

RETURN FIRE

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

1 May 2021...

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VOLUME 6, CHAPTER III
WINTER 2021-2022

ever felt like you're living in a script



that's not your own? ever wanted to break out?

1 MAY 2021...



After lockdown, let's look at the situation we're finding around us.

The pandemic has been the starting gun of a huge project of capitalist restructuring in which we are rapidly getting lost. London is already well within the bounds of being a 'smart city' [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg31*] – this means that every molecule in this seething metropole is in the process (or already) brought into one great artificial network: capitalism certainly, **but largely virtual, nearly autonomous, diffused into everything around us, and into ourselves, into our bodies, into our minds.**

Right now we are in the middle of a vast labyrinth. A spotless, serene dreamworld is being constructed. Total efficiency, total interconnection, total isolation. The world is being rapidly shrunk into the shape of what can be calculated, predicted and processed by Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality and the Internet of Things [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?*]. The last vestiges of vital and human connection are being flushed away, replaced by the management of this routine of ruthless exploitation and utter despair.

All the while the living earth is being incinerated – it's already too late to stop this. **We are already in the middle of the mass-extinction catastrophe. No worries.** Capital will be here to transition from the 'destructive' practices of fossil fuel extraction to rare earth mineral mining (used for solar panels, wind turbines as well as all the smart technology their world is now predicated on) [ed. – see *Green Capital & Environmental "Leaders" Won't Save Us*], they're already using slave-labour excavation in Guinea and the Congo. And the masses in our former colonial outposts fleeing death and chaos from the resultant shortages and resource wars? Well, the Napier Barracks Concentration Camp,¹ the

1 ed. – Former army quarters in Kent, southern England,

thousands washing up on the shores of the Med, the militarised border and detention system, gives you a taste of how they'll deal with that scenario.

All the while markets drive into permanent instability, as familiar patterns fall away, 'productive' industry continues to be abandoned and speculative finance reasserts its domination over the world economy: there will be (and already are) massive crashes and crises. Not a problem. **We remember the last decade of punishing austerity, the hurling of swathes of the exploited onto a scrapheap, the wiring of every aspect of our existence into a rapacious so called 'gig economy' [ed. – see *A New Luddite Rebellion*] at the same time as Victorian-style slum conditions increase at the margins,** masses of this city can't afford food, unemployment exceeds 1981 levels: the playbook here is very well established.

All the while surveillance technology – London already bristling with cameras, but supplemented by GPS, by our 'devices', by the very world we trudge through – is going into overdrive. Drones can be thrown into the mix too, and soon will be as common a sign of our ongoing occupation as patrol cars. Oh well. We know exactly how this will all be used. The same way that this country has built a sprawling carceral system [ed. – see *'Everything is Sanitised, But We are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands'*] to tag, bag and warehouse anyone who falls through the cracks of this megamachine – not to speak of the brutal treatment reserved for anyone with the audacity to stand and fight it. This 'bill'² gives us an idea of which direction we're heading in on that front.

So we're losing our grip on things; **the world is changing very quickly and we hardly know what to do with ourselves.** Any form of struggle which has as its basis performative activist gestures, 'community organising' (whatever that means), 'raising awareness', enlisting more members to a party, issuing demands for reform: these are not just quantitative and reactionary, they correspond to a world

where migrants have now been detained (as the UK state also has in other former barracks) with no release date, rampant infectious diseases in cramped quarters, and punitive responses to resistance and hunger-strikes; a clear extension of the UK Home Office's notorious 'hostile environment' approach to immigration.

2 ed. – The proposed UK 'Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill', among other things, heavily restricts protest and criminalises Roma/travellers/gypsies (as well as squatters/protest campers/unhoused people) by illegalising trespass with the intention to reside; in response Bristol saw riots this spring and ongoing 'Kill the Bill' protests, while empty police stations have been occupied in London and a mass trespass conducted on Norfolk hunting estates.

which no longer exists. The way that capitalism is going (and has been for a while) is to actually realise Thatcher's dictum, to get rid of 'society'. In this neo-feudalism there simply are no 'politics', no 'rights', no 'democracy', no 'community', not even in name – there is nothing to even pretend to be able to influence. Just a churning vortex in which we are destined to splinter and lose ourselves, winding out our time 'waiting' for something to break us out of this nightmare that will never come. Without dignity – without passion, numbed, smothered, empty.

But we still have one thing that is really dangerous. We have an idea. An idea worth taking risks for, worth wagering what's left of our lives on. If we can gain the courage of our convictions we can set off on an adventure to assert, proudly and without fear, a reality – a way of being which can explode the contours of the future that's been laid out for us, of the grave that's already been dug, and is beckoning for us. Because this is exactly what power lacks. It can't even comprehend it.

When it looks at the instability and chaos of our day it can only see something to be managed. It only sees the path of reintegration. But we can just about make out, if we try, something very different: a whole series of vulnerabilities, both material and mental (the terrain of battle is now everywhere), on the basis of which we can map out a plan of attack. Because once we smash the illusion of inevitability, once we assert the beauty and strength of our idea against this world, everything about it can be reinterpreted. *There is no longer a population to be watched, tracked and managed.* There is an area of contained individuals any one of whom may have the same anger, the same dreams, as we do. *There is no longer an economy to sacrifice to.* There is an exploited ready to fight alongside against exploiters whose power is fragile and whose claims to legitimacy are long gone. *There is no longer an encroaching technology.* There are so many nodes of an infrastructure, weak points ready to be targeted. Crucially *there is no more inertia*, there is an old world to be dispatched with, and a present moment, so long occulted and put off, ready to be seized back together, to be experimented with, to be lived to the full.

But what does this really mean? Do we just wait around for the next riot? What do we even do in a situation of mass insurrection? Are we to just be spectators, cheering on the ghettoised and excluded? Maybe contributing our own stone? And what happens the day after? The truth is that, at the moment, everything 'goes back to normal'. We need to take stock: we are already in a situation where they



can't keep control of the streets, in this new climate of 'managed' instability. Just look around this burning earth today, even this country can't escape that trend, a quick glance to the west will satisfy you of that.³ In order to have a true, qualitative shift, we must break out of every routine, including those adorned in 'violent' trappings. We want to diffuse amongst ourselves and express to the world a vision of insurrection and social war which goes beyond fights with the cops – because contrary to anarchist lore the police are not the real enemy, they are simply in the way [ed. – see *What is Insurgency?*].

