that relationship, though, that is worth mentioning, is that it became more and more difficult to manage resources from so far away as the world got smaller. And that's actually a thing that I don't think we're talking about much in this conversation, which is the fact that the Western colonial powers that as it so happens are still in charge... **What does the next anti-colonial struggle look like, and to what extent is there a periphery that's no longer being maintained particularly well?** And one place that isn't happening is Africa, as an example. Right now Africa is being pulled in three or four different directions by all the resource extraction happening there, and it sort of seems like that part of this conversation (which is a meta conversation about capitalism) does seem pretty different from what we're talking about in the context of exclusion in the anarchist space. But I'm curious if as a way to close this, you could connect them and do a wrap-up.

Andy: Obviously there is this huge... what I referred to earlier as the surplus population or the excluded is this massive layer (I'm not sure if it's the majority or a large minority, but this is a lot of people)...

T.B.: Oh, I think it's the majority of the planet.

Andy: There's not that many of them in the Global North, and they don't look the way that either the traditional Left or the identity politicians expect them to look. And so there's not actually been that much anarchist work done with them. But we have seen coming from those groups themselves some very anarchistic projects. We might refer to the Zapatistas,⁷² we might refer to El Alto in Bolivia, this city that is basically self-managed by community assemblies.

speech to the twentieth Congress of world Communist Parties, in which he revealed many of Stalin's crimes, including the massacre of between five to ten million peasants during the collectivizations of the early 1930s. There were many crimes he did not mention, since he was too implicated in them, and the purpose of his speech was to salvage the Stalinist bureaucracy while disavowing Stalin himself. This was the beginning of "peaceful co-existence" between the Soviet bloc and the West, but the revelations of Stalin's crimes and the worker revolts in eastern Europe (following the 1953 worker uprising in East Germany) were the beginning of the end of the Stalinist myth. Bitterly disillusioned militants all over the world walked out of Communist Parties, after finding out that they had devoted decades of their lives to a lie."

72 ed. – see "It Was Wartime"

We might refer to the West Papuan struggle,⁷³ service delivery protests in South Africa...⁷⁴ There's so many examples. And a lot of people haven't heard of these things (or they have heard of these things but only marginally), but the significance is not really understood because it gets put in these narratives of either traditional Left or identity politics, which really it isn't.

There is a possibility... I mean, there's a couple of ways the global system could go from here. It's at a downturn of a downturn. I'm not going to try to

73 ed. – see **'Let the Fire Light Up the Liberation of West Papua'**

74 ed. – A series of rebellions touching on access to water, electricity, housing, refuse removal, healthcare, education, etc. denied to residents of the black shantytowns created during the European-inherited apartheid racial segregation system, in what 30 years after the end of apartheid is still one of societies world-wide with that largest gap between the rich and the poor, although some of the rich are now racialised after the State's Black Economic Empowerment if anything increased that gap further while driving down corporation tax. Now, for a whole generation (that has only seen State spending on services decline to appease international capitalist speculators), the hope for a better life post-apartheid lies in shreds, while bordered by unattainable luxury in the suburbs.

However, as Richard Pithouse has noted, it is the model proferred of 'development' itself which is often at stake in these movements: *"The African National Congress (ANC) has responded to the new surge in popular protest with the same patrician incomprehension under Jacob Zuma as it did under Thabo Mbeki. It has not understood that people do not take to the streets against a police force as habitually brutal as ours without good cause. Government statements about the virtues of law and order, empty rhetoric about its willingness to engage, and threats to ensure zero tolerance of "anarchy" only compound the distance between the state and the faction of its people engaged in open rebellion. [...] A key barrier towards elite understanding of the five-year hydra-like urban rebellion is that protests are more or less uniformly labelled as "service delivery protests". This label is well suited to those elites who are attracted to the technocratic fantasy of a smooth and post-political developmental space in which experts engineer rational development solutions from above. Once all protests are automatically understood to be about a demand for "service delivery" they can be safely understood as a demand for more efficiency from the current development model rather than any kind of challenge to that model. Of course, many protests have been organised around demands for services within the current development paradigm and so there certainly are instances in which the term has value. But the reason why the automatic use of the term "service delivery protest" obscures more than it illuminates is that protests are often a direct challenge to the post-apartheid development model.*

"Disputes around housing are the chief cause of popular friction with the state. The state tends to reduce the urban crisis, of which the housing shortage is one symptom, to a simple question of a housing backlog and

explain Kondratiev-wave theory⁷⁵ at the moment, but basically it's in a crisis point where the system is going to have to resource-substitute, find a new organising model and new energy source, and new form of technology that is going to be the boom for the next stage if it's going to survive. And it is that question mark at the moment, we don't know if it will survive or not. If it does, what we're going to have is a shift in hegemon, because that's generally what happens:⁷⁶ it could be China,⁷⁷ in which that whole colonial situation is sort of shaken up.⁷⁸ (China by the

to measure progress via the number [of] "housing opportunities" it "delivers". But one of the most common reasons for protests is outright rejection of forced removals from well-located shacks to peripheral housing developments or "transit camps". [...] It is therefore hardly helpful to assume that protests against forced removals and housing developments that leave people homeless are a demand for more efficient "delivery"."

75 ed. – Named for Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev; posits cycle-like phenomena in the modern world economy, linked with the 'life-cycle' of technologies.

76 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**

77 ed. – "Europe – long a valuable container for cultural and political legitimacy, given the white supremacy at the heart of the world system [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg 89**] – has for the first time in nearly a century had to consider its separate interests, and this is already showing up in a markedly different approach towards China. In the US, the political elite already consider China an adversary worthy of a new Cold War, whereas in Europe, China is considered a partially reliable strategic partner. If something does not change quickly, the US will be relegated to the same status" (Geopolitics for 2024).

78 ed. – "In response to growing economic competition in Africa, long reserved as Europe's "backyard," article after article has appeared bemoaning China's practice of predatory lending, unloading cheap loans for largely unnecessary infrastructure on poor countries in Africa and the rest of the Global South, and then appropriating their entire public sector, their resources, and their future earnings when they can't pay back the debts.

"The New York Times describes Chinese debt bondage in Malaysia and lauds the local government for supposedly standing up to the practice. They go so far as to speak of "a new version of colonialism." There's nothing inaccurate about this: there has only been one century out of the last twenty (1839-1949) when China wasn't an active colonial or imperial power with its own brand of ethnic superiority. Colonialism has taken many forms in addition to the particular race paradigm that evolved in the Triangular Trade of the Atlantic. A truly global anti-colonial practice cannot be limited to a Eurocentric understanding of race or a simplistic opposition that places all whites on one side and all people of color homogeneously on the other.

"What is in fact inaccurate about the hand-wringing of the New York Times is that this "new version of colonialism" was developed by the United States in the decades immediately after World War II. Anyone familiar with the critiques of the anti- and alter-globalization movement knows that it was the Bretton Woods

way: Chinese politics has certain characteristics which are in common with new managerialism, Third Way, and identity politics: that weird combination of a government that can be extremely repressive but generally lets things tick along, this kind of weird mix of managerial control-freakery with performed humility.) But it also might just be a kind of diffuse form of power based on global cities all over the world where you just lose centre: the centres are just the global cities.

But if that doesn't happen, we're going into a Dark Age. And that actually is good news for anarchists. Because what it means is we're going to see decentralisation, we're going to see major structures falling apart or grinding to a halt, localised alternatives reappearing, increase in linguistic diversity. We're going to see ruralisation, people moving out of cities rather than into cities: basically what happened after the end of the Roman Empire,⁷⁹ and it's happened a few times in history in different places.

Now, if that happens, the potential is going to be... it may be that *bolo'bolo*⁸⁰ was just fifty years too early.

institutions created in the US that pioneered the practice of debt bondage and appropriation of public infrastructure. The corporate media is apparently hoping everyone has forgotten about those critiques by now.

"If this too-late, too-hollow concern is the best that the proponents of Western democracy can whip up, the contest is lost already" (Diagnostic of the Future).

79 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg76**

80 ed. – "[An] open utopia is the vision of an alternative society forwarded in the book *bolo'bolo* by the Zurich-based author P.M. This book not only acknowledges but treasures the type of instability and diversity of social relations that can be ushered in by the removal of all external control on the behaviour of individuals and groups. The world anti-system called *bolo'bolo* is a mosaic in which every community (*bolo*) of around five hundred residents is as nutritionally self-sufficient as possible, and has complete autonomy to define its ethos or 'flavour' (*nima*). Stability is afforded by a minimal but universal social contract (*sila*), enforced by reputation and interdependence. This contract guarantees, for example, that every individual (*ibu*) can at any time leave their native *bolo*, and is entitled to one day's rations (*yalu*) and housing (*gano*), as well as to medical treatment (*bete*), at any *bolo*. It even suggests a duel code (*yaka*) to solve disputes. However, "*There are no humanist, liberal or democratic laws or rules about the content of nimas and there is no State to enforce them. Nobody can prevent a bolo from committing mass suicide, dying of drug experiments, driving itself into madness or being unhappy under a violent regime. Bolos with a bandit-nima could terrorize whole regions or continents, as the Huns or Vikings did. Freedom and adventure, generalized terrorism, the law of the club, raids, tribal wars, vendettas, plundering – everything goes.*"

"While not all anarchists would want to go that far, the point here is that any anarchist orientation which

Maybe that will be what happens if we have a collapse like that. That's the optimistic version; the pessimistic version is just that the capitalists will want to hold on or the states will want to hold on and they all end up nuking each other and everyone will die... but let's hope not. Or, we get this Chinese-centred world economy, we get an upturn and then we go through... at which point we're looking at something like the 1960's sometime in the fairly near, probably within our lifetime.

But we will see. I mean, at that point we're then talking: will 3-D printing take off?⁸¹ Will robots take off? But we'll see new forms of protest, new forms of political action emerging based on the new opportunity structure, the new technologies and so on. But I think at the moment one the most powerful things people can do is, I think, looking for ways to relieve anxiety through concrete subsistence strategies: things that actually meet people's needs. **Trying to find ways to build relationships where people can coexist and relate to one another without having to have this set of norms, just as mutual support.** And trying to find ways to relate to



16.04.24, Saix, France: blurring the line between self-sufficiency & sabotage (see Return Fire vol.3 pg65) - the ZAD experience (see "What Happens After the Cancellation of the Project?") in French-speaking Europe continues, here in opposition to the A69 motorway project as site security is surrounded before a hooded group of around 40 once again burn heavy equipment; in the Cal'Arbre occupied woods nearby, a year & a half of collective life is experienced in the margins such militancy wins, while mob actions continue (such as arson of a vital frame for constructing the road bridge) & a comrade is in men's prison over her alleged bombing of an excavator

looks to the absence of law and authority must also anticipate a great deal of diversity in the way in which communities choose to self-organize socially and economically. Furthermore, the commitment to unfettered diversity must lead anarchists to respond to the possibility of a re-emergence of patterns of domination within and/or among communities, even if at a certain point in time they have been consciously overcome" (Anarchism Reloaded).

81 ed. – Although three-dimensional printers (that use a variety of techniques to melt, assemble and harden materials such as plastic into desired shapes) have been used in some industrial processes for decades, the late '00s have seen their enthusiasts really start fantasising about their potential applications to once again revolutionise and decentralise production. A perhaps unforeseen one is the FGC-9 carbines 3-D printed and widely used by the guerrilla insurgents in Myanmar/Burma, in a broader anti-military regime struggle with some anarchist participation.

the global excluded, who we're really not talking to at the moment; and I think that doesn't mean what the identity politics people are doing (that really is this top 1% or 10% of marginalised groups who are making a bid to get into the global elite). We need to be actually finding out what the people are thinking actually in the ghettos themselves or in the shanty towns or in the peasant communities. And I think that may actually be quite different.

It may be worth thinking about things like something like a Freirean⁸² or a Maoist⁸³ approach: could we

82 ed. – Paulo Freire, Brazilian radical educator; innovated a method of literacy learning via “speaking your own word.”

83 ed. – This needs some more explaining. Mao Zedong came to the head of the Chinese Communist Party, conquering the country at the head of a peasant army in 1949, and subsequently implemented a dispersed form of industrial development in the countryside termed 'The Great Leap Forward' which resulted in tens of millions starving; one of the prime examples of democide. He made no secret that his was one of what Loren Goldner terms “*bourgeois revolutions with red flags*,” as in nearby Vietnam and North Korea, following the defeat of more deeply revolutionary movements on the world stage after World War I: drowned in blood whether revolutions failed (as in Germany, 1918-21) or created new totalitarianisms, such as Stalinism. Once in power, with the landed gentry expropriated and the State strengthened, Mao's regime attacked Vietnam (hosting the US President in Beijing in 1972 during that nation's bombing of North Vietnam), applauded Pinochet's coup in Chile, backed apartheid South Africa's invasion of Angola, courted the far-right in Portugal during the street movement around the fall of the dictatorship there, and even supported the Philippine dictator's bloody war against Maoist insurgents! It is none of these legacies of Maoism to which Andy here gestures, nor to the way modern Maoists operate in social struggles (see **Indigenous Anarchist Convergence – Report Back**) but rather the methodological origins of Maoism among the peasants. In correspondence, Andy clarified that “*in this context what I was thinking was that they often started out as urban intellectuals who went out to the peasants and used a participatory back-and-forth approach (known as “mass line”) to generate a politics which was half theirs and half the peasants’ – it took in elements of the peasants’ worldview in a back-and-forth dialogue, it didn’t just turn up with all the answers like Leninists usually do. So the Zapatistas, in this sense, are still really using a Maoist model in some ways. Maoism also interests me in terms of the subsistence economics aspect, the creation of autonomous base communities which are protected from power both militarily, and through local support for the movement, and because they’re remote and difficult to operate in; and in terms of the affective empowerment of the poor which comes with “standing-up”, with breaking cultures of dependence and finding a kind of autonomous power. It’s also quite interesting how Marxism started in the North, was learnt by a bunch of Southern elite people who then took it back to their countries and made local versions, and that’s how Marxism became a global ideology, whereas African peasants haven’t heard of Stirner or post-left anarchy. Of*

kind of reconfigure that in an anarchist direction? It may be worth thinking about things like how do we reach (informationally) people who are maybe illiterate and not connected to the internet and don't speak English or French or Italian. It may be worth thinking about those kind of things. There are organisations that have done that; there are churches that have proselytised all over the world, there are nasty right-wing networks like the Islamist movements who have managed to grow in these kind of marginal communities: is there a way for anarchism to do that? And if so, what would it look like? Because I don't think it's going to be that kind of “oh, we go there and take leadership from the community and check your privilege etc. etc.”: it's going to be about actually introducing them to anarchism, and “how do you actually solve some of these problems in an anarchist way?”

T.B: Andy, thank you very much for your time. It is clear that we need to have some more conversations because I think that your voice is **desperately needed**.

'THROWN OUT OF THE TROIKA OF HISTORY TO THE WOLVES OF MEMORY'

Capital will disintegrate or deliquesce, rather than undergo sudden implosion. The signs of disintegration will become more and more obvious to experience and theory, but will not erase the simulacrum of the totality with any “revolutionary” collapse. The murky clouds in the crystal are starting to drift and clear. Suddenly, a concept: social triage. And immediately a corollary: the no-go zone.

The state, as the last spectacular locus of the world of simulation, will be forced to practise social triage, letting go of real control over zones which fall beneath the level of adequate involvement in the

course there's a lot of other stuff I find repulsive in Maoism... much of which also finds its way into identity politics, and/or which is now creeping out through imitation of Chinese cybernetic capitalism. (& the question I was thinking about at the time was – well, we have relatively quite a few anarchists in Northern countries and few in the South, and the ones in the South are usually in the small urban middle-class or organised working-class sectors – why don't we have anarchist movements among the real precarised sectors in Southern countries, or among subsistence peasants who are living anarchistically already – instead we either get Maoists, ethnonationalists, Islamists, etc... and I wonder if it's because we haven't learned how to do this Freirean thing yet).”

empty discourse. Zones: classes, races, marginalized groups, and to some extent actual geographic areas. Triage: gradual and imperceptible letting-go of “services”, leading to the emergence of no-go zones where “control” is reduced to purely simulated means (e.g. TV as social glue). Zones which have been economically abandoned (the homeless, small farmers, migrant workers, “welfare classes”) will gradually be eliminated from all other networks controlled by the spectacle of the state, including the final interface, the Police. Officially of course this policy will not exist and the specto-state will continue to claim jurisdiction and proprietorship of these zones – no political autonomy will be permitted, and occasional terror acts will be broadcast in the spectacle to provide a veneer of control-simulation. **But in stark economic reality these zones will have been sacrificed, like passengers thrown out of the troika of History to the wolves of Memory.**

[...] Having been seduced by the commodity, we will be abandoned by it – or rather, “they” will be abandoned, the alien others who were never really part of it in the first place. Interestingly, however, this “them” will gradually come to include more and more individuals and groups who now think of themselves as “us” – the heirs of that great Bourgeois Rational sun-lit world which the spectacle still simulates and preserves – the ones with “rights”, the ones who are “safe” and destined to “survive”. Triage will be practised in these zones as well. The cracks in the monolith will widen, and a lot of “us” will miss that last helicopter out of town.

[...] Inasmuch as this process is already under way, the study of demographics provides a clue to the future: where are the classes leaving, where are they going? **Mike Davis has analyzed this movement in the microcosm of Los Angeles, where a complex**



January 2025, Los Angeles, USA: multiple wildfires sweep into the nation's second-largest city, with mass evacuations & freeways choked up for miles with cars abandoned while fleeing; mutual aid efforts began immediately (see 'Mobilising Disaster Relief') sometimes in defiance of curfew & deployed National Guard (months before the mayor had slashed the fire budget by \$17.5 million while giving \$126 million extra to the police, who continued sweeps of homeless encampments & migrant raids during the fires)

pattern of triage and terror has already emerged to prove him a prescient prophet, whose brand of geomancy reads the bones of buildings and entrails of urban space rather than “natural” features of animals or landscape. (Inasmuch as “culture” has an unconscious it disgorges magic signs and symbols – not the smoke of burnt offerings but of burning cop cars.)

[...] As for specto-simulo-capital itself, its next (and perhaps final?) stage will consist of the Empire of pure Speed – the instantaneity of communications technology, elevated to the status of transcendent being – (omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence): – a kind of TechGnosis¹ in which the body (earth, production) will be “transcended” under the sign of pure spirit (“information”). This will unveil the terminal false transcendence or totality of the commodity: the final disembodiment of desire, the absolute flotation of the signifier – language as gnostic prison, and death the last bargain holiday special. The “lines” of this structure are already being laid, and a map of these lines transforms itself into a map of the future, or at least of future “History”. If we study this embryonic or ontogenic map we can see clearly that the “South” has already been cut out of the pattern, by an act of cartomantic imperialism that denies meaning to the same areas which have been denied “access” to the Commlinks.² The South will

1 ed. – see **For the Love of God**

2 ed. – In actual fact, the years since the above was written have led us to a rather different possibility: though still not triumphant over the European-authored colonial system described, the world-system fault-lines complicate the usual North/South dichotomy significantly; without promising any threat to the colonial model per se, just with shuffled actors ascendant. To return to the discussion in 'Geopolitics for 2024'; “We can see this more clearly when we look at BRICS, which is the most likely vehicle currently prefiguring a new world system. BRICS, together with the New Development Bank and other linked institutions, provide a counterweight to the G7 and the IMF. They are organized by the powerhouses of the so-called developing world: Brazil, Russia, India, and China starting in 2009, with South Africa added a year later. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates joined at the beginning of [2024].

“Clearly, BRICS is achieving important growth, with the original five constituting 45% of the world's population and 33% of the world's GDP (or 27% if not adjusted for purchasing power parity). Compare that to NATO (which is a military alliance and not an economic alliance like BRICS), with 31 members who account for 55% of global military spending, 12% of the world population, and over a third of the world's GDP.

[T]he US system purported to be universal, just in ways that subtly benefited the US and its allies.

“BRICS, on the other hand, is pursuing a different strategy. The alliance gives itself the possibility of being counterhegemonic by not pretending to be

not enter the paradise of information – for information is glacial crystalline ice, while the South is the realm of fire and noise.

And indeed the “South” is (or will become) the body, the realm of everything which is not pure spirit and information, everything heavy and mortal – the realm of agriculture and industry – the dark last vestiges of the neolithic – of production (that crude demiurgic barrier to the free mutagenesis of significance and the free exchange of emblems and images – of pure information). The South will supply “us” with microchips³ and soylent green,⁴ so we can all jack into virtual reality and download our consciousness (what a relief!) into the software. The information economy may have already begun to cut its ties with the material economy – it’s not at all clear that certain kinds of “money” retain any link – even a symbolic link – with actual social wealth. This is “virtual” money. In the context of specto-simulo-capital this

universal. It is very explicitly a counterweight to the dominant economic institutions and alliances (the G7 and IMF). And yet, it offers more meaningful collaboration. Especially at its founding in 2009, China was the economic powerhouse of the alliance. China has ongoing political and economic rivalries, as well as border disputes, with both Russia and India. Yet both of those countries were invited to form the ground floor, and the founding summit was held not in China but in Russia (though, not without significance, in Yekaterinburg, which is in Asia).

[...] Israel was once an important military laboratory for the US and a nuclear option in the world’s key oil producing hub, at a time when a pan-Arab alliance posed the threat of controlling both the oil and the Suez canal. Now, Israel is largely a liability; Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran are all aggressively trying to redraw power lines in West Asia and none of them rely exclusively on the US as a patron; Yemen is effectively threatening shipping through the Suez canal; and most West Asian oil is exported to India and East Asian economies[...]

“BRICS wouldn’t necessarily be the vehicle for the new world system, especially since it was designed as an economic and political counterweight within the current world system. But similar to the relation between the League of Nations and the United Nations, it gives a good indication of what the new system would look like. [...] Original signatories to this alliance would probably have to include China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, Egypt, maybe Argentina and Saudi Arabia, and – critically – the European Union, or at least Germany and France. As noted, the EU has already begun distancing itself from the US and keeping the doors open for good relations with China.”

3 ed. – see **The Kanak Insurrection & the Nickel Industry**

4 ed. – In the 1973 dystopian film by the same name, this refers to highly-processed food wafers, allegedly derived from plankton, made by the Soylent Corporation for consumption by the impoverished masses in a polluted, 'over-populated' and globally-heated future: the infamous plot twist is that as the oceans are dying and with them the plankton, they are actually made from human flesh.

money is hyperreal, and thus seems more powerful than money which is merely real and still tied to the “material bodily principle.” In this scenario we can finally “let our servants live for us” (Maldoror)⁵ while we go on and rise up to something better. The machine is not our servant (as some old sci-fi authors believed) but rather our symbiont. Our servant is the South.

So part of the North disappears into Cyberspace, leaving the other part deserted and bereft, no-go zones, cracks in the monolith. What could be more natural than this: – that the South will interpenetrate the North like mycelia in a loaf of bread? The holes and cracks in the North will become more Southern, more African, more Latino, more Asiatic, more Islamic. (P.K. Dick, a true Gnostic visionary, seems particularly prophetic on this point.)

Now the crucial question: is it possible to imagine the no-go-zone fulfilling a liberatory function? (in any way other than as a reversion to primitive warfare interesting perhaps to a few Nietzschean Vikings?) – that is, do the NGZ's play any necessary role in the emergence of the Temporary Autonomous Zone or even the Permanent Autonomous Zone? Does the NGZ represent – in some weird paradoxical way – the rebirth of the possibility of the social?

[...] To speak of such models however brings up the question of the idea of the social, which is (according to a very loose categorization) either political or “religious”.⁶ We've assumed that the NGZ has

5 ed. – In *Les Chants de Maldoror*, book by Isidore Lucien Ducasse (aka Comte de Lautréamont) who was influential on Situationism and Surrealism (see **Memory as a Weapon; Waging the War on Christmas**), dead at 24.

6 ed. – “Every society has a spirituality. Ways of framing knowledge, explaining one’s relationship with the world, and telling origin stories always surpass empirical fact and rely on culturally subjective constructions. From an anarchist standpoint, the most dangerous spirituality is the one that is reproduced by a professional institution, without popular participation. Perhaps the most dangerous subset of this type is the spirituality that claims to be unquestionable, such as monotheism [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg40**], or even worse, that claims not even to be a spirituality, such as scientific rationalism [ed. – see **'The Principle of Reciprocity'**].

“Therefore, the kinds of spirituality with the most anarchistic possibility are consciously metaphoric, flexible, and reliant on non-professional, diffuse participation in their creation and regeneration. Beyond the mode, the content should probably include an emphasis on cycles of renewal, revolt, ecocentrism, freedom, community, and reciprocity [ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**]. Because spirituality is ultimately storytelling, it also gives us a unique opportunity for remembering our history of struggle, free from the stultifying effects of institutional history-keepers. The folks at *Otherworlds*

abandoned – or been abandoned by – the political. Can it be that the idea of the social appropriate to the NGZ is “religious” in nature?⁷

[...] I'm thinking of certain old European genre paintings which always fascinated me as a child, depicting peasants or gypsies living in the ruins of some vanished empire – usually Roman. The images appealed to a Bachelardian⁸ sense of reverie and magic about certain kinds of “home”, certain kinds of “space”. I like the sense of abandonment implied in the paradox of abandoned ruins brought to life by

Review clearly have this in mind [ed. – see *Ghosts*].

“The spirituality, as well as the ways of sharing reproductive tasks and the kinship patterns, should be non-patriarchal. This is vital. Patriarchy seems to be the most resilient form of hierarchy in human history [ed. – see *The Scarcity Dynamo*], as well as a necessary precondition for state formation. Many cultures surviving colonization have traditional, non-patriarchal forms of gender organization, and as part of a revolutionary process we can develop (and are developing) social forms with no gender categories whatsoever” (Defying Power: An Anarchist Vision of Active Statelessness).

- 7 I mention this for two reasons: (1) religion has not gone away, as predicted by Rationalism [ed. – see *For the Love of God*], and (2) religion has proven to be a powerful source for social cohesion, for example, in the history of intentional communities – more powerful than political ideology or utopian planning. I hypothesize the possibility and reality of non-authoritarian, autonomous, self-organized, non-hierarchic aspects of the huge complex subsumed in the word “religion” – shamanism, for example, or the multivalent and infinitely expandable pattern of “paganism”, in which no culture can gain a monopoly of interpretation, or even a hegemony [ed. – see *The Darkness Criticizes the Wolf for Howling at the Moon*]. I'm not saying the NGZ should be “religious”, I'm saying it will be “religious”, and is “religious” – and that if we believe in the desire for some liberatory potential in the NGZ, we should begin now to find a “religious” language that will reflect and help to shape and realize that potential – or else we will face a “religion of fascism” (Christian right-wingers attempting to dominate the NGZ's) or a spirituality of entropy. One good reason, for instance, to ransack the history of Protestantism for radical models (Ranters, Diggers, Antinomians, etc. [ed. – see *The Principle of Reciprocity*']) would be to resurrect them – and not merely to serve as camouflage. Earth and body forms of spirituality (shamanic, neo-pagan, Afro-American, etc) – immanentist rather than transcendentalist – emphasizing an existentialism of works not faith, hence ethicalism not moralism – radical tolerance for all cults (on the “pagan” model) – distrust of dualist models but also of totalitarian-monist models - mystical but not ascetic – festal but not sacrificial. These would be some of the models proposed by our form of spirituality. None of the established means of propagating a religion would be appropriate here, however. Just as we need now to re-imagine the “Economy of the Gift” [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg53*], so also we need to re-invent (or even to fabricate) a “spirituality of freedom” relevant to our future as inhabitants of the NGZs – a spirituality of “everyday

“abandoned” bohemians, low-lifes, Brueghelian⁹ fiddlers and dancers – the contrast of the heavy remains of vanished triumphalism with the lightness and brightness of nomads. I may very well be romanticizing the NGZ as a possible utopian *topos* or site – but then again, I might be inclined to defend the occasional usefulness of romanticism: – it beats



Blockades in Val di Susa, Italy; see An Update from the No TAV Campaign & Thoughts on its Relevance for Stop HS2

despair. The NGZ is on the way, whether we dread it or romanticize it.

“The difficulty is that while stateless spaces proliferate, they tend to be inserted in other kinds of hierarchies – patron-client systems, gangs, ethnoreligious movements, local militias and so on. Also, the aspiration to be an included consumerist citizen is very widespread (because of global media flows and unequal resource distributions), so many people who live in mainly stateless ways, would like to be *more* integrated into states. One might take Chiapas or Bougainville as an example of what is possible in a lot of these sites, if a more anarchic set of aspirations emerged. On the other hand, states are grabbing for more power, but not because they're more powerful, rather because they're afraid[...] I think we will almost certainly see large regions of the globe slip out of de facto state control in our lifetime, though whether these regions recompose as anarchist is a different question entirely. Think Somalia + Chiapas + Haiti, spread through most of the global South, parts of the North and in certain suburbs of the major cities. Another way to think about this is the relative proportion of state and societal practices in everyday life – in fact a lot of our life even in highly “statified” societies is basically anarchic, it is lived through horizontal networks. We need to recover more networked practices to survive current problems (e.g. we will likely need to rely on local sources of food and energy within our lifetimes), and we'll have to rely less on hierarchies to make this work effectively, though states and corporations will try their hardest not to lose power. So there is a chance of social rebalancing towards anarchy (even if not all the way there). On the other hand, there is also a chance of a kind of global dystopian regime where states hold onto power by repressing any recomposition before it emerges. And a good chance of a prolonged muddling-along before the issue really comes to a head.”

– comments on Anarchism, War & the State

life” in the situ [situationist] sense of the word.

8 ed. – Gaston Bachelard, philosopher of science and poetics

9 ed. – Pieter Breughel, Dutch/Flemish Renaissance painter and printmaker known for landscapes and peasant scenes

THE KANAK INSURRECTION & THE NICKEL INDUSTRY

*[ed. – Report on last year's rebellion on the Pacific archipelago known to some indigenous independence fighters as Kanaky, and to the French colonial regime ruling it for 172 years as 'New Caledonia'. Triggers – as well as the extractivist ones detailed below, including French hopes to install nuclear plants locally – include a (suspended) bill by France to adjust the electoral system so that 10-year residents could vote; broadly seen as an attempt to weaken the position of the Kanak relative to the settler population, to thwart independence moves given French interests to be defended in a region China and the US vie to dominate. A state of emergency was declared for a prolonged period, with French troops and cops deployed to beat, shoot and rape. Factories, 300 vehicles at a dealership, a great many schools (closed during the uprising) and a data centre were razed by the flames, and 35 settlers (mainly mainland French) in Kaméré were evacuated by sea after their residences were looted then torched. Around 90 cells were ransacked and burned during a failed prison-break with guards taken hostage, on top of a large proportion of the transnational supermarkets (whose Kanaky franchises are held by a handful of elite families) and banks looted and sent up in flames. Settler militias roamed and killed, and the president of the South Province (leader of the Loyalists, an anti-independence group) openly called for formal apartheid between Kanaks and Europeans, shut down medical aid and subjected the famously-rebellious Saint-Louis tribal area to a months-long police blockade reminiscent of the 1887 Indigenous Code confining the Kanak to infertile reserves. In an inversion of Kanaky's 19th Century role as a prison colony (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg49**), detainees were sent to other French Pacific colonies or even to France to isolate them from kinfolk.]*

Despite ongoing repression and the French colonial authorities' announcements of a return to normal, the situation in New Caledonia is far from being resolved. Four weeks after the outbreak of the insurrection on part of Kanak youth [in early May], La Tontouta international airport remains closed "until further notice" *[ed. – in order to give priority to the military, cops and administration]*. Only the Magenta aerodrome has been open again since June 5th for



internal flights within New towards Lifou, Ouvéa and Maré, and nearly 500 French tourists have been stranded for three weeks on the archipelago of 270,000 inhabitants. The curfew (18h-6h) will continue at least until June 17th *[ed. – riots continued past this date]*, and the requisition of petrol stations for the exclusive use of cops and military has just been lifted on June 8th. As for the north of New Caledonia, it is the army which is directly responsible for supplying (and therefore rationing) the stores, by managing the containers which arrive by barge to Koné.

Despite the pressure of 3,500 cops and soldiers sent to the islands, some of the roadblocks are still put back in place by Kanak insurgents after being dismantled, in the districts of Nouméa or along the 50 kilometer road which leads to the airport, without sometimes forgetting to trap them with gas canisters or even prepare some homemade surprises for the blues: **on June 4th in Dumbéa, for example, a gendarme [ed. – militarised police] fell to the bottom of a manhole by walking on branches placed above in order to hide the opening.** "With a depth of 1.20m, concrete re-inforced irons 2mm in diameter had been positioned vertically at the bottom to create piles. The gendarme was impaled by one leg and a metal stake that had got in between his bullet-proof vest and body vest, which had pierced but without penetration thanks to the Kevlar plate."

In total, 212 police officers and gendarmes have been injured since May 13th, but also a significant number of Kanaks whom the authorities *[ed. – or settlers, as of 2011 armed more easily]* officially refuse to count. Several insurgents have lost an eye or had facial bones shattered following police flash ball shooting, others have bullet wounds and are in a coma.

Two recent examples: on May 29th in Dumbéa around 8pm, during the attack on a roadblock by the cops, the latter were subject to numerous pelted stones but also a rifle shot. The GIGN *[ed. – French elite unit of the Gendarmerie, infamous in Kanaky]* responded and fired six times "towards" the shooter. An insurgent is seriously injured: "Despite surgical intervention, his vital prognosis is still in jeopardy, the medico-legal findings showing the presence of two projectiles, one in the thorax and the other in the shoulder".

Then on June 3rd around 4pm at the Col de la Pirogue, at the Saint-Laurent tribe dam, on the strategic road leading to the international airport, the gendarmes opened fire on Kanak insurgents (who according to the cops had shot first at their vehicle): one was shot in the shoulder, and another in the head. We learned on Saturday June 8th that the latter, Lionel Païta, had died in hospital, bringing the number of deaths in the territory to eight (five Kanaks

[ed. – including teenagers, shot in the back by loyalist settlers, or by a business manager whose warehouse was being looted of a vehicle, or by an off-duty cop attempting to breach a Kanak roadblock], including two from Canala, one from Maré, one from Poindimié, one from Païta, a *caldoche* [French settler] in Kaala-Gomen who had fired against a [Kanak] roadblock, and two gendarmes; one of whom was killed by a colleague [ed. – while preparing a machine-gun on an armoured vehicle for a mission]).

Needless to say, in such a situation, wild rumours are swirling about the number of “disappeared” well beyond the 8 official deaths, while the prisons of Nouméa and Koné are filled to the brim [ed. – server tracing 200 out on tag burned...] and Kanak prisoners are deported to Polynesia and Fresnes, the official report announces 726 police custody, 115 referrals to court and 60 committal warrants since May 13th.

At the bottom of this insurrection of Kanak youth, in addition to colonization, racism, humiliation and hardship, is also the issue of nickel. **To put it briefly, New Caledonia has a quarter of the world’s nickel reserves, exploited in open-cast mines, to supply three pyro-metallurgical processing plants.** The first two produce ferronickel, a lower-quality blend that is used for stainless steel, and the third is battery-grade nickel (primarily intended for Tesla¹ since 2021). While currently providing only 5% of world production, the pyrometallurgical factories which provide all the artificial wealth of the islands (90% of the archipelago’s exports and 25% of jobs). These were already almost bankrupt or on standby before the uprising. Each of the three main factions – separatists, loyalists and the State – have possessed one of the major factories.

The first factory (Koniambo Nickel, KNS), the one in the hands of Kanak separatists in the north, has been shut down since the February 2024 withdrawal of its key shareholder, the Swiss raw materials trading giant Glencore [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg69*]. The activity has since been solely focused on maintaining the integrity of the furnaces (if the furnace of a metallurgical factory stops and is no longer supplied with ore or electricity, not only can it be permanently damaged if the shutdown is abrupt, but it also takes months to restart it).

The second, historic factory founded in 1880 belongs to SLN (Société Le Nickel), 56% owned by the French group Eramet, itself 27% owned by the French State. It is located in Doniambo, and was already in cessation of payments before the insurrection, kept artificially alive thanks to a state loan of 60 million Euros last February. Eramet wants to get rid of its metallurgical activities in New

Caledonia, particularly since it operates the largest nickel mine in the world at Weda Bay, on the island of Halmahera (Indonesia), right in the middle of primal forests (Indonesia has in fact gone up from 0% to 55% of world nickel production) with Chinese capital, which has caused prices to collapse by almost 43% in 2023 alone, thanks to unbeatable labour and electricity prices.

In addition, it has just obtained gigantic lithium extraction concessions in Chile and Argentina. **In Kanaky, this factory has been the object of several counter-insurgency operations by the French state – with all five mining sites that supplied it blocked for four weeks, while its stock of ore ended up running out, not to mention the riots taking place a few hundred meters from its factory.**

As for the third factory, called the Southern one and located in Goro, it is owned by the Prony Resources consortium and is also in cessation of payments, only surviving thanks to a loan from the French State of 140 million Euros in March. Its key shareholder, the Swiss trader Trafigura, has wanted to resell its shares for months, and the famous “contract of the century” signed in 2021 with Tesla already far away. As with SLN, Prony Resources’ activities at the mine and at the factory have been stopped since the start of the insurrection [ed. – *electrical transformer shot up*], even if its hydro-metallurgical process is different from that of the two other factories in the archipelago.

Faced with this, the State has been trying for months to straighten out a colony that it does not want to let go of at any cost, by trying to negotiate with the Caledonian government (made up of both loyalist and separatist parties, and led by the latter) a “Nickel Pact” to the tune of 200 million Euro in energy subsidies, with several strings attached: that the factories would commit to supplying the European market with batteries for electric vehicles as a priority; that this local government sharply increases taxes; that it authorizes the export of much more raw ore; and that it temporarily restores jurisdiction over the mining code to the [French] State.

In short, this “Nickel Pact,” which has undergone eight versions since November 2023 and has still not been signed, is a project aimed at intensifying the extraction of nickel for the metropolis, which would transform Kanaky into a purely mining territory, definitively embedded in a neo-colonial framework.

1 ed. – see 'Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!'

This is unlike the famous Nouméa agreements of 1998, supposed to buy social peace, and which planned to use mining revenue to promote the development of New Caledonia until its possible independence (hence the three referendums on the latter from 2019 to 2021, the transfer of mines and a bourgeoisie, and the creation of a local government).



19.06.24: blockade of Enercal hydro-electric plant, demanding prisoner release

The “Nickel Pact” therefore offends both the Kanak politicians who were banking on this resource to found their economic independence (as in “the State wants to steal our nickel”), and the urbanized Kanak youth who were already denouncing the corrupt politicians who never see the colour of all the money dumped on the archipelago. It also offends the collectives of Kanak tribes, who increasingly see the devastation caused by the intensification of extractivism (pollution of rivers, health, landslides), and began to advocate an independence which would drive out not only the French state but also the mines [*ed. – June saw polling station arson/roadblock*].