The real enemy to confront with violence is our own reduced conception of what is possible, *of what it means to live*. To strip the mask off power, to see this system as the weak and frail thing it is, we must see what in us, despite all appearances, is really strong, and this is our capacity to begin an infinite, limitless revolt, to break open our reduced imaginations – to wager our lives on that which cannot be represented, mediated or modelled. Against that, the courts, police stations, parliaments, boardrooms, the military, silicon valley, the chamber of commerce, the NATO/G8/G20/COP-? [ed. – see *Redecoration of Scottish Power HQ*], the 'anti-terror command' centres, become what they really are – just so many absurd spectacles, with so many hammy actors, waiting to be charged off the stage, when the audience no longer has it in them to watch and cower in the dark a second longer.

THIS TECHNO-PRISON IS VULNERABLE INSURRECTION NOW



Locations of 'Kill the Bill' demonstrations, April 2021

³ ed. – Reference to gorse wildfires in Northern Ireland.

5 widely accessible ways to take down drones

Wavelength/signal jammer:

Also used in the military sector, its a disruptor of radio waves that is able to disorient the drone by interrupting its distance monitoring. Using a frequency of 2.4ghz (which is free to use for non professional operators); You can find cheap signal jammers on Internet. Some drones have a functionality that force them return to the base of transmission whenever their primary signal is interrupted/in-received.

Laser:

Using a laser pointer/pen, by aiming it toward the drones' camera its lens/visual captor will be blinded or bumed. It will also help to dissuade the pilot from maintaining the drone airborne. Seeing the beam of the laser is likely to encourage the pilot to down the drone to avoid it being damaged.



BB/Pellet Gun/Air Rifle:

Drones easily loose balance when objects enter their propellers. A well aimed shot will do the job; though it's advised to be aware of the potential for collateral damages caused by stray bullets.

Kamikaze Drones:

You can find toy/hobby drones for <100e, while professional ones cost up to 15k. You can sacrifice your aircraft by forcing a mid air collision with the snitch one. In the best case both craft may be damage/destroyed and at v ery least likely to ground the enemy drone until the skies are clear.

Fishing wire/cord:

Attach some high up between two poles, or anchor points from parts of your building to another nearby one to set invisible traps with the line. The pilot can not see this transparent wire and so will not be able to spy on you.

There are certainly other ways to take down drones, including slingshots/catapults and other systems to launch rocks or nets. Share your skills/knowledge and effective tactics. They use Covid19 as an excuse to increase the social control.

LETS INCREASE THE RESISTANCE.



23.3.20: riot & attacks on police in Bristol as UK cops enforce the first night of the State of Emergency against youth in the Southmead area living under 'exceptional conditions' (searches, police harrassment, dispersal orders, constant racist profiling, etc.) for quite some time already...

“We have been underground too long,
we have done our work,
we are many and one,
we remember when
we were human.

We have lived among
roots and stones,
we have sung
but no one has listened,
we come into the open air
at night only to love

which disgusts the soles of boots,
their leather strict religion.

We know what a boot looks like
when seen from underneath,
we know the philosophy of boots,
their metaphysics
of kicks and ladders.
We are afraid of boots
but contemptuous of the foot
that needs them.

Soon we will invade like weeds,
everywhere, but slowly;
the captive plants will rebel
with us, fences will topple,
brick walls ripple and fall,
there will be no more boots.
Meanwhile we eat dirt
and sleep; we are waiting
under your feet.
When we say Attack
you will hear nothing
at first.”

– *Song of the Worms*



5th spring 'Kill the Bill' demo in Bristol: momentum is upheld with ongoing fights with cops and disruption of the commerical centre and key roads, despite (peace) police efforts and one of the largest investigations in the local force's history; clashes have spread to London at least once

WHY IS YOUTH LIBERATION SO IMPORTANT IN THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT?

[ed. – By UK youth liberation eco-anarchists Full Stop Affinity, reviled by the Left for autonomous action and targeted with transphobia until their disillusion.]

The environment will collapse before some of us reach our thirties. Our future has been stolen from us by the state. Children are an oppressed group and we will fight for our freedom. Older generations repeatedly look down on us and presume we know nothing. Parents and guardians treat us like property, censoring what we say, stopping us from acting.

Youth liberation is necessary. We must be free. The state repeatedly tries to fuck us around, turn us into a statistic. Keep us preoccupied so we can't see the murder and devastation they cause. **But we see it.** We will not surrender to the state. We may not believe the revolution will happen but we will continue to fight because it's the right thing to do.

Older generations have repeatedly shown that they don't care about climate change. They know they'll be dead before it becomes devastating. And they don't want us young people changing how they have to live or, in their words, "inconveniencing" them. We the young people have no future. We must fight for our liberation, like any oppressed group.

Climate change affects us. Climate change will kill us. We refuse to go without a fight. In the last year, we the young people have scared the shit out of the state with demos and direct action. It's important our older comrades do not try to control us, or police us, in our fight for freedom.

Youth liberation is especially important to the climate movement as we are the ones that will suffer. We are the ones that are acting. We don't mean "acting" as in the same sense as XRY [ed. – youth wing of Extinction Rebellion; see **Rebellion Extinction**], or even the youth strikes. We are taking direct action against our oppressors. Gluing and chaining ourselves to roads and fences while relying on state empathy will get us nowhere. A to B marches will get us nowhere. Only chaos will change things.



For too long older people have been made the face of the climate movement, with liberal groups pushing an image of older people, grandparents, to the front of their activism. You aren't fighting for your grandchildren's future by submitting yourself to the state. Only complete

insurrectionist action will cause change. Punch the enemy, do not rely on their empathy. We are the climate movement, not grandparents who chant "police we love you. We're doing this for your children".

Corporations know their actions are unjust, they rely on the compliance of the people and this is why we, the youth, pose such a threat. It's a time where values are experimented with, boundaries are broken and it signifies the end of relying on our oppressors for sympathy. This, along with the youths ability to begin organising independently, combine to make young people such a genuine threat to climate-massacring corporations and the oppressive structures they rely on.

Youth comes with an aspect of autonomy, which many other social groups lack. This is why the established system views young people as such a threat. **We have a crucial role in acting for social change and we will fulfil it.**

No matter how much they try to force and control us, there is no place for us in the state hierarchy and therefore their ideas of correctness. We can't be placed in a section. This is why youth movements and youth themselves are so often belittled and put down by media and corporations and tried to be controlled by schools and classrooms; because by its very nature, youth works against the state's ideas of hierarchy and control. This is why in movements such as the climate movement, which heavily relies on youth liberation, is important as its existence works against the hierarchies the movements desire and need to remove.

Young people are a determining dynamic force [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg27**]. All throughout history, exploited youth fight against the state and those who oppress them and encourage the people around them to do the same.

Smash the state. Set fire to the prisons. From the streets to the schools, remain ungovernable!

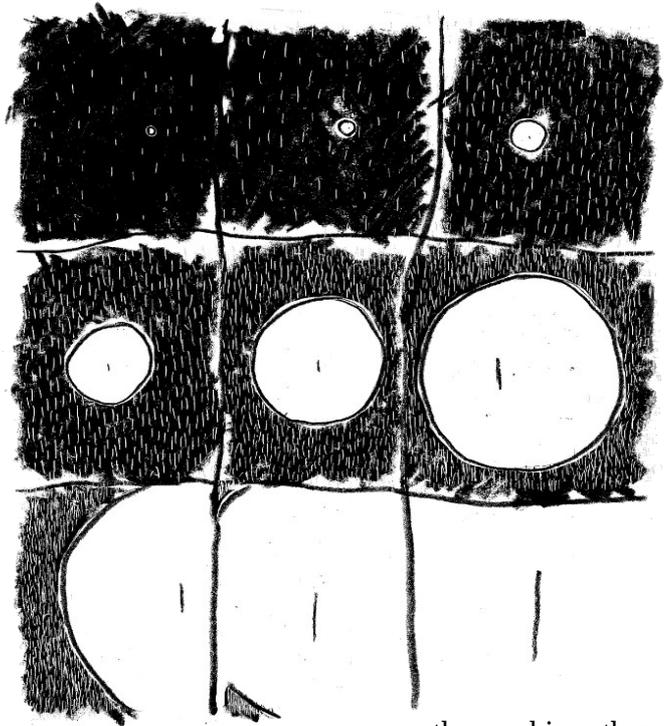
'THEY'VE SNATCHED AWAY YOUR FUTURE'

[ed. – A leaflet distributed to youth before the March 29th general strike in Barcelona (see *Return Fire vol.2 pg25*) that erupted into heavy rioting, inaugurating a new wave of combative struggles the following years: for more context search for “The Rose of Fire Has Returned!”]

They’ve snatched away your future. The superficial welfare, the American Dream they imposed on previous generations is something they can no longer promise you. No diploma, no healthcare, no mortgage, no career, no car, no retirement, no iPod, no ski vacations. Forget it all. Now they are saddling you with the following future: a merciless competition between those who manage to attain a stable job as cops, bankers, metro guards, managers, or engineers, and those who will have to live going from one precarious, short-term job to another [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg14*], handing out publicity flyers, cleaning up after tourists and rich people, working as waiters, cashiers, whores, cooks, metal scrappers, busting your ass working in construction or messing up your eyes working behind a screen [ed. – see *A New Luddite Rebellion*]. In other words, the bastards without a conscience who want to work as mercenaries, scabs, or exploiters will triumph and everyone else will be left without retirement, healthcare, or a salary.

Take a good look at your friends. Which of them would kick you out of your apartment for not being able to make the rent? Which of them would lock you up in prison for stealing or selling drugs as a matter of survival? Which of them would fire you just to increase their profits? They’re the ones who will take over the world and control your future, while all of you who are honest, solidaristic, and humble are gonna get fucked.

They’ve destroyed the world you will inherit. They’ve poisoned the water and the air through their greed and disrespect for nature. They’ve cut down the forests to turn them into commodities. They’ve fucked the climate out of pure caprice and arrogance. They’ve contaminated our minds with an authoritarian, pedantic education [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg27*] and a stupefying culture. They’ve stolen our knowledge of how to feed ourselves, heal ourselves, build our own houses, and resolve our own conflicts so that we remain dependent on their wage labor, their police and their justice, so that we only have to learn how to serve them, obey them, and use



the machines they force on us [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.4; 'Caught in the Net'*] rather than our own tools. They’ve made history disappear so we don’t understand how this happened [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg38*], how we lived before capitalism, and how we could live in our own future, created by us and not by them, that greedy pack of exploiters, authoritarians, torturers, and murderers.

This disappeared history is the history of our resistance, our struggle against all authority, and therefore it constitutes the seed of a future without them. But if they destroy the entire world, if they convert it into an uninhabitable place where we will be perpetually dependent on their technology and their control, there won’t be a future for anyone.

Burn it, then. Burn the future they’ve assigned you. Burn the plans they want to impose on you. **Burn their inhuman authority, burn their false wisdom. Burn everything that is a lie to create the possibility, however improbable, that the seeds of a new world sprout from the ashes of this one.** And don’t trust in anyone except for your friends, those who prove to be solidaristic, those who feel rage. And when they call you “violent,” when they call you “senseless,” when they demand you stop or attempt to recruit you, it’s because they’re afraid of losing control, of being revealed as nothing but authoritarian idiots who have destroyed the world and the future.

Burn it all, to start anew, and **without them.**

To the indefinite strike, to the recovery of sabotage, fire, vengeance, and permanent revolt.



REDECORATION OF SCOTTISH POWER HQ (Glasgow, Scotland)

Happy March 6th!

To celebrate the autonomous day of action called for by the insurrectionary collective

Full Stop Affinity, we paid a visit to the HQ of Scottish Power in Glasgow. In an attempt to stop their greenwashing, we added black to the facade of their HQ: anarchist and ecological symbols and slogans.