We therefore understand why the vote in the Senate on April 2nd and then in the Assembly on May 15th to thaw the New Caledonian electorate (blocked since 1998), having the consequence of numerically perpetuating the colonization of the archipelago, could have been the spark of an insurrection which methodically devastated the businesses and industries of the island’s capital. According to the latest report from High Commissioner (Prefect) Louis Le Franc, made public on June 7th, 570 businesses were destroyed and more than 1.5 billion Euro in direct damage were caused.

When the situation exploded on Monday 13th of May on the occasion of the blockade of the greater Nouméa, after six months of mobilizations against the thaw of the electoral body (including demonstrations of 3,000 people in late November, 5,000 on 25th February, 15,000 on 28th March and 60,000 people on 13th April), the Kanak politicians quickly lost control, and not only called for calm, but also condemned the actions of the insurgents.

In the face of groups of mobile, autonomous, Kanak youth, looters and destroyers, it was on behalf of the CCAT (Field Action Coordination Cell) that Christian Tein launched a call for calm on 14th May on the independentist radio, Radio Djido: “I call on all of our young people to step back. To stay where they are, on the side of the road, organized, structured. The CCAT never called for looting stores,” while also soliciting parents to “not let [the youth] run wild.” A line that will not vary, so that on May 15th in a

statement, this cell will specify “our fight for free Kanaky will be long and fraught with obstacles, so the CCAT calls on all citizens mobilized on the ground for appeasement and respect for the instructions”, and again on May 31st, adding that “the CCAT has never called for violence, looting or harming people... [It] does not condone acts of vandalism.

These acts must not tarnish our struggle for the good of all the citizens of Kanaky.”

But getting back to May 14th, since that same day Daniel Goa, president of the main independence party of the FLNKS, the Caledonian Union (UC, besides at the origin of the creation of the CCAT in November 2023), also published his statement, in which he called “our youth to remain calm, to show patience and to stop all abuses, all looting that does not honour us. That’s not dignity and freedom... The looting orchestrated this night is our dishonour and in no way serves our cause and our struggle, at worst they delay it... That is not the face of a Kanak. We do not rob our homes, we are worthy. To all the business leaders touched bodily, in their property, in their plans to make the country live, I bring them our full support, all our compassion and our great disapproval [for the revolt]. Work tools must be made safe.”

Also on May 14th, Louis Mapou, a member of the second main independence party of the FLNKS, the Palika (Kanak Liberation Party), and president of the local government of New Caledonia since 2021, also called in a statement for “calm and reason” adding that “all the reasons for discontent, frustration and anger cannot justify hurting or destroying what the country has been able to build over decades and mortgaging the future.”

Finally, let us add that even the traditional Kanak authorities then got involved, in vain, as the customary Senate chaired by Victor Gogny, which issued its solemn statement, in which he enjoined that “it is imperative that the youth show restraint and citizenship, and promote dialogue and cooperation to express their legitimate demands and aspirations.” Quickly joined by the National Council of chiefs (Inaat ne Kanaky, created in 2022), again on May 14th after the first night of insurrection, which came in turn to “call the youth to calm, wisdom and respect for the instructions given by the officials”.

And to conclude, it is directly the FLNKS (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) which released on May 15th its own position on the ongoing insurrection, which is at least explicit about its role as co-manager of the colony since the Maignon agreements (1988) then of Nouméa (1998): “The FLNKS, committed to the economic and social development of the country,

deplores the actions perpetrated against companies and provides support to the business leaders and employees impacted... It calls for the lifting of barricades to allow free access of the population to products, services and basic needs. This appeal is also addressed to all the political authorities, customary of this country so that each one where he is, contributes to bring back serenity and calm to our populations."

A request heard by members of the CCAT who due to lack of a plane to be able to return to the country, held a meeting at the CICP of Paris this same May 15th, during which Romuald Pidjot, deputy secretary of the Caledonian Union, specified that "the role of the CCAT will be to try to calm these young people down, but we will need the help of the State," while Rock Haocas (head of the USTKE union and general coordinator of the Labour Party, the other major component of the CCAT) could only deplore: "Urban warfare is not what we wanted, but young people have reached a stage that we can no longer control. We are in a phase of rupture, and it's not due to not having warned" [ed. – in June Nouméa council didn't erect EU voting billboards, fearing use as barricades].

Since the start of the insurrection, we could legitimately wonder what the situation was with nickel mines and factories in terms of sabotage (or not).

Outside of the capital Nouméa, dotted with looting and fires caused by young Kanak insurgents, what was it like "in the bush" and "in the tribe", where half of the Kanak population live? Even if we suspect that information has difficulty filtering through, it seems that it while it was the SLN (held by the State) which was mainly attacked, so was the Prony Resources factory (held by Loyalists).

In Thio, on the east coast, damage was caused to the conveyor belt which allows ore carriers to be loaded at the seaside. The Plateau and Camp des Sapins mines were also attacked, with looting and destruction.

In Kouaoua, still on the east coast, the 11-kilometre long ore conveyor to the bay loading dock, called "the serpent" [ed. – subject for years to blockades, 1.5km arson of the belt and burning/stealing vehicles there], suffered its twelfth fire in ten days, on June 1st.

In Népoui, a village located in the centre of the west coast, an ore carrier arrived on June 2nd urgently, to load 19,000 tonnes of nickel to be brought back immediately to Nouméa, in order to supply the SLN factory in Doniambo which had finished its three weeks of stocks, and risked its ovens being "irreparably damaged". Except that *boom*, in the middle of the night, part of the conveyor was set on fire, affecting around a hundred meters of the

conveyor belt. As a result, the loaded ore carrier arrived safely one day late (June 4th), knowing that the Doniambo factory now needs to receive such a boat every three to four days to operate. Since then, the SLN has sent a second ore carrier, but this time much further north (towards the Tiébaghi mine, in Koumac), hoping that the young Kanaks would be less hostile to it.

In Houaïlou, a village on the east coast, the Mining and Quarrying Techniques Training Centre (CFTMC), located on the Poro mine, has been reduced to nothing: "All the training tools, mining machines, training rooms courses, driving simulators were ransacked, vandalized and burned." It trained young people wishing to work in the mining sector.

In Nouméa, on May 9th around 4am, the security guard positioned on the quay had been subdued by unknown persons, before the moorings of the Prony Express ferry dedicated to transporting employees of the Prony Resources factory were cut. The maritime launch then went adrift. Then in Goro, located in the south of the island an hour and a half by car from the capital, on May 23rd, the Prony Resources factory was directly attacked, and two vehicles were lost. Since then, it has been guarded day and night by 35 guards from the private security group Erys, but the industrial and mining complex is still far from being able to restart, and even triggered its "Special Intervention Plan" (PPI) on June 7th, a program to enhance its security against external threats. As it happens, "The current disruptions have forced us to stop our operations. We are facing an interruption in the supply of raw water from Lake Yaté but also, since June 4, we have no longer been supplied with electricity," said the industrial giant a few days ago, without daring to speak of sabotage...

For an insurrection not to die it needs to deepen and overcome its internal contradictions, but also oxygen, a lot of oxygen. It is up to everyone, here, within the French colonial metropolis which is in the process of crushing the Kanak insurgents who have not yet lowered their hands (nor their weapons), to give it as much as possible. Out of solidarity, or quite simply out of hatred of one's own State.



Noyarey, France, 26.06.24: another in string of sabotages in the Grenoble region (see The "Green" Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else) burns electrical cables crossing a stream; the business park hosts military tech firm Lynred & a tag for a free Kanaky & a free Palestine is left nearby

THE PRICE OF GREEN CAPITALISM

In Sardinia, as in many other parts of Europe [ed. – see *'Gállok is the Name of a Place'*], energy projects to feed green capitalism have been proliferating for several years. In these sunny and seaside regions, already infested by mass tourism, these are mainly solar and wind farms.

On this Mediterranean island off the coast of Corsica, monsters of steel and cement must be built at all costs, even if it means uprooting olive, apricot and almond trees by force, to be replaced by huge industrial wind turbines with masts up to 200 meters high. Nearly 800 new “renewable energy production” projects are officially being studied, some of which are symbolic of all the others, such as that of the Chinese multinational Chint, which in April 2024 purchased over a thousand hectares in the north of the island (at Nurra), in order to build the largest solar farm ever conceived in Europe. **Faced with growing citizen protests, ranging from local committee demonstrations to picketing the port of Oristano in an attempt to block the arrival of a shipment of wind masts, and arguing in particular for the landscape and the fact that Sardinia cannot continue to be ravaged in this way just to export so-called “green” energy to the mainland, the region’s president soon found herself faced with a dilemma.**

On the one hand, there’s the internal mess of these heterogeneous mobilizations, where some say “no” to wind turbines but “yes” to LNG terminal infrastructures, while others, like the institutional environmental associations (Legambiente, Greenpeace, WWF [ed. – see *Green Capital & Environmental “Leaders” Won’t Save Us*]), ended up noisily withdrawing from the protests, explaining that wind turbines are basically quite clean, and that the priority is above all to demand a moratorium on fossil fuels (from which 75% of Sardinia’s electricity comes, with 40% exported to the Italian peninsula). And on the other hand, of course, there’s the whole range of political and economic interests at stake, including in terms of the “energy transition” financed by the European Union, even if wind turbines and solar farms really only serve to smooth fossil fuel consumption curves on the industrial energy market [ed. – see *The “Green” Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else*].

As a result, on July 3, the center-left-led region pulled out all the stops: the adoption of a regional law – against which Meloni’s government immediately launched an appeal – prohibiting the installation of all wind and solar farms for eighteen months (i.e., a moratorium), but only on works (not licenses or authorizations), only if they destroy new land, and only from that date onwards... **which still leaves the way clear for 37 promises of techno-industrial devastation already scheduled (i.e. 4 wind farm projects authorized between 2015 and 2022, and 33 solar farm projects authorized between 2019 and 2023).**

Except that, in Sardinia as elsewhere, it’s not surprising

that some end up moving on to actions that are a little less pacified and restricted to the

daytime, without the “ifs” and “buts” of institutions or citizens’ committees, by directly striking at the giants who are ransacking the territory not only in plain view, but also out of sight by extracting minerals from the four corners of the world (copper from Peru and Chile, iron ore from Brazil, silver from Mexico and Argentina, bauxite from Guinea, rare earths from China)...

For the authorities, the first warning came on Monday August 26 from the Nuoro area, along the road between Mamoida and Gavoi, when an employee maintaining 50-meter wind turbines already in operation noticed that the bolts of a support mast had been unscrewed and removed, putting the entire structure at risk of falling in strong gusts. This was the last straw for the police who rushed to the scene, as the saboteurs intended to turn the machine’s strength into weakness, counting on the force of the wind that the machine shamelessly exploits, to knock it to the ground after weakening its base.

As for the second alert, it arrived a few days later, or rather a few nights, from Thursday to Friday August 30, in the Villacidro countryside. There, on the site of the Danish multinational Vestas, where three huge blades were still waiting to be erected, unidentified people began to show their warm hostility by spraying them with accelerant, before lighting them all on fire. **According to the local press, “in a short space of time, a fire broke out, completely destroying the plastic sheeting covering the blades and damaging them. The amount of damage is not yet known.”** [ed. – *Less than 2 weeks later, around 2,000 photovoltaic solar panels were also destroyed after being sprayed with petrol and lit up in the Garganu area near Tuili at the site of a planned solar farm.*]

The history of Sardinia’s devastation at the hands of industrial capitalism goes back a long way, from the massive clearing of its primary forests in the 19th century to manufacture railroad sleepers for the mainland, to its coal mines, to becoming NATO’s military dustbin in the 1950s (its missile testing center is located at Salto di Quirra). Today, the frenetic multiplication of wind turbines on an island that already boasts an oil refinery and a coal-fired power station, demonstrates once again the fraud of an “energy transition” that claims to substitute energy sources when in fact they are cumulative, and of a green capitalism that only extends the ecocidal ravages, particularly in the sacrificed, poor and peripheral territories of Southern Europe [ed. – see *'The First Smart Island'*].

But there’s also a small detail in this story, which will certainly have escaped no one’s notice: while wind turbines are certainly giants, they are like other large modern infrastructures, in other words, with feet of clay scattered all over the territory. You can try to knock their heads off by dismantling the base, or directly burning their wings, depending on your taste...

CALLING IT TERROR

– on recent attacks in Southern Ontario

[ed. – Another one from the archives, in this case from 2018. Following two different rampage killing incidents, the author considers the discourse around terrorism; something that – as we wrote in 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** – anarchists are increasingly forced to tread carefully around. To that end, we have included selections from an online debate which unfolded on anarchistnews.org following this piece's re-publication there.

Coincidentally, 2025 has opened with the UK government and top cops suggesting a re-organisation of counter-terror powers, based around a supposed rising (although this has been the case for over a decade) of 'non-ideologically-motivated' attacks taking the same outward form as those discussed below: clearly pointing in the direction of more generalised surveillance and intrusion getting justified by the very last people we should trust to keep us safe (see **'We Cannot Share This Planet with Them'**). Mention is especially made of youths (and the internet); but, as usual, devoid of any sociological analysis of value. The fear broadcast by the media is of a 'new terrorism' of 'violence for violence's sake,' taking as its rallying call the 'non-ideologically-motivated' fatal stabbing of three small children last summer by a 17-year-old in Southport (who turned out to also be cultivating the incurable poison ricin for another attack on a potentially mass scale). But how mysterious can such attacks be taken to be, without taking the extreme alienation and domination of our times into account?

For example, the Home Secretary reported to the House of Commons that in 2024, 162 people were referred to the authorities as concerns for planning school massacres. How neutral an institution is school in our society (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg27**), or the bullying, indoctrination and/or discrimination that so many face there? As others have plead for so many years already, the instances of tragic, unpredictable lashing-out in this culture speaks deeply to everything the media will never entertain discussion of, or only superficially. Capitalism and the State are trauma-producing machines, and colonialism, patriarchy and technological de-sensitization only give us more reasons to suspect social causes as amplifying the most sinister of human potentials.

To return to the Southport atrocity, while sensitive to the racialised (and false) portrayal of the killer by the xenophobic wave that violently expressed itself across England immediately afterwards, are we really to believe that racism at school (the reason he gave before the attack

for having taken to carrying a knife there) should not be talked about as part of this case and his fantasies of power and revenge? Or the treatment reserved for autistic people in our oh-so-wonderful society? Or something of the brutalisation passed on intergenerationally (as a wealth of literature attests to occurring, everywhere from Ireland to Abya Yala – see **Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies** – to the Palestinian towns where children and grandchildren of the Holocaust slaughter with impunity) to the son of a former soldier in the exiled Rwanda Patriotic Front who 'liberated' the country after 1994's Hutu genocide against Tutsi and Twa; one of the most disturbing fiascoes of the carving up of Africa and ruling via 'ethnic zones' pitted against each other by colonial or pre-colonial states (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg123**), with disseminated German and Belgian essential racial 'superiority' of one or another?

The only thing that seems certain is that, so long as we fail to create a lived experience of dis-alienated life and re-connection, all is set for the atrocities to continue, whether those wielding the knife are Nazis (see **The Far Right, the Left, & the Trap of Electoral Politics**), the police (see **On Sexual Murder & Police Sadism**), some combination of the two, or those their kind have victimised. Faced with those who would categorise our own attempts to break out of this sick and sickening system alongside the very atrocities that keep it on eternal re-play (thinking here of the current Prime Minister, notorious hammer of the rioters of 2011 – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg61** – as head prosecutor during that rebellion after another police cold-blooded murder of a young unarmed black man, but even – why not – other anarchists; see **The Darkness Criticizes the Wolf for Howling at the Moon**), let's not allow ourselves be pacified.]



Unfortunately, the word "terrorism" has been getting thrown around a lot in Ontario these past few months. Two attacks in Toronto, the van attack on April 23, 2018 and the Danforth shooting on July 22, have both been talked about as terrorism, though each by different people and for different reasons. It's also a word that's been applied to anarchists in Hamilton¹ and to antifascists across the region in an attempt to delegitimize combative approaches to struggle.

Calling something terrorism is undeniably powerful, but the word is used in such widely different ways that it often seems to mean little more than, "I condemn this utterly". Whether it's being used loosely or specifically though, it has the function of setting the acts it describes as outside of reasonable consideration – it's often paired with words like "senseless", "incomprehensible", or "unimaginable".

But terrorism is a strategy that's been used by almost all political tendencies at different times.² As a strategy, it's not desperate or insane, the way the specific attacks often appear; terrorism has specific

1 ed. – see **Ghosts**

2 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg5**

goals and groups using it aren't shy about articulating them. The goal of this text is to look at terrorism as a strategy, as a choice that rational people might make to achieve their goals. This gives us a stronger basis for rejecting it and also gets us beyond the shocked and decontextualized reactions we understandably have to scenes of violence, like the two attacks in Toronto.

As an anarchist, I am part of a political tradition that helped invent modern terrorism. I'm also part of a tradition that rejected terrorism over a hundred years ago and that continues to hold strong in refusing it and its practitioners today. The anarchist definition of terrorism is usually something like: indiscriminate violence carried out on a civilian population to advance a cause. Anarchist terrorists at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th carried out a huge number of bombing and gun attacks against groups of people they believed to be bourgeois. The most famous of these is Emile Henry's bomb and pistol attack on the Cafe Terminus in Paris in 1894.

There were always anarchists (maybe even a majority) who rejected terrorism, and they argued against it. Their views gradually won out on the grounds that these attacks were counter-productive, that they, in their randomness, are authoritarian, and that simply there is no way of knowing the class position of each person in a crowded cafe, so the anarchist terrorists weren't even doing what they claimed to be.³

The anarchist definition of terrorism allows for a distinction between terrorism and targeted violence, such as assassination or attacks on the armed apparatus of the state. Such attacks by anarchists continued through the 1910s and 20s. Assassinating Archduke Ferdinand,⁴ or US president McKinley,⁵ or a factory owner during a strike are not terrorism under such a definition. This distinction played out more recently in the parcel bomb attacks carried out by the FAI⁶ targeting high-ups in the European Union beginning in 2003. They were clear that these were assassination attempts, acts of revolutionary violence, not terrorism. However others argued that sending letter bombs is indiscriminate because it's

3 ed. – Arguably this is truer in some cases than others; see **Return Fire vol.5 pg38**

4 ed. – Heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian empire, shot by Bosnian Serb in 1914 after annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, widely credited with provoking war with Serbia which led to the First World War.

5 ed. – see **Another Way Out**

6 The acronym is from the Italian, *Federazione Anarchica Informale*, Informal Anarchist Federation. The FAI is a decentralized, horizontally organized armed group that originated in Italy and has since spread to countries across Europe and South and Central America.

just going to hurt a random letter carrier or mail room employee,⁷ with no chance of actually making it to *[German Chancellor] Angela Merkel*.⁸ And groups like ITS⁹ in Mexico dissociated themselves from anarchism (because of its "moralism") when they started carrying out indiscriminate attacks.

Under this definition, the attacks on Canadian soldiers carried out in Ottawa and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu in October 2014 that were claimed by the Islamic State group (IS) would not be terrorism, since they targeted soldiers, the armed apparatus of the state, not random Canadians. As well, the two attacks in Toronto would both be terrorism.¹⁰

The Canadian state, however, has claimed the opposite, denouncing the targeted attacks on soldiers as terrorism and describing those against random people in Toronto in other terms.¹¹ Similarly, the

7 ed. – As was the case various times throughout that decade; though sometimes the 'collateral' was more pleasing than that, such as the bomb sent to the Greek Minister of Public Order which killed his close aide, another high-ranking services officer.

8 ed. – Notable exceptions (although somewhat proving the rule) to this ineffectiveness include the 2017 letter bomb seriously injuring a senior Greek economist/technocrat of the International Monetary Fund (former Prime Minister, governor of the Bank of Greece and vice-president of the European Central Bank) and his security detail of two; another which wounded the director of Italy's tax collection agency, sent by the FAI in 2011; and the 2020 case in Chile (see **Rebels Behind Bars; Francisco Assumes His Part in the Charges Against Him**).

9 The acronym is from the Spanish *Individualidades tendiendo a lo Salvaje*, Individuals Tending Towards the Wild. This terrorist group is based in Mexico with offshoots in other countries. Although initially describing themselves as anarchists, they officially broke with anarchism because of criticism of their indiscriminate violence, sexism, and general bullshit. They have since carried out at least one attack targeting an anarchist space and continue to kill random people [ed. – or claim to].

10 I realize with the Danforth shooting this is complex; although IS claimed responsibility and there are reports that the shooter had been active on IS-affiliated websites, this is disputed. The counter-narrative is about mental health. However, I would suggest there is no contradiction between these things – mental health clearly doesn't stop someone from having strong political views and taking action on them, and they certainly don't delegitimize a person's opinions, even if those opinions are as foul as IS' Islamism. It is very unlikely the shooter was directed by IS the way the 2016 shooters in Paris, France [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg5**] were, but then again neither were either of the two men involved in the killings of Canadian soldiers mentioned above. Although it's uncertain, I do take the claim of responsibility seriously and think it's worth analyzing in that light, even if later information shows it to be false.

11 It's true that the shift federally from Harper's Conservatives to Trudeau's Liberals has involved the state being less invested in fear-mongering, though Trudeau

Canadian state insists on describing people who kill its soldiers in other countries as terrorists, notably in Afghanistan, even when they are engaged in conventional warfare.¹²

Officially, the Canadian state's definition of terrorism is extremely broad – any act that seeks to intimidate people in the service of an ideology could be described this way. This broadest sense is what that bright light of the left, Hamilton city councilor Aidan Johnson, meant when he described anarchists as terrorists for breaking a bunch of windows on a rich street in early March 2018.¹³

The powerful tend to mean two things when they choose to call something terrorism. One is that they consider those carrying out the actions to be beyond the realm of political consideration; their ideas matter only in as much as it proves the act was terrorism, but those ideas are rendered unthinkable by association. The other is that the terrorism label is tied to a set of legal structures that have been developed over the past two decades to severely punish political violence carried out by anyone other than a state. Which is ironic, because the word terrorism was coined to refer to the actions of states, notably The Terror in revolutionary France,¹⁴ but it has since evolved to mean literally any other kind of violence.¹⁵

didn't hesitate to apply the label to the Edmonton attack in 2017 [*ed. – stabbing-and-vehicle-ramming; the person responsible had an ISIS flag in the van, but although convicted ultimately didn't get terrorism 'enhancements'*].

12 The most famous example of this is the case of Omar Khadr, but it isn't hard to find others

13 On the night of March 3rd, an anarchist demonstration in Hamilton smashed up a bunch of stuff in a wealthy neighbourhood. For a collection of texts about the incident and the ensuing charges: north-shore.info/2018/06/05/beyond-support-update-on-locke-st-defendant-and-a-proposal-for-beginning-to-organize-solidarity

14 ed. – A series of massacres and public executions consolidated the regime of Maximilien Robespierre (a totalitarian application of Enlightenment-derived ideology – see **'The Position of the Excluded'** – seeking to uplift the new, 'equal' human subject by cutting down any who questioned the agent of its 'general will, the State, or were deemed incapable of 'equality'), deposed July 1794.

15 Other gross opportunists, like the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War and other so-called anti-imperialist groups, cynically take up this same use of the word terrorism when it suits them, for instance arguing that anyone with facial hair resisting the Assad regime in Syria is a terrorist while claiming that nothing done by the Russian, Iranian,

These days, terrorism as a strategy is mostly the domain of right-wing and fundamentalist groups. The two Toronto attacks are great examples of this, one carried out by an alt-right misogynist and the other by someone who seems to be a partisan of an Islamist group. By following the state's lead and refusing to look at why groups might use terrorism as a strategy, we actually decrease our ability to resist the reactionary tendencies these attacks represent. For the state, this is convenient, as it makes it simply a matter of increased policing and social control, or in some places funneling people into deradicalization programs. But if we want to actually oppose reactionary forces on a liberatory basis, we need to do better.

The two tendencies linked to the Toronto attacks, the North American far-right and Islamism, seem to oppose each other, but the strategy of terrorism they both employ benefits each of them, regardless of which side carries out a given attack. And that's not by accident.

The modern strategy of terrorism was most clearly articulated by the FLN¹⁶ during their fight against France's colonial occupation of the territory known as Algeria.¹⁷ They carried out violent, indiscriminate attacks against both natives and French citizens to fulfill two goals: to militarize and polarize the struggle by encouraging reprisals; and to gain leadership of that struggle through the strength of its armed wing and attacks against rivals. During the so-called independence struggle, the FLN killed many times more natives than they did French settlers, building a monopoly on violence within the opposition that made them a perfect state in waiting.

IS has clearly studied this experience. When they emerged militarily in Syria, they avoided conflict with the Syrian state, seeking instead to attack and dismantle rebel groups.¹⁸ They then tried to consolidate control over territory through mass killings and torture, which also allowed them to project strength externally. By encouraging and carrying out attacks against civilians in Western countries, they invited Western societies to react in

or Syrian states could possibly be.

16 The FLN *Front de Liberation Nationale* or National Liberation Front, was an underground political party with a significant armed wing during the Algerian war of independence and has ruled the country, as various flavours of military dictatorship.

17 ed. – Although inspired by Vietnamese nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh, with his ultimatum in the face of overwhelming French dominance; “For every nine of us killed we will kill one – in the end you will leave.”

18 For an excellent analysis of the Islamist counter-revolution in Syria, check out this excerpt of the book *Burning Country*: leilashami.wordpress.com/2016/02/11/burning-country-extract-on-islamisation

ways that alienate their Muslim citizens, which polarizes conflict. It also helped them position themselves as the one true opponent of Western domination both internationally and in the Middle East specifically, consolidating their power.

In both Algeria and France, the FLN's campaign of terrorism fed into a counter-movement of racist nationalists. These nationalists also produced a terrorist fringe that tried to control its respective movement, notably the OAS.¹⁹ **The similarities to the present moment don't need outlining – we shouldn't be surprised that groups like PEGIDA and the World Coalition against Islam have dutifully popped up in Canada in pace with rightist terror attacks like the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting.**²⁰ That far-right tendencies like the Incels,²¹ linked to the van attack, have views on gender as reactionary as those of the Islamists is also not a surprise: the far-right's opposition to Islamism is a false one, a question of whose totalitarian nightmare world will survive, while acting as perfect foils for each others' growth.

It is interesting that few in Canada are willing to say that both the van attack and the Danforth shooting were terrorism, and this seems to skew along political lines. Those more on the left, steeped in the discourse of antifascism, saw the van attacker's parting Facebook post linking himself to both Incels and the military as proof that the attack was a conscious political act from a nihilistically anti-social corner of the far-right. They were also more likely to describe the Danforth shooting in terms of mental health and to be concerned about the possibility of a racist or Islamophobic backlash. Those more on the right, where discourse about Islamic terrorism is used to justify everything from immigration controls to cutting social services, took the IS claim of responsibility on the Danforth seriously. On the other hand, they were more likely to look at how society had failed the van attacker, condemning the act perhaps, but then tuning back in to Jordan Peterson talking about enforced monogamy (a perfect solution to involuntary celibacy).²²

19 ed. – Secret Army Organisation, with the slogan “*Algeria is French and so will remain,*” killing over 2,000 people.

20 PEGIDA, acronym from the German *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West. This anti-immigrant group started in Germany and chapters have popped up all over, including in Toronto where there are not infrequent rallies. The World Coalition against Islam is based in Calgary and recently tried and failed to have an openly racist rally in Toronto

21 Short for Involuntary Celibates, an online network of misogynists who blame women's freedoms for society's (and their own) problems

22 Jordan Peterson is an academic who rose to prominence

Both of these reactions have would have us shying away from an analysis of terrorism to a mere horror of violence coupled with a rejection of the associated ideology. **The reactionary alt-right and Islamist ideologies are distinct from their choice to use terrorism and can't be reduced to it.** The far right is disgusting even when they aren't doing mass killings, and indiscriminate killings are inhuman (as well authoritarian, cynical, and callous) regardless of who carries them out.

I do think it's appropriate to be able to physically confront our enemies, to be prepared to go on the offensive, and to escalate social conflicts. Terrorism, however, serves only authoritarian ends. If I don't want to militarize conflict,²³ reduce possible forms of political engagement, or consolidate my power, then I definitely want to be clear about avoiding terrorism, (without even getting into the moral questions).

As well, the discourse of terrorism is a shield the powerful use to defend themselves. That means I need to be clear about what terrorism is in order to refuse to let politicians and business owners decide that breaking windows and setting off fireworks is morally equivalent to running people over in a van. **Because if we let our enemies set the terms of our struggle using loaded language like terrorism (or violence for that matter),²⁴ then we've lost before we've started.**

We need to build offensive capabilities while also being able to defend the appropriateness of our actions. Looking to the long history of anarchists and other anti-authoritarian tendencies who have refused terrorism can give us tools for assessing what courses of action are fundamentally incompatible with our ideas. It can also be a reminder that simply because a certain action is scary or unpopular doesn't mean it isn't deserving of our solidarity.²⁵

If we are to use the word terrorism at all, we need to define it ourselves and be clear about our own politics and strategies. From there, we can build a stronger analysis of the various authoritarian tendencies, whether states, the far-right, or Islamists, that choose it as a strategy so that we may better counter their efforts.

for his hyperbolic opposition to basic respect for trans people. He has since reinvented himself as a self-help figure for reactionary men. This analysis macleans.ca/opinion/the-context-of-jordan-petersons-thoughts-on-enforced-monogamy is from Maclean's but it digs into his comments following the van attack

23 ed. – What we have termed the martial against the military; see **Return Fire vol.3 pg19**

24 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg16**

25 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg39**

'A LOSE-LOSE SITUATION'

anonymous: securitisation¹ and desecuritisation

Yeah, because we really want to encourage the moral-panic mentality of condemning everything we don't like as "terrorism". Rather than locating it in a sociological context.

People really need to read [Ole] Waever's stuff and [Didier] Bigo's stuff on securitisation and desecuritisation. **The "terrorism" label is primarily**

1 ed. – “Security studies, and security as exceptionalism, began in International Relations (IR). This is mainly about geopolitical relations among states. In traditional security studies, ‘security’ means state (i.e. ‘national’) security. This is threatened by other states, through the threat of war. States develop security architectures to survive in an international world thought of as hostile and anarchic. There are thus “security dilemmas” as states do not know whether other states are arming themselves to attack or to deter attack. Security exceptionalism relates to the existential threat of annihilation by a rival state. Security is provided through military build-ups, alliances, diplomacy, and realpolitik – often at the expense of other states.

“With the end of the Cold War and US unipolar dominance, traditional security studies seemed obsolete. Military/security institutions were at risk of losing some of their funding and power. In this context, security scholars started to talk about “new threats”. These threats are existential threats, just like great-power war. But they don’t come from rival states. They threaten state survival in a range of (mostly indirect or hypothetical) ways. For instance, civil wars supposedly threaten to engulf the world in chaos, organised crime eats away at stability, “terrorists” could devastate a country with weapons of mass destruction, hackers could crash the power grid or make planes collide. Most wars are now “new wars” or complex emergencies, involving a complex array of nonstate actors and transnational connections. Natural disasters, economic crashes, refugee waves, protests and insurrections like the Arab Spring, were all reframed primarily as threats. Pandemics catastrophically destroying the social fabric are placed firmly in this category. Threats are nearly always imagined (often wrongly) as coming from “black holes” and “failed states” in the global periphery. Northern states pursue a militarised, repressive policy towards the South and aid Southern states to suppress their populations, supposedly to keep these “threats” at bay. The Bush regime promoted a “duty to prevent” – a right of powerful states to invade weaker states so as to prevent new threats.

““New threats” discourse got a huge boost from 9/11. Securitised responses to “terrorism” ignored the social causes, inequalities, and grievances which cause armed conflict. These approaches relied on invasions, surveillance, network disruption, censorship, assassinations, extrajudicial detention, torture, and information warfare. The “war on terror” has failed: Iraq and Afghanistan were quagmires [ed. – see *Capitalism & Electrification*], Islamist militias have multiplied, and mass casualty attacks by a range of actors, including the

a securitising move. Suffice to say that securitisation of a wider range of issues is NOT in anarchists' interest, nor in the interests of oppressed groups (African-Americans etc). Anarchists should be trying to desecuritize EVERYTHING so as to destroy the state's power to create states of exception.

anonymous: What are you replying to? The text talks about how one use of the word is as a security scheme by the state

spookbuster: terrorism or war?

Bigo: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.455.2691&rep=re>

Waever: [scribd.com/document/258746092/O-Waever-Securitization-and-Desecuritization](https://www.scribd.com/document/258746092/O-Waever-Securitization-and-Desecuritization)
[clisec.uni-hamburg.de/en/pdf/data/waever-2003-securitisation](https://www.clisec.uni-hamburg.de/en/pdf/data/waever-2003-securitisation)

Neocleous: [researchgate.net/publication/258188414_A_Brighter_and_Nicer_New_Life_Security_as_Pacification](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258188414_A_Brighter_and_Nicer_New_Life_Security_as_Pacification)

Point taken that there's a necessary discussion on legitimate vs illegitimate use of violence/force, but I wonder if it's necessary to use the police-state's

far-right, have increased. Securitised responses might have made it harder for opponents to organise or to carry out attacks, but they quickly innovated new strategies. And the root problems were either ignored or intensified. Meanwhile, the racism of the “war on terror” has bred both grievances among Muslim communities and hatred among fascists. But the “war on terror”, like the equally unsuccessful “war on drugs”, has become a new common sense. It often serves the interests of the state and capital. Local resource wars, such as the Niger Delta conflict [ed. – see *The Ecological Transition is a Hoax*], are securitised by states and companies seeking to defend existing regimes of plunder. They are helpful in excusing human rights atrocities, delegitimising opponents, and classifying resistance as “threat” rather than grievance.

“In the “war on terror”, America developed a strategy of “full spectrum dominance”. America aimed to dominate all the different spheres of “hard power” and “soft power”. Hard power is military power. Soft power encompasses all the other things which give states influence: economics, reputation, media control, diplomacy, etc. Approaching these areas from a security perspective has repressive effects. For example, not only America but most states now approach social media in terms of channelling use, promoting and boosting their own ‘signals’ or preferred frames, and disrupting the activities of perceived adversaries. The practices well-known from the outcry over Russian activities in 2015-16 [ed. – to influence the US election] may well be common practice for governments worldwide. The most influential can also co-opt or coerce social media companies into aiding their efforts. In full spectrum dominance directed at new threats, there is no operational difference between responses to state adversaries, ‘terrorists’, protest movements, or disinformation. The military model applies to them all” (Anti-Lockdown Theory: Stop Securitisation!).

buzzword in it. We could just as easily say "reactionary violence" for example (although "violence" has its own issues as the state tends to shift its meaning and use it polemically). I'm going to suggest at the end of the post that we should talk about different kinds of war instead, and maybe also about war crimes/atrocities (some things are not justified even in a just war) although I'm uncomfortable with "crime" language on Stirnerian² grounds.

Problem one: we aid the expansion of the concept of "terrorism" from a narrower to a wider use, for instance by encompassing spree killings under the label, and this aids securitisation.³

2 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

3 ed. – "Today's warfare is "logistical". It does not simply fight an enemy on an existing terrain, but seeks to rearrange space so as to prevent the enemy from acting. Applied against the military's own society, this leads to "endocolonialism", or the internalisation of colonial power. [Paul] Virilio portrays everyday life as colonised or polluted by military ways of seeing, expressed through technologies such as surveillance cameras and disconnected images. Security scares become a kind of "orgy" allowing the release of otherwise repressed emotions.

[...] The state seeks to make societies "legible". In doing so, it simplifies them both analytically, by ignoring the complexity, and materially, by imposing the categories it uses to simplify in practice. [...] States, argues [James C.] Scott, seek to turn "the population, space, and nature under their jurisdiction into the closed systems that offer no surprises and that can best be observed and controlled". This is the matrix from which securitization emerges. It is arguably a re-emergence of the "reasons of state" studied by [Michel] Foucault and Scott. [...] Securitisation also goes hand-in-hand with insecurity, or the creation of everyday fear to provide pretexts for control. Securitisation involves framing- out any claims, demands, rights, or needs, which might be articulated by non-state actors. Such actors are simply disempowered, and either suppressed and "managed" or paternalistically "protected". Securitisation tends to seek to control others by reducing or constraining their agency (e.g. Situational Crime Management, which removes opportunities for crime), without engaging with others as actors in their own rights. The frame is fundamentally monological, recognising no actors other than a managerial elite.

"Securitisation does not represent a response to an increase in existential threats to the state. Rather, it is a discursive shift towards framing all social problems and differences as "security" issues or "risks" has created an illusion of expanding dangers. American unipolar dominance has led to shifts towards asymmetrical and unconventional warfare. The discourse of "new threats" frames issues such as armed opposition or "terrorism", organised crime, arms proliferation and environmental problems as security issues. As a result, the field of security studies "risks losing all focus". Securitisation creates a field where certain social actors can expand their

Problem two: we aid the project of "exceptionalising" fascist terror rather than treating it as a *political* problem which must be fought *politically* for *political* (or anti-political) reasons. The COIN⁴/liberal response to fascism tries to put clear blue water between visibly extreme, swastika-drawing, hood-wearing, noose-wielding, Hitler-praising types who can be singled out and banned/punished/blacklisted because everybody hates them already,⁵ and the wide array of far-right political forces who are a little bit less extreme or less obvious - the AfD⁶/UKIP⁷/Lega Nord⁸ type of parties, the "post"-fascists like the French FN⁹ and the Austrian FPÖ,¹⁰ the right-wing of the Republicans/Tories/Republicains¹¹ etc, and the shadowy deep-state groups who hate anarchists and the left and don't have much time for liberal democracy either (in Greece the counterterror pigs and Golden Dawn¹² are pretty much the same people; some huge portion of cops voted for Golden Dawn in the last election, and it's the same with the FN in France... and anyone remember the pigs, under the leadership of "post-fascist" minister Gianfranco Fini, making anarchists arrested in the Genoa G8 protests¹³ praise Mussolini¹⁴ and sing fascist hymns?).¹⁵ It's very easy to condemn the former without recognising either their ties to the latter or the way the latter often pose a similar and greater threat, except they do it with police resources instead of homemade bombs (the old Israel/Palestine issue: Palestinian suicide-bombing is "terrorism",

roles. It merges and de-differentiates militarism against external enemies and internal social regulation. The resultant military functions may be carried out by the military, the police, or other social agencies, which are handed securitised tasks (for example, teachers, doctors and social workers commanded to implement Prevent duties [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg13**])" (Schizorevolutions vs. Microfascisms: The Fear of Anarchy in State Securitization).