Why Scottish Power? Scottish Power, and their parent company Iberdrola, are trying to greenwash their role in global and local environmental destruction by sponsoring COP26 [ed. – the latest of the annual United Nations climate summits; see *Return Fire vol.3 pg7*], the summit of fools that will take place in our city in November.

We do not forgive the irreversible environmental damage you have caused, and are still causing. There is no such thing as ‘Green Energy’ [ed. – see *Green Capital & Environmental “Leaders” Won’t Save Us*], no matter how many pledges you sign, nor how much you pay for ‘ecological’ summits. **We also do not forget your constant, and still ongoing, attempts to scam common people by creating debt out of thin air, nor your catastrophic ‘service’, leaving people freezing and hungry.** In a worldwide pandemic, Scottish Power somehow manages to keep being one of the most predatory capitalist organisations around.

We hope you enjoyed our little redecoration. Our actions (and our graffiti skills) can only get better.

**WE ARE NATURE DEFENDING ITSELF –
TOTAL LIBERATION NOW**

HOW TO: FILL FIRE EXTINGUISHERS WITH PAINT

[ed. – From a series by Montreal Counter-info; for more direct action guides on blocking trains, shutting down pipelines, demonstrations, riots and more, visit mtlcounterinfo.org/how-to/ using appropriate internet security tools such as Tor Browser, Tails, etc.]

Fire extinguishers filled with paint have been useful to anarchists in Montreal fighting gentrification, surveillance, and most recently, colonial advertising.

1. Steal the extinguisher

Find a water-pressurized fire extinguisher. They are metallic silver and come in two sizes. Both sizes have removable tops, which are often attached with a nut. The larger size is 9L and has a schrader valve, like your bike tire, so that they can be easily repressurized. It is often found in universities, apartments and office buildings. The smaller size is 6L and needs to be repressurized with an air compressor. It is only found in restaurants because they are for grease fires, and are sometimes conveniently placed near the back exit!

2. Empty the water

Wear cotton gloves to avoid getting your prints all over the thing. Spray the water out of the fire-extinguisher, ensuring that the pressure gauge reaches 0 psi. We usually do this in an alleyway, but it can be done in your bathtub.

3. Fill with paint

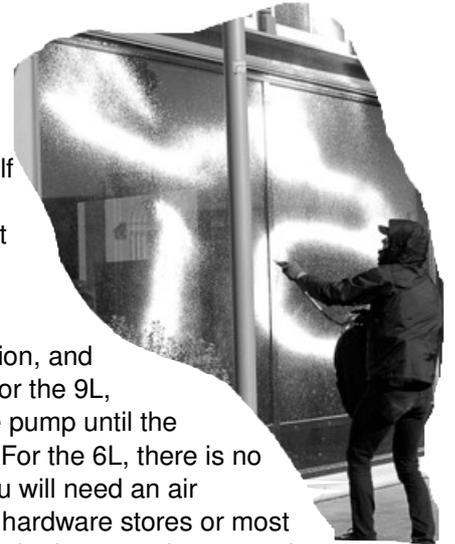
Remove the nut and top section. Fill the extinguisher about half way with a mixture of equal parts latex paint and water.

4. Pressurize

Reattach the top section, and make sure it's tight. For the 9L, pressurize with a bike pump until the gauge reads 100 psi. For the 6L, there is no schrader valve, so you will need an air compressor, found at hardware stores or most pawn-shops. Remove the hose, and connect the air compressor tubing, using a 3/8" male adapter. Set the air compressor to 115 psi. You may not even need to depress the handle of the extinguisher for the pressure to slowly raise to 100 psi. If you need to depress the handle, remove the safety pin and depress it gradually. Stop as soon as it reaches 100 psi, to avoid paint going into the tubing. Return the safety pin and secure it with duct-tape.

5. Clean

Wipe down with a cloth soaked in rubbing alcohol to remove any fingerprints!



CAPITALISM & ELECTRIFICATION

"In the current organization, as monopolists of science who remain such beyond social life, scientists certainly form a caste of its own which presents many similarities with the caste of priests. Scientific abstraction is their God, living and real individualities are the victims and scientists are their consecrated and licensed sacrificers"
– A. Bakunin [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg97**]

They Say “Ideology” Too Soon

For at least thirty years the dominant narrative has fobbed us with “the end of ideologies”. According to the “thinkers” of the palace, the collapse of countries under State Capitalism would have inaugurated a new era, the one that the philosopher Francis Fukuyama (1992) calls “the end of history”. Therefore history would be to be intended as a linear development where the democratic and liberal State represents its *telos*, the ultimate Goal of evolution beyond which it is impossible to go. It is the principles of liberalism that dictate evolution, marked and pushed by the force of rationality.

As this state of “perfection” is attained, ideologies make no sense either. The clash between opposed and alternative visions of the world is irrational and counterproductive, technical reason decides what is right and what is wrong, the only thing we can do is to follow rationality. Therefore any deviation would be absurd.

In a contradictory way, Fukuyama thinks that this final stage of human evolution is the democratic State. What he couldn't foresee is that precisely by virtue of the rational domination of technique,¹ the very

1 ed. – “The European Union constitutes a hybrid between a technocratic and democratic model, though it cannot advocate such hybridization, because to acknowledge a gap between democracy and technocracy would contradict the EU's fundamental identity.

A technocratic system leaves policy decisions to appointed experts who climb the ranks, ostensibly based on performance; appointments are carried out by the institution itself, as in a university, not by consultation with the public. Most leading members of the Chinese Communist Party, for example, are engineers and other scientists. However, it would be naïve to ignore that they are first and foremost politicians. They simply have to respond to internal power dynamics rather than focusing on performing for the general public. In the United States, the all-important Federal Reserve runs technocratically, although it is subordinated to democratic leadership. The technocratic elements of the

democratic constitution would soon become obsolete.² If there is nothing to choose, if the best thing to do is the most rational one... Another world is impossible!

It is a strong idea of immobility. Not only has the thought of being able to overturn the State, of taking over political power (let alone destroying it!) become synonym of an imminent psychotic crisis, but even the direction has become untouchable, up to its smallest detail: not only did capitalism become the only possible world, but within it, the neo-liberal variable was the only economic form necessary in the years between the two millennia. Hence the excess of the democratic regime [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg61**]. It increasingly demonstrated to be a theatre of the shadows, whose director, however, is a copy, a duplicate of the one and only ideology.

It is particularly necessary to distinguish between plural “ideologies” and singular “ideology”. What has

European Union, such as the European Central Bank, enjoy far more policy-making power, and are often able to dictate terms to the democratic governments of member states. However, the EU has been careful to take advantage of the old liberal distinction between politics and economics: by relegating technocracy to a putatively economic sphere, the EU maintains its obligatory commitment to democracy” (Diagnostic of the Future).
2 ed. – “Democracy as a governmental practice incapable of realizing its ideals is in crisis domestically in the US and many other countries, but democracy as a structure for interstate cooperation and capital accumulation is also facing a crisis at the global level.

Due to its domestic crisis, democracy is failing to capture the aspirations of its subjects. The kinds of equality it guarantees are mostly either irrelevant or pernicious, and the benefits decrease the further down the social ladder you go. Democratic government has failed to deliver just societies and failed to cover up the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. It has ended up as another aristocratic system, no better than the ones it replaced. This means that democracy is losing its innovative ability to recuperate resistance. But until roughly 2008, neoliberal elites barely cared about resistance. They thought that they had so defeated and buried revolutionary potentials that they had no need to pretend, no need to toss the crowd any peanuts. As the 1990s and 2000s dragged on, they became increasingly blatant in their crusade to concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands while despoiling the environment and marginalizing ever larger portions of the population. Now that they have revealed their true face, it will take some time for people to forget before they can use their siren song again, and this lack of trust in public institutions comes at a bad time for the once hegemonic NATO countries and their allies. This underscores why it is so frustratingly myopic when radicals help to restore the seductive value of democracy by talking about what “real democracy” should look like: it's like the story of the engineer in the French Revolution whose life was spared at the last moment when the guillotine jammed – until he looked up and said, “I think I see your problem” ” (Diagnostic of the Future).

happened in recent years is not at all the end of *ideology* but the end of *ideologies*. Ideology is stronger than ever: it has become the one and only thought. After all the affirmation “ideologies are dead” is an *ideological* affirmation itself. The thesis of the end of ideologies is an eminently ideological thesis. It is a thesis which by closing the debate and declaring any possible confutation defeated, founds itself as necessary ideology: so much necessary that it doesn’t even need to declare itself as such, doesn’t need to boast the word either – it is intangible like the Holy Ghost. If you ask it “what are you?” it will reply like God with Moses: “*Ego sum qui sum*” [I am who I am].



that what commands us is still an ideology, also the most radical one and for this reason mystified, is not yet enough. What we have to do regarding this new religion, rather, is: *not believe in it*.

Here the difficulties begin for the anarchist movement.

Revolutionary anarchism of the new millennium

Ideologies make sense only if they are thought to be resolutely opposing one another, the one armed against the other. From a certain point of view, in this sense it is correct to say that ideologies are over. The dominant ideology is therefore a paradoxical, monstrous Super-Anti-Ideology. Today the most radical move, the one really revolutionary on a theoretical level, is the denunciation of the mystified ideological nature of technical thought.³ But to affirm

3 ed. – “However, there is a great deal of myth around technocratic governance. You can’t have a purely “scientific” government because “objective interests” is a contradiction in terms. Bare empiricism cannot recognize something as subjective as interests; this is why scientific bodies have to fabricate discreet ideologies masquerading as neutral presentations of fact, since there is no human activity, and certainly no coordinated research and development, without interests. Yet governments are nothing without interests. They are, at their most rudimentary, the concentration of a great deal of resources, power, and capacity for violence with the purpose of fulfilling the interests of a specific group of people. The relationship becomes more complex as governments become more complex, with different types of people developing different interests with regard to the government and with institutions producing subjectivities and therefore molding people’s perceptions of their interests, but the centrality of interests remains, as does the fact that hierarchical power blinds people to everything outside of a very narrow reality, and such insensitivity combined with such great power is a sure recipe for unprecedented stupidity.

One example of this is the Three Gorges Dam, perhaps the greatest construction feat of the 20th Century, and certainly a symbol of the Communist Party’s ability to carry out strategic planning that sacrifices local interests for a perceived greater good. But the dam has caused so many demographic, environmental, and geological problems that they may outweigh the benefits in energy production. The major motivation for building the dam was probably hubris—the state basking in its technocratic power—more than a measured estimation that the dam would be worth it. [...] The European Union is also experiencing problems due to technocratic management. Aside from the temporary rebellions caused by the heavy-handedness of the Central Bank, the EU’s number one

existential threat right now can be traced to the Dublin Regulation, an early EU agreement, subject to little scrutiny at the time of its signing, that stipulates that migrants can be deported back to the first EU country they entered. The core EU states (Germany, UK, France, Benelux [ed. – Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg]) habitually bully the poorer states, protecting their key industries while dictating which industries poorer members have to expand or abandon. And while the Mediterranean countries were able to tolerate being turned into debt colonies and tourist hellholes, they have not been so tolerant of the immigration policy, which also gives leaders a scapegoat for the first two problems. The EU’s immigration policy is an obvious dumping on Greece, Italy, and Spain, and to a lesser extent Poland and other border states. These are the countries that can least afford a greater burden to their social services, as Germany siphons off better educated immigrants and shunts the poorer ones back to the border states. This policy has been the major cause of all the right-wing threats to the EU’s integrity. Though it is the product of technocratic planners, it reflects the same arrogance that accompanies all power politics.