4 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg15**

5 ed. – ...although, in the light of 2025 so far, it's less clear that they may not be allowed off the leash by certain elites to protect their own form of capitalism, without yet a complete rupture with democracy however: see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

6 ed. – Alternative for Germany, far-right populist party.

7 ed. – UK Independence Party, right-wing populists.

8 ed. – Northern League (now just League), Italian right-wing populist party.

9 ed. – see **Lies of the Land**

10 ed. – see **The Far Right, the Left, & the Trap of Electoral Politics**

11 ed. – Les Républicains, liberal-conservative French party.

12 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

13 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg68**

14 ed. – see **'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'**

15 ed. – Recall that following the well-publicised police tortures during those days, the head of police was later appointed the head of Leonardo (see **'Back to the Forefront'**) between 2013-2020.

Israeli air strikes with F16s aren't).

Problem three: the expansion of the idea of "terrorism" from explicitly politically motivated armed groups to lone individuals with vague political connections but also complex mixes of circumstances and influences (people like the Toronto attacker) creates huge risks for anarchists, because it's likely sooner or later that a disturbed individual with personal grievances and emotional problems will commit a massacre after leaving a trail of circle-A's and praise for Bakunin¹⁶ and Kaczynski,¹⁷ or wearing a V-for-Vendetta mask¹⁸ (already in the Parkland case,¹⁹ there's left as well as right symbolism in use, he had a hammer-and-sickle and a chaos symbol). **There's then a huge risk that COIN agencies will frame this as "radicalised anarchists" even if the person's connection to anarchism is tenuous, at which point, anarchism will be targeted on social media and the internet to eliminate "radicalisation which leads to terrorism" - we'll see people getting six-year sentences because they posted "fuck the pigs" on Twitter six years ago.**²⁰ I wouldn't like to be @news²¹ or LBC²² in this environment, or even IWW.²³

Problem four: we're opening ourselves to the "both sides" move if we expand the concept of terrorism against our enemies while rejecting its use against our own side (ecosabotage for example). Sure, on a strict UN/international law definition we can safely distinguish sabotage, attacks on police, and fighting for the YPG²⁴ from indiscriminate or targeted killings of civilians. But it still looks bad in the global mediascape because the Nazis are also saying "the left are terrorists and we're not".

And yes, on this author's definition and also on a strict UN definition a lot of the things which are currently called "terrorism" are not – even for

16 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg97**

17 ed. – see **Earthbound Farmers' Almanac & Food Autonomy in Bulbancha**

18 ed. – Dystopian graphic novel by anarchist Alan Moore, in which the anarchist protagonist goes up against a British fascist regime wearing a mask based on a depiction of Guy Fawkes, best-known member of the 1605 plot to blow up the House of Lords, executed after its failure.

19 ed. – Deadliest so far of the long list of US school-shootings; a 19-year-old's rampage in 2018 in Florida.

20 ed. – Anti-hate law has already in cases been used to shield cops (see **Rebels Behind Bars; Spanish Media Side With Fascist**). City of Hamilton and Hamilton Police Service in Ontario also attempted around the time this was written to designate the circled-A a hate symbol.

21 ed. – anarchistnews.org

22 ed. – Little Black Cart, now-defund anarchist publisher.

23 ed. – see **'It Depends on All of Us'**

24 ed. – Male equivalent of the YPJ; see **Rebels Behind Bars; December 8th Case**

example a lone wolf ISIS member killing soldiers or police. But the difficulty is, whether we can make it stick. As anarchists we should also want to break down very strongly the division between actions by the state and those by other actors – i.e. the idea that indiscriminate/targeted killings of civilians is terrorism whereas indiscriminate/targeted killings of civilians by states is warfare. If a cop kills a black person who doesn't pose a threat, because of the cop's racial prejudice, shouldn't this be treated in the exact same category as (say) Dylann Roof shooting up a black church?²⁵ This takes us a long way from the UN definition.

And of course, we do use terms like "state terrorism" and "the state is the real terrorist". But convincing people that war is terrorism is a hard sell, it might be better to play it the other way, "terrorism is simply war by irregular actors". Of course there's just war and unjust war, but really the nature of the actor shouldn't matter. This also raises the possibility of arguing that people are POW's [Prisoners of War] rather than criminals. If we get this set as a principle then it really benefits anarchists and radical movements. POW's generally have more rights than prisoners, can't be "punished" as such, and have to be freed at the end of the war. Potential POW's on the run can't be extradited. And the state can't pass laws banning "inciting war" on social media because... well, the state incites war. It blows open the selective nature of COIN once "terrorism" is considered war (even if "war-crime" or unjust war). A Nazi is engaged in an unjust race war against spooks²⁶ they misrecognise in other people. Islamists are engaged in an unjust war against non-Muslims with elements of a just war against imperialism, but indiscriminate targeting. Spree killers are engaged in (just or unjust) personal wars against people or institutions which have ruined their lives, or against "society" in general, or (in the most obviously psychotic cases) against imaginary enemies. Gangs are at war with the state or one another. (It would be far more productive to send in preventive diplomacy teams instead of pigs when gang wars break out). Anarchists are engaged in a just war against the state. And killer cops are engaged in an unjust war against black people, poor people, anarchists, etc. It all fits with Stirner's idea of enemy-not-criminal and with the insurrectionist idea of social war.²⁷ In a way, Islamism, far-right massacres, spree-killings, gang violence, are all

25 ed. – Roof, American white-supremacist, opened fire in a famous Charleston church (the oldest in the southern states of a black independent denomination) in 2015, hoping to start race war due to "Blacks" "taking over the world."

26 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

27 ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics**

distorted or displaced forms of insurrectionist social war, mediated by spooks (see Bonanno's account of Islamism in "For an Anti-Authoritarian Insurrectionalist International" for a clear demonstration of this).

anonymous: Good response. I'll respond to your points one by one.

1) This text is arguing for a more specific use of the word and that it has value as a way of looking at strategies independent of the meaning our enemies give it.

2) I think the text is making the same point as you. By seeing terror as one of many strategies used by the far right, we don't get bogged down on exceptionalizing violence and instead see it as a part of a wide range of strategies. It's still something we need to be conscious of, but stopping far-right terror is not a worthwhile goal in itself.

3) The difference between the examples in the text and the examples you give are claims of responsibility, by IS on the Danforth [attack] and by the van attacker. These claims situate the attacks within a broader set of activities by both tendencies. What you're describing is more like that guy who volunteered for bernie²⁸ who shot up the republican baseball game and breitbart²⁹ trying to say its democratic terrorism

4) I like some of what you're saying here, but the text isn't really talking about denouncing the state as terrorists. The word might be useful for us in thinking about different kinds of violence, that's about it. It's not a media stunt to be against terrorism or to define it so as to be sure we're not doing it – it's to satisfy our own moral and strategic concerns.

5) I like some of what you wrote about war too. Terrorism and war might be different words for the same thing, sure. They are both about

28 ed. – Bernard Sanders, US progressive leader, predictably now once again on the road in hope of running in 2028.

29 ed. – see **Lies of the Land**

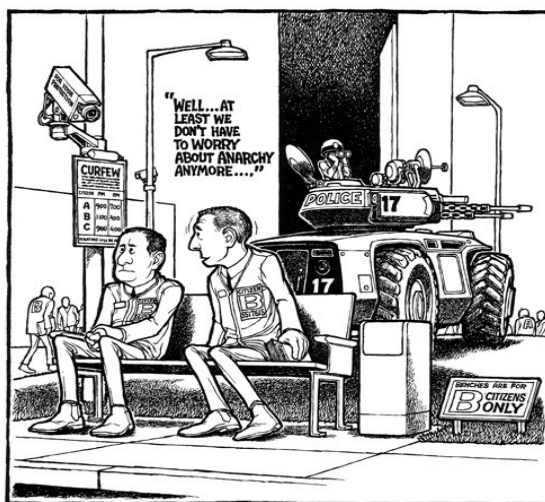
“We are not one risk among others to be managed by the state, we seek to overturn the world of risks, of security, of 'civil liberty'. As such anarchy is defined by a refusal of the terms of the social question posed by the enemy. We do not want more 'freedom', to keep our consumer choices 'private', nor do we have any desire for the 'freedom' to go to clubs now in the UK Covid restrictions having been 'relaxed' (at the time of writing). The 'liberty' that we're after is profoundly uncivil: it requires an explosion of these categories – of more-or-less free, more-or-less secure, more-or-less state charity, more-or-less 'sustainable development' and so on.

This is not to suggest that we are partisans only of a dreamlike utopia of 'total liberation'. It rather means bringing a total refusal of negotiation, an attack against the terms of any possible compromise, to bear on every dimension of social reality in its immediacy and specificity. This is why the assigning of the word 'terrorist' to anarchists is the most reprehensible slander. Not only because, of course, by the metrics of harm and violence and so on, any magistrate who could pass such a judgement has blood dripping from the hands which would clutch that gavel, or sign the legal documentation. The lie is also given to these attempts, because they try to place conscious subversion of the existent as simply one 'danger' or 'risk' to be managed among many. To see anarchic ideas and actions in that context of 'public safety' requires a full subjective immersion in the hysterical, passive position of hostages on the plane. But we say that this plane, this sense of being many miles above the surface of the earth, kept adrift only by the grace of miraculous technological and state maneuvering, is an illusion.

This is the way we are organised by this miserable reality, but it is synonymous with our alienation from the possibility of organising ourselves. What anarchist projectualities [ed. – see *For the Love of God*] give rise to is dangerous not for the passengers, nor for the flight, but to the idea that this [is] where we are. The people who are subject to the crises, to the risks arrayed all around us like menacing shadows, are nothing but the very anxious spectators these conditions are designed to produce. It is a self-fulfilling process, against which we propose an absolute confrontation. We are not a public hazard, a troubling 'tendency', an extremist minority: we are the light by which all these wailing ghosts can be dispatched with.”

– *The United States of Emergency:*

United 93 & the Vertiginous Bureaucracy of 'Terror'



polarizing conflict, reducing possibilities for engagement beyond organized violence, both encourage specialization, both are indiscriminate, both favour authoritarians... To me, being anti-war means strategizing about how to have conflicts that don't turn into wars as much as it means opposing the violence of the state, because it seems that when things become wars the

liberatory potential vanishes. The revolutionaries in Syria struggling to maintain the protest movement even as the conflict militarized understood that it would become a lose-lose situation...

'A NEW IMAGE' [Spain]

Last Tuesday the 25th [July, 2023], at dawn, we attacked a van belonging to the company Indra near the neighborhood of Vallcarca [in Barcelona] with our favorite materials: gasoline and fire.

Indra, an arms manufacturer, is the technical part of the development of state geopolitical and economic interests.

Numerous contracts with the Spanish Ministry of Defense demonstrate its participation in military armament projects as well as its control of 80% of the Sociedad Española de Misiles, the Spanish subsidiary of the main European missile manufacturer.

Today, the military industry has adopted a new image that departs from that of the military staging a coup d'état to a kinder one, of friendly and smiling professional mercenaries who, together with their suppliers, respond to a social demand for security.

When excuses such as terrorism are not enough to justify increased militarization, then the other major concerns of society become the necessary pretext for the military descent in the metropolis.

Thus, events such as the recent creation of the prison ship "Bibby Stockholm" in the United Kingdom, destined to continue and increase repression towards migrants, is not a coincidence.

The military complex, therefore, ends up accompanying society in its decadence with its gentle image, technological surveillance systems and sense of security on the part of the citizenry, seeking to establish the deadly peace of the bosses and the legal owners with the support of the silent majorities.

In the face of all this, we stand with those who decide that their battlefield is that of negation and disobedience.

Through this action we would like to spread the fire in these conditions of continuous war against every symbol and face of the authoritarian society in which we have decided to fight.

*We send our warmest greetings to comrades Monica and Francisco [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; 'Today, March 8th'**], who are now facing a trial that will last for months. The complicit words of comrade Francisco fill us with strength to continue exploring the paths of anarchist conflict here and now.*

*Greetings also to Alfredo Cospito [ed. – see **'Our Anarchy Lives'**] who is recovering after 6 months on hunger strike.*

FOR INSURRECTION, ATTACK, AND
VENGEANCE!

– some dangerous individuals

AVOIDING THE 'PEACEFUL PROTEST' TRAP

On October 26, another Tommy Robinson-led¹ rally took place outside 10 Downing Street under the "Unite the Kingdom" banner. Neo-fascist crowds gathered to advocate for Robinson's release following his recent arrest, displaying Union Jacks and anti-immigration rhetoric. Although the turnout fell short of the rumoured 25,000 attendees, it was substantial enough to underscore the persistent influence of the far-right, which appears strategically positioned within the UK political landscape.

An antifascist migrant worker bloc was formed to face the fascist march, organised by groups like United Voices of the World, Black Lives Matter, Plan C, Anti-Fascist Network, Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st century, Brighton Anti-fascists, Independent Workers Union, and Hackney Anarchists. The bloc gathered at Piccadilly Circus, aiming to distance themselves from the sinful Stand Up To Racism assembly, who had unsurprisingly called for their meeting point at Piccadilly only days after the antifascist migrant worker bloc announced theirs.²

After joining the UMW picket march from the Science Museum – in solidarity to the striking security guards, the bloc moved assertively down Shaftesbury Avenue

1 ed. – see **Lies of the Land**

2 ed. – Front-group for the Socialist Workers Party (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg62**). To take but one other example of their recuperative tactics, in August 2022 an anti-deportation network in Manchester responded to an immigration raid at a restaurant: 20-30 people mobilised and prevented the officers from detaining anyone. Yet a few SWP/SUTR members proceeded to distribute their SUTR placards, unfurled a banner and a sound-system for an impromptu rally on the scene, and went on to describe the action as their own success. Additionally, members tried to get people to peacefully obstruct the cops when they were already leaving empty-handed, to get a photo-op... They since refused to take down footage from their social media of people on the action. They closely collaborated with police on their own events, and indeed spontaneously appointed themselves 'liasons' at this autonomous action. Neither SWP nor SUTR had shown any interest in the network before as it built up the contacts and trust with migrants, nor since. Successful thwarting of Border Agency raids is not new (see **'Mobilising Disaster Relief'**), nor making the agents despicable job harder (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg89**); in 2015, union representatives complained that in London "pretty much every week" they were disrupted, pelted with eggs or rocks, having vans boxed in or tyres slashed, having to retreat indoors and wait for back-up, etc.

toward Charing Cross Road. Though initially caught off guard, police regrouped, creating a standoff at Haymarket. Despite police warnings, the bloc held firm, chanting slogans until the pigs eventually allowed them to proceed. They marched to Whitehall to join the United Friends & Families Campaign, who had also marched earlier on that day, setting aside banners in a silent show of respect upon arrival.



(see Rebellion Extinction)

Both the antifascist migrant worker bloc and SUTR numbered several hundred participants each, being significantly outnumbered by the fascists and confronted by a heavy police presence that nullified any chance of exerting meaningful pressure. Minor skirmishes ensued, resulting in five arrests, including one counter-protester allegedly involved in an assault on a police officer.

Thinking Strategy

These events illustrate the ongoing struggle of grassroots movements in the UK, particularly as peaceful demonstrations emerge as the only permitted option in a heavily policed environment that shows little tolerance for diverse street tactics. Consequently, these movements often fail to apply significant pressure, let alone create conditions that might challenge authority, inadvertently reinforcing the state's narrative around superficial reforms and allowing its institutions to maintain control over dissent.

Peaceful protests can easily be co-opted into legal and political frameworks, making them predictable and manageable for the state. This co-optation can also hinder transformative justice within movements themselves, depriving them of the disruptive power necessary to effectively challenge informal leaderships within activist organisations. As a result, non-conflictual tactics will keep falling short to make a significant impact or shift public opinion against the government, as seen in the limited, if not backfiring, effects of initiatives like Just Stop Oil.³

Amid tightening state repression, the Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act of 2022⁴ grants law enforcement broad authority to restrict protests labelled as “disruptive”. This legislation enables fines, arrests, and dispersals based on vague criteria, such as noise levels or perceived public inconvenience, creating a chilling effect that deters activism. Advanced surveillance technologies,

3 ed. – see **The Red Flags of Just Stop Oil**

4 ed. – see **1 May 2021...**

including facial recognition, further discourage participation by increasing the risk of identification and scrutiny post-protest. The spectre of long-term repercussions looms over protesters, likely explaining the significantly low turnout at grassroots demonstrations.

Meanwhile the far-right networks have been consistently building up, successfully staging “people’s riots” last summer using confrontational tactics that appropriated insurrectional spectacles to promote white supremacy through performative violence. Anti-Islamic and nationalist sentiments remain attractive, fuelled by social fractures and the failure of multicultural integration amid significant global restructuring.⁵ New waves of immigration are to be expected, driven by the ongoing wars and environmental collapse, that will keep exacerbating social inequalities. Immigrants will remain the scapegoats for economic and cultural anxieties, while facing exclusion from the consumerist lifestyle of Western societies, starkly illustrated by the genocidal violence faced by millions in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The events of [26.10.24] highlight the difficulties of navigating this landscape. The statist left remains stagnant, lacking any ideological or economic alternatives during this time of profound global crisis and restructuring.⁶ Fascist elements are encouraged to re-emerge unchecked in an environment of complete state control, gaining confidence to terrorise vulnerable communities and spread their hateful rhetoric. Without energised communities to build anti-hierarchical networks that foster diverse strategies and provide essential ground support,⁷ grassroots movements risk further decline and may lose ground to rising nationalist narratives. **An anti-authoritarian ethos is crucial now more than ever, as it is the only force capable of countering the growing homogeneity and suppression imposed by the state and its various manifestations.**

The challenge isn't just about fighting against fascism; it's also about understanding how different parts of the state perceive and utilise these movements. This dynamic allows the far-right to strengthen while more radical voices are suppressed, even within parliamentary politics. This situation underscores the need for a new kind of resistance from the below, that goes beyond protests and promotes strategies that effectively disrupt and challenge the underlying systems of oppression.

5 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

6 ed. – see **The Far Right, the Left, & the Trap of Electoral Politics**

7 ed. – see **'Mobilising Disaster Relief'**

LONG LIVE MUNTJAC! - confronting Eurocentrism in the British anarchist scene

[ed. – Muntjacs, the south-east Asian deer (fanged and self-protective), are deemed an 'invasive species' (see *Return Fire vol.4 pg30*) in the UK by 'fortress conservationists', source of racist analogies still drawn by many; see *The Far Right, the Left, & the Trap of Electoral Politics*.]

Disclaimer; this medium article does not reflect the views of the Muntjac editorial collective, nor is it published by them. This is my own view on why this project is so important to me and why I hope that it inspires similar projects.

In my several years floating around in the British anarchist movement, there has always been this glaring hole in the available books, zines and magazines. Very few people who aren't white have any kind of platform. We all know about Black and Asian anarchists who are in this-or-that group or who are involved in this-or-that project, but there's very little content that centres our voices, our desires and our praxis.

Embarking on a project like this, a free print/digital magazine which not only has to claw its way up the hierarchy of legitimacy amongst the other anarchists but also crawl up and through the anti-anarchist propaganda pushed by the non-white NGO and Marxist spaces that already exist and draw in non-white radicals like moths to a flame [ed. – see *Follow the Fires*].

As distinct minorities in this country, having projects to amplify our voices is essential, this isn't the first attempt at this in anarchist history. For example, Korean anarchists working in Japan and in exile in Manchuria in

the 20s and 30s organised together and wrote their own papers.¹ Chinese anarchist dissidents wrote short-circulation magazines together to keep connected.²

(White) Anarchists in the UK are involved in supporting immigrants and refugees from Africa, Asia and the Middle East and they're involved in these very diverse communities across the country but sadly this coming together hasn't produced a wealth of content written from our points of view.

One factor is that a lot of the black and asian radical tradition is an oral tradition.

In my view, a large part of this is due to the pressure of being judged then later excluded by our white peers and another part is due to how deracialized British anarchism is especially amongst the 'no war but class war' types who "don't see colour". **I'm guilty of it myself, I spent most of my time too worried to even talk about these issues thinking I wasn't qualified.**

If anyone's going to call out the misogynoir in our movements, it's us. If anyone's going to point out the racism in the anarchist scene it's us. I hope people take the time to write or to talk about these topics, even if it's just a few paragraphs it's needed NOW, more than ever.

- 1 theanarchistlibrary.org/library/dongyoun-hwang-anarchism-in-korea-book
- 2 thecommoner.org.uk/the-equality-society-a-preliminary-archival-reconstruction-of-the-chinese-american-anarchist-movement

FOLLOW THE FIRES



30.01.12, Chiriquí province, Panama: Ngäbe-Buglé blockade Pan-American Highway for six days (largely stopping traffic from Central America, costing millions of dollars) after government plans new dams & sale of their land to Canadian & Korean mining companies; they rout police & burn their station, & block access to Petaquilla mine with accomplices

[ed. – Although US-centric in outlook, this piece speaks to similar dynamics in much of the (Northern) Anglo-sphere. While the authors are clear that they are not discounting all 'race'-(/gender-, etc.)based organising, perhaps it's not clear exactly what would not fall under the hammer of their critique. One concern of ours when re-printing this is a certain hankering for a new 'revolutionary subject' arguably detected in their framing (while at other moments they are clear in advocating for action from us all), but we'll save our last additions here for the hotly-debated topic of identity itself. While representation and recuperation are foundational to the democratic electoral system, so it's not surprising that also in (post-)modern social movements they become prominent and need guarding against – in other words, the 'politics' part of identity politics is the part we find more objectionable – the 'identity' part is certainly more complex; see **'A Question That Will Never Be Solved'**. Precisely to more effectively distinguish rebellion from recuperation, it's necessary to have more clarity on this. "What exactly are identity politics?" asked Peter Gelderloos in 'You Have To Do It My Way': "I can't deduce a coherent definition from its usage; given how the term is thrown around it seems only to imply that the speaker is annoyed by someone else focusing on racism or sexism. I thought identity politics meant the process of creating a homogenous identity within a certain population to serve as a political constituency and power base for a group of politicians, whose role as exploiters sitting



Spring 2024, London: resisting round-up for deportation to barge owned by Bibby Marine (founded with slave-trade links), site of suicide & disease

atop that population is hidden by the shared use of that singular identity. In other words it calls up the likes of Gloria Steinem [ed. – mainstream 'radical' feminist figure since the '70s, employed by the CIA, collaborator with repression against sex workers and other not fitting into her mold of Western enlightened feminism, and organiser of the Women's March and its diversion of resistance at the start of Trump's first presidency; see **'It Depends of All of Us'**], Adolf Hitler, David Ben-Gurion [ed. – leading figure in the Israeli Labor party and from the time of partition seen as the 'father of Israel', whose borders he dreamed of expanding from the Nile to the Euphrates], or Ron Karenga [ed. – culturally-focused and notably sexist black nationalist engaged in deadly intra-movement conflict with the Black Panthers with money and support from Los Angeles police and Californian then-governor Ronald Reagan, as part of the CIA program to covertly destroy revolutionary movements].

"Yet when anarchists use this term, frequently they're using it against people involved in the construction of fluid, heterogenous, and complex identities, who extend solidarity to people with different identities and develop holistic critiques of power, and adoption of this identity does not also mean the adoption of a preformulated and unquestionable dogma. [...] One typical internet harangue of Anarchist People of Color bristled at their support for Mumia abu-Jamal [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; **'The Temple Was Build Before the City'**], who is "not an anarchist." (Does this mean that what happens to Mumia is not relevant to black people who identify only as anarchists, because once they make this identification clear the police will stop treating them like black people and start treating them the same as their lighter hued comrades?) In the end it's not a coherent criticism, it's just white people telling people of color how they should identify. This is true identity politics, in the Mobutu Sese Seko sense of the term [ed. – Western-backed dictator who came to power in the Congo in a CIA- and Belgian-aided coup, who made a false show of purging all colonial influence, ordered all European names changed to 'authentic' ones and banned Western clothes, while he was chauffeured between various palaces as the population starved and mineral wealth was sold off to foreign companies], that only regards one identity as natural or at least unquestionable in the common project (nationhood, the struggle against capitalism, what have you), and any other identity as superfluous or harmful.

"To be fair, there are those who reject identity categories with a little more consistency. They make it easier for themselves by being philosophically individualist, although I can't think of any who haven't also contributed to the construction of an anarchist identity."

While there are plenty of applications in radical and non-radical spaces that run contra to this good-faith reading (as detailed below), what would some examples of such "fluid, heterogenous, and complex identities" be? We've seen the theory of intersectionality turned on its head, fixing people into their roles; the author of *The Unquiet Dead* offers the idea (looted from academia) of assemblage theory instead: "at first a product of white male imagination, in defiance of



our (however oppositional) expectations formed by such essential categories[, it] troubles each definition as it lays itself across the body. Within both modes of thought, one may be, say, a white cis [ed. – see **You Are the Good Cause**] woman accepted by her community but lacking in economic privilege – and that experience will be entirely

different than the experience of a person with any one of those categories changed; the only similarities are those enforced by oppression or affirmed through solidarity. What is it to be a poor white woman in the company of other poor white women, from your region – or from far away? What is it to be poor and white in relation to rich white people? What is it to be poor and white and a woman in relation to a particular poor black person whom one knows and loves dearly? How was it when you were a child? How will it be when you are old? How will it be at work next Thursday? And so on. The difference is in how static any of those categories are understood to possibly be as one moves through space and time. Rather than continuing to atomize identity into each person's singular experience, the framework of assemblages defies the confines of the body, and instead considers the ways in which they relate to each other over the course of movement through space and time (which is itself not necessarily linear), through each social and biological interaction. Indeed, it defies the limitations of these interactions to the human. Furthermore, the framework allows the possibility of choice, of free will, of contradiction; of, most importantly for us, defiance. It establishes the **spaces of slippage** Andy Merrifield called for, something radically undefinable and inessential."

To us this seems like a more fruitful engagement than abandoning the field of identity wholesale to the politicians (turning away from it, as the authors below put it), though much of their analysis and proposals are useful nonetheless. We are reminded of the thoughts in 'A Generalized Theory of Frivolity': "Lately, it really feels as if everyone has suddenly forgotten about feminism! The elite capture of identity politics in the neoliberal age [ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**] has conveniently erased half a century and more of the labor to articulate a language to describe our once invisibilized, intersecting experiences. (it's crazy any of us even get the chance to create knowledge "legitimately" – if the right gets their way, our studies will be a brief historic experiment. Political education is one of their most focused upon targets) The maligned "safe(r) space" [ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**] inherits its defining factors from this complicated lineage. We know that safety is illusory. If we find fault in the way these attempts have been swooped and turned against us, it is not the labor itself we reject. It remains a gift from our elders, to adapt and translate. We pick through the wreckage of ivory towers and marketplaces for wheels we won't have to reinvent later."

We can already hear the critics (certainly from the hoariest parts of the Marxist crowd with their historical materialism; see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**) that by criticising certain

forms of identity politics while still speaking as and to “non-white revolutionaries,” the authors are falling into their own trap. Returning to ‘You Have To Do It My Way’: “A common argument made by these critics of a poorly identified identity politics seems to be that the speaker pays lipservice to the evils of racism or sexism but claims that the basis of racism and sexism is the division of people into categories along lines of race or sex, thus people who include these divisions in their political work are guilty of reinforcing rather than attacking the oppression itself. How valid is this hypothesis? First I want to analyze the logic a little more. An assumption underlying this argument is that the first apparent feature, chronologically, of a phenomenon will become the basis of that phenomenon, and thus its generative feature. In other words, a distinction of gender is a prerequisite for sexism, thus gender distinctions generate sexism and by destroying gender distinctions we destroy sexism. What was that video game where the boss of a certain level is this evil bug that flies around and suddenly multiplies into a dozen copies of itself, but if you can kill the original, then they all die? Anyways I think I make my point: if identity itself is the basis for oppression then we can destroy oppression by destroying identity, whereas leaving identity untouched would automatically regenerate oppression. A further assumption of this line of reasoning is that history is mechanical, progressive, and unilineal, because if the first feature of a phenomenon automatically leads to the development of the entire phenomenon, then there is no possibility for multiple outcomes or even for stasis or reversal. A always leads to B always leads to C.

“There. The idea has lost its clothes. And, oh irony of ironies! It reveals itself to be Historical Materialist at best, and Social Darwinist [ed. – i.e., ‘survival of the fittest’] at worst. [...] I can’t argue hard enough that history is neither mechanical, progressive, nor unilineal, these are idiotic and harmful – yet highly recalcitrant – Western myths, and God help us if these myths are true because that would mean that unless anarchy has been preordained by the machines of history then there is nothing we can do to bring it about.”

Certainly, the piece below is more sophisticated than this, and the main identity at stake – racial identity – is much more clearly a colonial imposition; yet still requiring a complex awareness in confronting, one which can be both refined and undermined in the course of struggles, as the authors point out. Let us continue in that task, unburdened by the dead hand of essentialism.]



The following essay was adapted from a talk that has been given in slightly different forms at three gatherings in three different regions of the U.S. in the last six months [ed. – published in June]. It emerges from the broader efforts of some nonwhite revolutionaries based in and around the [US] Southwest who are using talks, workshops, and discussions in an attempt to combat liberal and otherwise counter-revolutionary forms of identity politics which present themselves as militant and anarchist.

“Unlearn the identity and ally politics you learned at colleges and non-profits, or from people who work at colleges and nonprofits. They are tools of counterinsurgency and make you really fucking annoying.” – Wendy Trevino



1. **BIPOC radicalism** is an imprecise name for a number of slippery dynamics and tendencies that foster repressive habits, discourses, and patterns of acting in our movements. It does not name a coherent political identity or bloc, some external force or conspiracy to be countered, but is an element of the social landscape of counterinsurgency¹ that can

1 ed. – “I would argue that the concept of counterinsurgency has two interrelated definitions, one significantly more broad, and one much more historically specific. In a very broad way, counterinsurgency is nothing other than the attempt to eliminate or prevent insurgency. To put it another way, policing, in its very structure, is counterinsurgency, and I generally prefer to understand the concept in this way; it provides a rich conceptual basis for any number of discourses on statism as an active phenomena.

“However, the way that the term is often used, and the way that Kristian Williams uses the term [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg12*], is grounded in military strategies deployed against insurgencies beginning with the British campaign in Malaya and the French campaign in Algeria. In this context, counterinsurgency is a term that implies any number of specific tactics within a loosely defined strategy that takes its strategic object and terrain of engagement to be the population itself, rather than the gaining and holding of space [based] in the modification of the dynamic of conflict within the population. Taking as its point of departure that conflict permeates space, and that this kinetic scenario fundamentally shifts the dynamics of this space on a constant basis, combined with the recognition that the state functions to the degree that conflict is contained, this body of thought focuses its attention on ways to de-escalate and decelerate conflict within time and space. In the contemporary context this has lent itself to intelligence-led operations, in which local populations are used as mechanisms to project the force capacity of an occupying force.

“In other words, sympathetic and unsympathetic

flow through all of us in different forms and combinations across time and place. Where it emerges, it suffocates and snuffs out the fires that sustain militant culture.

BIPOC radicalism is not synonymous with any non-white radicalism, radicalisms that take seriously the question of race at political, strategic, personal, and communal levels,² or radicalisms drawing on non-Western ways of being and lineages of resistance.³ It names a particular mix of elements of identitarian politics – essentialism, a rhetoric of safety and vulnerability,⁴ and a politics of deference – with tendencies of more rigid radicalisms⁵ – moralism, destructive critique, internal policing, and the formation of enclosed milieus bound by an insular shared language. BIPOC radicalism shares many characteristics with previous waves of radicalism emerging out of queer and feminist subcultures, and often overlaps with them, though the specificity of racial identity fosters unique dynamics and obstacles. While it is most often concerned and speaks for the category of “BIPOC,” it can also speak for any related subcategory at any given moment – Black, Brown, Indigenous, Palestinian, immigrant, and so on.

It might otherwise be recognized as “BIPOC radical liberalism,” “identitarian or racial authoritarianism,” “radical racial essentialism,” or “racial identitarian counterinsurgency” (even when enacted by genuine participants of a movement). While each name emphasizes different aspects of this tendency, and each has its own limitations, I use “BIPOC radicalism” to emphasize two things: first, how this politics coalesces around a particular set of identities under the umbrella of “BIPOC” and the taxonomic view of racial identity this relies on. Second, how it claims to represent genuine radical politics, perhaps even the most radical, in ways that make it harder to confront than its more ideologically liberal counterparts. At the intersection of “BIPOC” and “radicalism” emerges a set of ideas that claims to represent the most radical faction of non-white political actors, and thus to represent anti-colonial insurgency itself.

elements are identified, with sympathetic elements, or elements that can be made sympathetic, being used for both intelligence gathering and as adjunct informal forces to bolster the otherwise limited capacity of the occupying force” (Countering Insurgency). Insurgency and counter-insurgency is the stated call for submissions for upcoming (May 1st 2025) second issue of Muntjac magazine (see **Long Live Muntjac!**).

2 ed. – see **Long Live Muntjac!**

3 ed. – see **Yawar's Story**

4 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

5 joyfulmilitancy.com/2018/06/03/the-stifling-air-of-rigid-radicalism

Whether these tendencies manifest as internalized policing of other participants in a movement or our self-cannibalizing impulses towards conflict and critique, they act as force multipliers for the actively repressive maneuvers of our enemies in the state and ruling classes. **In the name of liberation they smuggle back in the very framework of racial identity, one of the originary moves of counterinsurgency that inaugurated the modern/colonial world,⁶ that turned life-worlds and relations into populations and bodies, subjects or objects of power and violence.** Disguised in the mask of radicalism, these tendencies exploit real contradictions and fault lines in our movements in self-repressive ways. **Most importantly, BIPOC radicalism is repressive of those of us named as “BIPOC,” locking us in a cycle of impotence that stifles the growth of autonomous anti-colonial insurgency.**



2.

BIPOC radicalism has not overcome the fatal limitations of (white) radicalisms, and often intensifies or replays the same dramas. It is not a movement connected to the autonomous self organization of the colonized,⁷ but a scene within a scene. It is defined by impotent rage against the existing scene and resentment of others for things that we do not feel capable of ourselves. Limited to a critique of others, BIPOC radicalism avoids the task of tracing a positive vision of what a revolutionary process looks like, of how to overcome the limits that each cycle of struggles and uprisings hit.

This tendency implicitly or explicitly adopts language – “directly impacted,” “centering,” “safety,” “allyship” – coming from university and nonprofit lineages, from politics meant to protect the middle class (including the BIPOC middle class or class-aspirational).

BIPOC radicalism has inherited a political language that is a product of the limits and defeats of the revolutionary possibilities of the twentieth century – the counterinsurgency doctrines that dismembered revolutionary movements globally and the diversion of the revolutionary self-

6 ed. – see the companion piece to **Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation**

7 ed. – see **The Kanak Insurrection & the Nickel Industry**

organization of the colonized into the designs of national bourgeoisies that built the current era of multi-national capital and authoritarian states. While these political frameworks previously belonged more exclusively to liberals, the post-2020 explosion of the Instagram-Infographic-Industrial-Complex⁸ has produced a new wave of BIPOC radicals who mix this more liberal identitarian framework with more anarchistic political positions on non-profits, the state, and mutual aid.⁹

Just like other radical scenes, this scene produces an insular language and framework for acceptable activity that actually closes it off to the unruly messiness of autonomy and self-organization. The foreclosure of a revolutionary horizon, the erasure of the real insurgent practices animating previous cycles of struggle, and an inability to overcome the limits faced by these struggles, have led to a retreat to the interpersonal at the expense of all else. Anti-racism becomes a self-help politics for trauma-obsessed BIPOC and guilty white people alike.

Individual people of color conflate their own desires, opinions, and fears with those of all BIPOC. They then conflate those assumptions with political positions, with the milieu giving the false impression that these feelings are generally felt. Conflicts which are fundamentally about the ethics by which we relate to each other or the strategies we pursue in our conspiracies are misrepresented as simple identitarian divides. BIPOC radicals become absolved of their own complicity or missteps in these dynamics and weaponize authenticity politics to erase or undermine other “BIPOC” who take contradicting positions that undermine their representational claims. In its most destructive forms, the strongest proponents of such politics cause the self-destruction of the movements they engage in through the imposition of their rigid political doctrine and their habits of conflict and call-out, smothering any of the possibilities that they overlooked in their narrow analysis.

3.

BIPOC radicalism produces a shared unhappy community of critique that is ultimately unsustainable. It erases and represses the inherent heterogeneity and dissent that lurk within each political identity, which eventually resurface as fault lines and sources of further disappointment.

Many BIPOC spaces are defined almost in their

8 ed. – see **We Close the Door**

9 ed. – see **'Mobilising Disaster Relief'**

entirety by critiquing or distinguishing themselves from white people, white leftists, white anarchists. This shared critique produces a false sense of shared politics and safety. While BIPOC caucuses present themselves as representing some shared experience or identity, their framing already self-selects who shows up – those who already align with an identitarian frame show up, and those of us interested in something different stay at a distance, stay quiet, *or are acting elsewhere*.

Defining oneself by critique is an easy cop-out, because critique is an easy muscle. We are trained in it by a spectacular and social network-mediated society that teaches us to experience our agency through the very fact of expressing correct ideas – the practice of critique itself as power in a world where we are separated from our collective agency. Critique is easy because it reinforces our distance from the messiness of a situation where we are challenged to experiment within a set of practical limits. Critique enables us to easily judge and categorize people and events in a moral framework of good or bad.

The cruelest irony is that, once the easy target of the white person is removed from the picture, these spaces usually devour themselves in vicious cycles of critique and conflict. The conflicts range in content: fights over classifying if someone is white or “white-passing” frequently rehash the logics of race science, with BIPOC reaching for their calipers to guard entrance to their safe space; fragmentation on intra-identity lines of class and class-aspirations, gender, sexuality, disability, create even more insular scenes in an identitarian fractal; **conflicts over politics and strategy in the context of specific, real struggles reveal our lack of affinity. Even the framework of BIPOC anarchist is limiting, as even the anarchist identity is full of its own internal fragmentations on personal, theoretical, and strategic questions – social anarchist, insurrectionary, nihilist, autonomous communist.**

When the dust settles, the “BIPOC” spaces collapse and the “white anarchist” spaces remain, and we are left with the choice between burnout or finding possibility amidst complexity.

4.

BIPOC radicalism converts racial identity into a moralistic category rather than a political one. This identitarian moralism offers a simplistic framework for judging events and organizations on the basis of what they are believed to be and the identities they are composed of rather than what they are doing. The reflexive critique of “this space/tactic/action/ideology is white” in actuality tells us little about the

object of its critique.

Describing what a body or collection of bodies is, particularly in terms of the social identities inscribed onto it, tells us little about what we desire, what we can do, what we can build or destroy as part of the struggle against the colonial world.

Animated by a search for the perfect space with

an idealized racial composition, where the “real BIPOC revolutionary subject” will supposedly be present, we are driven away from the messiness of reality: that we make revolution in the conditions we find ourselves in, with the people who show up, not the conditions we wish we had.

This identitarian moralism locks in identity as a static positionality which one can never engage, destabilize, or escape, trapping white people and BIPOC alike. Judgment of spaces and actions on the basis of the real or perceived racial composition of a space, or assumptions about the “privileged” nature of militancy, closes us off to the possibilities and agency to be found in such spaces – whether mass actions, convergences, infrastructure projects, or militant networks. Hand-wringing about the supposedly privileged nature of militancy does not negate the necessity of militant activity such as blockades, occupations, riots, sabotage, and more. The self-righteousness of this position participates in the real erasure of principled anti-colonial militants of color who engage in these spaces or actions.

Identitarian moralism threatens to restrain the promiscuous and powerful affinities that flow across positionalities and replace them with a rigidly boxed-in identitarian non-affinity. **Expectations around “centering” betray an investment in the logic of visibility, which cannot comprehend something as insurgent if the right identities are not represented in positions believed to be authoritative. This expectation, on the one hand, exposes those precisely misunderstood as “the most vulnerable” to higher risks of visibility and the higher labors of leadership. On the other, it locks us in to speak first as and for the identities scripted on to us, rather than to speak as and for**

“All you see are demographics
All you hear is “systems”
Without undressing me down to the sum of my parts you cannot
achieve that checking-your-privilege erection.
You defend dogma cuz it’s all you’ve got left
But
Humanity won’t fit into data bars or scripted syllabi
And won’t stick around when you can no longer see it.
Undressing us all with your politics you become the most correct
And also an entity you’d probably hate
– could you escape for a moment.
You steal our dignity and undermine our friendship
When the dots connect
And I see you seeing me through the activist gaze.
I’m not the beating heart I feel
Your eyes just reflect a female queer blob of color.”

– Rakhee Devasthali

our desires and capabilities. The obsession with our being, with who we are presently in this world, with listing identities and privileges, suppresses our imagination and experimentation with what we can become beyond this world, what we can become in the struggle against this world. Attempts to capture a snapshot of our

position misses our movement, our constant motion towards something else. We become so focused on seeing and naming the walls of the cage we are in that we reinforce it, losing focus of the ways we escape, fight, shake, and break the cage.

5.

BIPOC radicalism defines identity through victimization and vulnerability instead of agency and action and remains trapped in a negative cycle of powerlessness. When “BIPOC” are invoked it is usually to name some sort of injury or risk: “BIPOC are at higher risk of arrest and face worse repression,” “BIPOC don’t feel centered or heard in this space.” This framing is especially potent in activating the guilt of well-meaning white radicals, who then self-authorize to fight on behalf of their “BIPOC” allies and wreck other spaces they are in in the name of the White Guilt Crusade.

When the category of “BIPOC” is invoked, it is overwhelmingly demobilizing. Fears of vulnerability lead to risk aversion, peace policing, and restricting our activities to purely non-confrontational activities – romanticized community and mutual aid events without teeth, spectacularized rallies, and the occasional heavily planned non-violent direct action. Anything that breaks out of this rigid mold – spontaneous revolt, autonomous actions at a large march, decentralized activity, unplanned or breakaway marches, the emergent chaos of insurgency – are stigmatized for “putting others at risk.” The realities of repression are reduced to simplistic, decontextualized, immaterialist check-boxes of power and privilege mapping onto pre-defined racial identities, regardless of the actual amount of repression experienced – surveillance, door knocks, interrogation, financial instability, incarceration. Strategic conversations about risk,

courage, and repression are replaced with blanket statements about safety that smother the fires of resistance; we become afraid of other people exercising an agency and autonomy that we deny ourselves.

BIPOC radicalism declares its resistance under the framework of victimization and vulnerability, yet offers impotent critique when their organizing is inevitably co-opted by non-profits. The cooptation is no accident, but is built into the limitations of BIPOC radicalism. The milieus steeped in this politics inherit much of their organizing framework not from an anarchic ethos of self-organization, nor the lessons learned in the chaotic mess of the mass revolts of the past decades, but from an Activist™ milieu¹⁰ rooted in specialized frameworks of heavily planned protests, visibility and spectacle, and an abstract notion of community building or mutual aid. **All of these forms of activity are easily adopted by non-profits, which often can simply out-organize the BIPOC radicals with their well-resourced networks and media capacities.** By exorcising the spectre of unregulated resistance, BIPOC radicalism leaves itself completely open to an endless cycle of cooptation and impotent critique.

Once demobilized, declared, and co-opted, all BIPOC radicalism has left is a politics of complaint that is perversely dependent upon the white radical milieu it critiques. Critiques of actions, convergences, and events for not meeting the milieu's political standards mask an underlying powerlessness and dependence; BIPOC radicals have given up the the autonomous self-organization that would give them the power to fight and build on their own terms and are reduced to making demands and registering grievances of the white radicals. The white radical milieu ultimately maintains its central position and power as the BIPOC radicals have given up their own power entirely in their expectation that white radical allies serve them and cater to their needs. Rather than recognizing the unique resources and

10 ed. – see **What is Insurgency?**

opportunities at their disposal and forming strategies to actualize their own visions, the BIPOC radicals are reduced to a position of impotent dissatisfaction with what others are doing.



07.08.24, London, UK: during nation-wide xenophobic rioting around 50 people gather to oppose it in Croydon, one of the 100s of locations announced on far-right channels to gather that day; they don't show up, but the masked-up crowd make good to barricade, light fires & launch projectiles & fireworks at the racists who were bound to show up: the cops. Days before in Bristol, where controversy has been raised in the past about combative tactics in migrant-defence mobilisations 'endangering' the most vulnerable, a group of anti-racists were the only force defending migrant families housed in a hotel from a 'Stop the Boats' protest intent on carrying out a pogrom such as much migrant housing received during those days, holding them off until local Green Party councillors prematurely declared victory & facilitated a police dispersal, leaving it in the hands of apathetic cops.

6.

BIPOC radicalism's politics of deference¹¹ runs counter to the necessity of principled co-struggle, critical reflection, and internationalism. The invocations to “center BIPOC,” and to “follow BIPOC leadership” are constant in these milieus. In practice, this usually means to take whichever BIPOC are present in the room, are vocalizing a particular critique, as unquestionable authorities. To politically disagree is to invalidate the “lived experience” of others.

Undoubtedly, political spaces must be responsive to the feelings, desires, and needs of the people in them. But this

responsiveness should be guided by principles, strategy, and politics in a spirit of collective struggle and mutual critique. It cannot be led by the purely interpersonal response of people-pleasing and uncritically following charismatic leaders – and there are many such charismatic anarcho-influencers and petty identitarian narcissists among the BIPOC radicals and their associated army of white allies.

For the guilt-ridden (whites and BIPOC alike), this response is an easy palliative – it requires one to not develop one's own politics and principles, to not study and experiment with insurgent practices, to not be at risk of political conflict with others. Often “listen to BIPOC” ends up being a shorthand for listening to those who already agree with you or validate your own liberalism, risk aversion, and comfortable activism. Best case, you end up with a sea of passive activists who are unable to take initiative or develop their own strategies for pushing the horizon of revolution.¹² Worst case, you drive masses of new activists into manipulation by self-appointed and self-interested leaders who are practiced at weaponizing this guilt to silence critique, pushing people through an activist meat grinder that leaves people burned out and disillusioned.

11 thephilosopher1923.org/post/being-in-the-room-privilege-elite-capture-and-epistemic-deference

12 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg67**

If we understand race as a modality of governance that imposes social roles, distributions of labor, and categories of being and non-being, then BIPOC radicalism is a managerial inverse of this form of governance. Using guilt, control and suppression of unruly affinities, and the purging of dissident desires, it manipulates the terrain of a movement. That this gesture is a response to a sense of powerlessness in the face of the colonial world does not make it liberatory.

The unfortunate truth is: the BIPOC radical who is in the room may not have good ideas about strategy and tactics, and should not necessarily be listened to. They may be projecting their own fears and anxieties onto a situation. Perhaps they don't actually have the same "lived experience" of exploitation or repression as others in the room. Most importantly, they are not the only people we should be developing our politics from. If we only listen to the BIPOC radicals in these insular rooms, we will ignore the actually existing forces of anti-colonial insurrection we can learn the most from.

Do you listen to the anxious BIPOC radical telling people to not act autonomously, or to the Black rioters smashing cars and shooting fireworks at the police? Do you listen to the middle class diasporic protest organizers whose solidarity is restrained by their own class position and anxieties? Do you listen to the anti-colonial militants who may not be in the room who have advocated more insurgent strategies – including those in the global south calling for escalating, militant solidarity?¹³ Do you notice when there actually isn't a unified BIPOC voice, a BIPOC leadership, in the room you're in? Who is in most need of your solidarity? How will you choose?

Dis-Orienting Ourselves

BIPOC radicalism does not have a true hegemony over the identities it claims to represent. Throughout previous strains of radicalism and waves of insurgency, we find currents that actually undermine this identitarianism with a politics of affinity, complicity, and autonomous militant action at the strategic levels necessary to end the colonial world.¹⁴ We must find our ways back into these currents to push past the limits we currently face. Some preliminary proposals on how we might do so:

a.

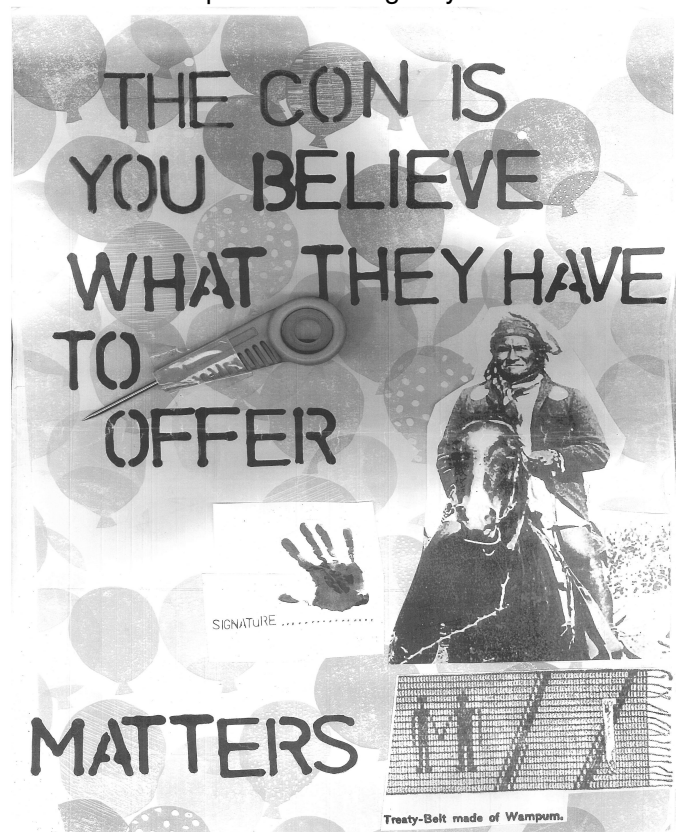
Follow the horizon of insurgent anti-colonialism, not

13 ed. – see 'Since Colonial Times'

14 ed. – see 'Occupied Territories'

identities and leaders. Anti-colonialism is a loose, imperfect term, but one I want to salvage from the wreckage of the twentieth century. **Tearing away the baggage of representation, nationalism, and leadership that steered the anti-colonial movements into authoritarian post-colonial capitalism, we can see the living thread of anti-colonialism in the actual self-organization of the colonized and globally oppressed.¹⁵ This thread runs back through the aborted, partial revolutions of national liberation, tapping into the legacies of masses of colonized and oppressed people remaking their lives and transforming themselves in the process.** The growing sequence of insurrections against the state and capital, the toppling of elites local and transnational, is where this force continues to live.

This insurgency appears as hydras, as Acephale,¹⁶ as masses and crowds, camps and riots, assemblies and networks. Everywhere there appears a leader, a spokesperson, a representative, a center, we can see the creep of counterinsurgency. Those dedicated to this insurgency must participate in its self-defense from these forces and frustrate the attempts of those who would recapture the insurgency in the terrain of



(on the wampum treaty-belt mentioned in the artwork above, see Indigenous Anarchist Convergence - Report Back)

15 ed. – see 'The Position of the Excluded'

16 ed. – A headless (acephalous) figure, memorably deployed holding a sacrificial blade and burning heart in the symbolism of the Surrealist (see **Memory as a Weapon; Waging the War on Christmas**) Georges Bataille's milieu during the 1930s anti-fascist struggles.

identity, legibility, visibility.

b.

Insurgent anti-colonialism must hollow out and de-center the center, and decenter ourselves. It is a process that is not about us and our individual selves, but a total remaking of the world and our subjectivity. Anti-colonialism will require us to think, feel, desire, and be differently. We should not confuse our current selves for the selves that revolutionary processes make possible. Each step we take in this process will be terrifyingly exhilarating and painfully transformative. **Moving in a mass crowd, clashing with the police, destroying property, deliberating in mass assemblies, growing and preparing food at scale,¹⁷ distributing guerrilla medicine – after every experience that pushes us closer towards this horizon, we will find our ideas, passions, and habits fundamentally altered.**

This process requires us to step into our own power – the power which we fear and resent in others and ourselves. We cannot know what we will become at the outset. We must embrace this radical uncertainty, this risk, to dive headfirst into the unknown without the comfortable guarantees that the Activists™ would offer us. We do so because we know that what we will find is far more joyful, powerful, survivable than anything this world and the milieus parasitically dependent upon it have to offer. If we are serious about this, we could make white people irrelevant to what we are doing.

We feel new capacities growing in ourselves, and the growth of these capacities connect us to friends and co-conspirators the world over. **By rediscovering our own resources, traditions, and skills to bring to the war against this world, we escape the pits of our resentment of what the white radicals have. We become a force capable of organizing**



The other capture of feminism: head of the Conservatives, first black leader of a major UK party, flaunts her transphobic feminism (see Wounded Healers), denies institutional racism, opposes reparations for slavery & more black history in schools, & fiercely defends "Western values" against 'less valid' cultures

17 ed. – see **Earthbound Farmers' Almanac & Food Autonomy in Bulbancha**

our own needs, building our own material base, no longer dependent on others. We lose ourselves in the swell of the mass and rediscover other ways of being. Echoing Assata¹⁸ – echoing Marx¹⁹ – we have nothing to lose but our chains.

C.

To follow this horizon will blow apart the identities we have inherited, enabling new forms of relation, affinity, and communal life unbound by the violent fictions of identity we have inherited from the colonial world. **Abolishing not just our identities, but a**

18 ed. – Assata Olugbala Shakur (her chosen name; Assata means "she who struggles" in Aisha, Olugbala "the one who saves" in Yoruba, and Shakur "the thankful one" in Arabic) was a fighter of the Black Liberation Army underground group (BLA; she'd participated in the Black Panther Party on both West and East coasts before but left disillusioned with macho and ahistorical attitudes), which did reprisals against the murderous police departments. She was convicted for a 1973 shoot-out which left a cop dead as well as her comrades Sundiata Acoli and Zayd Malik Shakur. In 1979 she was broken out of prison by the BLA and some of the May 19 Communist Organization, and was granted asylum in communist Cuba in 1984, living there ever since. While her autobiography and legend widely circulate to this day, it must be said that she speaks not a word in public critical of the dictatorial and racial regime in her new home; while various black liberationists have found refuge there in past decades, the legacy of slavery on the island lives on in treatment to the Afro-Cuban population, not least by the police (for example, who killed a 27-year-old in 2020, provoking protests, then received full government support under the hashtag #HeroesInBlue while the regime simultaneously criticised the US in that year's visibilisation of racist State violence across the world; see **The Siege of the Third Precinct**). Since coming to power – and slaughtering the anarchists, who had a history of organising across divides of racialisation – the communist regime denies that racism exists on the island, despite the widespread anti-black notion of marriages to *adelantar* (improve the race of) future children and the regime's own repression of Afro-descended spiritualities, and a large portion of the Afro-Cuban population being in prison (the imprisonment rate in general on the island is even higher than in the US), sometimes merely as 'potential criminals'. Cuban anarchist Gustavo Rodríguez states that there is a "sort of apartheid, people from the eastern provinces (predominantly Afro-descendants) are prevented from moving to Havana and the western provinces, where they have greater opportunities for survival. These "illegals" in their own country are called "palestras" or "Palestinians"; a derogatory, deeply racist, classist and regionalist noun, which is used in a comparative way in clear allusion to the discrimination suffered by the native Palestinians in the State of Israel. This pejorative has been widely accepted and has become dangerously incorporated into the Cuban daily lexicon. Constantly harassed and persecuted by the police – who demand official documentation, using discriminatory criteria to identify them (the regional accent when speaking and the color of their skin) – these people are not only denied to

world that could produce such identities, would mean the communization of all things, the seizure of the means of our collective life, and the reforging of the social relations we will need to animate them. This process proceeds in slow, molecular forms in daily life and explodes rapidly during ruptures and crises. We must turn our attention away from the question of identity and leadership towards the question of our practices, infrastructures, movements, and how they can further the insurrections against the global reign of racial capitalism.

This is a doing, not a being – or a *doing being totally out of control*. We cannot stop thinking about the composition of our movements and how to bring new sectors of society into this insurgent process – of how to generalize insurgency particularly among the colonized. But we cannot be solely obsessed with *who* is doing something at the exclusion of *what* they are doing. Such an insurgent process will not reinforce the identitarian lines we have inherited, but will blow them apart and enable new, unimagined forms of relation, affinity, and communal life unbound by the violent fictions of identity we have inherited from the colonial world. In this crumbling world there are still possibilities to be found wherever people are experimenting with this process, regardless of their particular identities.

There is not now, and perhaps has never been, a BIPOC experience or a BIPOC community. Many will continue to inhabit communities defined by ethnic, linguistic, and cultural lines in the wake of Race. Many others already live in far more promiscuous

buy the products of the ration book for not residing in their native provinces, but they are constantly detained and deported to their places of residence.” Hence, when in 2013 in an open letter on her 75th birthday Assata spoke of living in “*One of the Largest, Most Resistant and Most Courageous Palenques (Maroon Camps [ed. – see 'All That Wildness Names') That Has Ever Existed on the Face of This Planet*”, you can smell the lie.

19 ed. – Of course, as his one-time follower and biographic sketcher John Zerzan writes, “when asked about his idea of happiness, he answered, “To fight.” This ignores the fact that Marx never fought. His entire political life was one of constant compromise, including his initial condemnation of the Paris Commune [ed. – see *For the Love of God*].”

relationships, in non-normative communities that defy easy classifications of identity. Regardless of where we find ourselves, we will need a shared ethics of conviviality and conspiracy: of how to live well with each other and how to fight together.

Everywhere people are building fires – fires for burning down the infrastructures of this world and the identities ascribed to them,²⁰ fires for gathering around in new forms of communal life with shared sustenance, story, and song. To follow the horizon of insurgent anti-colonialism, follow the fires.

'IDENTITY PRECEDES IDEOLOGY'

[ed. – From an interview with Adi Callai. He differs from most analysts in that he wants not to say “that identity politics is either good or bad, but to reveal how the State uses it, so that movement participants can act accordingly.” He studies “IDPsyOps” as counter-insurgency; examples include police infiltrators of the anti-G20 summit mobilisation in Toronto using accusations of identity oppression among radicals to divide people and deflect scrutiny, or the incident during the George Floyd rebellion (see *The Siege of the Third Precinct*) where after Atlanta cops killed Rayshard Brooks, another black man, and media filmed a masked white woman in the crowd that burned down the fast-food joint who had called the cops on him, ‘woke’ Twitter re-broadcast police claims that the movement was being hi-jacked by white outsiders, leading to her doxxing and arrest: she turned out to be Rayshard’s long-time friend. He also discusses a CIA recruitment ad using language of diversity etc. Here, he opens answering the question of what identity politics is and how it came to be what it is today.]

It’s a very illusive term, that means different things to different people. But I’d say most research today traces the term identity politics to a collective of black feminist socialists called the Combahee River Collective, that popularised (and ostensibly coined) the term in the 1970s. And in following this vein, I define identity politics as simply an approach towards political action and advocacy for specific social groups through a centering of their own voices. And (as we generally see under capitalism and neo-liberalism),¹ tools/technologies – whether discursive or material – tend to be appropriated and colonised by the system, and used for its own purposes. Olúfémi Táíwò makes a similar argument about what he calls *elite capture*. Essentially, what has happened (I think), it that this so-called progressive framework has been absorbed into the classical colonial doctrine of divine and conquer. And as we see especially in the contemporary US, it has become a powerful instrument for the production of hegemonic narrative, or a claim to legitimacy. (By the way, according to

20 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg46*

1 ed. – see *'The Position of the Excluded'*

the US military's own Joint Publication on Counter-Insurgency, this kind of narrative, kind of claim to legitimacy, is foundational to successfully repressing an insurgency.)

So as you go over in the video [IDPsyOps], the Right has attacked identity politics, as have some on the Left. Yet at the same time identity politics has become part of the everyday conversation, either in the forum of the corporate spectacle getting "woke" to sell to new markets, sell new products (which in itself is nothing new). Or in the form of things like Disney celebrating Pride² while at the same time donating to the Don't Say Gay bill.³ Ted Wheeler⁴ using pronouns in his Twitter bio while calling in the police and far-right militants to attack Black Lives Matter and anarchists is another example. Trump himself has fully embraced white identity politics,⁵ and far-right strategists like Ann Coulter have really strategically used white identity as a way to try to gain access to votes. So it seems like everyone both hates and uses identity politics at the same time. So I'm curious: how did we get to this point, where everyone's pointing the finger, "identity politics is bad, they're doing it"? At the same time, identity seems to be this really core way of galvanising a base of support.

The examples you listed: they could be seen as examples of elite capture. Or of attempts at authoritarian entryism into a discourse normally associated with the Left (as I explore in the video with that example you mentioned of the CIA recruitment ad). But also to address your previous question, there is a way (and Idris Robinson⁶ talks about this) in which identity precedes ideology. So there's something about identity politics that is so embedded into us – and therefore even if we try to completely cleanse ourselves from its framework, I think we can't do it at this point.⁷

So it achieved a certain goal that it set out to do in that initial movement of the '70s. And I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing. For me, I carry my own international baggage with it, witnessing the lack of an identity political awareness in other struggles

2 ed. – see **Reclaim Your Queer Fucking Life!**

3 ed. – Passed in Florida, banning classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity, mandating that parents be the first informed of any attempt to access support or health services on these topics by their kids and with the power to deny them access.

4 ed. – Liberal-leaning Mayor of Portland, whose house was attacked with fire and condo occupied during over 100 consecutive nights of rioting in the city in 2020 during anti-police uprising; see **The Siege of the Third Precinct**.

5 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

6 ed. – see **The Darkness Criticizes the Wolf for Howling at the Moon**

7 ed. – see **'A Question That Will Never Be Solved'**

around the world. In the video, I talk about Israel-Palestine: I think in my experience too I found myself craving for some identity political awareness in Italy, and noticing how there is a certain lack of sensitivity there that is harmful and toxic in the movement.

But it feels very urgent in the US. Elite capture has been very powerful in the US, and the way it is recuperated and used needs to be addressed theoretically and materially I think, as we go about our organising here.

[...] Peter Gelderloos I think talked about this during the [first] Trump administration:⁸ when it seemed like progressive politics were gone or something like that. But saying decisively that neo-liberalism has won the culture wars. And I think in a sense it is true, and it's what we see in military discourse too. So, as emphasising 'soft' counter-insurgency⁹ over the sort of fascist approach of just mowing everyone down. So this arm of the elite is going to consistently deploy identity politics, and here you're hinting at that: the risk within representation, the recuperation that happens through representation.

So when we examine for example the police evaluation reports, the after-action reports in Minneapolis or in New York City these consultants that municipalities and the State essentially hire to evaluate the police response to the George Floyd uprising:¹⁰ they consistently implore the police, page after page, to use more soft counter-insurgency methods. To appoint community leaders. To talk to the community. To recuperate the social movement apparatus (which, again, leans so heavily on identity politics). At the same time, as we're going to see a continuing reliance on this form of counter-insurgency, I truly think that within the movement we are developing the tools to deal with that, to an extent. I think in the anarchist movement at this point we understand when we see it, and it's a question of how to expand it towards the other mass movements that have and will materialise; to expand the critique and the ability to identify these operations when they unfold. [...] What I'm proposing is to think of identity politics as a tool that can be used strategically for a variety of purposes. So there are places where an identity political awareness can be beneficial (as in, identifying authoritarians, regardless of whether they think of themselves as socialists) – and I don't think we can avoid that. I think (especially in the US) this kind of awareness is embedded in how we understand society. As I mentioned, Idris in the 2.0 of 'How Might Should it Be Done' says identity politics

8 ed. – see **'It Depends on All of Us'**

9 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg13**

10 ed. – see **The Siege of the Third Precinct**

precedes ideology. [But], simply, if they're making common cause with our enemies – and we can prove it – we should not give them space regardless of their identity.

Would it be fair to state that regardless of the problems with identity politics or wokeness being captured by the elites, the real issue is that autonomous anti-capitalist movements remain largely white, have problems with retention, are not actively multi-generational in most examples – what does pushing back against identity politics do for us, and how does it help us grow our movements that are also more representative of the proletariat as a whole?

I think something we should consider is that there's a way in which that kind of perspective works to perpetuate exactly the reality that it seems to oppose. Because it makes us tokenise each other. It works to make invisible or side-line the participation of people who are not white, and it makes us racially profile ourselves or submit to the logic of race (which is the logic of racism). Barbara and Karen Fields talk about this in a great book called *Racecraft*. So when you look at the heart of racial constructs – whether the geneticist pseudo-science or the sociological and historical geneology – the concepts disintegrate and become incoherent. You see this with how racists try to conceptualise identity categories in order to exterminate them, the Hitlerian logic that then through a kind of proto-identity political discourse became the same logic that the State of Israel uses to determine what makes a Jew.

And I think Fanon¹¹ realised this, BLA¹² prison theorist James 'Yaki' Sayles realised it too: the logic of identity might have its strategic uses, but race and racism are to be dismantled. And part of that involves a refusal to participate in its logic. So, like Yaki says, friends and enemies are distinguished by the choices they make,¹³ not race. So rather than thinking about organising based on shame and guilt, orienting towards creating a movement that is hospitable to all of its participants; organising to own or expropriate our own housing so that no-one is homeless or at the whims of landlords or banks; organising to share our resources more generously and effectively so no-one has to work for a living unless they want to; to organise such that we get more energy out of our organising than what we put in to it, as I think a comrade this year said on the podcast.

And I think that if we succeed in creating this kind of infrastructure, we will notice that our movement is actually much more diverse than what we are told.

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg49**

12 ed. – see **Follow the Fires**

13 ed. – see **'The Myth of Luck'**

'THE MYTH OF LUCK'

Last Wednesday night [19.10.11] we attacked the office [in Melbourne] of Australian Labour Party MP, Jenny Macklin, Minister for Indigenous affairs [ed. – *it was smashed and paint-bombed*]. We did this because the Australian government is a government of occupation and ongoing colonization of the Indigenous people of this country [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg69**]. Our actions are in solidarity with the Indigenous people who have been invaded, whose land has been stolen, who have been forcibly removed from their homelands, from their families, whose cultures and languages have been irreversibly damaged, and who are still experiencing ongoing waves of attacks at the hands of our colonial government, of this very office of “Indigenous Affairs”.

We also carried out this attack because as non-Indigenous citizens of this country we are coerced into a situation where we materially benefit from the colonization of Indigenous peoples. We have learnt to deny the reality of the origins of our material wealth – we are the “lucky country”. The myth of luck disguises the reality of war and occupation upon which our lives are built. **We are born into a society that tells us that this colonial activity is a good thing, that it is “for us”, that it is “for them”. That capitalist, materialist culture is “good”. Is “beneficial”.** That everyone deserves the “great Australian dream” built on the spoils of colonial war.

But the dream is a myth. We act because we want to break the monotony of this existence. We do not believe that material comfort is the sole quality which makes life “good”. We act because we do not believe in the cultural superiority of capitalism, and reject the missionary logic of assimilating Indigenous peoples to provide them with a “better” life. We do not believe a life based solely on consumption that is devoid of real emotion, community, individuality and joy is a “better” way of life. This society is boring. It’s empty, unfulfilling, dissatisfying. It is built on a web of lies, pain and suffering, haunted by the almost erased memories of ways of life we have lost [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**].

We reject this culture of denial. **We reject a society that is telling us that we must accept the categories given to us by society, be it either “oppressed” or “oppressor”, “colonized” or “coloniser”.** We are against colonization. We are against the assimilation of the world into white supremacist capitalist culture. Everyone is resisting this system every day in countless different ways, from the seemingly insignificant like every time someone shoplifts from Woolworths, doesn’t buy a ticket on the train, turns off their tv because they’re sick of the mindless bullshit; to community walk-offs, and rioting in the streets [ed. – see **Riots & Eagles**]. This is one way we are choosing to not only resist but intensify our resistance and our lives. Through this action we are reclaiming our dignity and clearly stating our refusal to be “obedient” citizens of colonial

Australia.

– **Unaustralians**

BEYOND THE SCREEN, THE STARS

"Nothing is boring if you are aware of it. It may be irritating but it is not boring. If it is pleasant the pleasure will not fail so long as you are aware of it. Being aware is the hardest work the soul can do, I think." – Solitude by Ursula LeGuin

As technological expansion hurtles forward at an increasingly dizzying pace, the presence of smartphones threatens to become normalized across the anarchist space; in many places, this presence has already been normalized for a long time. Among anarchists in the US, critiques of adopting smartphones, or any other new tech gadget, have generally failed to escape the dead-end binaristic logic of moralistic lifestyle politics. Choosing to live without technology is reduced to a form of consumer activism – an arbitrary personal code that is irrelevant to the struggle, or even harmful in terms of redirecting hostility against the state into judgments of individual consumer choices.

The concept of *'there's no such thing as ethical consumption under capitalism'* has, predictably, become a banner of the 'radical' social media consumption frenzy that has engulfed anarchist milieus in these territories and paved the way for the current state of things. **Today it is nearly unheard of to live without a smartphone; when attending a meeting or event, one must assume there is a smartphone in each and every pocket, and any critique of this reality is largely viewed as the squawking of old-timer, out of touch wingnuts.**

In some places anarchists have resisted this process of normalization and maintained a clear and consistent critique of the impact of smartphone adoption, warding off the incursion from taking hold in the first place. Everywhere that this is not the case however, including but not limited to the US, where any such critique has long since faded, is there any going back? What would it look like to propose that anarchists ditch the technologies we have become increasingly dependent on and addicted to for over a decade, that have come to mediate so much of our

lives, relationships, and forms of struggle?

This text will attempt to construct such a proposal, taking a hard look at how we got into this mess, and sketching out some possible escape routes, both individual and collective. I am particularly interested in looking at how smartphone adoption relates to the general erosion of anarchists' ability or desire to critically examine how we structure our lives on our own terms, instead shaping ourselves into the alienated, flattened personas that digitization demands. When we start to adapt to, and even defend, this alienation as our de facto point of departure, we quickly forget how to be anything else. **The only way out, then, is to remember.**

Most analyses that I find relevant use the term 'technology' as shorthand for the technologies of industrialism which contain and reproduce the power relations of dominant society, rather than engaging in debates about what is or is not a technology. Although

these debates can be valuable, too often they are useless spirals that breeze past the realities of industrial devastation and technological domination in the present. I am more interested in considering smartphones in particular as the linchpin that has made my generation of anarchists accept digital capture on a level I still find hard to fathom, but it's the nature of this capture that I wish to focus on, rather than just the gadget on its own.

Hand in hand with bureaucratic obstacles, social pressures to have a smartphone, to be connected and reachable at all moments, push us into an ultimatum: adapt or be left behind. This framework is foisted on us from all angles, supplanting our own questions with those constructed by the digital world. How do we want to connect with the people we care about? With strangers? What type of relationships do we want to nurture? These considerations are paved right over with fear and threats – you'll lose all connection, you'll lose touch with what's going on, you'll become irrelevant – a parasitic and relational blackmail. **We are denied even the dignified option of solitude, which in the digital world is rewritten as isolation, loneliness, depression, irrelevance.**

As many analyses about technology have pointed out,¹ we don't just use machines, they also use us,

1 'Caught in the Net: Notes from an Era of Cybernetic



mutilating the way we think and feel to fit into the pathways they have constructed for us. **So it is not only the devices themselves that encroach upon anarchist spaces, but these ways of thinking, these ways of feeling and relating – replacing our living spiderweb of affinity relations with a digital web of disembodied connections.** The ability to consider a path of struggle that doesn't depend on optics, on public opinion, on spectatorship starts to feel unrealistic or irrelevant.

There's much more to say about the horrors of smartphones, but on some level, everyone who finds themselves caught in this net already knows. Continually using this technology is in itself a process of numbing and adapting to what you and this little box are doing together, and to the extreme violence and destruction required to bring it to your hands. The anxiety that creeps up after being away from your phone for too long, and the feeling of satisfaction when you get back to the screen, finally able to get your fix – these sensations are not incidental and can't be reduced to individual pathologies; dependency is part of the design. **That feeling of your focus flitting around like a fly in its death throes, trained by years of flipping between internet tabs, scrolling through riot porn interspersed with memes, selfies of people you don't even like, videos of police violence.** We all know what's happening, deep down under the layers of numbness and denial, and it's terrifying.

Interventions of recent years typically focus on how we use technology, not if we should be using it in the first place. This makes sense as a reaction to the reality of the social terrain where smartphones are and will undoubtedly continue to be ubiquitous, and the urgency of getting people to stop unwittingly snitching on themselves and one another by, for example, planning crimes via Signal.²

These debates and cycles of advice are endless, confusing, and typically result in a kind of broken telephone where people adopt tech security tips in bits and pieces without seeing the whole picture. By way of example, I got into an argument with a

Delirium' offers a comprehensive analysis to this end.

- 2 ed. – Regarding this widely-used app, we recommend the full text 'Signal Fails' both on technical notes and social dynamics around scenes using it: "Even if we stick with smartphones, it's dangerous when our communications are centralized. If Signal's servers went down tonight, or Riseup.net, or Protonmail, imagine how devastating that would be to our networks. If anarchists ever pose a major threat to the established order, they will come for us and our infrastructure without mercy, including suspending 'legal protections' we might be depending on. For better and for worse, I believe this scenario to be possible in our lifetime, and so we should plan for resilience."

stranger after a demonstration who pulled out their smartphone to look up directions to the bus stop. When I told them they shouldn't have brought their phone, and definitely shouldn't use it now, they got defensive and informed me that they had it on airplane mode and were keeping it in a Faraday bag, so it was okay. This logic made my head spin, since it didn't take into account the police getting access to their phone if they were arrested, which neither a Faraday bag nor airplane mode would do anything to prevent.

This anecdote is absurd, and I would like to believe that most anarchists would follow a more sensible line of reasoning and either leave their phones at home during sensitive moments or ditch them entirely, but I'm not at all confident that this is the case. Judging from this person's behavior, they had put a great deal of thought into their approach and it was likely based on recommendations shared by others in their environment, reflecting a tendency to heap tech-security measures one on top of the other in a manner that effectively puts the underlying assumption – that they need their phone in the first place – beyond question. And interestingly enough, the false security engendered by their nonsensical precautions might endanger this person and their comrades more than if they had taken no precautions at all [*ed. – if using it wrongly, assuming protection*].

The text titled "Never Turn off the Phone: A New Approach to Security Culture" reflects a similar mentality, though using a more internally coherent logic. By taking for granted the fact that "we all" use and will continue to use phones as the basis of their approach, the author surrenders any possibility that we might live any other way, instead arguing in favor of structuring our behaviors around the metadata created by constant phone and internet use. While building awareness of daily patterns is a useful starting point for confronting surveillance, the solution – never turn off the phone – proposes expanding technology's hold over our lives, omitting any consideration of the consequences of this expansion.

Given how widely this text was circulated, and translated into several languages, a significant number of people clearly found the proposal valuable, testifying to the level that smartphones are entrenched and normalized in the surroundings of people who also want to act against the structures of domination. So how to approach this reality? With more technical guidance recounting what people already know – that they are carrying a cop in their pocket? I don't want to discount technical advice in general, which is clearly extremely valuable for sharing knowledge about how to avoid putting information into the hands of our enemies, especially given the constant developments in technologies of

surveillance. **Rather, I think that any technical approach has to be based in a qualitative critique of technology or it risks further normalizing this horrifying trend by “thinking more about how to adapt to technological nuisances than how to get rid of them.”**³

The most recent issue of Return Fire⁴ republished “Never Turn off the Phone” with a long footnote quoted from “Here... at the Center of the World in Revolt”, problematizing the text’s understanding of security culture by warning against the separation of “technical knowledge from the strategic” –

A broadly shared suspicion of communications technology, academics, journalists, and police, in the hands of an entire community, will be far more effective at blocking State intelligence-gathering than a sophisticated array of counter-surveillance techniques in the hands of one affinity group; but the one need not and should not exclude the other.

At least in my surroundings, not only is the technical separated from the strategic, but any hope of an expansive projectual approach seems to be abandoned entirely, anarchists focusing instead on shaping struggle to fit the increasingly claustrophobic technological enclosure.

Leaving aside what the author means by “community”, their words also raise the problem of the faultlines formed between those who refuse this enclosure on an individual level, possibly along with their close comrades, and those who are ensnared – **who maybe have never lived without a smartphone, were given ipads as babies, have always had to swallow the feelings of heartbreak and rejection when their loved ones pull out their phones instead of looking them in the eye.**

Constantly sharpening hostility towards the digital cage is a valuable and necessary process, and can also be an important gift for all those whose hostility is buried under the anxiety and fear nurtured by smartphone society. The timid approaches that accept the eternal ubiquity of smartphones, likely out of a desire to avoid alienating all those enmeshed in digital networks, are not only weak, they are ineffective and insulting in that they underestimate others’ desire to escape the trap they are stuck in.

This perspective is based in my own experience, as someone who has (very gratefully) received this gift from comrades many times. Being surrounded by the sense of inevitability wears one down, no matter how deep their hostility to technology. Proposals that

3 For a more in-depth critique of “Never Turn off the Phone” see “Fermer le clapet” in *Avis de Tempêtes* #13.

4 ed. – **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4**

focus on resisting the current of digital consumption through the force of individual will can be important, since at the end of the day we must each decide how we want to live. However, the paradigms and logic of compulsory connection seep into the fabric of one’s life, and it’s extremely difficult to even recognize what is happening, let alone take the necessary steps to banish it. **I have gone through the process of being sucked in by technology and, guided by the uncompromising spirit of my comrades, cutting myself free, only understanding the extent to which I was plugged in by experiencing the literal chemical withdrawal that follows tearing out the plug.** Sharing stories about living free from this technology, challenging one another to think on our own terms, to find solutions to the problems that arise when we stop depending on robot servants, is a basic form of solidarity in this technological nightmare, and an essential one.