There is also the question of resistance. The Chinese government is making the bet that it has the technological and military power to quash all resistance movements, permanently. If it is wrong, it risks total political collapse and revolution. Democratic governments enjoy a greater flexibility, because they can deflect dissident movements towards seeking reform, which rejuvenates the system, rather than forcing them to shut up or blow up. European democratic institutions have proven that this pressure-valve mechanism still works, with progressive parties forestalling the growth of revolutionary movements in Greece, Spain, and France. [...] So the technocratic model is not clearly superior. Even if it were, Western powers would have a hard time accepting it in more than hybrid form. This comes down to white supremacy and its centrality to the Western paradigm. Democracy plays a fundamental role in white supremacist mythology and the implicit claims of white progressives to superiority. Basing the mythical roots of democracy in ancient Greece, whites can think of themselves as the founders of civilization and thus apt tutors to the rest of the world’s societies. Orientalist paranoid are based on the association of Eastern civilizations with autocracy and despotism. The Western sense of self-worth collapses without that opposition” (Diagnostic of the Future).

has had the incalculable historical merit of placing itself as the only negation (at least in the West) of the new dominant ideology. Released from the scientific myth that permeated Marxism, besides not having been knocked out by the fall of the Berlin wall, anarchism could be, and in many aspects has been, the revolutionary force of the century. Let's just try to think: what would the anti-globalisation movement [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg80**] have been without anarchism, what would the Greek crisis [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg17**] have been without anarchism, what would the struggle against eco-catastrophe have been without radical environmentalism [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg78**] for the most part anarchist, what would our era have been without the endless string of attacks against politicians, economists, scientists, carried out by anarchists?

Therefore, if on the one hand anarchism hasn't naturally met with any difficulty in spontaneously setting itself as *negation* of the dominant ideology; on the other, as we will see further on, some components of the movement have expressed a substantial limit: *they believed in* some of the theses of the dominant ideology. Sometimes, even if we overturn its judgment of value, we excessively tend to believe all the lies that the ideologues of the State foist on us. The dominant ideology affirms it can submit and control all corners of the world with technique? Then we believe it and talk about resistance to a "mega-machine" with totalitarian characteristics, apparently almost invincible. The dominant ideology affirms that class struggle is over? Then we believe it and talk about new oppressions, about an indistinct multiplicity of privileges. Our action has certainly always been in good faith (obviously here we are interested in talking only about comrades in good faith), our acting has always aimed at attacking the mega-machine and privilege. But as we tend to believe in the theses of the dominant ideology, even if we overturn its values, our analysis remains nevertheless tainted with a hermeneutic horizon which is that chosen by the State.

The Afghan Variant

But are things really like this? Is history really over? Are ideologies really dead?

The September 11th anniversary occurs right as we are meeting up. Not even ten years after Fukuyama made his appearance, history overwhelmingly came back. What followed is well known. The Bush administration declared war on the Taliban and invaded Afghanistan. Two years later it was Iraq's turn. Twenty years after we can see how it all ended. For a long time now Iraq is actually a State controlled by pro-Iran governments, Americans' worst enemies.

As for Afghanistan, after twenty years of economic and literal bleeding, the USA were compelled to withdraw and the Taliban conquered the country again. A defeat which reminds the West of Vietnam, with the Americans and their allies (including the Italians) forced to flee from embassies by helicopters!

The most powerful and armed army in the world was defeated by a guerrilla of shepherds armed only with a *myth*. The same shepherds who destroyed the Red Army [ed. – of *Soviet Russia*] forty years ago. The clumsiest army in the planet defeated two world superpowers in the space of half a century. Certainly the most irreducible economists will find a multiplicity of supporters who backed the Taliban in recent years in the name of the most ignoble economic interests. Surely these are not forces that can compete with the USA, Russia and China together, all of them terrorized for different reasons at the Islamic expansion in central Asia.

The truth is that the Taliban defeated NATO and before that the Red Army because they were not afraid to die. They have a God and a pre-modern religious practice in the name of which they absurdly believe heaven will be there for them the more enemies they manage to kill. The myth, martyrs and heroes versus placid super-paid westerners who want to kill some savages and go back home with their bank accounts full of mercenaries' lavish wages. The myth of Allah versus the myth of Messi and Michael Jordan. Who else could have won? A revival of the *myth* that defeated the two most important ideologies of modernity in the space of four decades.

What does this have to do with our discourse? Quite a lot.

The dominant ideology (which claims it is not) thinks it is invincible. It preaches technical rationality as an unbeaten and unbeatable form of historical evolution. As we mentioned, the opposition to this Moloch has sometimes accepted its contents, even if it has also overthrown its values. But not only do we anarchists need to oppose the dominant ideology we also need not to *believe in it*.

The dominant ideology affirms the overcoming of the human being and their limitations in favour of machines. It occurs that its opponents firmly believe in it, even if they declare they are disgusted. Faith in this fate is so strong that it ends up cheating the swindlers themselves. Not having opposition, the ideology ends up cheating itself. Doesn't the Afghan variant also talk to us about the failure of this dystopia? You can bomb villages with drones for twenty years, but then you need humans to control the territory. Forget about advanced technologies,

forget about cyborgs to be used in wars! Without boots worn by human feet, when drones go back to the base after their death flights, humans retake control.⁴

Think how many say that a sort of “health dictatorship” was established by Big Pharma because of the pandemic. Perhaps they should reckon with the “Afghan variant” more than they do with the English or Indian variant. Don’t you think it was a hard blow for Big Pharma to have



4 ed. – “Fourth generation war, or the revolution in military affairs, also sometimes includes reference to new types of warfare enabled by new generations of weapons, particularly those using computers, robotics or electronics. This is an emerging field, and hard to discuss as a result, but it appears that the main dynamic behind such moves is the search for a technological fix to the vulnerabilities faced by military forces: firstly that they rely on the loyalty and at least reluctant willingness of large numbers of soldiers to fight, and secondly that they are vulnerable to tactics depending on the density of local social and geographical spaces.

Armies seek to get around these limits by developing technologies which reduce the reliance on large numbers of soldiers, which render local sites vulnerable to surveillance, and which render popular support irrelevant to the outcome of local conflicts (note that they seek to do so – they have not yet done so). One of the difficulties with this discourse on technology is the nexus of interests involved: arms companies have an interest in making new products seem more transformative than they are, military leaders have an interest in playing up threats and increasing military budgets, and between them, they create a situation where political leaders are constantly urged that they are about to fall behind without some vital new killing machine.