My attempts to share this gift with others in my environment, starting with my closer comrades and moving into more extended networks of affinity, have been extremely well received and reciprocated. Younger anarchists in particular have reflected about how miserable they were as children of the smartphone generation, sharing how it feels to have never learned how to function without this technology and the difficulties of figuring it out for the first time. Rather than being defensive, as I cynically expected on some level, they launched head-first into the possibilities that ditching their smartphones could open up. Exceptionalizing young people as being a lost cause is, again, insulting given the reality that technological dependence traverses all corners of society. Those of us who lived without smartphones, maybe even for most of our lives, and then gave in at some point are perhaps faced with an even more difficult task of self-reflection and reckoning.

Thinking through how to shift social norms away from digital communication together is more effective if it considers all the ways we relate and move through the world. Starting to just drop by your comrades’ houses without texting or calling first, for example,



something that has come to be seen as invasive or disrespectful, can change the fabric of these relations – it forces us to learn how to tell people we care about that we're busy and don't have time to see them, and on the flip side, how to accept this without internalizing it as a rejection and falling back into the "ease" of avoiding face-to-face interactions altogether. We need to learn that this avoidance isn't actually easier, as it destroys our relational skills, our ability to confront each other when necessary and to maintain trust and respect throughout conflict. This is a simple example that illustrates the importance of a deeper shared commitment to re-learning, or learning for the first time, how to escape the net. **If we can't share this commitment, what are our relations based on?** I don't want to know about the weather forecast from the app; I'll bring a map so you can leave your phone; Can we just ponder this question together for a moment instead of running straight to google? – all of these interventions may be small, but if consistent and mutual, such little challenges (alongside the bigger ones like actually GETTING RID of the damn phone!) can open up space for connection that we didn't even realize was stolen from us.

On an individual level, we must make this same commitment to ourselves, regardless of what everyone around us is doing, and renew it whenever necessary. This is a process of earning back our own trust, doing everything we can to avoid breaking it and, if we do break it, learning how to earn it back again. Smartphones, the internet, etc. teach us to mistrust our instincts, our own sensory perception of the universe, trusting only the expertise of the search engine. Ditching smartphones, therefore, cannot be reduced to a technological 'detox', another means of adapting to, and so accepting, the world as it is. The task at hand is not so simple. Nor can we rid ourselves of phones as a mechanism of distraction to avoid facing ourselves, to numb our fears and grief, only to substitute in another such mechanism – TV, internet surfing, etc. If we fail to challenge the core approach, the phones will just sneak back in sooner or later.

"Many were the evenings when, after her friends had gone home, she would sit by herself in the middle of the old stone amphitheater, with the sky's starry vault overhead, and simply listen to the great silence around her. Whenever she did this, she felt she was sitting at the centre of a giant ear, listening to the world of the stars, and she seemed to hear soft but majestic music that touched her heart in the strangest way. On nights like these, she always had the most beautiful dreams. Those who still think that listening isn't an art should see if they can do it half as well."

– Momo by Michael Ende

WE CLOSE THE DOOR

– *Publicación Refractario comes to an end (Chile)*



After more than a decade, the publication *Refractario* is coming to an end, and with it we close the door to this project.

We have delayed these final words and the necessary closure of this project, thinking about resuming it or giving it new formats, but it is imperative to leave some words by to the door before closing. A project built with so much effort and affection deserves a decent closure.

In July 2012 we started this counter-informative project. We generated a materiality in paper¹ that lasted eight issues (from 2012 to 2014), and we also published 5 special issues. Undoubtedly, the heart of our project was the website. In it converged various dimensions of the anti-prison field: news, contingencies, calls, propaganda, reflections, material of interest, memory and practical information. The project operated for 11 years, far exceeding the initial objectives. We maintained the rhythm of publication, the space for reflection and positioning at different junctures, while on the other hand the feedback from comrades who translated texts, sent communiqués and fed informal discussions within the anarchist movement made *Refractario* a useful, current and active tool.

Throughout this period we celebrated the release of several comrades from prison, accompanied the trial of many and maintained strong agitation in solidarity with several who are still behind bars. Several campaigns managed to internationalize thanks to projects like this one, which allowed us to inform, disseminate and position their urgency in other latitudes. The intention was always to become a space to find accurate information, as well as to open the discussion on so many issues linked to prison, trials

1 publicacionrefractario.wordpress.com/numeros-anteriores/

and repression that in these years have strained the anti-authoritarian milieu.

Already by the end of January 2006, the counter-information web page “Palabras de Guerra” (Words of War) said goodbye to the virtual world at that time. We highlight some of the reasons that led to its closure, as expressed in its farewell communiqué:²

– *Excessive volume of information (in most cases superfluous), a reflection of the Western society of excess.*

– *Accelerated publication rhythms, as opposed to natural rhythms.*³

– *An immediatism that generates the need to be constantly informed.*

– *The emergence of a revolutionary subject whose militancy is based primarily on the internet.*

This criticism and caution has always accompanied us in the various virtual counter-information projects in which we have participated, supported, collaborated or launched. **But clearly in the last few years we have faced a real centrifuge regarding the same points already raised by the comrades years ago.**

The pandemic was the materialization of an erosion that had been going on for almost a year regarding the use of our website. The massive use of social networks (in particular the platform Instagram) – to the detriment of web pages for information and “debate” within the anarchist movement – was exponentially cemented and strengthened.

Due to the nature of the platform and its publication formats, the arguments presented by the comrades of Palabras de Guerra have reached absurd levels. We find ourselves with an impossible-to-digest amount of information that is changing not only day-by-day, but hour-by-hour. At the same time, the need to get into that pulse makes us maintain a frenetic rhythm of publication where what is relevant is lost in a sea of information that we ourselves create.⁴

It is this same dynamic that prevents further reflection, debate and – even by its design (use of texts converted into images as a template) – makes it impossible to [easily] translate and transcribe texts, in some cases even leading to the elaboration of shorter

2 The full text is still available at lahaine.org/est_espanol.php/la_web_anarquista_palabras_de_guerra_se

3 ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**

4 ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**

texts to fit its limited length. The modality frustrates any possibility to archive or search material published in the past, yet here it is, up and running and in one way or another “connecting” a lot of *compañerxs*.⁵ Announcements, urgent news, headlines and some communiqués are now disseminated almost exclusively through these channels. For example, we tried to venture into this format from *Refractario*, but we were unsuccessful, precisely because of the impossibility of developing reflections or sharing texts that go beyond those limitations. They were simply not compatible.

We understand that these problems affect not only our project, but also several web pages and counter-informative projects that have closed or become obsolete.

The scarcity or absence of physical newspapers also gives us a clue to the problem. If this went hand-in-hand with the proliferation of physical spaces, real meetings, debates, it would not be as worrying as the decaying scenario in which anarchic environments find themselves. The repetition of slogans; the absence of response to repressive onslaughts; the indifference to what happens outside one's circle of acquaintances; identity and lifestyle as the struggle, complemented by the image/aesthetics of hoods and fire as an end in itself. To strengthen internationalism, to elaborate reflections, perspectives of struggle, to project new offensives, to weave networks of conspiracy, to educate ourselves politically in a permanent way are indispensable elements at the time of arming ourselves in the social war, aspects that are drowned in reformist petitions, complaints, and posing as thugs, leaving scarce space for political deepening.

We leave on record our current vision of the anarchic milieu after the revolt⁶ and the practical disuse in which our webpage (among other projects) has fallen, so that perhaps in other times, in another territory, it may serve as a learning experience. This scenario does not demotivate us in any sense, but we believe that it is necessary to evaluate the present with a sense of reality in order to deepen and qualify the paths to negate this world. **Where do we inform ourselves? Where do we open debates? How do we converse among comrades who do not know each other? Where do we reflect? Where do we ourselves take the initiative, not just following behind the situation?**

Today *Refractario* comes to an end. But this was not the first anti-prison project and it will certainly not be the last. Today we decided to give this project a burial

5 ed. – see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**

6 ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; 'This Latest Chapter of This Story'**

and not leave it open or adrift. The page will remain as long as the web allows for those who want to review the abundant archive that exists there. In the backpack of the experience remain all the communications and networks forged of an international character, the open and heated debates that allowed the anarchist galaxy to take positions and be nourished.

Our contribution sought to escape from the uncritical solidarity, to skip the spaces of charity and reject the misinformation that usually abounds in the reality of prisoners (When were they imprisoned? What are they accused of? What was their sentence? Where are they? Are they out yet?), maintaining that the prisoners of the social war are those comrades that we are missing in the street. Therefore we reject any heroic or untouchable figure, talking with them, dialoguing, making proposals or arguments.

Before concluding, we do not forget the urgency that the fulfillment of sentences applied by military justice to comrade Marcelo Villarroel,⁷ the long sentence that comrade Juan Aliste is serving,⁸ the isolation regime faced by the anarchist comrade Alfredo Cospito in Italy⁹ or the recent life sentence given to the anarchist comrade Francisco Solar,¹⁰ who assumed responsibility for attacks against the powerful and repressors.

Finally we call to strengthen all counter-information projects that stubbornly manage to endure over time, such as Informativo Anarquista. Only with the support and nourishment of all of us do they become useful tools.

Nothing is over, everything continues.

“We do not give up on our fellow prisoners. Our offensive solidarity is revenge for their captivity. This does not mean an identification with their visions. The prisoners are not sacred idols or symbols of the struggle, but they are the ones who are missing at our side” – Conspiracy of Cells of Fire¹¹

“Life is constant struggle, it is overcoming monotony and stasis” – Mauricio Morales¹²

– Refractario, February 2024

7 ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Between Weichan & Social War**

8 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg51**

9 ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; "Today, March 8th"**

10 ed. – *ibid.*

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg40**

12 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg92**

POEMS FOR LOVE, LOSS & WAR

Who I Met at the Crossroads

One night,
I thought that beside the moon I saw Venus,
but it turned out to be an airplane.
Sometimes, my leg spasms beneath my pocket
and I think my cell phone is vibrating.
One morning, I was naked in the shower,
my muscle jumps, and I wonder who's calling
this early.

I've seen moths
confuse streetlights for the moon.
By morning, a snowbank has piled beneath the light
all the moths, overstuffed with
incandescence.

Mockingbirds are imitating only the most obnoxious
ringtones, but somehow turn them back into
music.

The insects are dying.

Once, I hugged a telephone pole instead of a tree.
I confuse streetlights for the moon.
Some mornings, I don't stop dreaming
until I finish brushing my teeth.
Mockingbirds are learning to beatbox.

One day, he called me with a prophecy,
his phone plugged into a tree he had mistaken
for a telephone pole, I wonder who's calling this early.
There are a dozen or so fireflies. Sometimes,
they get encased in amber beside the moon
I thought I saw Venus.

At night, a generator humming
sounds like moth wings and fireflies.
I want to think the dead moths are snow.
I dream streetlights for the moon.
I worry for my dreams. My muscle jumps.



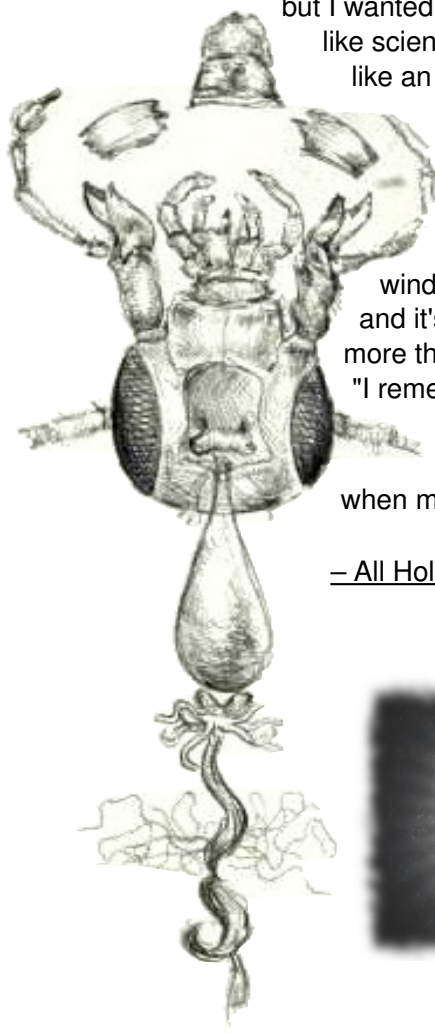
I can only hold his hand over the phone.
 I hug telephone poles because I can't face him.
 One morning, I thought that one pinprick of light
 preceding the sun was staring back at me.
 One night, I looked into the sky,
 this time without a telescope, and I saw that
 the space
 between the moon and Venus is not empty.
 It is full of all the insects that have left earth,
 crawling over each other's backs,
 breathing and not making noise,
 between the streetlight moon and Venus.

One night, humid in Pennsylvania,
 he held his cupped hands to my eye
 and suspended in them, buzzing incandescent,
 was a firefly. As he explained the science –
 that the enzyme luciferase catalyzed a –
 I could only think that Lucifer
 was another name for phosphorus
 was the other half of the evening star.

It was either the generators or moth wings humming,
 Maybe the streetlights or the moon
 turned the moths to snow,
 but one night, buried in his hands,
 I swallowed bugs like a third grader
 until I was empty, like light,
 but I wanted hard,
 like science
 like an exoskeleton.

The next morning,
 I'm brushing the
 taste from my mouth
 when outside my
 window I hear a bird
 and it's singing something
 more than
 "I remember when, I
 remember, I
 remember when I" –
 when my muscle jumps.

– All Hollow-Eyed & Listless:
Poems by Jack



MEMORY AS A WEAPON

'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'



You're listening to From Embers, a weekly show on CFRC 101.9 FM [campus-community radio station] about anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas and practice. **We are broadcasting from the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples on land that has come to be called Kingston, Ontario, Canada,** because of the thievery and brutality of the Canadian state and its empire-loving parents. From Embers is about fires, some real and some metaphorical. Fires started generations ago and tended to over the years; little sparks all across this territory that we hope will grow, spread and engulf the thieving state called Canada and the capitalist system that has plagued this land since the fur trade.

As many of you know, May 1st is marked by anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarians around the world as part of International Workers Day, or Mayday.¹ Here in Ontario, some demonstrations this year [2019] were themed around building resistance to the right-wing Ford government,² whose austerity measures are bringing deep funding cuts to public services across the province. At a rally at Queen's Park in Toronto, according to one report back, anarchists and radicals decided to make things a bit more confrontational, by bringing a homemade replica guillotine dripping with fake blood, with the words "cuts are political violence" written on the side. The reaction, at least in politics and in the mainstream media looked like this:

"Of all the anti-Ford protests outside the Ontario legislature, none has been like this. On Wednesday afternoon, amid another demonstration, a handful of protesters brought a homemade guillotine to Queen's Park. It was smeared with fake blood, with one protester holding up a sign saying 'chop chop'."

"It was disrespectful. It was cruel, and it's a credible threat that has been referred to the Ontario Provincial Police."

1 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**

2 ed. – Provincial government of Premier Doug Ford.

The situation in Toronto got me thinking about the image of the guillotine and other symbolic gestures towards political violence. I certainly noticed a rise of guillotine memes in the last couple of years. And I wondered why that is. Then I came across an article called 'Against the Logic of the Guillotine', posted to the CrimethInc. website, which placed the guillotine in its historical context, and engaged in an in-depth discussion about revenge fantasies, political violence, and imagining liberatory revolutionary alternatives. That piece is at once challenging, hopeful and controversial. All qualities that I thought would make for a good discussion for this podcast. So tonight, I'm going to be speaking with one of the authors from CrimethInc., which is a decentralised anarchist collective and publishing project. It's been around since the mid-1990s. We discuss the ideas in the article and tease out some of the philosophical tensions that underpin it. **To be clear, my goal with this piece is not to call out or shame the guillotine crew in Toronto, as the media and the so-called progressives have been doing now for weeks. In fact, I applaud their courage and creative experimentation.** And want to be clear that this is not the same old pacifist condemnation of violence.³ Instead, I hope to encourage some constructive, critical reflection on the images that we project of a freer world and the consequences that they have.



For the purposes of this conversation, I'm just one of many participants in CrimethInc. projects. I'd like to be understood in the way that Alfredo Bonanno⁴ described himself as a comrade among comrades.

So would you like to start just by talking a bit about why folks set out to write this piece like what was the impetus for writing it?

Well, the article was written just because guillotine memes have become so common over the last few years. And also in response to... the most widely known vehicle for the radical Left in the US now is called *Jacobin*.⁵ So there's these references to this history that very few people are familiar with. And this is taking place in a context of escalating social and political polarisation in the United States. Increasing conflict; people on all points on the political spectrum are angry and disempowered. And from our vantage

3 ed. – see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; **'Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics'**

4 ed. – Walking away from his work as a bank clerk and even as executive in the chemical industry (a salutary indication of the potential of people for change!), this Sicilian became a key figure in social struggles and the anarchist movement from the 1970s onwards, writing many books and speaking widely.

5 ed. – Magazine named after the most influential political club during the French Revolution of 1789, the Jacobins, whose ascendancy led to the Terror: see **Calling It Terror**.

point as long-time anarchists, we see people on the Left as well as on the Right who seem to be fantasising about authoritarian institutions solving their problems for them.⁶ If only they could, they could see revenge executed on their behalf. And which is something that we've seen from the right wing for a long time. But it's disturbing for me to see this from the Left.⁷

I really liked how you discuss this issue in the context of the history of the guillotine, and specifically, going through the French Revolution references that a lot of people make, and contrasting it with the burning of the guillotine in the Paris Commune.⁸ Would you like to just give a bit of that story for our listeners?

Well, the original French Revolution began famously with the storming of the Bastille, which was a military base, but was also a prison. The liberating phase of the French Revolution began with the storming of the prison. And you could argue that the liberating phase of the French Revolution ended when the Jacobins began to use the guillotine to solve their problems and – as often happens in revolutions – they killed off the most radical elements first, and then they killed off the more moderate people who are competing with them for control of the revolution.

With this, this long standing premise that a revolution will succeed a single authoritarian body is able to gain a stabilised control at the at the heart of things and exercise coercive force over over the entire nation. This is obviously not an anarchist idea. This is an authoritarian idea.

Now, it was interesting for us, looking at what happened in France: first, that it didn't work to keep the Jacobins (the people who were supposedly trying to make the French Revolution succeed) in power, because as soon as they had guillotined all of their potential allies, it was easy for the reactionary forces to guillotine them, to gain control of France. This is how, ultimately, Napoleon Bonaparte came to power and the French Revolution shifted into this sort of nationalist quest for Empire, that brought to an end the hopes of that generation for revolution.

What was also interesting to us studying the French Revolution of 1870 and 1871, when the Paris

6 ed. – see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.3; **Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism**

7 ed. – Of course this has actually been with us for some time; one thinks of the calls for State execution of British Petroleum executives following the Deepwater Horizon atrocity (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg28**), or the mingling of (nominally) leftist feminists with far-right, church and conservative groups to call for State-imposed violence and exclusion of the phantasmic trans menace haunting their every public bathroom (see **Wounded Healers**).

8 ed. – see **For the Love of God**

Commune took place, that one of the first things that participants in the Paris Commune did – grassroots, working people in the Paris Commune – was that they went to the place in Paris where the guillotine was kept, and they brought it out. And they didn't start guillotining rich people with it; they didn't start guillotining tyrants. They took it, and they burned it. And for us, this speaks to us across the centuries as a brave and courageous refusal to affirm coercive force – lethal coercive force – as a tool that can play a desirable role in social change.

Now, I want to be clear, I'm not coming to this from the perspective of pacifism. This is an important conversation topic for us, because we believe that yes, we have to employ coercive force in the course of social change; otherwise, you have no way to defend yourself. But it's a really a question about what we fantasise about; what we imagine is going to create the kind of society that we want to live in. And what we understand ourselves as desiring; and desiring to shed oceans of blood.

Now many of us, understandably... You're in conflict with your boss, you're in conflict with your landlord, Donald Trump is president, all these terrible things are happening. It's understandable that people would want to shed blood. But the point that we're arguing here is that we can't understand the shedding of blood as being our political project or our political goal.

To go back to the difference between the French Revolution and the Paris Commune for a second: if you just want to take a class perspective, the traditional class reductionist or Marxist take⁹ is that the original French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution, that brought property owners and instituted a sort of bourgeois democracy. It's not unusual that a bourgeois democracy would still be using coercive force as a fundamental part of their political programme, that they would centralise it in the hands of the State, and see their goal has been to kill everyone who was incompatible with their political programme. But that workers in the Paris Commune, people who are from the proletariat, rank-and-file participants in the struggle understood that as long as there is a State-controlled, centralised, concentrated, State-legitimised form of violence, it's always going to be used against the underdogs. Against the proletariat, against the people on the receiving end of power imbalances. And so, fundamentally, for us, the burning of the guillotine is an expression of revolutionary optimism, and a refusal to use tools that that can't actually lead us to the goals that we're shooting for.

Right. And I think that that leads into my next

9 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**

“We undertake violent struggle without making it our ideal, without thinking of the execution of a tyrant as a supreme victory of justice. Our violence is not justice [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; *'The Temple Was Built Before the City'*], it is simply a necessity that fills itself at the expense of feeling and idealism, and on its own it is insufficient.”

– Praxedis G. Guerrero [see *Return Fire vol.2 pg61*]



Communards burning the guillotine as a 'servile instrument of monarchist domination' in Paris, April 6th, 1871

question pretty well, which is, when you say the logic of the guillotine, can you explain what is meant by that?

The fundamental question here is: what does revolutionary social change entail? Does it mean that we kill the bad people? Or maybe if we want to be a little bit less brutal, that we put them in Gulags¹⁰ or something, so that the *good people* can live freely? As an anarchist, I would argue, no; that's not the way that we have to understand social change.

If we regard people as static, as fixed quantities, if we reduce people to their status in this society,

10 ed. – “After the Communist Party defeated the opposition in the Russian civil war of 1918-1921, they exiled anarchist and communist dissidents to the Solovetsky Islands, creating one of the first prisons of the Gulag system (G(lavnoe) u(pravlenie) ispravitel'no-trudovyykh) lag(ereĭ), “Chief Administration for Corrective Labor Camps”). The ancient monasteries in the town of Suzdal and on the Solovetskii Islands in the White Sea were converted into prisons for hundreds of political offenders, who staged demonstrations and hunger strikes to protest their confinement” (Paul Avrich). Camps lasted until 1991.

rather than focusing on the relations between people and the potential that all human beings have for change: if we take that approach, we're bound to end up utilising some sort of guillotine-logic where revolutionary social change means subtracting certain people from the world. That is, this logic doesn't distinguish us from any other authoritarian party, including the most despicable ones. For me, the goal that we should have is to transform our relationships, and to create situations in which people who currently are not able to have a positive or mutually-fulfilling, mutually-beneficial relationship can have such relations.¹¹ And like I said, there will be conflict, there will be struggle, there will be violence on the way to that, but that is a totally different goal than thinking that our use of force should be guided by the intention to destroy our enemies.

I think you make a nice point about this, too, when you're talking about people not wanting to get their own hands dirty or not taking these things seriously enough that they are willing to engage in the kinds of violence that is implied by the guillotine themselves. It's always about someone else doing it in a sort of rationalistic kind of form.

This is why guillotine memes, specifically, are distinct from other kinds of revolutionary fantasies; Molotov cocktail imagery or the traditional black-bloc imagery of a bunch of people acting together to defend themselves from police violence. Those are tactics or tools that that can be employed without implying the concentration of force in the hands of a bureaucracy. The guillotine is to be used against people who are already in your power. I would argue that it's cowardly and irresponsible to kill someone that once that person is powerless before you, and that that should not be should not be what we're fantasising about.

This whole question about tools here: are tools neutral? Of course, people fantasise about using the tools of the system against the system. You can look at every tool and its historical application; if we can identify what happens when revolutionaries get their hands on those tools and use them. This is not just an abstract question. This is a concrete historical question.

Some of the problem here is about the absence of collective memory.¹² Some of the problem is that people who are reposting guillotine memes have not read the history of the French Revolution. People who are who are fantasising about getting their hands on their oppressors don't know what happened to people

11 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'Centering Relationships'

12 ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**

like them the last time that happened and was guided by a party or an authoritarian organisation. So the issue here is not about whether we can use revolutionary force or revolutionary violence. It's specifically about the fantasy of a well-oiled machine doing the work for us.

And that's why there's a correlation actually, between the guillotine itself, which is like a basically turns capital punishment into a spectator sport... Historically, it's this ritual in which people who have already been captured are brought out in front of a bunch of other people and executed as this spectator sport, legitimising the power of the state, confirming it. The meme about the guillotine... because a meme is just that, people who are posting memes – by and large – are not the people who are in Rojava right now, engaging in these hard questions about what to do with captured ISIS fighters,¹³ that are the real lived version of this question. An average person who's posting a guillotine meme is posting it from the comfort of a non-revolutionary situation, knowing that they're not actually going to get their hands bloody.

But the problem is that when we legitimise these things in times of comparative social peace, the fantasies that we promote right now will eventually – as our society gets more and more volatile, and there are more and more situations of unrest – these fantasies will be the sign-posts to the future that we have to work from when we are in a revolutionary situation. So I think it's very important that we think critically now about which sign-posts are going to get us to the future we actually want to arrive.

13 ed. – Unfortunately, in the years since, it seems clear that responsibility for this question has been passed on to those least to be trusted with it: their coalition partners (see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'The Temple Was Built Before the City') against ISIS, the US government, which is involved in most aspects of the prisons holding tens of thousands of ISIS fighters real and alleged, all together with their families, their forced brides, their child recruits, and even some Yezidi people that ISIS attempted genocide against. Torture is rampant, the states of the foreign-born ISIS fighters are refusing their repatriation (preferring, perhaps, that the danger remains in proximity to the revolutionary project), and Turkey – key facilitator of the ISIS insurgency and sworn enemy of the Rojavan project – has used air- and drone-strikes on prison security to allow prison breaks. As we go to press, it looks likely that the new US administration of Trump will wash its hands of Rojava at last, leaving it in the sights of their NATO-partner Turkey, and the ISIS prisoners may constitute a new nucleus of the Caliphate directly in the midst of those they wish to exterminate.

One of the ideas expressed in the article is... I'm actually going to read a quote that I pulled out, that says: "If we wish to wield coercive force responsibly when there is no other choice, we should cultivate a distaste for it." And I liked that idea, I agree with that idea. At the same time, I think about... say here, in the context of urban Ontario in Canada, that it's a very pacified society overall. And actually, a lot of what we're doing as anarchists is trying to break through that pacification and break through that social peace; not by calling for mass murder,¹⁴ but calling for people to get angry and to get active and fight back. So I wonder if there's if there's a way to balance cultivating that distaste for violence, but also creating openings for people to become more active in resisting for their own survival?

Absolutely. This, for us, is a pressing and real question. Because we are promoting and practising revolutionary self-defence. For me, one of the important things when we're talking about resistance, when we're talking about revolutionary self-defence, is that it's very important to match our words with deeds. **Words gain their force, they gain their traction on our lives, by our habits of backing them up with action. If you say, "this should happen," and then you do it, next time, somebody says something should happen: it's thinkable that it will happen as well.**

This was always my critique of someone like Derrick Jensen,¹⁵ who says, "Every morning I get up, and I try to decide whether to blow up a dam or to write a book." And of course, posing the question to himself that way, he always decided to write the book, right? Not to blow up the dam. For me, this is irresponsible. I would like to think that if I believed that personal and individualistic act, blowing up a dam, if that was the most effective thing that I could do that I would do it and it would be irresponsible not to do that. If, through this process of consideration, I had decided that that would be the most effective tactic.

I think that it's important that the tactics that we employ be reproducible and be tactics that we can engage in immediately. And so, if we're talking about revolutionary violence, then I think it's realistic right now to use examples of things that people have recently done, and that we could participate in.¹⁶ I think it's dangerous to imagine that the more intense the violence or the conflict or the tools that people are using, the more revolutionary the situation is. Like people looking at what happens in Russia, and imagining that there is more social potential for

14 ed. – see **Calling It Terror**

15 ed. – see **Wounded Healers**

16 ed. – see **Propaganda of the Deed & Global Social Networks**

liberation there because there are more guns being employed. I think this is a really dangerous mental shortcut, the actually conflates revolutionary social change with the use of force. We should be focusing on developing our skills to evaluate what actually constitutes the kind of changes that we want to see.

So in that regard, I actually think that guillotine memes – because they don't refer to something that we are immediately about to do – don't contribute to the likelihood that we will actually take forceful action. I think that we have to combine realistic proposals with immediately following through on those, and that will actually produce more contagious and reproducible examples of self-defence.

We also have to imagine that when we enter into a revolutionary conflict that we might actually win. And if we win, it will be essential that the goals that we are fighting for are desirable goals, so that we don't just set up another version of the same order that exists today, with a slightly differently distributed use of force to keep people in line

Memes or replica guillotines, or whatever they tend to be, kind of gestures towards – like you said – revenge fantasies. Would you make a distinction between guillotine ones and another one that I think of (that comes out a lot), the assassination of Mussolini¹⁷ after World War II? That's a very common image that gets circulated as a kind of revenge fantasy. Do you think there's any difference there?

That's a good question. I'd have to do more research about what happened to Mussolini. It's hard not to think of Mussolini, like I was saying before, as a static quantity; as somebody who should just be removed from the world. The goal of fascism is to teach us that there are people who should be removed from the world. And if we accept their premises, even if our conclusion is just that they should be removed from the world, this is a very different thing from expressing a revolutionary optimism. It's in the article, but the counter-argument would be that the worst thing that could happen to Mussolini would be for him to have to spend the rest of his life in an anarchist society in which everyone knew what he had done, and despise him for it. And he would have to show up to the village assembly, and nobody would listen to him speak. Nobody would respect him. But that he would actually be powerless to harm other people: that we wouldn't need to kill him.

And I think this is a more honourable fantasy – and

17 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg60**

“Tuaut de La Bouverie, representative of the people in 1791 and a partisan of public executions, was more logical when he declared to the National Assembly: *“It takes a terrifying spectacle to hold the people in check.”*” – *Reflections on the Guillotine*



Meme displaying the ignoble end of the dictator in April 1945; already deposed and fleeing for the border, taken prisoner by partisans, executed then mutilated, strung up in public beside other fascists

“During the night of the guillotine the foundations for a new spectacle are laid. Capital regains strength: first the bosses’ heads fall, then those of the revolutionaries.”

– *Armed Joy*

it's a revenge fantasy, honestly – but it's a more honourable revenge fantasy. Because it's different from a State proposal. For me the more different point of reference would be the assassination of King Umberto of Italy. By [Gaetano] Bresci, the anarchist who had also rescued [Errico] Malatesta¹⁸ from an assassin (there was a gunman trying to kill Malatesta and Bresci – he was unarmed – threw himself on the gunman, disarmed him, saved Malatesta his life) and then a couple years later took all his money and bought a handgun and a ticket across the Atlantic and, at great personal risk to himself, assassinated the Italian king who had overseen the murder of more than 1,000 working people in this conflict in Italy shortly before then.¹⁹

For me, again, this is a more honourable fantasy. When in your power, it's not about being the dominant force and killing the underdog. It's about an underdog standing up to a much more powerful force. And at great risk, at great personal sacrifice; making

18 ed. – Italian anarchist (1853-1932), travelled widely to agitate (and was imprisoned in various countries he organised in); died under house-arrest by Mussolini.

19 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg89*

a gesture that that points to the possibility that all of us could rise up against our oppressors. I'm not saying that individualistic assassinations²⁰ are the tactic that we should be employing. And there's some criticism – some legitimate criticism – about whether they played the role that partisans of propaganda-by-the-deed hoped that they would play in revolutionary social change a century ago.²¹ But if I have to choose between a guillotine meme and remembering the courageous acts of underdogs, of course, I'm always going to want to do the latter.

When I first saw this article, I understood it as part of a series of things that have come out of the CrimethInc. publishing world that have been critical towards certain ways that the Russian Revolution is remembered, and critical of Bolshevism and this kind of thing. So, is there sort of a current effort within that project to distinguish anarchists from authoritarian communism? And why if so?

I think that the prospects for revolutionary struggle – if not actually for successful revolution – are much, much more promising now than they were 20 years ago. I think there are a lot of people who are interested in what social change would mean and recognise that it's essential to recognise that our species is probably going to go extinct by any number of different threat models if we don't bring about serious transformation of our society.²² And so it's a very important time to talk about revolution and the different things that it can mean. I don't think any of us have a personal hostility towards people who are currently in authoritarian socialist or communist parties, or who identify with Stalinism²³ or Leninism.²⁴ But we definitely think that the anarchists proposal is something different, for the sake of everyone who participated in the Russian Revolution of 1917 to 1921: including Bolsheviks who were executed for having brought about all the positive social changes that happened then.

I think it's essential that we remember that that happened; that we understand why it happened. And then we make sure that when we bring about the changes, the uprisings and ruptures and upheavals that are ahead of us, that that we go into it armed with a really thorough knowledge of what happened last time people engaged in social revolutions like this and and how we are going to make sure that they have different consequences.

20 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg84*

21 ed. – see *Another Way Out*

22 ed. – see *Anarchist Ethics in the Collapse*

23 ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies*

24 ed. – see *'It Depends on All of Us'*

ANARCHIST ETHICS IN THE COLLAPSE

However, no process of healing collective and intergenerational

The fundamental idea of anarchist ethics is that means and ends are inseparable. But it goes beyond ethics. **The idea that ends can justify the means is simplistic. It is a case of confusing the categories we use to parse reality with reality itself.** The conditions always contain the methods that brought them about. Furthermore, there are no ends. Every day, history keeps moving along, and the methods we use to shape society become locked into, a part of, the society we create and recreate.

This is one reason most anarchists favor collective self-defense and attacking oppressive institutions, but are against the violence of prison. **Prison means controlling a defeated enemy. We want to remove the ability of a cop or politician to control, not to control people for what they've done in the past.** That's why we attack the powerful and their mercenaries but we would never establish gulags. Anarchist revolutions reflect the attempt to walk this line. But what happens to these ethics in a civilizational collapse?

Every decade, the effects of ecocidal capitalism are killing more people than were murdered in the worst atrocities of the 20th century. There's a reasonable probability that we are headed to a collapse. Looking at human history, that would mean 10-50% of the entire population dying, and the upper classes either being massacred or in their entirety, or leading people in the extermination of some scapegoat group. Or first the latter, then the former.

I want to stress that collapse is not certain, and those who claim it is are intellectually dishonest and, usually, politically problematic. Nonetheless, there's a decent chance that a few decades from now there'll be revenge-crazed bands of trauma-survivors hunting down Elon Musk's [ed. – see '*Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!*'] offspring across the four corners of the earth as remaining billionaires deploy murderbots to defend their luxurious survival compounds and in that extreme but feasible outcome, revolutionary currents may have some influence, but no control, over outcomes. So what does that mean for us?

Class society needs to be abolished, but killing a lot of people, even very bad people, does not particularly prepare those who do the killing to create a free society motivated to heal the planet after centuries, millennia, of suffering and oppression.

First off, we need to always organize for the best possible outcomes (convincing people to abandon their leaders and providing tools to self-organize society with a minimum of bloodshed) or we foreclose those outcomes. But we also need to prepare for the worst, or we will end up against the wall, succumbing to starvation, etc. **However, encouraging hatred of the wealthy and powerful is necessary, strategic, and true in both the best and worst scenarios.** People will continue to give dominant institutions another chance unless they feel contempt for everyone associated with those institutions. Furthermore, revenge can be an important part of a healing process.

traumas can be based entirely or primarily on revenge or even on acts of self-defense. Reconciliation is just as important – giving a chance for those who did harm or those who stood by to make amends and come back into the fold [ed. – see '*Between Punishment & Vengeance*'] – and even more important is decentering the people and institutions who were oppressive, and **recentering the healthy relationships we are creating and our feelings of safety and satisfaction within those relationships.**

That leads me to what may seem like a paradoxical conclusion: it is a mistake to view the mercenaries and powerholders of the dominant institutions as human. Pressuring your deadbeat dad to go to therapy might change things for the better in your abusive family. Getting millionaires to go to therapy will not mitigate one iota of the suffering capitalism causes. That's because the mercenaries and powerholders of the dominant institutions are organic interfaces to eternally inhuman institutions, and as long as those institutions exist, their interfaces will not act like humans [ed. – see '*Riots & Eagles*']. All of us know, our jobs dehumanize us and in one way or another, we live for the weekends. **But for those with the power to shape, advance, or protect those institutions, it's another story. They've given their lives over to the machine.** The key is not to honor their humanity (or leaving aside the anthropocentrism [ed. – see '*Return Fire vol.2 pg11*'], their beauty as living beings), but to honor our own. I could give a goddamn for the life of a cop, but I don't want to see what it would do to my friends, going around getting rid of everybody who works as a cop.

So as things continue to get ugly and uglier, as we more frantically try to point out that there is another way to live, a healthy way, a loving way, with whatever comes I think the key is this: to ask ourselves, could I live with myself after this? If I take this harm out of the world, even though this harm also has a name, a face, a story, will I still be able to create joy and beauty in my community? Would we be enriched or endangered by allowing this walking harm among us, knowing their story, giving them another chance? They can't be the protagonists anymore, we need to be. And we deserve the best future possible. Fostering reconciliation, cultivating love, these are fundamental parts of a free world. But they can only come about when we are not in constant danger and degradation.

Sorry for the dark thoughts. All the death, human and other, while those responsible for it or those who make allowance for it continue to be celebrated and listened to, it's weighing on me. Oh my god did someone just read this as a critique of *violence* [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics*']?? I give up... Now in favor of executing everyone who thinks in binaries.

One thing I think about in the context of this debate is some of the debates in Europe that I've read a little bit of in terms of back and forth debates about armed struggle groups. And this question you brought up earlier in terms of things being reproducible, and trying to avoid specialists of revolution and this kind of thing. Is this an important priority for you?

It's the fundamental question. Because this gets at the question of what the distinction is between revolutionary social change in an anti-authoritarian sense, and mere military conflict. We aren't participants in a party that we hope to bring to power, we don't hope to rule others or to determine the shape of all social life, we hope to make it impossible for anyone to do that. And that's the fundamental distinction. And so, when we think about revolutionary tactics, we should be thinking about which tactics will enable everyone to defend themselves against attempts to impose coercive order, we should be thinking about which strategies we can use that will be reproducible, that can be infectious, that can be contagious, which forms of social change we can engage in so that others will see these changes and want to carry them out themselves, rather than understanding what we're doing as engaging in a partisan struggle of Group A versus Group B.