Supposed new breakthroughs, such as unmanned drones, heat-ray weapons and anti-missile interception, have proved to be less effective or less widely usable than originally intended. This qualification aside, the state is constantly increasing its autonomy from factors of public support and morale by relying on high-tech weaponry and surveillance. The effect is dangerous: if the state can do what it likes without the need to obtain popular support on the ground, it can increasingly resort to unconstrained warfare while making fewer and fewer concessions to local proxies or domestic populations.

They also contribute to atrocities which would not otherwise have occurred. The US drone strikes on Pakistan, for instance, would have been technically possible without drone technology, but probably too diplomatically risky without Pakistani government support. The risk of an American pilot being put on trial in the glare of the global media for violating Pakistani airspace is the kind of demoralising image problem America increasingly seeks to avoid. Dead villagers in isolated locales which can be kept off CNN or passed off as dead ‘terrorists’, on the other hand, are deemed a price worth paying.” (Behind Enemy (Thought) Lines).

lost the biggest supplier of opium on the planet?

Obviously the point is not to stop fighting Big Pharma, put oneself at the service of the pro-vaccine leftists and of general Figliuolo [an Italian army corps general appointed by Prime Minister Mario Draghi as Extraordinary Commissioner for the Implementation of Health Measures to Contain the COVID-19 pandemic, to lead the vaccination campaign]. The point is always that of *not believing* their ideological theses, not believing that theirs is the only possible fate. Their science is not the only possible science [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg33**], the domination of technical rationality at the service of capitalism is not a technologically necessary fate.

After all, wasn’t precisely general Figliuolo the leader of the war mission in Afghanistan on behalf of the Italian troops of occupation? There, the so-called “military-vaccination campaign” is in the hands of the general who along with others lost Afghanistan. Generals in power? Yes but which generals? Figliuolo is a loser!

The “Afghan variant” brings us to another thought, a much more disturbing one: *modernity as a parenthesis*. What if the occupation armies of the capitalist States of the planet “withdrew their troops” one fine day? And what if the Sun of the Future didn’t rise that fine day but medieval reaction, religious obscurantism, human barbarity, oppression of women? It must have been this thought, so disturbing that it was pushed into the deepest subconscious, that pushed so many ex-comrades towards a now exquisitely reformist terrain. In the face of the collapse, many could show they are not all that revolutionary. Fear of death or of something much worse could drive many to say that yes, after all our government is not that bad. After all, don’t a certain opposition to fascism, a certain social-democratic rhetoric of defence of the vulnerable, a certain neo-liberal vision on the role of minorities also talk of this to us [ed. – see **‘Something Different Than the Reflection of This World’**]?

What do we need to do? Espouse obscurantism? Shout “Allah is great” or to take to the streets along with conspiracy theorists? No, we need to oppose our myth to their war gods. We need to oppose what Alfredo Cospito [ed. – see **‘Our Anarchy Lives’**] calls “the myth of avenging anarchy” against the divinities of technique and reaction. The idea that the rich who have reduced us to these conditions will pay one fine day. And it won’t be due to some miraculous divine assistance, the chance to do justice is in our hands alone!

From “Technological Totalitarianism” to the Chip Crisis

Another way with which some are opposing the dominant ideology of our age is that of denouncing the danger of an imminent technological totalitarianism. **Again, while rightly opposing the ongoing trends, these comrades end up nevertheless with accepting their beliefs.** The idea that technological progress won't know limits and will conquer the entire planet is only the umpteenth ideological delusion. Not only are we against the projects of reorganization of capitalism, we are also sceptical about the lies being told to us by its mouthpieces.

On 17th July economy newspapers spread a disconcerting piece of news, well concealed by the mainstream media. This is an item from the agency *LaPresse*:

Audi and Volvo will stop their plants in Brussel and Gent, Belgium, this week due to shortage of microchips. It is what is being reported by several local media including *The Brussels Times*. Shortage of microchips has slowed down production of about half a million vehicles all over the world, according to the European Association of Car Suppliers (Clepa), and it is believed that its effects will be felt until 2022. It is not the first time that both plants have had to stop production due to shortage of microchips, which can be present in their dozens in the newest car models. 'The second trimester of 2021 was very difficult and we are still witnessing delays in production', Clepa president Thorsten Muschal affirmed. Audi explained that the supply of chips will remain limited in the coming months – and therefore it is not possible to exclude further adjustments to production – even if the situation is expected to improve. 'It seems that the lowest point of the crisis has been reached', Peter D'Hoore, the plant spokesperson, said. 'We expect an improvement in the second half of the year', he continued.

But what, you want to make the digital revolution and you don't have chips for cars?!

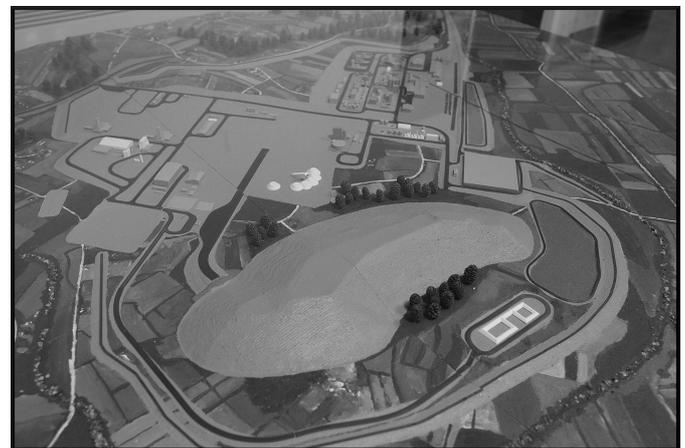
The effects of the chip crisis will be felt until 2022, they say. At the time of the press release (June 2021), they mentioned half a million vehicles not being produced due to shortage of raw material. But they were confident that “the lowest point of the crisis” had been reached. On the contrary, the chip crisis keeps on expanding, affecting all technological sectors and not only these. We publish extended passages of an article of *Il Sole 24 Ore* which you can read entirely at this link: [ilssole24ore.com](https://www.ilssole24ore.com)

After Audi and Volvo, it was the turn of Tesla, Elon Musk's electric car [ed. – see '**Let's Destroy Everything That Is Called Tesla!**'], which had to stop due to shortages of lithium and cobalt:

Problems are also there for Tesla, Elon Musk's electric car titan. Costs are increasing due to shortage of raw materials. The CEO himself explained the situation in a tweet: 'Prices are increasing due to the pressure of costs, especially those of raw materials, in the supply chain all over the industry'. In this case prices of raw materials such as lithium and cobalt are at stake, both increasing (according to the International Energy Agency), demand for minerals for electric vehicles and batteries will grow at least 30 times by 2040).