The thing that distinguishes revolution from war, in my opinion, is that it's transformative and contagious. That's actually the reason that, for example, the Russian Revolution was able to succeed; because of the solidarity coming from restless, oppressed people in other parts of the world, the dockworkers strikes in Western Europe that prevented Western European countries from intervening: all of these different factors that threatened this revolution would spread. The thing that makes it possible for us to win when we're in a revolutionary struggle is if our desires, our ethics, our forms of liberation are so compelling that others can see themselves in what we're doing, and undertake their own version of it. Or if others who've already been involved in struggles – maybe much longer than than we as anarchists have been – can recognise the possibilities in a shared struggle. This is the thing that offers us the opportunity for a victory that would be thoroughgoing and transformative rather than just another party coming to power and trying to enforce its particular agenda on everyone.

I was really struck when I first read the article about how the word “everyone” is used, in terms of “[a]narchism is a proposal for everyone.” And there's a quote in there that says “hope is our most precious resource.” And I think it is a very optimistic perspective in terms of the idea that our relations, including with potentially some people who are

oppressors can be transformed. Yeah, and I think a lot of what those of us in the radical Left do when we create propaganda or messaging is we're encouraging and inciting people to turn against their bosses, turn against their landlords, turn against their rapists, turn against the Nazis. But I think that there's a different kind of analysis of identity and social roles²⁵ implied in what you're writing about. Would you be able to unpack that a little bit for us?

The easiest way to combat this is to use a conceptual tool that I know from German anti-fascists, which is this idea of structural anti-semitism. I have a lot of problems with the *anti-Deutsch* critique.²⁵ But I think

25 ed. – see **Follow the Fires**

25 ed. – Literally, 'anti-German': an entirely reactionary (in several senses of the word) tendency that dominates the German Left, based ostensibly around (justifiable) social guilt at not having sufficiently resisted the Nazis and their holocaust, yet ending up with the strangest of conclusions.

“*Long before the Nazis came to power in Germany,*” reads the critique 'Antinationalist Nationalism', “*opposition to capitalism and the rich was often directed against caricatures of “the International Jew.” Many German nationalists considered the proletariat to be composed of non-Jewish Germans, who were supposedly preyed upon by Jewish money lenders; the implication was that by getting rid of the Jews, the capitalist system could be symbolically cleansed of its parasites.*” (This was despite widespread Jewish involvement in anti-capitalist and anarchist struggles.)

Hence, anti-Germans are suspicious not just of many anti-capitalists, but of critics of the putatively 'anti-fascist' nations such as the US, Britain, or – most of all – Israel.

Dragging behind them the racist progressivism from the hoariest of Marxisms, the text continues, “*“There is something worse than capitalism and bourgeois society: its barbarous abolition,” writes one Anti-German, and he goes on to make it explicit that he is referring to Arabic nationalism as well as German fascism. Thinking this way makes it easy enough to pose Israel and the United States as the flagships of culture and progress, and those dirty Arabs as the savages to whom the torch of Nazi irrationality and brutality has been passed. [...] Anti-Semitism has flourished among Arabs; much is made of this by the Anti-Germans, who trace Arabic nationalism back to early connections between certain Arabs and German Nazis. But these few connections would have been meaningless if Arabic anti-Semites had not had been able to make use of Israeli atrocities in the years that followed to recruit converts. The violence in the Middle East today is not the direct successor to the Nazi Holocaust; rather, it is the result of the violence committed by survivors of that Holocaust, who became abusers in their turn – as survivors all too often do [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg46**].”*

As we are seeing today in the phenomenal rise of the German electoral far-right once again (with the Left chasing their votes by themselves hardening against immigration, while castigating anti-Zionist protesters during the systematic genocide in Gaza), this hasn't even led to a widespread anti-fascist critique; rather, it has

this particular tool can serve us here. The idea of structural anti-semitism is that when you personify the social structures or institutions that you oppose, as the particular beneficiaries of them, or the particular people who enforce them, that you are basically doing what anti-semites have done, with the banking institutions for example. By saying, "Jewish bankers," right, that even if you're not saying, "Oh, the Jewish bankers are the problem." But you're saying the bankers, the specific people are the problem, rather than saying capitalism is the problem: rather than saying, this set of relations is the problem. You're still engaging in fundamentally the same structure of activity that anti-semitic groups or other white-supremacists are engaging in.

And for me, our adversary is not specific people whom we hope to conquer and dominate. Our adversary is the social relations that enable some people to conquer and dominate others. I feel like we have to be really clear about the distinction between this. Ultimately, to get conceptual, our enemy is

missed what was so key to the rise of fascism – the colonial relationship. While the trauma of World War One is often cited as source of the 'irrational barbarism' which exploded under fascist regimes, but this ignores the fact that this was the first experience of 'total, industrialised war' only between Europeans, not the (would-be) colonial subjects already for years facing the machine-guns and concentration camps (the term used for Spain's internment of civilians in Cuba, but preceded by US containment of Cherokees, etc.). In other words, it was the 'boomerang' of Progress itself (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg11**).

The 20th Century fascist powers were, precisely, those already out-maneuvered on the world-stage in the European scramble to carve up the world (leaving the largest victors, Britain, France, and their offspring like the US to smugly paint themselves in 'anti-fascist' colours); yet the colonial experiences that they *did* have hugely set their courses. *The Unquiet Dead* records that "Franco [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg61**] attributed the success of his Africanista officers in their war against revolutionary Spain to their experience in Spanish-colonized Morocco; the creation and near-immediate loss of German empire was a source of emotional fuel for the rise of the Third Reich; and colonizing Ethiopia was so important to Mussolini that he sunk endless quantities of troops and resources into the project, though he succeeded only in murdering thousands of Ethiopians." Germany's first total genocide of the 20th Century was not in Europe, but in the territories that would become known by the end of that century as Namibia. 'Deconstructing the Columbus Myth' notes that "the nazi master plan of displacing or reducing by extermination the population of the western USSR and replacing it with settlers of "biologically superior German breeding stock" is roundly (and rightly) condemned as ghastly and inhuman. Meanwhile, people holding this view of nazi ambitions tend overwhelmingly to see consolidation and maintenance of Euro-dominated settler states in places like Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, the United States and Canada as "basically okay," or even as 'progress'."

enmity. **But we have to fight these institutions, these relations, as they're represented and imposed and defended by specific people.**

Of course, that's why when a line of police charges you, and there's a specific police officer coming at you, you have to engage in a conflict with that police officer. But the goal of that should not be that you then become the person who is dominating that other person; the goal should be to make it impossible for anyone to carry out that kind of domination (or, ultimately, to draw the loyalty – or at least a mercenary attitude – that causes people to become police officers in the first place). Everybody who is the beneficiary of an oppressive system today, when they hear us speaking this way (about destroying the institutions that they benefit from), that makes them more likely to identify with the institutions, for the most part, right? They're like, "Okay, we have to defend ourselves from these fucking anarchists who want to kill us."

At the moment at which it's possible for there to be a mutiny (which is the starting point, usually, for a revolution; when some people mutiny, when some people reject their role in the existing order); at that moment, the people who engage in that mutiny recognise that they have more to gain from fighting against the institutions than from being afraid of us. And so I think it's actually in our interest as revolutionaries to always convey to people that we're not fighting against them personally, we don't desire to exterminate them. That we actually are proposing a different set of relations, that would be more fulfilling for them as well. That it's actually more fulfilling to be in nourishing, loving, mutually grounded relations with other people who are your equals than it is to own a billion dollars worth of assets.

This does go against one sort of strategy that is maybe summed up by the quote, "people are killing the planet, and they have names and addresses." That's another kind of thing that people say, right? Say, with the SHAC case,²⁶ or something like that, where individuals are targeted because corporations are so nebulous and so difficult to push back against.

Well, I'm definitely I'm not arguing against the tactics that were used in the SHAC campaign, to be clear. I'm arguing more that if it's necessary to engage in tactics like that, we should be very careful that we keep our real goals in mind as we employ them, that we don't fall into the sort of mental shorthand of thinking that if we can just get rid of the bad people that that will take care of everything. **That's what I'm arguing; it's not an argument against any particular tactics.** There may even at some point in

26 ed. – see 'The Position of the Excluded'

history have been a time when guillotines were used for good, although in all my research I was never able to come up with one. But the point really is that what guides us is essential there. The earth *is* being killed, and the people who are doing it *do* have names and addresses. And we have to make it impossible for them to do that. Take that as it will.

But the thing that will ultimately make it impossible for anyone to do that is to give everyone a sense of their shared interest in making that impossible. Anarchism proposes a completely horizontal distribution of power. And how would we maintain that? Well, it would take a lot of people understanding the value of the horizontal distribution of power to prevent anyone from amassing and concentrating it so as to dominate others.

And just to drive that point home, can you discuss a few of the people that you did discover, lost their lives at the guillotine?

Oh, goodness. I mean, that is one of the things that that makes the guillotine memes so ironic for revolutionaries, is just that so many people that that we admire or look up to – or at least remember as part of our movements – were killed by guillotines. The famous anarchists from 100 years ago, from the propaganda-of-the-deed era, like Émile Henry²⁷ or Sante Caserio,²⁸ Auguste Vaillant,²⁹ Ravachol,³⁰ all the whole Bonnot gang...³¹ all of those people were guillotined. The people from the White Rose, the anti-Nazi youth organisation in Munich in 1942-1943: they were guillotined. The Nazis actually guillotined about the same number of people during their reign as the Jacobins during the time that they were in power. So the guillotine has a really rough history as a particular tool that has almost always been used by people that we would not identify with, against people who were courageous and generous in the things that they contributed to humanity.

So when I first reached out to you about this

27 ed. – see **Calling It Terror**

28 ed. – Anarchist anti-militarist who fled Italian conscription and assassinated the French President in 1894, avenging that State's recent executions of the comrades mentioned in footnotes 27 and 29.

29 ed. – French anarchist who tossed a bomb into the Chamber of Deputies in 1893, without loss of life: first person that century executed in France without having killed anyone. Émile Henry (see footnote 27) undertook his own attack to avenge him.

30 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg44**

31 ed. – All, that is, who hadn't already died in shoot-outs with the law: some of many French anarchists influenced by Stirner (see '**The Position of the Excluded**') who took up illegalism, or living from theft from industrialists and banks, as resistance to wage-labour: see **Return Fire vol.2 pg22**. Pioneers of the getaway car.

interview, I mentioned one of the reasons that I wanted to talk about on our show is the this kind of scandal that was created at Queen's Park in Toronto on May Day where some kind of anarchist and anti-fascist mix of people brought a replica guillotine to Queen's Park, which is where the government of Ontario sits, and kind of made the dual point about sort of austerity and cuts as well as sort of this guillotine gesture towards political violence. What would you say to somebody who participated in making that happen?

I mean, just that we're part of the same movement with probably compatible goals. And this whole reflection about guillotines is just the sort of comradely criticism and debate that we always hope to foster. And that, we think, is one of the really strong points of the the anarchist movement historically, that it's a space of self-education and debate in which there are no dogmas. In which we are always trying to reevaluate the strategies and symbols that we use and being critical of ourselves and each other: but constructively, I hope.

It did rile up the intended targets quite a lot. The government, the Ford government, spoke about it in the legislature and tried to get a police investigation.

I'm wondering if there's another kind of another image that could have been used with more liberatory history that would also have that kind of effect?

Because I think that was intended.

That's a good question. And that's a question for aspiring anarchist historians. It's our responsibility to unearth the symbols and the gestures and the accomplishments of the people who came before us; whether they were self-identified anarchists or others, anywhere across the world, fighting against colonialism and other forms of hierarchy. To keep those in our thoughts to bring them back to life and to invest them with revolutionary force. One of the tragedies of the 20th century is that after the Russian Revolution, so many people who had been anarchists became State communists, because it seemed to be successful. And now 100 years later, the reference points that we have for struggle against the State are largely statist reference points.

And it would really behove us to popularise other images, because imagery has power. The image of a black-bloc smashing windows of Starbucks in 1999, during the World Trade Organisation summit in Seattle, was extremely important for catalysing a generation. The image of the Zapatistas³² taking power. And Chávez had done the same thing [*in Venezuela*] a few years earlier.³³ If the iconography

32 ed. – see **"It Was Wartime"**

33 ed. – On this, we recommend Aragorn Eloff's essay

that we act under, if the banners that we put at the front of our our marches, direct everyone's fantasies to incorporate this authoritarian history of revolutionary struggle, we can be sure that we will have the same problems again.

This idea of the revenge fantasy is identified as an understandable desire by people who are oppressed and dominated. But there's this distinction between desire and a politics of liberation. And I'm just trying to try to figure out what is being said about what is this relationship between people's desires and people's politics? Because I think this is an oft-debated sort of binary in our in our scenes here.

That is a super interesting question, right? I felt like when you identified that in our discussions leading up to this interview as a tension within different CrimethInc. texts, I thought that was really smart. So there's a question about what the role of desire should be in revolutionary politics. There's a couple frameworks for how we understand desire that we probably shouldn't emulate. One is the sort of vulgar populism, which is like whatever people want, let's make sure they get it. If everybody wants to wide-screen television, then our job is to carry out a class war in which we secure wide-screen TVs for everybody.

Another idea how we should relate to desire is this sort of aesthetic militancy, where you prove that you are more militant than the next person by being willing to give up on things. I feel like the sort of atmosphere of anarchist and generally Left organising in the last quarter century has really

shifted from having this sort of optimistic, desire-based approach to this sort of hostility to desire and just mutual suspicion.³⁴ Everyone thinking that everybody else's desires are a problem, and that the most important thing is to impose a notion of duty...³⁵ which we're just now finally starting to see some push-back against that, from people like Saidiya Hartman,³⁶ who recognise that that militant asceticism is actually not a star that we can follow to a world in which everyone will be free or happier, or white supremacy will be abolished.

If we understand desire as political, what does that mean? The first thing I would say is that certainly we can't pursue a politics that is about suppressing or refusing desire. But also, the things that we desire don't always tell us everything that we need to know about what it would take for us to actually be happy. I think desire usually tells us more about where we are than about where we should be, in the sense that, you know, you talk to a person from a city and you're like, "What do you want city person?" – they usually say something like, "Well, what I really want to be able to do is retire to the country."

Now, your average city dweller would be really bored in the country. But they fantasise about living in the country. Because that is that desire is produced by the stresses of city life. It doesn't mean that they'd be happy in the country, but it does tell you what the problems are with being in the city. In this sense, like [Michel] Foucault says, pleasure can be more transformative than desire. Desire is produced by our experiences in the past, but pleasure can surprise us. Pleasure can take us by surprise and introduce us to

“Manichaeism is a central concept in Fanon’s thought [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg49*] and it sits at the heart of his conception of how ideology functions in the postcolony. The term comes to us from a religion founded by Mani, known by his followers as the ‘Apostle of Light’, in Babylonia in the third century. Mani wove a set of diverse religions into a single new faith that proposed an absolute dualism between good and evil marked out, in symbolic terms, by light and dark. Brought into contemporary discourse as metaphor Manichaeism speaks to an absolute split between all things light and good (and true, beautiful, clean, healthy, prosperous, etc.) and all things dark and evil (and false, ugly, dirty, diseased, impoverished etc.). It is an inherently paranoid orientation to the world. As a personal disposition Manichaeism is often taken to be consequent to splitting and projection, to the inability to confront one’s own shadow and the collapse into the temptation, the narcissistic temptation, to ascribe it to the other. It is a wretched mode of being in which life is squandered and sociality poisoned. As a collective disposition it is often associated with authoritarian social and political projects. When the political is reduced, in George Orwell’s famous phrase, to a version of “Four legs good, two legs bad” there is no room for nuance, principle, or dissent – there are just two sides. [...] Fanon may have first encountered the concept of Manichaeism in Simone de Beauvoir’s sprawling, ground breaking and brilliant book, *The Second Sex*, published in 1949. De Beauvoir wrote that “*To posit the Other is to define Manichaeism*”. Importantly she also observed that “*The essence of Manichaeism is not only to recognize two principles, one good and one evil: it is also to posit that good is attained by the abolition of evil and not by a positive movement.*”” – *Manichean Delirium (In the Time of Jacob Zuma)*

‘Beyond Bolivarism – a critical look at the fetishization of Chávez and ‘21st century socialism’

34 ed. – see '**The Position of the Excluded**'

35 ed. – see '**You Are the Good Cause**

36 ed. - see '**All That Wildness Names**'

Below: canoes & molotovs used by an indigenous association in June 2023 to storm two oil tankers during an oil blockade of the route from Peru to Brazil; the same year others occupied an oil platform elsewhere in the Peruvian Amazon & 3 protesting were killed by cops in 2020, after huge parts of Brazil's Amazon burned in State-sanctioned arson to reduce indigenous autonomy & clear grasslands for cattle or soy. The Peruvian Amazon's last uncontacted tribal reserves 20% coincide with proposed oil & gas blocks; contamination is already causing health & cultural crisis, with hundreds of pipeline leaks in the last decade fouling water & food
Right: The right Amazon burns: 16 delivery vans, Berlin, Mayday (see Return Fire vol3 pg87) 2024



new desires that we didn't have before.

For me, the interesting thing about understanding desire politically... I mean, desire is what causes us to produce the world we live in and to reproduce this world. This world reproduces desires that keep us in it. If we think about desire politically, we're thinking about how to create situations that produce other desires that would in the making. They would make it possible for us to want things that would lead us to another world. That I think is fundamentally the anarchist question.

Twenty years ago there were people talking about this in a way that sort of got misunderstood or reduced to consumer politics. So, veganism. For me, the thing that was interesting about veganism was not just that you'd be putting your money elsewhere so that you're reproducing soy mono-crops rather than the cattle industry, in what used to be the Amazon rainforest. But the thing that's interesting about veganism is people intentionally shifting their tastes, intentionally shifting their desires. And we can see this in a feminist framework also; that the things that we want right now might actually be destructive to the people that we love. But through a process of experimentation and developing positive desires experimentally, through – like I was saying about Foucault and pleasure – discovering new things that could be more fulfilling than the things that we currently do and want to do, then we could arrive at a place in which our social relations, and the things we want, could be more integrated, and more mutually beneficial.

So to bring that back to the guillotine, I totally understand why people would want revenge. I want revenge.³⁷ But I also want to arrive at a world in which nobody would be motivated by revenge, in which no-one would even have cause to want revenge. So when we engage in social change, we can't think of it as a sort of Hatfield-and-McCoys³⁸ thing. I understand

37 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Letter to the Editors**
 38 ed. – Two families whose infamous 1863-1891 feud stood in US lexicon for this kind of unending rivalry.

why people want revenge, I want revenge, but our political actions should convey us beyond the world that we live in today and the desires it produces.

I think there's also something going on about the impoverishment of our imaginations,³⁹ where the only thing we were left able to desire are basically more power, revenge, these kinds of things that I think sit in for our inability to imagine a life more worth living than what we have.

Absolutely. If you believe that you could have a truly fulfilling and beautiful life, including beautiful and fulfilling relations with the people you currently want revenge on, that would probably be more desirable. But right now we want revenge, because we can't possibly imagine that and becoming capable of imagining it. Not in some sort of superficial hippy way that would give us an excuse not to take action, but becoming capable of imagining it in a way that would mobilise to take action, with everything on the table, to transform our relationships. I think, for me, that's essential, it has to be what we're trying to do.

Yeah, and I feel like I do know so many people who can't imagine a better world right now. They just don't have that in them. And they do feel more empowered by letting that go. But I think on a strategic level, it's a huge loss for us to give up on, on imagining better worlds for everyone.⁴⁰

There's another way to come at that, which is that it may be true that there's no future. It may be true. You're on a long enough timeframe, we'll all be dead, and the earth will be eaten by the sun. Those things are certain. Global climate change may also kill us off along with all the other species that are being destroyed. All of those things are true. For me, that doesn't make it any less beautiful to take action in the present. And it doesn't make it any less meaningful. Because the present does exist, the present is real, no matter what will happen in the future.

If in the present, we don't act in pursuit of the things that we consider meaningful and beautiful, that makes the tragedy that's underway a farce. It makes it a travesty. It makes it ridiculous. It

39 ed. – see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**
 40 ed. – see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'A Web of Relations & Tensions'

makes the whole situation just sort of embarrassing for us, because then we're not losing anything anyway. But if we act, showing that there could be another world, at the least it gives the tragedy that we're enmeshed in weight, and it means that there will have been something beautiful in the world when it comes to an end.

And I think that rather than having this long view of history, where we're like, "well, the enemy will be defeated in the end" (there'll be nothing we have to return to the present moment and become capable of acting in the context that we're in), but guided as if like navigating by the stars by a vision of the best thing that our lives could be, because ultimately, we don't know what the future will hold. And it could hold beautiful things.

I'm just wondering what, what is giving you optimism and hope right now? Like what what's going on around the world that that you find personally inspiring at this time?

That's a good question. I mean, for me, the fact that people are still struggling at this point, after all the defeats of the 19th century and 20th century, after all the people who were removed from history by guillotines, capital punishment, firing squads: all of those things give me give me hope. I remember being in Berlin at the end of the 20th century, at Køpi, which is one of the famous squatted social centres there. And being in a room with a few hundred people in it, punks, anarchists, aspiring revolutionaries. And it coming home to me that half a century before in Berlin, everyone like that had been killed. Everyone with any dream of liberation had been killed, into the millions, huge numbers of people. And that despite that, the children of that generation were still able to reinvent anew, from nothing, the dream of liberation and revolutionary social change. For me, that reminder that you can't guillotine away – that you can't execute away – the part of the human heart that longs for freedom and for some sort of meaningful togetherness; that always guides me.

As for struggles today, it helps to be connected to people who are struggling against [Jair] Bolsonaro⁴¹

41 ed. – Elected president that year. "March 31st [year above interview released] was the anniversary of the 1964 coup that kickstarted a 20 year military dictatorship, responsible for the disappearance, murder and torture of countless political figures. [...] The president approves and shows interest in participating in commemorations, because he claims there was no dictatorship, it was a needed authoritarian regime to prevent the country from turning "red". His followers now form a new wave of "dictatorship deniers", fuelled by anti-communist (pro-USA) conservative views. They even changed last Christmas' color, and blue Santas were spotted all around the country. The whole situation feels like a cruel prank, if

"If our movements never forgot, we would value healers, gardeners, and storytellers at least as much as fighters. If our movements never forgot, we wouldn't believe in heroes, nor divide society into angels and devils. If our movements never forgot, we would have learned patience. If our movements never forgot, no one would be able to say "let's trust the State to carry out this transformation" without getting laughed off the stage, or getting a stern history lesson from someone who suffered and survived that mistake the last time around. If our movements never forgot, we would welcome young people and cherish elders, we would teach our shared history and tell our own stories and talk about futures like they are plural, loquacious and as attentive as clay in a child's eager hands. If our movements never forgot, we wouldn't dialogue with cops or sit down with politicians or put our hopes in a referendum or election. We would believe in ourselves. If our movements never forgot, we would know that we will let each other down, we will make mistakes, we will fail. We would also know we have a great capacity for learning, for growing, for getting back up. If our movements never forgot, we would remember more ways of being, and we would be better at imagining even wilder possibilities. If our movements never forgot, we would remember the commons [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; '**Centering Relationships**'], we would remember self-organization, we would remember spiritualities of solidarity, and we would remember what they did to sever us from the land, to sever us from our own bodies, to turn some of us into soldiers of patriarchy and mercenaries of white supremacy and we would see paths – not to turn back the clock, but to begin to restore what has been mangled – to trust ourselves again."

– *If Our Movements Never Forgot*

in Brazil or people in Russia under the terrible conditions that prevail there now, who are still trying to do solidarity with all the different people targeted with the torture cases there.⁴² The fact that people have not given up that that gives me hope. And then on the other side, the certainty which is increasingly clear for all to see that the prevailing order cannot go on indefinitely. That just underscores how urgent it is that we be seriously taking action in such a way that that we will be prepared to make sure that what comes after it is not worse.

it wasn't for the President's unprecedented visit to the CIA (the institution that financed the dictatorship back then), and the talks with Trump over the future of Venezuela." (Brazil's "Dictatorship Deniers")

42 ed. – see '**The Vital Space of a State**'

REBELS BEHIND BARS

– text by prisoners & repression news

Latest on Wounded Fighter

Boris (France)

[continued from *Return Fire vol.6 chap.5*]

Selections from some 'Anarchists in complicity and solidarity' in their January 2024 statement:

On September 25th, 2023, the Nancy Court of Appeal tried again the anarchist comrade¹ Boris, for having burned the relay antenna of the four telecoms operators, as well as that of the cops and gendarmes, in April 2020 on the Mont Poupet (Jura). [...] On August 7, 2021, and while the appeal date had been set for the end of September, a fire in the cell he was locked in seriously hurt him (most notably leaving him paralysed from the neck down). Plunged several months into a coma and prognosed as struggling for his life, his room was guarded by two gendarmes until the lifting of these conditions by the Court of Appeal of Nancy on September 20, 2021. The rest is a long medical journey of the comrade in different hospitals, where he had to continue to fight both against medical authority and other judicial bodies (notably against an attempt to put him under custodianship at the request of the chief physician of the palliative service of Besançon). **On the side of the Court of Appeal of Nancy, while the fixing of a date of hearing for the fire of the antennas remained suspended sine die for two years in view of the state of health of Boris, it was in the middle of July of this year 2023 that they suddenly decided to reconvene.** For this, they used the vile pretext that the comrade had managed to express himself in video from the hospital before another jurisdiction, in March 2023, in order to successfully inform a judge that he opposed any custodianship (of the State as well as of the family)!

“Now housed in a center for adapted living, Boris finally chose to accept this hearing of September 25, 2023 before the Court of Appeal (telecommuted), so that this story could be over. While some companions were present in the courtroom of Nancy with his lawyer, others were alongside Boris in his room, especially to help him face the vagaries of wi-fi and tracheotomy. For the sake of the anecdote, Boris had also taken care to adjust the angle of the small camera so that appearing behind him and in front of the judges was the poster “From the Shadows of the

1 transl. – As is customary the word companion is used in the French, which highlights more the sense that everyone is fighting their own struggle.

Towns the Glimmer of Insurrection”.² [...] **As for the prosecutor, he had previously recalled that this attack was not isolated at the time (with 175 for the whole year 2020, almost one every two days), and that the State had then feared that their multiplication, “if they had been coupled with others against energy and water”, could bring “the country to its knees in three days”.** He justified by this presumption of coordinated actions the means of anti-terrorist investigation deployed against the companion, as well as the heavy verdict of first instance (although the association of criminals was finally abandoned at the closure of the investigation)... before claiming now “taking into account the serious harm inflicted on Mr X during his detention”, a sentence of 8 months “covering his pre-trial detention” (according to his bad maths).

The final judgment fell on October 25, 2023, by unsurprisingly condemning Boris to a sentence equivalent to his pre-trial detention, i.e. one year in prison, plus 1,000 euros paid to Orange and the judicial agent of the State for their lawyers, plus 169 euros for appealing and being found guilty, plus a confirmation of the “reparations” granted to civil parties at first instance (about 91,500 euros to Orange, Enedis and the agent of the State, the other mobile companies having dropped the case). For information, it was communicated to the lawyers of the latter at the exit of the court that if ever their representatives dared to try to make a buck off the comrade in the near future (that is to say concretely on his disability benefit) it would certainly give them publicity that they would rather prefer to avoid...

At present, only one legal proceeding is pending, that in the hands of an investigating judge of Nancy concerning the cell fire. Once again, strength and courage to Boris, who also received in mid-November the famous ‘high-flight’ [*ed. – custom-made, vertical and electric*] wheelchair, for which he thanks those who participated in financing it through solidarity, and who now offers him new opportunities for autonomy.

Ruslan Siddiqui Charged With Railway Sabotage & Military Airfield Attack (Russia)

At the end of November [2023], the anarchist Ruslan Siddiqui was arrested on suspicion of organising the derailment of a goods train in Ryazan province. On 2nd December, the Dorogomilovsky

2 cestdejatoutdesuite.noblogs.org/2013/01/11/de-lombre-des-villes-aux-lueurs-de-linsurrection

district court in Moscow sent Ruslan to pre-trial detention.

Acts of railway sabotage are now quite common in Russia. Partisans use these to block the delivery of military supplies to the armed forces operating on Ukrainian territory.¹

The derailment occurred on 11th November, 190 kilometres out from the Moscow terminal.

Kommersant newspaper reported the details as follows:

Due to the detonation of improvised explosive devices (two bombs, each equivalent to 3kg of TNT, were placed 10 metres from each other on a bypass used by goods trains), a 300 metre stretch of track was damaged. A crater opened up, and the first 19 carriages of goods train no.2018 fell into a ditch. The explosion broke the window of the train driver's cabin, and the driver sustained non-serious injuries.

The security services have also stated that Ruslan Siddiqui was involved in an attack on the military airport in Ryazan on 20th July. **Four [drone] quadcopters, loaded with explosives, were flown on to the Dyagilevo base.**

Ruslan has now been charged with a "terrorist act" (Article 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, parts 2.a and 2.v) and "possession of explosive material" (Article 222.1, part 3.a). He is threatened with between 12 and 30 years imprisonment.

Ruslan's comrades have contacted the anti-war human rights initiative "Solidarity Zone". This is how they described him:

As one mutual comrade said, 'Ruslan is a person of action'. And that's really it: Ruslan undertakes difficult tasks, without wasting words. He grasps the essence of any situation quickly and works out how to respond. As a friend he is always responsive, always ready to help. He loves adventure sports such as trekking and cycling marathons. He has travelled many times to the Chernobyl and Belarussian Exclusion Zones [*established after the nuclear explosion in 1986, now uninhabited, richly forested areas*].

Ruslan is a proponent of anarchist ideas, and the Russian military aggression against Ukraine distressed him greatly. **All the more so because some of his friends and comrades died in that conflict, and people continue to die there.** And now he himself has become a victim of state violence, and our support is important to him.

1 ed. – see **'But It Did Not Stop'**



Since the above statement was released by the anarchist site avtonom.org, the same site released a longer piece this January with writing by the comrade, who has not denied carrying out the attacks in question. As well as detailing his torture by the cops (in one case with a taser for so long that some of his tattoo was burned off), he mentions that he is also being accused of planning another railway sabotage, which he denies. The investigation against him completed, he now awaits trial. There are well over a thousand criminal cases in Russia for anti-militarist actions since the start of the invasion (from administering anti-war Telegram channels to conspiring to destroy fighter jets), including the 16-year sentence to hard labour handed down by a military court to the anarchist Roman Shvedov in December for an incendiary attack on an administration building; the comrade was found dead in his cell five hours after the trial. But, hearteningly, there are signs of mutiny among the troops themselves, according to a2day.net:

In Ukraine on November 6th, Pavel Klymenko, a butcher general, was liquidated. He commanded the 5th Brigade and was famous for his fierce cruelty to his fighters. Endless and very large-scale (even by the standards of the Russian army) butcher assaults, executions for refusing to go on these assaults, sending soldiers "to the basement", extortion of money, beatings, torture. It was announced that Klimentko was killed in an FPV [*first-person view*] drone attack. According to the Rospartizan Telegram channel, the FPV drone was fired by Russian side – when Klimentko was riding his motorcycle around occupied Krasnogorovka [*eastern Ukrainian city*].

You can send letters through the on-line service PrisonMail.online
How to write a letter to a prisoner if you are not in Russia:
t.me/solidarity_zone/158

'WE CHOSE THIS PLACE' (Italy)

In the night between 1st and 2nd June, using rags and fuel, we set fire to a fibre optic street cabinet in the Fontina area of Pisa. We chose this place because it is in an industrial area near the Carrefour hypermarket, a robotics laboratory of the Sant'Anna Institute [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg75*] and the Bank of Pisa. Each day reality shows us how domination and war are directly linked to the development of these technologies, as the smart annihilation of the population of Gaza is demonstrating [*ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; The Atrocity*].

As much as the media has downplayed the damage by attributing it to a fault, they have had to admit that the repairs will require a long time. In this way we hope we have spoiled the work of the above-mentioned institutes and the festivities for this hypocritical republic [*ed. – on its commemoration day*].

'Today, March 8th' (Chile)

[ed. – Written in 2023, re-translated and annotated. For more on the intertwined nature of Mapuche struggle for the liberation of their Wallmapu – their traditional territories – and insurgent anarchism in those lands, see **Rebels Behind Bars; Between Weichan & Social War.**]

Today, March 8th [ed. – *International Women's Day*], as millions of women fill the streets of large cities around the world, we gather here again in this space of commemoration and struggle. We wish to keep alive the flame that those rebellious women decided to ignite hundreds of years ago and that today comrades continue to embody day-by-day from different trenches.

Over the years the struggle against heteropatriarchy¹ has sprouted, resisted and persisted in many territories. Heteropatriarchy is present in multiple areas of our lives, both in our interpersonal relationships and in ourselves; we are constantly learning and unlearning, inhabiting new experiences that make us question and reflect from different realities and environments.

The heteropatriarchy strikes hardest to those who resist the subjugation of their nature, that subjugation which the system defines as normal. As indigenous people, intersex, trans, gay, non-binary, pan-sexuals, lesbians, we do not live the same experience. Above all, it is not the same for those who decide to attack every bastion that seeks to dominate and destroy us. For the same reason we do not raise the banners of passive victimhood, on the contrary, we aim at constant confrontation against everything that seeks to subdue us.

Today we want to remember different comrades who, with their struggle, have nurtured the antagonistic path that we have decided to embrace. Herminia Concha,² Luisa Toledo,³ Cláudia López,⁴ Aracely

1 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg56**

2 ed. – A comrade participating in the workers struggles in 1950s Chile, the homeless movement building self-organised neighbourhoods, expelled from the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) guerrilla which she was part of forming due to deviations from the party line, exiled to Sweden before joining struggles in Nicaragua, healing wounded fighters and undertaking sabotage against Pinochet's dictatorial regime (see "**The Position of the Excluded**"); still active supporting revolutionary and Mapuche prisoners around the turn of the century.

3 ed. – Well-known and much-loved figure in the resistance to the dictatorship (to which she lost three of her children, becoming emblematic of their March 29th Day of the Youth Combatant) and then to the following democracy.

4 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg62**

Romo,⁵ Jill Phipps,⁶ Guilly Peachy.⁷ We also wish to emphasize those comrades who have fallen in confrontations or have been assassinated for their fervent commitment to the defense of land and water, and to animal liberation. Nicolasa Quintreman, Macarena Valdes, Emilia Baucis: the three Mapuche *weychafe*⁸ comrades. Nicolasa fought hard against the installation of ENDESA's Ralco project⁹ in Pehuenche territory. At the age of 74, she was found dead in the artificial lagoon of the same project. Macarena Valdes, seed guardian, defender of water and forests in the Newen-Txagil community, was found dead in her own home at the hands of hired killers from the companies RP Global and SAESA at the age of 32.¹⁰ Emilia Baucis, defender of water and territories, anti-speciesist,¹¹ part of Lof Llazkawe,¹² was murdered at the age of 25 by hired killers from the Riñimapu condominium in the context of a retaking of traditional territory in Riñiwe Lewfu.

We remember every *compañera/e*¹³ who has been killed for fighting against the killing of animals and the devastation of their habitat. Because we recognize speciesism and patriarchy as two oppressions that form part of the same system. One seeks the subjugation of other species, considering them inferior, despite their capacity to feel. And the other seeks the oppression and invisibilization of women and of dissidences from gender norms, considering them inferior beings that can be violated and commodified. Therefore, we believe that it is not possible to fight for the liberation of human women and gender dissidents and ignore the violated females of other species.

Devastation is advancing by leaps and bounds. Without land, there is no life. Simply, there is not much to add nor more to think; as Emilia used to say, "The defense of the land and of bodies on the territory have never been and will never be contradictory struggles". **Heteropatriarchy pretends to be loving, fun, to captivate with cute slogans,**

5 ed. – Killed in an accidental detonation along with one of the Vergara brothers (see footnote 3) while preparing attacks; possibly the premature explosion was provoked by Pinochet's agents.

6 ed. – Second-generation animal rights activist, anti-fascist and anti-vivisection saboteur, crushed under a lorry she'd broken through police lines to try to stop during a campaign against the live export of UK calves for veal.

7 ed. – British anarchist/animal liberationist, passed 2015.

8 ed. – Mapuche warriors

9 ed. – Hydro-electric dam flooding a Mapuche graveyard.

10 ed. – Both companies involved in a hydro-electric project.

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg10**

12 ed. – A *lof* is a Mapuche village community.

13 ed. – The form of *compañeros* (see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**) specifically in the feminine and the gender-unmarked forms, respectively.

with chatter, to disguise itself as environmentalism, sisterhood, even intersectionality.¹⁴ It will not stop the devastation of the earth through state policies, nor governments of the day; they only seek to mitigate or slowly kill the *itxofil mogen*.¹⁵ Billions of hectares of native forest have become ashes, rivers, lagoons, lakes, springs, waterfalls, have disappeared, are about to become extinct or have irreparable damage, as the oceans live daily. Hundreds of animals have seen their habitats violated or usurped in the name of progress,¹⁶ by mining, forestry and oil companies, fish farms,¹⁷ etc.. *Compañera/es* from different territories plan, act and attack against the devastators of the earth, lurking from the forest, the mountains, the jungle, the desert; in the dim light, waiting for progress to show its face because sooner or later they come to exterminate. **We send much *newen***¹⁸

14 ed. – This concept was intended to recognise interconnectedness of different forms of oppression and, therefore, solidarity; often devolving, however, (especially when combined with social-media-level analysis and performativity) to a checklist of oppressions, or, worse, a hierarchy. Of course some kind of analysis along these lines is vital when faced with the very real hierarchies imposed by patriarchy, race, ability, etc., but in many of its applications intersectionality has been of questionable use in dispelling essentialism. As written in 'So Fucked Up: Guilt, Disempowerment, & Other Mistakes of an Anti-Oppression Practice', *"The result is the sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit assumption that one's place in the hierarchy (differently abled queer female-bodied latina) can tell you more about them and their history than any individual differences. [...] I think awareness of history and socialization is critically important. But the set of nuances and emphases that anti-oppression activists choose encourages personal identification with systems of oppression rather than mutiny, in the case of those in the privileged box, and victimization by systems of oppression that are perpetuated by allies as much as by enemies, in the case of those in the oppressed box. [...] An individual who echoes oppressive behaviours he has been trained in shares very little in common with an institution that can both generate, model, and evolve those behaviours. Emphasizing that commonality can be useful, with an indispensable caveat, in understanding how the system works, but if we place our new understanding in a revolutionary framework – with the desire to actually abolish these institutions – then this knowledge points directly to the strategic necessity to undermine and sever this commonality or identification with power, not to reinforce it."* However, people fighting to be recognised on their own terms and self-defining their struggles is still vital; one alternative framing to intersectionality that has been offered is an application of assemblage theory: see **Follow the Fires**.

15 ed. – Mapuche term for general biodiversity.

16 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg11**

17 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg24**

18 ed. – Mapuche term for force or strength, of the kind that flows from nature.

to all those *compañeras/es* who actively participate in networks in defence of seeds, waters and territories and for animal liberation; and to those who – despite all the exhaustion – continue to protect their roots,¹⁹ in the face of all the consequences. No matter how many times the hired killers persecute you, we know that you more than anyone know the forest, desert, jungle and mountains like the back of your hand, the *püllü*²⁰ of each fallen *compañera/e* accompanies you and each *geh*²¹ protects and shelters you.

We take this opportunity to make a special mention in solidarity with Alfredo Cospito, a comrade with an indomitable soul, who is today imprisoned in the 41bis regime,²² which seeks to subdue his mind, body

19 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**

20 ed. – Mapuche term for the soul of a living thing such as a human (that which survives death is the *am*).

21 ed. – Spirits of different places known to the Mapuche.

22 ed. – To continue from where we left off with our notes introducing '**Our Anarchy Lives**': Alfredo's hunger strike lasted 181 days, causing an explosive situation in Italian society. Recall that he was striking against his confinement under '41 bis' conditions (the most political charges in Italian law, requiring signing by the Minister of Justice), and his life sentence for actions hurting no one and which he did not claim. It seems that the administration under technocrat Mario Draghi – all too aware of the powder-key of tensions from his experience as head of the European Central Bank overseeing the carving up of Greece for its debts – aimed for the sentence to coincide with a general crackdown to scare dissenters; for example, around the same time six trade unionists were charged with extortion simply for demanding wage increases.

Alfredo's sentencing (once visibilised by the strike and many actions in solidarity with him; see '**The Terms of Life & Death**') caused controversy in Italian media and civil society, but unlike with many other issues where anarchists mobilise, the initiative was solely in the hands of the anarchists, with the reformists and democrats tagging behind. In this way, the anarchist movement regained momentum and presence, leaving the State in embarrassed silence as it waited (and no doubt wished) for Alfredo to die, speaking up only to say accuse the comrade of an "instigatory" role in the disorders during his fast. For example, 101 days into the strike some comrades reported holding a demonstration in Rome, *"which the police forces decided to surround and provoke. However that evening the plans did not go as foreseen in the offices of the police, with a part of the demonstrators remaining outside the encirclement and the police forces ending up in the grip of those whom they wanted to provoke."*

"There was a riot and a wild procession through the streets of Trastevere, determined to hold the streets for a few hours, ending with 42 demonstrators arrested..."

Two weeks later it was Milan's turn, with damages to ENI-Enjoy cars (see '**The Ecological Transition is a Hoax**'), estate agents, supermarkets, banks and a few cops, while Alfredo was undergoing transfer to the

and spirit. Despite this, Alfredo remains firm and determined, even when his jailers do not allow him to receive a hug, letters, or to touch and appreciate nature in the midst of these walls of grief and concrete. Alfredo daily shows us the strength of his conviction, his daily struggle for life, after more than 4 months [ed. – *at the time of writing*] of hunger strike. For those of us who are lovers of life, we know that there is no patient way to live locked up and isolated from our loved ones, from looking to the sky, from feeling the wind against our faces or from sitting under the shade given to us by a tree. He would rather die than be repentant and dominated.

We send a fraternal embrace to the mothers, sisters and daughters of all the prisoners who, on a day like today, died in the San Miguel prison fire.²³ To all those

hospital there. (The next month, Turin: 630,000 euros in damages during the rioting, ending in a siege of anarchist Radio Blackout's premises.)

As comrades wrote in 'The State is Weak', "*the warning that the Italian state intended to give to the anarchist movement has been returned to sender with determination and consistency. In these six months of hunger strike, the isolation of Alfredo and all the imprisoned comrades was prevented.*" This was not his first hunger-strike (that having been when he refused conscription in the '80s and was jailed), even during this spell in prison, but consequences this time were heavy: by the time he stopped, when the Constitutional Court reduced his life sentence to 23 years (and his co-defendant Anna's to 17 years and 9 months) in a partial win for the strike and solidarity movement – although he remains under '41 bis' until at least 2026 – he'd experienced presumably permanent neurological damage, losing feeling in one foot, has reduced feeling in the other one, and the start of similar symptoms in one hand.

As we previously recounted, seven months after the end, he and various others were charged with terrorist incitement over the interview which '**Our Anarchy Lives**' was drawn from; happily, this January all charges against Alfredo and all 11 others were dismissed. The hearing at least gave Alfredo an opportunity to hear the voices of the other comrades and see their faces, albeit via videolink (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg90**), and to speak. From his statement: "*Even if remotely, even if for the brief time of a blink of an eye, today I can tear off the gag, the medieval bridle of a 41 bis that a moderate left-wing government applied to me years ago to silence an uncomfortable voice, for however minor and irrelevant, however surely an enemy of your democracy. [...] Today in this courtroom we are undergoing an inquisitorial trial based on an interview given through regular prison mail and not through a conversation with my sister in a prison visit as the prosecution wants us to believe, dragging her to the courthouse only for the mere fact of continuing undeterred to attend prison visits with her brother. It is a classic strategy of all authoritarian regimes, used regularly in the 41 bis regime, to burn all bridges with all emotional bonds outside of the prison.*" Struggle goes on.

23 ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Ten Years Since the Massacre in the San Miguel Prison**

who make visible and continue to fight against femicides or hate attacks against their loved ones or friends, for Nicole Saavedra,²⁴ Ana Cook,²⁵ Mónica Briones²⁶ and so many others murdered for being women and/or gender dissidents. We also send a loving embrace of solidarity to all those who are fighting at points of confrontation in different territories; comrades of Wallmapu, Puelmapu,²⁷ Kurdistan,²⁸ Iran,²⁹ Wayuu,³⁰ Murui-Muina,³¹ Asháninka,³² Guaraní Kaiowá,³³ among many others: who today cannot be less than an inextinguishable fire in our minds and hearts, to continue striking, attacking and destroying every strand of this rotten system.

In relation to our prison, we will not tire of publicly denouncing the jailers who carry out humiliating practices against fellow inmates. It is common to observe in this prison that most of the prison guards reproduce practices prohibited in their own internal regulations. Day by day, the prison guards make the prisoners lower their trousers and underwear, as well as to open their legs, do squats and hold the squat for at least 30 seconds to perform body searches. They also make the inmates pull up their shirts, raise their bras and show their breasts, all to ensure that the *compañeras/es* do not carry "prohibited items" on their bodies. Many of these searches are carried out in front of corridors where male officers, interns, civil servants, etc. circulate, or are forced in the view of other prisoners. Months ago we denounced the application of this protocol in the visiting area; however, it continues to be applied to those deprived of liberty. Illegitimate pressures that are carried out constantly; when the inmates refuse to submit, they are threatened with the with-holding of their visits, deliveries and/or *venustorios*.³⁴ In addition there is

24 ed. – 23-year-old student kidnapped, tortured, raped and murdered in El Melón, Chile, probably because she was a lesbian, by a man who also raped 9- and 12-year-old girls.

25 ed. – Chilean DJ killed in her room in 2017, who became an emblem of feminist struggle against macho violence.

26 ed. – Painter and sculptor whose 1984 murder during the dictatorship is considered the first documented case of a lesbophobic hate crime in Chile.

27 ed. – The parts of Wallmapu east of the Andes, today claimed by Argentina; see **Return Fire vol.5 pg56**

28 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg97**

29 ed. – see **Iranian Anarchists on Protests in Response to Police Murder of Mahsa Amini**

30 ed. – Home of the Wayuu people (the largest indigenous group living under the Colombian and Venezuelan states).

31 ed. – Indigenous inhabitants of a reserve in Colombia.

32 ed. – The largest and most widespread indigenous group in the Amazon, straddling Peru and Brazil.

33 ed. – One of three Guaraní sub-groups; their territory is crossed by Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina.

34 ed. – An allowance in the Chilean prison system is that in these spaces a prisoner can be intimate with a visiting partner, including sex: reserved for the "best behaved."

never a lack of jailers who, when faced with complaints, only mock contemptuously and proceed to tighten the protocol with even more humiliating practices. Jailers are not comrades; no police are and never will be.

*Fire to the cis-tym³⁵ and to the whole prison society!*⁶⁶

*Freedom to all subversive, anarchist
and Mapuche prisoners!*

– *Mónica Caballero Sepulveda,*
anarchist prisoner.

– *Mawünhko,* anarchist prisoner.

– *Itamar Diaz,* anti-speciesist prisoner.



(some context on the imprisoned comrades:)

Mónica: [continued from *Return Fire vol.6 chap.3*]

She has written multiple texts from prison on the occasion of previous March 8th commemorations, which stem from thousands-strong female garment-worker strike in New York City in 1908, lasting more than a year and seeing the first International Women's Day dedication on February 20th 1909, spreading around the world.

As Mónica recounts in her March 2021 statement, *"There are those who have fragile memory, others simply ignore and there are some who better forget it. [...] In 1908, a group of workers organized themselves autonomously to confront and demand that the bosses end the conditions of misery in which they barely survived, this daring and courage was punished with a great massacre.*

"The powerful sought to end the strikes and sabotage with an amplifying measure so that no one would again try to break or obstruct the chain of production and merchandise, for the bosses killing workers will always be the most economical and effective option, there is plenty of poor people.

"That March 8th is commemorated today is thanks to the effort and persistence of many who do not forget what happened that day, so for those of us who are committed to building antagonistic paths to the logic of the heteropatriarchal system, it is crucial not to stop remembering those who fertilized with tears and blood the ways of confrontation, thus we learn from those who were before us, from their successes and mistakes. In this way we give more accurate blows to this system of terror."

35 ed. – see *You Are the Good Cause*

36 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg7*



"The tremendous change in woman's position [is] indeed phenomenal when we reflect that it is but a short time [ed. – written 1914] since she has entered the industrial arena. Six million women wage workers; six million women, who have the equal right with men to be exploited, to be robbed, to go on strike; aye, to starve even. Anything more, my lord? Yes, six million wage workers in every walk of life, from the highest brain work to the mines and railroad tracks; yes, even detectives and policemen. Surely the emancipation is complete." – *Emma Goldman*

The switch to March 8th relates to the old Russian calendar; by that system of counting, 'our' March 8th of 1917 marked International Women's Day with a thousands-strong uprising in then-capital Petrograd against the ravages of the First World War and widespread hunger. Despite the ire of male 'revolutionaries' like Leon Trotsky (who wanted them to wait until May 1st – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87* – reduced by men like him to a male-centered annual worker protest), their rebellion grew into daily mass strikes against the autocracy of the Tsar, and, within a week, the abdication of the latter, ending his dynasty.

Naturally, none of these events are commonly celebrated in the recuperated March 8th events today.

As cited in *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4*, Mónica's co-accused, Francisco Solar, had already assumed responsibility for the attacks of which he was accused – upon trial in November 2023, with a solidarity demonstration outside the court, he was sentenced to 86 years, and the prison authorities seem determined that he spend the maximum of that possible in isolation. Mónica received 12; she was charged with being accomplice to one of the actions only, the Tánica one (see *Rebels Behind Bars; Francisco Assumes His Part in the Charges Against Him*).

Mawünhko: Arrested along with her comrade Tomás González in May 2022, after a confrontation following an identity check (from which two others escaped unidentified): accused of carrying a weapon and ammunition, and attempted double homicide against the police. Some months after writing this joint letter, she was released after received an abbreviated

sentence accepting the charges handed down by the prosecutor; Tomás got 16 years for having fired on the cops to make an attempted escape.

Itamar: Then imprisoned following the September 2022 action against the Susaron facility in Santiago, by Animal Response Group. In that attack, armed persons stormed that meat industry central branch, evading the electric fence, scaring off the security guard and torching almost the whole enclosure; the packing plant, sales and marketing office, events space, the entire fleet of 10 trucks, documentation and the safe, and the refrigerated distribution point along with its seven tonnes of beef, chicken and pork, in a major blow to critical infrastructure of an internationally-importing business. Sadly, surveillance footage caught the car they used, and triangulated the signal of their phones in the house where they had gathered before and after the action, and they were arrested two weeks later.

Briefly released pre-trial before being re-called to prison on the appeal of the prosecutor, Itamar was sentenced in March 2024 to five years on tag, so is now out on supervised 'freedom'. Her three comrades – Ru, Tortuga and Panda – got between four-and-a-half to five years; only Tortuga was also allowed to serve this on tag. In March 2024 (before Tortuga got out), the three of them wrote that “[i]n prison it is difficult to deal with sorrow and anguish, because you have no room to let yourself slack. You can’t, for example, apply the classic ‘today I won’t get up’, ‘today I will rest and give myself a day to think’. Here the wheel doesn’t stop and you have to know how not to show weakness in front of screws and prisoners.

“Here you either grow stronger or you melt into the mud that covers everything around you, and for that great flow of energy that is required; conviction in our idea and pride in our actions and decisions become more vital than water or oxygen.” Let not our differences with the vegan comrades (see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; **'A Web of Relations & Tensions'**, or some of the positions taken in the claim for the action) stand in the way of the urgent demolition of the industrialised food system in all its cruel forms.

While still locked up, shortly after co-writing the above article, Itamar participated in a strike on her wing, expounding on various abuses and deprivations by the guards. As part of that, she and a friend were disciplined for advising fellow inmates that the kind of strip-searches described above were violations not just in an ethics but also a legal sense; both were moved to the punishment module for “attempted mutiny and threats to other inmates.” In the Santiago 1 prison, those who showed solidarity with Itamar were also dispersed to different wings.

More on the House Searches in Brussels & Amsterdam (Belgium, Holland, Germany, France)

[ed. – continued from *Return Fire* vol.6 chap.5]

Early in the morning of 23rd May 2024, three residences of comrades in Amsterdam and Brussels were raided. As a reminder: digital devices (computers, telephones, hard drives, USB keys, cameras), tools, and anarchist publications were seized. No one was arrested on that occasion.

According to the first documents of the investigation, three comrades are the targets of a procedure issued by the prosecutor’s office in Munich for: “participation in a criminal organization (§129),¹ arson, disruption of public works, and anti-constitutional sabotage.”

More precisely, the comrades are suspected of forming a so-called “left-extreme anarchist group” “who committed the following offenses in Germany”:
– “on 25.07.20 arson of [fibre-optic] cable spools, trucks, and construction equipment in Munich”;
– “on 03.08.22² arson of construction equipment in Schrobenhausen (Bavaria)”;

Several European Investigation Orders issued since at least September 2023 indicate collaboration between the prosecutor’s office in Munich and their Dutch, Belgian and French counterparts.

Any new information will be shared.

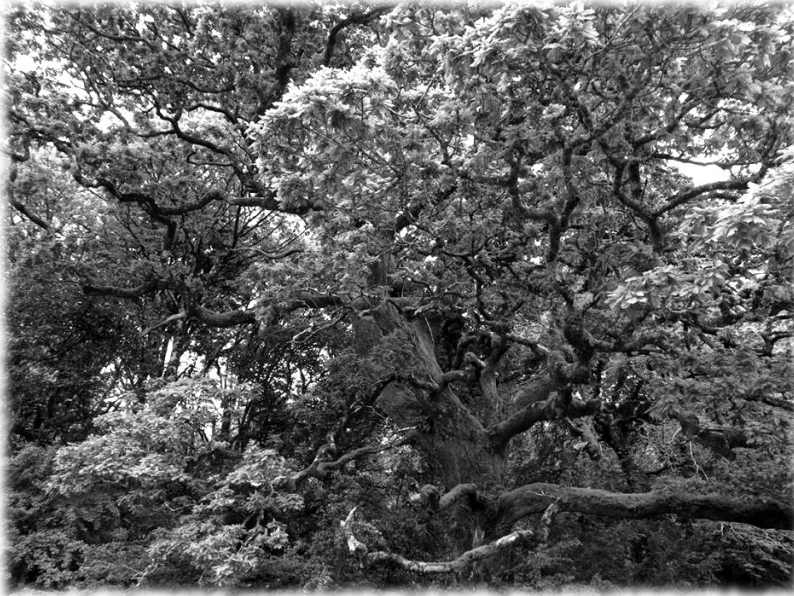


02.09.24: repression fails to stop the attacks in Munich – huge Max Bögl concrete plant hit, 7 pieces of heavy machinery torched, conveyor belt ignited & starts to burn the mixing silo, millions of euros in damages (among other projects, Max Bögl worked on the Grünheide factory; see Cars as Cameras)

- 1 ed. – 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**
- 2 ed. – In the prosecutor's documents this was listed as 2002.

WOUNDED HEALERS

– searching for questions



A woman who was born in a tree and had spent her entire life swinging from branch to branch, never using her legs to run upon the forest floor, woke up and, for reasons that she could not entirely comprehend, decided that she would teach her friend, who had lived in the same fashion as she, how to walk. They both climbed down, scratching their faces, arms, hands, legs and feet on the tree's surface, and fell upon the floor, with their backs on the ground, looking up at the sun's light shining through the branches, breaching the leaf cover. Instantly they were aware of a myriad of strange creatures, that they had never encountered before, from the treetop, moving around them – not by sight, but by their movement over and between both their bodies. They tried to name them, classify them, so as to form pictures in order to understand these strange beings they found themselves immersed within. But as this ended in failure, the woman stated to her friend that they should stand and begin running. Using each others bodies for support, they attempted to stand, but fell back to the ground, their bodies now twisted together, and they start kissing and caressing each other, as eros fell with the gravity that brought them back to the earth.

This story has not ended, and it will not end here. If there is a story of this space, this is one whose picture reflects my experience of the space we are.

Most of us who find ourselves drawn to radical politics didn't arrive here because of well reasoned arguments, or because we found ourselves, due to privileges, in comfortable circumstances, that we'd very much like to end for entirely self-less reasons.

We aren't the ones that the system that is this machinery worked for and provided what needs we desired being met. We almost certainly had to work outside or against the machinery to fulfil those desires.

We recognise the cracks in the machinery and the systemic failings, because we have lived within those spaces and as those spaces. The absurdity of this culture, the madness of the machine that is Leviathan¹ is something obvious to us, because we have fallen to the earth, and felt the impact of that upon our bodies.

My falling to the earth has involved many experiences that will be similar to many others within this space. I lived the violence of economics through finding myself caught between contradictory families of poor middle-class Italian-American catholic culture, who had once known great luxury and affluence; and wealthy working-class

Jewish culture, that had migrated between many nations to find itself in London doing far "better" than they'd ever expected; while living with my recovering crack and heroin addict father, getting by on whatever we could. While I only lived it when I moved to Devon at 14 and encountered young people who had never met anyone of a Jewish background, my first sensations of the violence of racism was through learning of historical spaces of racial prejudice, in particular the violence of concentration camps.² My first experience of the violence of rape culture, where as a young "man" I was aware of what was going on, was when the very Christian IT [*information technology*] teacher, who years later got arrested and sent to prison for paedophilia, showed me extremely violent pornography, during a period of my life where I was openly questioning my sexuality and exploring homosexual identity. There are other experiences, some of which I have shared here before, but I will leave it as these for now.

Your fall to the earth might well be similar. You might have felt the impact of racism upon your being. You might have felt the impact of poverty and class-culture within your life. You might have felt rape culture touch your skin and violate who it is you are. Your experiences might have been worse than mine. The struggles I have lived might pale in comparison to those you have experienced. I am in no position to claim any monopoly on the experience of suffering, and I live now a life of relative comfort, as someone

1 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'The Temple Was Built Before the City'

2 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; 'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'**

who fits the identity of white, male, heterosexual and many more positions that can be considered as privileged.

Regardless, we are survivors, and that is important. Whatever happened to us, we have survived whatever happened, as right now, here in this space, we are alive. If you are reading this now, as I was writing this in the space of now that I am living within, you are alive. You are alive as Life. Where we are alive we are the potential for what is impossible and, perhaps more beautifully, what is possible.

That is the strength that survival brings. What we can take as the value from our suffering is the strength that survival has brought us. Empowered, we are the embodied potentiality of possible, as we are not impossible. We have the power to create impossibilities, through the potentiality we embody and manifest within-and-as-the-world-as-being-in-the-world.

This strength does not come without scars though. Many of us still bear open wounds, as we continue to live within the machine that enacts violence upon our being. We are all the world, as we are Life, and so we are all, in some way or another, impacted by the violence the machine Leviathan inflicts upon the earth we fall upon, as we fall into our being.

Within all our desire, I believe, there is a primal search for healing and wellness. To heal ourselves, and to help others heal. We all want to be the medicine-people of our tribes – many of us falling into the commercialisation of Siberian shamanism and fashion-revolutions, in our haste to be healers. **As such, we become the woman from the tree, trying to teach our friend to run, when we have never walked before.**

So as we go to bring what we can to facilitate healing, whether that is by confronting the enactor of violence, or by tending to the wounds that have been left, we bring with us the scars and wounds we bear as survivors.

It seems important to acknowledge that, for the most part, all memory of what it was to be healthy is, for the most part, lost to us, as we and the world we are is not what was and can never be so again: “an individual cannot quote the same Heraclitus quote about rivers twice, because it is not the same Heraclitus quote about rivers³ and they are not the same individual” – Julian Langer [*ed. – author of the piece*]. The world that was has dissipated into impossibility, through the transient motion of the

3 ed. – “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.”

present. This space is forever changed. It also stands that we, as observers of the world, as the-world-observing-itself, desiring ourselves-as-the-world-healed, have an effect wherever we observe, from the quantum scale right through to scales of epic magnitude that we have no ability to comprehend, changing the topography of the space, from our observations as a wounded-world-observing-itself.

Whatever understanding we have of the world is never free-floating, never independent from the subjectivity we embody, as psychic-spaces, body-spaces and as space-as-community. So whatever understanding we bring as healers will bring with it all that we are and all that is us.

I recently underwent an experience were two very wounded people were trying to bring healing to each other, one of which is a friend who is close to me. They ultimately ended up bringing each other more harm, as the situation became more and more abusive. One party became physically violent and the other stayed, knowing it would get worse, but hoping what they knew was wrong. Neither wished harm on the other – they were both trying to be loving and failed, because, like the woman trying to teach her friend to walk, they are both wounded people, trying to facilitate healing, with no memory of what wellness ever felt like. The situation fell apart, into hurt and anger; love transformed into something that neither of them had wished for;⁴ and the best of intentions weren't enough. Their wounds meant they were not strong enough to support each other. Where they ended up was somewhere entirely worse than where they had been.

I have noticed something similar when I have witnessed groups trying to provide group healing to each other, when they all bare similar wounds. My father's been involved in 12 Step fellowships for the bulk of my life. All of his friends have been from within that space. They all look to each other for healing and support. **There is something beautiful within that world, but the tragedy is that this goes side-by-side a cultish image of well-being, that amounts to psychic-vampirism.** Sponsee drains sponsor and sponsor drains sponsee. They are all beholden to each other, out of moral obligation towards whatever their “higher power” is. Eventually most fall out of the program and relapse, which often leads to death by overdosing. Those who last the longest are those whose vampirism is able to be sustained the longest, sucking from the wounds of those who suck from the wound of whomever is suck from them. And I am yet to meet anyone from that space who embodies anything that resembles

4 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg46**

wellness.

The tragedy of both these situations is that there is no “bad guy”, no one to blame. Both involve individuals acting out of love, with beautiful intentions, but for the most part resulted in something awful and ugly. The wounds their bodies have been left with, psychically and in flesh, make healing within-those-spaces impossible. Eventually the space becomes impossible and everything falls apart.

Ontologically and existentially everything that is will be impossible and dissipate into nothingness. Everything ends and eventually healing becomes as impossible as being.

But as survivors, who know what it is to embrace the potential of possibility by staking a claim in what it is to Be-in-the-world, as in to-care, we know that in front of our experience of impossibility comes our experience of the possible. We know what it is to experience freedom. We know what it is to experience beauty. We know what it is to experience love. With all the suffering and struggle, the impossibility, there is what makes Life desirable.

There is an absurdity to the situation that seems inescapable. We know our projects will eventually become nothing. At some point all of this will be irrelevant. If the anthropocene extinction event⁵ doesn't take all of us with it, whatever happens, at some point in that space called the future, which never arrives but is apparently coming, the sun will explode, taking with it the earth and all that lives there.

But we still desire healing. There is an irrationality to this that is instinctual, visceral, primal and seems to be manifest from the animal bodies that we are. Our wounded animal bodies, who desire our individualised bodies healed, as well as the body of the earth we are manifest Extensions of. Trying to run, as we are learning to walk, as animals.

This is a space caught between hope and hopelessness, where both fall away into honest desire. Words fail to express this adequately. But we find we have to speak. We feel that we have to be like the robin who calls out in the morning with their song to announce the sun's rising. So, still learning to sing, we cry out in desperation and defiance.

5 ed. – For some troubling of this framing, see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4*; 'A Web of Relations & Tensions'

Someone who is obviously very wounded, but searches for healing and wishes to be a healer – sometimes achieving and sometimes failing – is Derrick Jensen.

If you know of Jensen you will likely either view him as an angelic figure, writing beautiful poetic pieces of environmentalist writings while seeking to be a force to challenge patriarchy; or you'll likely see him as a demonic figure, who hates all humanity, most of all trans-people and queer theorists. In many ways Derrick deserves both of these identities. He also doesn't likely deserve all of either.

Derrick has spoken and written openly about the abuse he, his siblings and his mother, underwent at the hands of his father. About his father's violence towards them and the sexual assaults he underwent through childhood. The accounts he gives of these experiences are raw and will resonate with many of ours.

One of the aspects of Jensen's writings I loved, when I first encountered his writings, was how he located abuse as systemic and located it within processes, rather than viewing abuse as isolated phenomenon. Coupled with his apparent honesty about himself and the pessimism that resonates with my own, I grew very interested in his writings. Books like *Endgame*, *Strangely Like War* and *The Myth of Human Supremacy* have become works that I personally value a great deal, because of their poetry, imagery and soberness, regarding the violence that Leviathan enacts daily. And through email exchanges, I enjoyed what I knew of his identity outside of writing and activism. Derrick is trying desperately to be a medicine person within his community and to bring healing within the world.

This though was occurring more and more on the backdrop of learning why people dislike Derrick Jensen so much. Learning of how he fell out of favour with both primitivists⁶ and anarchists, and the transphobia he is caught up with became increasingly uncomfortable for me. The Leninism⁷ and prejudice of his organisation DGR [*Deep Green Resistance*],⁸ who

6 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg92*

7 ed. – see 'It Depends on All of Us'

8 ed. – “DGR was in the news last year [ed. – written in 2024], when indigenous activists broke ties with the organization because of their transphobic position. This was not the first time this had happened. DGR is explicitly and unapologetically trans-exclusionary. Some in the group have compared gender transitioning to eugenics and genital mutilation, and described it as a conspiracy of the medical industry [ed. – see *Nicolas Casaux, Transphobe, is Lying to You*].

“The DGR website states: “Gender is not natural, not a choice, and not a feeling: it is the structure of women's oppression. Attempts to create more 'choices'”

I had initially looked on as “interesting, but by no means perfect”, became something I struggled more and more with.

Eventually, I moved away from any involvement I ever had within that space, as I moved more into where I currently find myself. I had no ill-will towards Derrick or DGR, though I had less respect for them. What was apparent to me was that they obviously desired much of the same healing in the world that I do and that, while I might not believe in the same medicines as them, they are working towards challenging this industrial nightmare that is violating us and the earth we are Extensions of. Equally, what was also apparent was that Derrick Jensen and many (if not all) of his followers are still struggling with their wounds, trying to heal, and trying to survive, in much the same way that many of us are. I’m not saying Derrick or DGR bring nothing with the potential to provide healing, but the known side effects of this approach worry me.

It is sad to think that systems and circumstances have affected him/them so as to come to this, that wounds have left that space having such a will for wellness, but unable to move past its own hurt. It is sad that Derrick and DGR can be beautiful in many ways, and yet so ugly in others.

Derrick has written and had published, a new book titled *Anarchism and The Politics of Violation*. This book will have undoubtedly have been written out of Derrick’s desire to bring healing to the space that ecocide and patriarchy⁹ has left us with. **That said,**

within the sex-caste system only serve to reinforce the brutal realities of male power. As radicals, we intend to dismantle gender and the entire system of patriarchy which it embodies.” As Molly Taft at Gizmodo has observed, *“people not well-versed in how modern transphobia manifests may skip over this sentiment or misread it for committed feminism.”* But implied in the statement above (and made clear on their FAQ) is the belief that the trans rights movement reinforces the binary gender hierarchy.

“I would respond that any expression of binary gender theoretically reinforces the gender hierarchy, but that is as true of cisgender as it is of transgender. And in any case, it seems to me that transgender *actually breaks down that binary* – and hence the hierarchy – by embodying (literally) the permeability of those categories” (Jumping the Gap: Where Green Transphobia Leads).

9 ed. – At the distance of seven years since this was written, it’s clear that any kind of feminism or ecological revolt is no longer the motivation for DGR’s essentialist hatred, if you can judge from the allies they appeal to; both Jensen and Keith have featured on a variety of far-right white nationalist media, and through a front-group Women’s



Above right: DGR's front-woman Lierre Keith (after she & Jensen drove out original trans-inclusive members) – now more known for anti-trans activism (see The TERFs Weekend From Hell) – & fellow transphobes get cream-pied, egged, & banner snatched away by counter-protest to their opportunistic rally in Oakland, December 2022

how he is seeking to do that is an immediate concern, as this work seems to be, for the most part, not a critique of issues within anarchist theory, but a bash against egoism¹⁰ and queer-culture/queer-theory.¹¹

Discussions within queer theory regarding age of consent laws have, unfortunately, stained its image within some areas of discourse. This is very similar to how the image of the “violent thug” has had an impact on anarchist theories within discourse. It is very similar to how the image of a “Mao-supporting¹² Stalinist,¹³ defender of gulags” has impacted on Marxian ideas within discourse.¹⁴ It is very similar to how the image of the “crazed lesbian screaming about castrating all males” has impacted on feminist arguments within discourse. It is very similar to how the image of “racist, nationalist supporters of ethnic-nativism” has impacted on environmentalist ideas around tribalism and falling in love with the land you live in.¹⁵

The image of queer theory being the “paedophilia defender theory” is by all appearances the dominant idea Derrick is pushing through this work. This is apparent by the rhetoric he has used in discussions around the content of the book, where he allocates anarchist ideas as being supportive of paedophilia,

Liberation Front (WoLF) work with militant anti-abortion Christian groups, trying to elect Republicans and appealing to the United Nations for anti-trans legislation. Then again, feminism has always featured struggle between right-leaning women and the rest of us, even before the famous 'second-wave' '70s-'80s collaborations with the Christian Right to futher criminalise sex work and porn, so new alliances with the 'Make America Great Again' crowd shouldn't lead us to acritically defend it.

10 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg18**

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg21**

12 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

13 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies**

14 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**

15 ed. – see **Lies of the Land**

as anarchists support queer-culture.

Before challenging Derrick's depiction of the situation, I'm first going to address where he right – not to advance the uglier aspects of his argument, but so that, here and now, we can move past it.

Now, while I have been disgusted by him in many ways, one of my main influences, in thought and praxis, is Hakim Bey/Peter Lambourn Wilson. I find many(/most) of his ideas brilliant and engaging, but hate that I have had to encounter them on the backdrop of his advancement of “boy love”, through periodicals like *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. **Bey, as someone who has an obvious desire to be a healer through confronting the wounds/disease this culture inflicts, experimented – as far as I know, only conceptually – with what he thought could be a medicine, but what he advanced is dangerous and toxic.** He and those anarchists who supported him in that, while acting out of a desire to nurture healing and challenge the violence of the machine of Leviathan, fucked up, in the way that people who experiment with medicines can fuck up. I hope any damage caused by this course of treatment was minimal.¹⁶

One of my favourite concepts Bey has used is that of psychic-nomadism, which forms a great deal of my personal praxis – including how I encounter Derrick Jensen's arguments. Psychic-nomadism can be seen as a form of movement between systems and ideas, embracing certain aspects that hold personal value/usability, and leaving what has nothing desirable to bring, or is dangerous. **It is my belief that we all do this, to some extent or another, in that there (really) are no ideological purists or orthodox practitioners, just people wishing to paint an image of purity – the only Christian died on a cross and all that.** This is something I have sought to bring to my relationship with Bey/Wilson's ideas, while remembering that he is undoubtedly wounded by his experiences of the violence of the machine that is this culture, and how much that will have had an impact on the manifestation of his ideas.

In a talk Derrick gave recently [*ed. – this piece published in 2018*], which you can find a video of on Youtube and includes discussion around his book on anarchism, he gleefully enjoys poking the anarchists attending, to voice protest and criticism towards his transphobia, with a series of references to queer-theories relationship to paedophilia discussion. The

16 ed. – Another sympathetic reading of Bey that articulately points out the utter incompatibility of Bey's own theory with Bey's old position on 'boy love' can be found in Andy Robinbon's essays on him: search theanarchistlibrary.org

reference I found most noticeable was how excited he got to describe Gayle Rubin's work *Thinking Sex*, which includes content on politics surrounding paedophilia, as the foundational document of queer-theory. **Whether *Thinking Sex* is the foundational document for queer-theory or not, if it has any significant impact on queer-culture or not, if queer-theory and queer-culture as-the-lived-experience-of-queer-individuals-and-not-ideas-within-discourse are one and the same process or not; what Derrick misses is that paedophilia is not foundational to queer experience, regardless of whether or not they both involve transgressing social-norms.** Derrick's use of rhetoric here is simple – muddy the waters and then describe the ground underneath the pond to someone looking at the muddied water.

But as I write this I remember Derrick's experiences of sexual abuse at the hands of his violent father, which instantly brings to me an empathic experience of why he would be so keen to try to eradicate something that might seem to him to be justifying the violations he underwent.¹⁷ And a memory is brought to my mind.

As I mentioned earlier, during my early years of puberty I underwent a period of considering whether or not I found myself as someone who is gay. During my early childhood most of my family had assumed I'd be gay, if not a priest (of some description). I had spent a lot of my time in my early years being dressed in the clothes of my aunts and female cousins and having make-up put on me. Upon being diagnosed with dyspraxia when I was about 5, my mum put me in ballet classes, which helped contribute to my social groups being dominated by female friends. As such I had a very “feminine” male identity for someone of my age, which went with the camp-theatricality that is still a feature of my personality and the “sensitive nature” I've often been accused of having. All of this, coupled with the emotional difficulties I was having regarding about my mum's death and absentee father, were spaces that led me to actively consider whether or not I was gay.

17 ed. – Jensen's supposed good intentions are less convincing in light of he and DGR's new bedfellows, the far-right groups denouncing 'LGBTQ+ people' as “groomers” while repeatedly themselves embroiled in legal cases over their own paedophilia. As the author/s of 'Second Member of Neo-Nazi Group Famous for Attacking LGBTQ Community as 'Groomers' Arrested for Child Pornography' mention, “[s]ystematic sexual abuse of children is a real problem, and perpetrators have been exposed in institutions such as the Catholic Church, far-Right evangelical churches, organizations like the Boy Scouts, and at the hands of law enforcement – institutions that the fascists all seek to up-hold and valorize.”

(Also) as I mentioned earlier, during this time I found myself having to confront a situation that had a severe impact on the next few years of my life. When I was 13, the, devout Christian, IT teacher at the school I was attending, knowing I was at the time calling myself gay – I was very open about it with people at the school and in most other areas of my life – during a lesson, when all the other students were doing something on the other side of them classroom, showed me an image of extremely violent pornography (a man bent over, cheeks spread open, cuts across his anus, with blood dripping on to his testicles). I had no idea how to confront what was happening to me. When I got home I told my father what had happened and he called the police and school and an “investigation” occurred, but it ultimately concluded that Mr Miller had been searching for something and stumbled across it by accident. Little over a year later, when I had moved from London to the countryside in Devon, I heard from one of my old school friends that Mr Miller had been arrested for paedophilia, as he had tried to sexually abuse one of the younger students.

While I am not a fan of prisons and police-culture, and would prefer that Arthur Miller had been able to be dealt with directly by the loved ones of those he abused, in as painful a way as possible, I cannot deny that I am glad that he has not been able to wound anyone else. I know moral anarchists, who like to paint black and white pictures of what is and isn't acceptable within anarchist space, through universalist-type platitudes, will find my comfortability with his being locked up unacceptable. But, to be honest, I don't care. Like Derrick, I don't care if it is through the use of laws that forests and rivers are protected – I just don't see that as a lasting means of “winning”. If it acts simply as a pain-killer, that might make possible greater healing in other spaces, then that is something.

This is the closest encounter I had with paedophilia within my childhood. As a child-care worker I worked with many young people whose lives have been impacted by it. My experiences of it have been far removed from queer-culture. The teacher wasn't gender-queer, but an old-school Christian man, living a very “normal” life. Like-wise, the backgrounds of those young people weren't of them being abused by non-binary or trans-individuals, but by people who would, for the most part, be considered normal.

Confronting what is “normal” and the hidden violence within that space, is to a large extent what queer theory is about. Living lives that do not fit the immediate stereotypes that “normality” present is what queer-culture appears to be about. **The lives of queer-individuals isn't a theory, which Derrick**

Jensen can argue them out of, but a lived experience of attempting to survive within this culture, while not being violated by it. Like Derrick's environmentalist and anti-patriarchal work, theirs is a process of survival and healing – with theories facilitating space to discuss what is occurring within the world.

Like the space of queer-culture, egoist praxis is one of the areas of anarchist thought that Derrick seeks to challenge within this work. He has done this most noticeably by challenging the concept of illegalism.¹⁸ Illegalism an approach to anarchist activities that, in the pantomime display many take to be its true form, would appear to be mostly about bank robberies and open violence, (but is almost certainly more the embrace of what would usually be considered “petty theft” – shop lifting – as a means of surviving this culture).

It surprises me that Derrick would bash illegalism, when he himself is famed for having been an open advocate of illegal acts of resistance, as a means of healing and supporting survival. When I first encountered Derrick I was immediately drawn to his critiques of property, pacifism and the rejection of the pieces of paper that grant illegality to certain acts. But this move to bash illegalism goes hand-in-hand with his moving more and more towards Leninist-type Marxist politics and rhetoric, as he has distanced himself from the anarchist and primitivist conversations and activities.

I'm not convinced that a practice of purist illegalism would be a way of personal healing or worldly healing, but that doesn't mean that it cannot be part a collection of medicines, all available as of nurturing health and survival. I think that probably individualist anarchist Emile Armand said it best when he said “*I am not an enthusiast of illegalism. I am an alegal. Illegalism is a dangerous last resort for he who engages in it, even temporarily, a last resort that should neither be preached nor advocated. But the question I propose to study is not that of asking whether or not an illegal trade is perilous or not, but if the anarchist who earns his daily bread by resorting to trades condemned by the police and tribunals is right or wrong to expect that an anarchist who accepts working for a boss treat him as a comrade, a comrade whose point of view we defend in broad daylight and who we don't deny when he falls into the grips of the police or the decisions of judges ... It is understood that the majority of anarchists submit. “We obtain more from legality by rusing with it, by fooling it, than by confronting it face to face.” This is true. But the anarchist who ruses with the law has no*

18 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; 'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'**

reason to brag about it. In doing this he escapes the dangerous consequences of insubordination, the penal colony, the "most abject of slaveries." But if he doesn't have to suffer all this, the submissive anarchist has to deal with "professional deformation": by externally conforming to the law a number of anarchists finish by no longer reacting at all and pass to the other side of the barricades. An exceptional temperament is necessary in order to ruse with the law without allowing oneself to be caught up in the net of legality."

One of the things that concerns me about Derrick pushing anti-egoist rhetoric is that he is perpetuating a narrative within eco-radical discourse that is one of the reasons why people find our discourse so off-putting. **The idea that environmentalists are engaged in some-sort-of martyrdom,¹⁹ where sacrificing what they desire,²⁰ for the sake of some community they are both part of and equally above, is one that is incredibly off-putting, ultimately making the violence of techno-industrial civilisation far more desirable.**

This fits the narrative that environmentalist writer Daniel Quinn²¹ describes, where the voice of this culture calls out "the progression of all of this is the best we can ever have. Ergo anything that deviates from that pathway must be less desirable". As a response to this, Quinn argued we need to be talking not about getting less of what we need, but more – not about "saving the world", but of getting more of what we *really* want, what is most desirable.²²

This is something I have attempted to bring to environmentalist discourse in both of my books and many of the essays and articles I have written. A wide-egoist perspective includes ecological-welfarism in its practice, because we-are-the-world-we-are-immersed-in-and-Extensions-of – as Deleuze and Guattari²³ put it "monism²⁴ = pluralism".

The idea that environmental welfare is a form of bondage is not only false, but dangerous, as it puts

19 ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**

20 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; 'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'**

21 ed. – Quinn himself was allegedly a 'healer' very much showing wounding towards the end of his life, apparently working on a book suggesting blocking food access so as to starve some six billion humans to reduce population to his preferred level. While having not identified as an 'environmentalist' during his most famous years, ironically his concern throughout his work with this question places him with some of the worst of them; see **Unruly Edges**.

22 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of **Return Fire; 'Centering Relationships'**

23 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg55**

24 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg43**

people off striving for the freedom and beauty that is the living world Leviathan violates. If we are really selfish about our desires and needs, then wildness/nature/ecology/primal-anarchy seems inescapable, as we cannot escape (really) this world that is (to borrow from Sartre)²⁵ the freedom we are condemned to. I believe that, if we are to be part of the creation that is this living space, then we need to look to the responsibility we have towards our egoistic-welfare and entirely selfish desires, as a self that is a singularity within the multiplicity of earth.²⁶

25 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

26 ed. – In fact, it may be more useful to think of altruism and selfishness as being something of a limited way of seeing things; "I do not believe that either egoism or altruism are somehow inherent to human nature. Human motives are rarely that simple. Rather egoism or altruism are ideas we have about human nature. Historically, one tends to arise in response to the other. In the ancient world, for example, it is precisely in the times and places as one sees the emergence of money and markets that one also sees the rise of world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. If one sets aside a space and says, "Here you shall think only about acquiring material things for yourself," then it is hardly surprising that before long someone else will set aside a countervailing space, declaring, in effect: "Yes, but here, we must contemplate the fact that the self, and material things, are ultimately unimportant." It was these latter institutions, of course, that first developed our modern notions of charity.

"Even today, when we operate outside the domain of the market or of religion, very few of our actions could be said to be motivated by anything so simple as untrammelled greed or utterly selfless generosity. When we are dealing not with strangers but with friends, relatives, or enemies, a much more complicated set of motivations will generally come into play: envy, solidarity, pride, self-destructive grief, loyalty, romantic obsession, resentment, spite, shame, conviviality, the anticipation of shared enjoyment, the desire to show up a rival, and so on. These are the motivations that impel the major dramas of our lives, that great novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky immortalize, but that social theorists, for some reason, tend to ignore. If one travels to parts of the world where money and markets do not exist – say, to certain parts of New Guinea or Amazonia – such complicated webs of motivation are precisely what one still finds. In societies where most people live in small communities, where almost everyone they know is either a friend, a relative or an enemy, the languages spoken tend even to lack words that correspond to "self-interest" or "altruism," while including very subtle vocabularies for describing envy, solidarity, pride and the like. Their economic dealings with one another likewise tend to be based on much more subtle principles. Anthropologists have created a vast literature to try to fathom the dynamics of these apparently exotic "gift economies" [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg53**], but if it seems odd to us to see, say, important men conniving with their cousins to finagle vast wealth, which they then present as gifts to bitter enemies in order to publicly humiliate them, it is because we are so used to operating inside impersonal

We are this wounded world.²⁷ I, as earth, desire healing. Equally, I am wounded, like all of earth, and so bring with me into the healing my wounds, my subjectivity, my biases and all the rest of me. We are never free-floating, not event the “experts” and “doctors” whose medical-gaze, as gods, would seem to grant them the power of authority.

What Derrick, and many others within radical and non-radical discourse, does is to assume a position that can provide answers, like how we generally assume doctors can provide answers regarding any illnesses we have. This is quite comfortable and follows mathematically reducible pathways. Problems necessitate solutions, that can be solved and questions, like 1 + 1, get answered (2, or so they say).

The issue I have with this is that Being is non-reducible and I'm not convinced the conversation should stop just because “they” have provided an answer. This is, again, something I have sought to bring with my writings – not answers, but more questions and explorations. And, while this might not make me popular amongst certain groups and individuals, I believe that the non-judgemental confusion of “I really fucking don't know” is what we need most, as we explore medicines in our search for healing.

The publishers of my books, Little Black Cart, often get grief for being non-judgemental and for not giving hardline answers, that can be rallied around, while being more interested in exploring areas of thought not often questioned.²⁸ This though is what I value about them. I think we don't do ourselves any favours when we are quick to jump to answers and reluctant to explore questions.

markets that it never occurs to us to think how we would act if we had an economic system where we treated people based on how we actually felt about them.

“Nowadays, the work of destroying such ways of life is largely left to missionaries – representatives of those very world religions that originally sprung up in reaction to the market long ago. Missionaries, of course, are out to save souls; but this rarely interpret this to mean their role is simply to teach people to accept God and be more altruistic. Almost invariably, they end up trying to convince people to be more selfish, and more altruistic, at the same time. On the one hand, they set out to teach the “natives” proper work discipline, and try to get them involved with buying and selling products on the market, so as to better their material lot. At the same time, they explain to them that ultimately, material things are unimportant, and lecture on the value of the higher things, such as selfless devotion to others” (Army of Altruists: On the Alienated Right to Do Good).

27 ed. – see **'Since Colonial Times'**

28 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

One of LBC's most persistent critics is John Zerzan²⁹ – another writer, like Derrick Jensen and Hakim Bey, who I have a sensation of love for, that is contrasted with my frustration over so much about him.³⁰

Zerzan's writings have had a huge impact on my perspective and writings. He is undoubtedly someone who questions far more than most, or at least has questioned more than most – as it appears that in recent years he has become more interested in providing answers, than questioning what is occurring in our present situation; (I would point out that, for the most part, John's explorations through questioning have taken historicised forms, where matters are, in an entirely indefinite way, definite through their linguistic form). My experience of John Zerzan, as he has been over recent years (particularly through his radio show), is of someone providing far too many answers to not enough questions and bashing people asking other questions (or exploring questions he also has explored), judging the world from rhetoric that assumes a free-floating world view, independent of his woundedness, as part of this world that is wounded by Leviathan. This was personally noticeable when John commented on an editorial piece I wrote for the @news Podcast, on not taking a mathematically reducible of problem-solution (or question-answer) approach when discussing our present situation, where I suggested, not as answers but as means of exploration, radical semiotics (creative means of communicating ideas and non-normative approaches to meaning-making) and radical hermeneutics (as interpreting the world and information in different ways to those that fit the overly simplistic problem-solution approach).

As far as our medicine cabinet goes, I value what both LBC (and Aragorn!, Ramon Elani and others involved) and John Zerzan (along with Black and Green Press and Kevin Tucker), bring as wounded manifestations of earth, (egoistically) trying to heal itself. I value the questions they ask and, some (not all), of the answers they provide.

A space, within the world of Facebook and blog discourse, that it seems has far too many answers and no where near enough questions, who revels in factionalist dramas (and has largely succeeded in alienating themselves from many others within this space – most noticeably those they were “friends” with), is the Spacegeist blog for The Glitchy Phantasm. TGP is someone who embodies so much that needs healing, within our space. From what little I know of who-they-are, while I don't value the shit they dump into that world of discussion, (shit that is certainly the manifestation of the wounds they have

29 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg92**

30 ed. – Julian Langer's review of Zerzan's latest book 'When We Are Human' deals directly with some of the most toxic positions he has fallen into, while saving what's best.

undergone within their life,) I hope they manage to find a space-to-be that nurtures their well-being, as the well-being of the earth-they-are-manifest-Extensions-of. There was, and to some extent still is, a great deal that interests me about their creativity, but I hope they move away from some of the answers they have chained their-self to.

The space that I found myself most significantly disappointed by TGP/SG was in their attempts to blacklist the pagan space of Rhyd Wildermuth³¹ and Gods & Radicals, through encouraging witch-hunts. The motivation for their attempting to challenge Rhyd and G&R is seemingly out of interpreting those spaces and not managing to see past their personal wounds.

This is something that happens so much within our spaces.³² It is sad to see it when it does – the relationships that fall apart, potential for beautiful creativity left no longer possible through hurt.

What do we do then?

I value G&R for being a space that is open to more questions than most. Rhyd knows that I am sceptical of the revolutionary approach he and many who share in that space prescribes. But Rhyd and the rest of those involved with G&R bring to the world a space that embodies the ecology of “monism=pluralism”, and I value them for that.

I believe that the greatest potential for healing goes with embracing a diverse scope of questions and the exploration of a medicine cabinet (monism) that includes a wide array of medicines (pluralism). I've heard Derrick Jensen being filmed saying “we need it all” on multiple occasions, and I agree; we need us all! We need trans-folk, queer-folk, radical feminists, anarchists, primitivists, nihilists, communists, anti-racists, anti-capitalists, anti-socialists,³³

31 ed. – see **A New Luddite Rebellion**

32 ed. – see **'Between Punishment & Vengeance'**

33 ed. – “In the mid-19th century, socialism and communism were largely synonymous, and as often as not they referred to the dream of a future without all the institutions at the service of bankers, landlords, and factory owners; a future without the State. Since Marxism crowded out the utopian variations of socialism, however, the term has come to refer to the authoritarian shift in the international anticapitalist movement. Throughout the 20th century socialism referred to a range of state policies, whether these were states created in the course of revolutions or pre-existing states captured through electoral means by socialist parties. It is in reference to this experience that I say that socialism was the greatest mistake of the last two centuries, and if over the next few decades we do not survive the ravages of capitalism, the dead end of socialism will bear much of the blame. [...] I am not writing this argument to go around in the interests of dogmatism. I don't want to make everyone think like me. On a neighborhood level, I'm fine working with

environmentalists, anti-colonialists, and basically everyone fighting for the healing of the earth they are! Not necessarily for the answers they bring, but for the questions they embody. **I'd like to think that there is space for a mad bizarre creature, dancing by the coast and under trees in Briton, who writes and talks about feral spaces, about destroying time/history and about creating as psychological warfare, within the medicine cabinet, as a space, not for answers, but for healing.**

I have no illusions about everyone getting along³⁴ and I'm not seeking to prescribe anything. I'm just questioning whether or not any of us have any answers that are “the right answer” and be open to the possibility that, between the different spaces I've mentioned, and Ones that I haven't discussed and/or don't know about, there seems to be the greatest potential for healing.

In my piece published by G&R on my experience of technology as being a cancer patient I recounted different ways that healing was being brought to me, such as prayer, rieki, crystal healing, meditation, juices, radiation therapy, herbal remedies, steroids, brain surgery and more. As I stated in that piece, I don't really know what did anything and what did nothing. I know that I struggled to walk at various times during that process. I know now that I can walk whenever I want to do so, taking great pleasure in walking in the woods near my house and by the sea. While walking the other day, along the side of a steep drop into the sea, I looked out and saw that I was at the edge of a world, and what I noticed about that space most was that there were no answers – just lots of questions.

We are at the edge of a world. Whether it is systemic collapse, or runaway global warming, or a revolution, we are at the edge of this world, as the earth-we-are becomes something we haven't known, there are no answers – how can you give answers about something you know nothing about? It is a space full of questions and the potential for healing and regrowth.

I lay here on my back. I'm staring at the sun through the leaves and the branches, amazed at its power and wonder “where am I?”

people with terrible ideas, as long as they're not calling the cops or doing other things that put other neighbors in danger. On a larger scale, I'm happy to work with people who aren't anarchists, and I think our movements would be weaker if we were all anarchists. But those who push movements to create political parties, to participate in elections, or to imagine the revolution as the creation of a new state are putting us all in danger” (Socialism: Let's Not Resuscitate the Worst Mistake of the 20th Century).

34 ed. – see **'Not Fighting the Same Fight'**

THE DARKNESS CRITICIZES THE WOLF FOR HOWLING AT THE MOON

– on Areion's *Warlike, Howling, Pure & Invecchiare Selvatico's tedious maligning*

I read Areion's *Warlike, Howling, Pure* along with Idris Robinson's introduction feverishly after receiving my copy. I forced myself to put it down between chapters, both to savor the enjoyable and erudite prose, but also as necessary to situate the vast and complex subject matter: millennia of spirited uprising spread across the world. In his dismissive and snide review of the book, "Millenarian Insurrectionary Hail Marianism", Invecchiare Selvatico admits that *W,H,P* delivers "many important and interesting micro-histories" but still laments that the book "comes regrettably from the otherwise provocative Contagion Press." **If nothing else, his screed proves this title's provocation too. It sure provoked Selvatico, though not to greatness.** He accuses Areion of writing "all-too predictable chest-beating bombastic nonsense." While Areion undoubtedly delivers in a style of anarcho-maximalism throughout his wholly unique book, what's truly predictable is Selvatico's response. For a book he calls "uninteresting," he devotes a great deal of energy. He spends most of the text wrestling with his personal strawman of insurrectionary anarchism (a Spook, for the Stirnerites reading along)¹ but ultimately his vitriol fails in its attempt to temper Areion's fire. After all the bloviating, a few things remain at stake and warrant clarification: anarchy, animism, martyrdom (and some troubling comments on race).

Anarchy

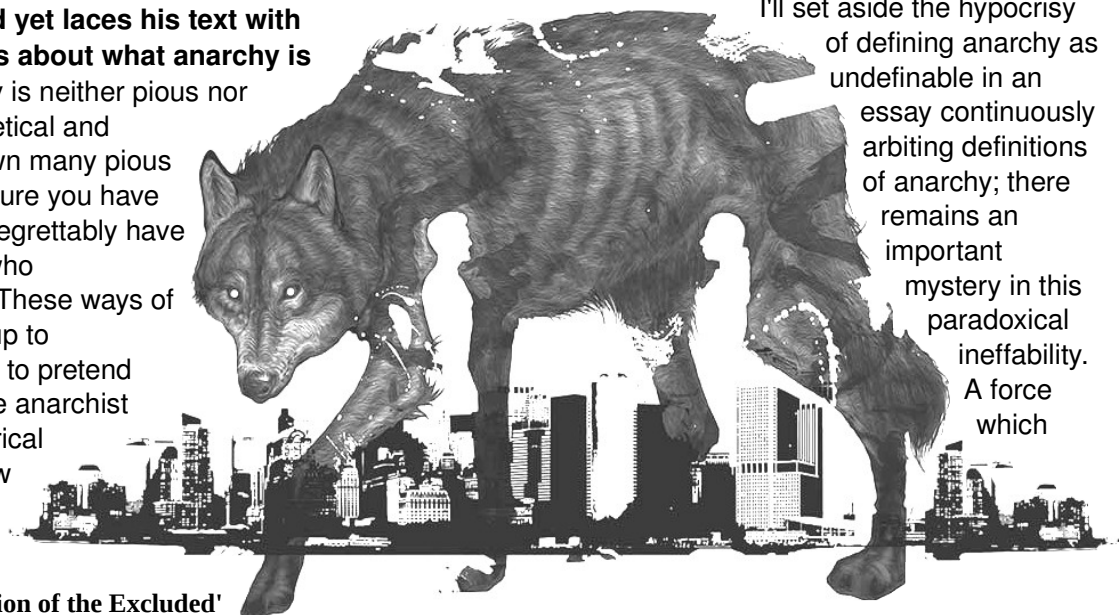
Selvatico takes great offense that Areion articulates a unique vision of anarchy, and that this vision differs from his own. **He bristles at Areion for "defining anarchy for us" and yet laces his text with simple formulations about what anarchy is and is not.** "Anarchy is neither pious nor evangelical. It is heretical and dispersed." I've known many pious anarchists, and I'm sure you have too. I certainly, and regrettably have encountered many who proseytize as well. These ways of being may not hold up to Selvatico's Ideal, but to pretend they aren't part of the anarchist tradition is an ahistorical and extremely narrow view. **I too adore anarchy's**

tendency toward the heretical and dispersed. These qualities are only possible because every anarchist has a personal relationship to anarchy. These singular relationships lead to divergent understandings, and this diffusion makes the beautiful idea so beautiful. If Selvatico simply articulated how his anarchy differs, I would not be penning this retort. But he goes a step further, denying what Areion knows as anarchy by stating explicitly: "It is not."

Perhaps Selvatico believes that having been "a primary editor and writer for Green Anarchy" or publishing a book through some edgelord publishing house qualifies him to defy the one tried truism (for better or worse) about anarchism: *that there are as many definitions of anarchy as there are anarchists.* Still the question remains, why? This question becomes even more pronounced when Selvatico concedes the key thrust of Areion's book:

For instance, I would agree with Areion, that anarchy is 'a force within the world – a spirit.' I often describe it this way, yet to call it 'devotional' both traps it and forces us to submit to it, rather than it moving in us. It is not something to serve. It is not something to kill and die for (specifically). It is not a practice or a religion. It is an agent of chaos and freedom that cannot be reified. It is life itself: undefinable, unmolested, unrestricted, uncontrollable...It is not a god. If it were, I could only have a heretical and adversarial relationship with it.

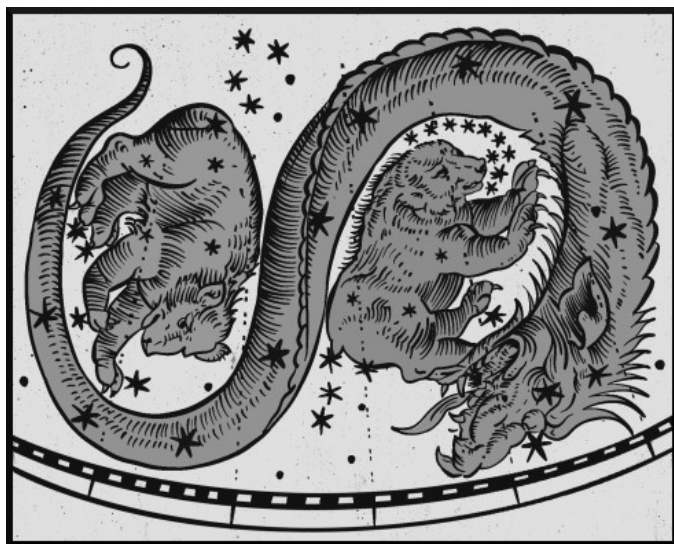
I'll set aside the hypocrisy of defining anarchy as undefinable in an essay continuously arbiting definitions of anarchy; there remains an important mystery in this paradoxical ineffability. A force which



1 ed. – see "The Position of the Excluded"

defies our attempts to understand or delimit it, but is nonetheless active and affective within the world, would certainly be understood as a powerful spirit by the vast majority of all of our human ancestors. In the mediterranean traditions drawn on by Areion, it would be termed a *daemon*, from which Christians derive their moralistic perjorative, demon. *Daemon* is not a moral term though. It's ambiguity extends beyond good and evil, encompassing a variety of entities. Spirits of the dead, hellbeasts from the underworld, the spirits of the wild, and yes even gods could all rightly be called daemon in Hellenistic parlance. The "God" dismissed by Selvatico is a bludgeon used to flatten the the polymorphic ways that human communities throughout time have experienced the divine, whether *Theoi*, *Orisha*, *Netjeru*, *Nkisi*, *Æsir*, *Xian*, *et al*. Curious that in his ham-handed effort to tar Areion's theistic anarchy with the brush of Christian trauma, Selvatico never once mentions the theological underpinning of *W,H,P*: polytheism – the multiplicity of divergent divine forces with their own desires and agendas (agendas are BAD in Selvatico's morality!) existing in the tumult of the cosmos.² This gross omission betrays the critic's ungenerous and disingenuous intent.

As a polytheist, in active conversation and solidarity with other anarchists of other religious persuasions, Areion does not impose his gods over anyone else, nor does he express any desire to. His is a personal cosmology, interwoven with others. In recent years, exciting and vital efforts at anarcho-religiosity have cohered and in some cases re-emerged with vigor throughout the anarchist galaxy. Anarchists have studied, practiced, and endeavored to articulate liberatory interpretations of Judaism, Islam, Taoism, etc. To deny the anarchy of Jewish, Muslim and Taoist anarchists would be reprehensible. I fondly recall discussing the development of a Muslim anarchist tendency in the



2 ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg39

Bay Area³ over tea with Aragorn!⁴ and Dot Matrix⁵ who asserted then, "we want a world where many different kinds of anarchy are possible!" Granted, these tendencies would shortly come into conflict, but conflict hardly disqualifies the anarcha-plurality.⁶

That Selvatico doesn't extend Areion this same courtesy is a disgrace, especially for someone who fancies himself a free-thinker. He insists that the rhetorical differences of Areion's interpretation of anarchy-as-force, "forces us to submit to it, rather than it moving in us." That Selvatico feels a compulsion behind Areion's words reveals just some of their power (to say nothing of whatever it reveals

3 ed. – Consider, for example, the "Muslims, Jews, queers, trans, and spiritual comrades" who released a 2023 communique detailing the following: "*Heartbroken, raging, yet tenderly hopeful, we began a series of actions across multiple Bay Area cities in unconditional solidarity with Palestine. We attacked four targets, one financial, one military, one corporate, and one tech:*

1.) *Under the surveillance of Transamerica building security across the street, we smashed the windows of HSBC for maintaining business relations with more than a dozen companies selling weapons and technology to the Israeli military.*

2.) *With personnel still inside, we smashed the windows of a US military recruitment office because the US is Israel's primary source of military support.*

3.) *We smashed the windows of a Starbucks for their repression of pro-Palestine unionized workers.*

4.) *Sneaking past their security, we drenched 8 Cruise cars with red paint for being a subsidiary of General Motors, which has offices in Israel and is invested in Mobileye, an Israeli self-driving car surveillance technology company [ed. – see 'Good Skills to Practice'].*

[...] *Perspectives limited by rigid, ideological dogmatism will struggle to navigate the complex political landscapes, contradictions, and existential questions amplified by growing, global challenges to Western hegemony as it enters its inevitable death spiral. Many comrades will continuously find themselves in political alignment with the interests of the West and whiteness.*

"We colonized people should not give in to mistrust, but these fence-riding responses to Palestine show us we will be abandoned by some comrades when solidarity is most vital. Not everyone will join us in destroying the Western world and ending its ceaseless atrocities that echo across generations. This betrayal will be hurtful, but we must push ahead regardless. We will have to define what non-Western anarchy looks like for ourselves, and our anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ancestors will guide us. [...] The collapse of Western hegemony is on the horizon, and we welcome it. We see decolonial revolutionary holy war, and we celebrate it." We concur, while still looking to the future hegemons in waiting we will have to fight next; see '**Thrown Out of the Troika of History to the Wolves of Memory**'.

4 ed. – see the companion piece to *Return Fire* vol.3; **Colonisation**

5 ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.5 pg49

6 ed. – *ibid.*

about Selvatico's impoverished spirit). Submission is absent from *W,H,P* as is anything which precludes an anarchy "moving [with]in us." I experience flame as felt sensation, and Areion seemingly does too.

Animism

In light of Selvatico's reductive cosmology, I cannot overemphasize the absurdity of him describing Areion's conception of animism as 'thin'. While the former waxes poetic about his own animistic approach, dirty hands and all, Areion's exhibits a fullness far exceeding its slender container. It's admirable that Selvatico finds his spirituality in raw engagement with the wild world, truly. But where do the dead figure in his animism? What of those unruly yet omnipresent *daemones* irreducible to this rock or that river? For whatever good anthropological approaches will do us here, **animism cannot be separated from ancestor veneration, nor from awe for the vast and indomitable forces of creation.** He accuses Areion of abstraction for his reliance on story, but play with story is precisely the stuff of animist engagement with the world. To excise all this from animism empties it of precisely what we likely need to combat the pervasive spiritual emptiness which Selvatico (twice) emphasizes that he sees alongside Areion and Idris. Selvatico insists his is a spirituality of place, but the gods and the dead and our stories of them are more woven into place than whatever he does upon the land some piece of paper says is his. What of the bones and songs in earth? He gives us a glimpse:

My spirituality feels unique and grounded in direct organic relations, not myopic thrusts of mythological chest-pumping warrior jiz. My shared spirituality feels intimate and penetrating, not rhetorical and opportunistic. My spirituality is the daily living of getting dirty. It is not removed, epically-driven, and merely metaphorically earthen. In my life, balancing and playing with belief, cynicism, uncertainty, and enchantment is essential in the way I relate to spirituality and is fundamentally at odds with any sort of Holy War.

The insistence on a sedentary spirituality, against that of wanderers is a fascinating turn from one of the primary purveyors of primitivist thought.⁷ Even more intriguing, the libidinal overlay! It's all penetration, dirty even, but no thrust or release. It calls to mind the masters of Taoist sexual alchemy who retain their orgasmic energy, only cumming for procreation. But it also evokes the mythic Mormon practice of "soaking it."⁸ Dear Selvatico, which is your kink? As for warrior jiz, don't knock it 'til you've tried it!

7 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg92**

8 ed. – Premarital workaround: penetration without friction.

With his own style of masculine bravado, Selvatico declares: "I'll defend myself and our people and place on this earth to my last drop of blood..." I applaud his commitment to defending the places and relationships wherein he finds spirit. For myself, I'd name those things holy, following the anarchic visionary [William] Blake:⁹ "for everything that lives is holy, life delights in life!" If one fights to the death to defend these delights, could that not rightly be called both holy and war?

This understanding is a precondition of meaningful engagement or solidarity with, for example, the countless efforts by indigenous people around the globe to defend the sacred.¹⁰ Without the sacred, we've only empty allyship¹¹ or worse, ecology.¹² In context of such a disenchanting view, Selvatico's advocacy of a sort of tribalism is troubling to say the least, which brings us alas to...

Race

The reductive approach Selvatico displays throughout his entire review is applied heaping to Areion's critique of whiteness. "'Whiteness' and 'anti-blackness' vs freedom and liberation... If only it were all so simple. If only there were a good and bad, right and wrong, victim and oppressor." Did you notice the slippage from Whiteness (defined by Areion as an egregore¹³ and as spiritual severance from ancestry¹⁴ [wait, which NPR program was that?]) to the Individual in Selvatico's petty concern that he or another may be deemed an oppressor? *W,H,P* is quite nuanced in its appraisal of the racial order, while Selvatico's entire treatment amounts to a thinly veiled anxiety about some sort of reverse racism. You won't hear Areion's schema on the radio, but variants of Selvatico's take can be found by the thousands daily on the bleakest corners of Twitter/X. He's playing himself with this one. **Selvatico describes his lifeway as "familiar and tribal and anarchistic, not some vague movement of the oppressed holding people accountable for previous sins carried down from generation to generation." Ignoring that Areion's proposals are anything but vague, Selvatico does himself (and his descendants) a tremendous disservice by so hastily dismissing the very real generational traumas (many of which are racialized) inscribed on us by this nightmare society.** Those who

9 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg61**

10 ed. – see **'Gállók is the Name of a Place'**

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg67**

12 ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'A Web of Relations & Tensions'**

13 ed. – see **Ghosts**

14 ed. – see **On a Comet's Tail**

practice earth-based spiritualities while ignoring the dead-in-the-earth do so at their own peril.

The creeping sensation that Selvatico is taking this a little too personally is compounded when he says, "Areion has provided a volatile and blood-thirsty religious component for the knuckle-headed, bruit, obtuse, and unsophisticated ideas and actions of Antifa..." If he was triggered by Areion's anti-racism, it may have something to do with his aside that, "my black sun and theirs seem to mean very different things, but that is another story."

Selvatico, tell us the story! Does your sun burn at midnight in the underworld? Perhaps the *sol niger* of the alchemists? Or is it that twelve-armed appropriation forged at Wewelsburg Castle to advance the occult arts of domination?¹⁵ This may be the true core of the disagreement here.

Absent an answer, I'll treat Selvatico better than he does Areion; resisting the impulse to read his words in the worst way possible, however enticing the dogwhistles! Still, his willful ignorance of the racial regime of this doomed empire, and of the ancient and more recent revolts against it, goes pretty far to explain the ultimate misunderstanding of his position:

Martyrdom

Again, an anarchist approach which makes space for martyrdom may not be his cup of tea, but to deny its place in the tradition is ahistorical at best, and racist at worst. **Anarchists have always afforded a special place to our dead, and Areion does a thorough job of demonstrating this.** Besides the classical examples, contemporary anarchists continue to deepen and refine our understandings by exposure and complicity with other movements, especially the Kurdish and Palestinian liberation struggles. The Palestinians insist that all those massacred by the machinations of empire, not only armed combatants, qualify as martyrs. Understanding the differences between our movements is important of course, but there is strength in applying other lenses. **When I think of my fallen beloveds, first to mind are those suicided by our living hell (forgive me if naming it hellworld makes me a moralist), of those burned up at dance parties,¹⁶ ravaged by cancers, overdosed on opiates, and slain by the mundane meatgrinder of vehicular travel.** Our dead weigh on our present, and join us as we strive to live free. But naturally Selvatico applies his frankly exhausting brand of reduction to this too, consistently conflating Areion's ancestral methodology with the specter of

15 ed. – Site of 'Hall of Supreme SS Leaders'; this old fertility symbol inlaid in its floor as centre of the Nazi world.

16 ed. – Possibly reference to 2016 fire at the Oakland queer warehouse venue known as Ghost Ship, where 36 died.

armed struggle – something the latter never disavows, but to which his spiritism is irreducible.

Selvatico tells us that "if this were a random wing-nut, or even a cute little cult, I could find some amusement in it all. The author of this book, however, is not some detached actor, but a long-term anarchist who is part of a developing sphere of theory and practice, which, for me, feels significantly different." He makes other references throughout the text to "this particular camp," by which he means variously insurrectionary anarchists, the proponents of "combative anarchy", or simply anarchists of action. **He isn't wrong that "in times of deep desperation, millenarian, apocalyptic, and martyr-fueled ideas and actions are not uncommon," and he is even correct to evoke the "cautionary lessons" for these for anarchists.** But again, he protests too much.

The path of the guerrilla is not for everyone. Word and deed are bound up together, and I myself am better with a pen than with a gun. I get it. We live in scary times, Selvatico. And still, I see friends and comrades consistently coming to remarkably similar conclusions of late (and from very diverse positions). Their road is a fraught one and they'll need every blessing upon it. Things likely only get more dire from here. We cannot and should not all take up arms, but some already have, and many more certainly will in the days to come. When they do, whatever my personal analysis and risk-calculations, I will be grateful for Areion's *attentat [attempt]* here (as well as Idris "more troubled and troubling" lines) against the spiritual emptiness which even a cynic (though he's no Diogenes!)¹⁷ like Selvatico deems "a colossal problem." **Against that colossus, we need fire-starters and ritual, sabotage and poetry.**

Free lives amidst the death of This World will take everything we can muster: love, spirit, tenacity, critique, joy, and, yes, perhaps even "literal sacrifices to the gods." Diane di Prima¹⁸ (sorry, not sorry) advised decades ago "to seek help in the realms we have been taught to think of as mythological," and Areion offers one way to do just that. Diane also wrote, **"NO ONE WAY WORKS,"** it will take all of us shoving at the thing from all sides to bring it down." *Warlike, Howling, Pure* is one anarchist's proposal for a passionate existence lived, even unto death, in spite of the void. I look forward to yours, dear readers.



17 ed. – The Cynics first appeared in ancient Greece, spread with the Roman Empire and survived into Christianity; they taught 'natural' life, rejecting State, fame and fortune, the Cynic known as Diogenes of Sinope believing that "in a rich man's house, there is no place to spit but his face."

18 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg63**

'OCCUPIED TERRITORIES' (USA)

On June 4th, the Israeli Defense Ministry penned a deal to procure a third F-35 fighter jet squadron from the United States government. This deal totaling 3 billion dollars, financed by US military aid to Israel, would bring the Israeli Air Force's F-35 fleet to 75 fighter jets. **The F-35, considered to be the backbone of the Israeli airforce, has played a critical role in the IDF's assault on Gaza**, escalating Israel's aim of the total destruction of Palestinian life within Israeli occupied territories.

So on the morning of June 9th, we started a fire at the Portland offices of Parker-Hannifin located at 6458 N. Basin Ave in the Mocks Bottom industrial area. The mainstream media did not report on this fire. The full extent of the damage is unknown.

Parker-Hannifin was targeted because they are a key supplier of the F-35 program. Parker's Fluid Systems Division was selected to design and develop the F-35's fuel system and onboard inert gas generating system. Parker subsidiaries also supply parts for the jet's engine subsystem and airframe.

In 2022 Parker-Hannifin purchased UK based military arms manufacturer Meggitt. Meggitt exports military components to repressive regimes across the world including supplying the air data systems for Israel's Apache Helicopter gunships.

The state of Israel relies heavily on weapons and materials shipped from the West to enact their genocidal policies in Gaza. As insurgents living within the so-called United States we are in a unique position to disrupt the supply chains and infrastructure that make this genocide possible.

In memory of Aaron Bushnell¹

– some anarchists



12.01.25, Glasgow, UK: windows smashed at hi-tech Parker-Hannifin production facility, paint sprayed inside

1 ed. – “In February [2024], anarchist Aaron Bushnell committed the extraordinary act of killing a US Air Force soldier by orchestrating his live-streamed self-immolation [ed. – *outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC*] – an act of solidarity felt deeply by various Palestinian resistance groups. While his death is tragic and horrifying, it charged what he had to say with meaning. This seemed to have helped in giving protest in the US another boost [ed. – see *L’Espoir C’est la Lutte*], challenging people here and everywhere to have a fraction of his courage and do everything in their power to stop the genocide. His sacrifice calls on us all to step up.

“I find some hope in the increasing popularity of the writings of Basil Al-Araj in Palestinian resistance discourse. Himself a martyred resistance fighter killed by Israeli soldiers in a shootout in 2017, Basil was heavily influenced by [Franz] Fanon [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg49*] and adopted his radically inclusive, anti-identity politics outlook [ed. – see *Identity Precedes Ideology*]. In his “Eight Rules and Insights on the Nature of War” Basil said, “Every Palestinian (in the broad sense, meaning anyone who sees Palestine as a part of their struggle, regardless of their secondary identities), every Palestinian is on the front lines of the battle for Palestine, so be careful not to fail in your duty.” In a lesser known piece that has yet to fully appear in English, he wrote: “I no longer see this as a conflict between Arabs and Jews, between Israeli and Palestinian. I have abandoned this duality, this naïve oversimplification of the conflict. I have become convinced of Ali Shariati and Frantz Fanon’s divisions of the world [into a colonial camp and a liberation camp]. In each of the two camps, you will find people of all religions, languages, races, ethnicities, colors, and classes. In this conflict, for example, you will find people of our own skin standing rudely in the other camp, and at the same time you will find Jews standing in our camp.”

“He goes on to criticize Israeli journalist Amira Hass’s editorials as insidious examples of “the progressive wing of the counterinsurgency” [ed. – see *Follow the Fires*], counterposing Israelis such as Yoav Bar and Jonathan Pollak as examples of Jews who, as Fanon would say, “change sides, go ‘native,’ and volunteer to undergo suffering, torture, and death” as members of the camp of liberation. If, as per Basil and Fanon, the broad resistance would be able to distinguish friends and enemies based on “the choices they make,” on their actions and commitments, rather than their identity and “race,” then counterinsurgent psychological operations that pit people against each other and diffuse collective action [ed. – see *Identity Precedes Ideology*] might be halted at the point of implementation, enabling a more formidable movement trajectory in the heart of Empire” (The Gaza Ghetto Uprising).

“These attacks responded to the recent murders on the aid boat at the hands of the Israeli armed forces which has hit such huge news recently (perhaps because some victims this time are white children of the Western middle classes, as opposed to the routine deaths that pass unmarked by the media on a daily basis in Palestine and for that matter everywhere else) – but this is also our own trajectory in the over-due counter-offensive against the colonisation of our lives by capitalism right here. Solidarity is best when it serves to extend your own struggle in compliment of another’s.” – claim for 08.06.10 smashing of a bank, estate agent, Conservative Party office & soldiers’ cars, Bristol, UK

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anarchist news &
information exchange**

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

Bash Back! News (queer analysis and
counter-violence)
bbnews.noblogs.org

Clydeside Anarchist Noise (Scotland)
noisenoisenoise.blackblogs.org

Earth First! UK (direct-action, leaderless
eco-defence) earthfirst.uk

Freedom News (UK & global)
freedomnews.org.uk

Indigenous Action (radical perspectives
from occupied homelands)
indigenouaction.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

No Trace Project (security techniques,
multi-lingual) notrace.how

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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Upping the Anti

'Thrown Out of the Troika of
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– from 'NoGoZone' by
Hakim Bey

'The Kanak Insurrection & the
Nickel Industry'
– from sansnom.noblogs.org

'The Price of Green Capitalism'
– from sansnom.noblogs.org

'Avoiding the 'Peaceful Protest'
Trap'
– by Blade Runner

'Long Live Muntjac!'
– by An Anarchist Named
Mutt

'Identity Precedes Ideology'
– from This Is America #166

'Anarchist Ethics in the Collapse'
– by Peter Gelderloos

errata: The article cited in the previous
chapter of this double issue (Return Fire
vol.6 chap.7) as 'The Far Right, the Far Left,
& the Trap of Electoral Politics' on the cover
and in the sources is in fact 'The Far Right,
the Left, & the Trap of Electoral Politics'.
'Another Way Out', un-cited in that chapter,
was by William C. Anderson. Apologies.

**last minute request from
Earth First! UK:**

"hey friends,

could you include the dates for the
summer gathering (7-11th [presumably
of August]) and a note to say that we are
looking for a field we can host it in!!

if anyone has an offer of a field/venue
we could use then do please email us at
earthfirstuk@riseup.net"



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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