Above: Korenita River, western Serbia
Below: How global mining giant Rio Tinto envisages the area as the proposed site for Europe's biggest lithium mine



Inevitably these problems also concern electrical appliances:

Things are no better in the sector of electrical appliances. According to the president of Whirlpool in China, the same global shortage of raw materials (in particular chips) which has shaken production lines in car companies, is now striking producers of electrical appliances, unable to meet demands. Whirlpool itself, one of the biggest companies of electrical appliances in the world, has seen its deliveries of chips reduced by 10% in proportion to its orders in the month of March. Hangzhou Robam

Appliances Co Ltd, a Chinese producer of electrical appliances with over 26 thousand employees, had a four-month delay in the production of a new fan for high range heaters because they couldn't procure a sufficient number of chips.

And videogames: "Unfortunately we are coming up against a great shortage of semiconductors and other components". These are the words of the Chief Financial Officer at Sony, Hiroki Totoki, talking about Play Station 5. What was not expected, however, is that the chip crisis could cause serious troubles also to other sectors such as construction, coffee and even toilet paper!

It seems absolutely absurd, but one of the sectors put in crisis by the chaos of raw materials is that of toilet paper. Suzano SA, the biggest producer of wood paste – the raw material for products including toilet paper – has made it known that logistics problems triggered by the raw material crisis (containers requested by other sectors, transport in an uncertain state, etc.) could create supply problems.

Finally, right in these first days of September the chips crisis is starting to pop up in national news bulletins, which are trying to limit it to the economic pages: Stellantis (the old FIAT) is now writing to workers to announce an extension of mid-August holidays to part of September in several sites where they produce Panda and Fiorino, due to chronic shortage of semiconductors.

In an electrified world, the electrification crisis is a general crisis. Not only because robotization affects all sectors but also because the chips crisis is a crisis of extraction, speaking in strictly material terms: materials for computers are lacking, but trees for paper production are also beginning to be scarce!

Naturally the chip crisis is not an impromptu one, but a deep sign of the times. From the one hand increasing demand of conductors, semi-conductors and superconductors, on the other the inability of African mines to keep up with this ever increasing demand of raw materials.

The result of the imbalance between demand of conductor metals and the weakness of the offer will very likely have important consequences not only on the volume of production but also on costs. **The great strength of digitalization has been the progressive deflation of its products. Computers,**

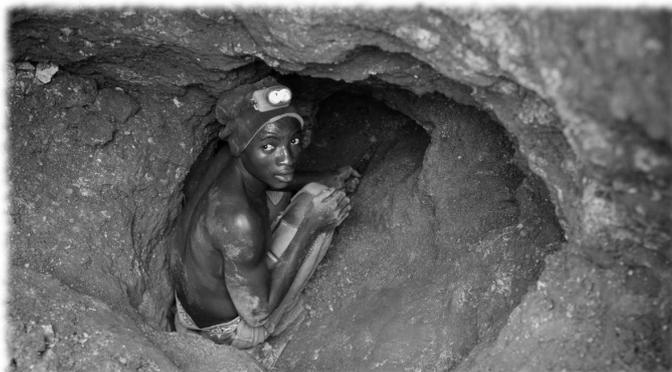
cell phones, devices of various kinds have been costing less and less for many years, making them goods affordable by everybody – even those who can't feed themselves or pay the rent.

An increase in the price of these devices will certainly reflect on the speed of the propagation of their global spread. But the finite nature of the planet also applies to the raw materials which smartphones and PCs are made of, it talks to us about objective limits of technological expansion.

By saying this we don't want to spread the easy illusion of a spontaneous depletion of resources useful to the technological authoritarian turn. In the past we used to deceive ourselves too easily on the end of oil production, except that they found new oilfields deep-down and the way to reach them precisely thanks to new extraction technologies. Capitalism won't switch itself off spontaneously for lack of fuel, it is us who must blow it up!

Capitalism always finds new areas to be exploited and new technologies to do it. The spreading of mines in search of metals such as coltan outside the Congo is part of these attempts. The point is not to believe the reputation of invincibility of the capitalist machine. These researches also produce struggles of resistance, and also workforce surely more costly than the slaves used in Africa. Again, therefore, price increases and a more and more excluding availability of technological applications.

What we are supposing, therefore, is not technological totalitarianism, but a condition of technological specificity in a context of general recession. There will be hyper-developed "citadels" (the word is not to be intended literally), outside which the big mass of humanity will abound, more and more excluded from the poles of wealth [ed. – see *'Something Different Than the Reflection of This World'*]. This picture is not to be represented "geographically", as the developing world was pictured once upon a time. **This excluding dynamic will cross vertically all societies.** In this context, the image of the worker with a chip in his overall



Components for global digitalisation at their source in Congo

which spies all his movements at work will go hand in hand with that of the said worker who, once he is back home, will increasingly experience a condition of cultural barbarism – with the addition of problems in the supply of coffee and toilet paper. Technological revolution will continue to be based on the exploitation of humans. This will be the case as long as capitalism exists [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg9*]. Human flesh remains the real gold mine for exploiters. If anything, new technologies will serve to control it better.

They Write “Green Deal” & You Read “Sacking”

While in the IT market the prices of the chip crisis are not yet to be seen, this is not the case for so called electric cars. To purchase an electric car with “decent” performance – we are not talking about rust buckets running 50 km per hour – you need to pay at least 18 thousand euros and this only thanks to public contributions otherwise the bill would be another 3-4 thousands exorbitant. It is not by chance that Panda continues to be the most popular car in Italy, as it costs less than 10 thousands. In other words, the “green revolution” remains a class privilege.

It is not by chance that Greta [ed. – *Greta Thunberg, influential – and reformist – teen climate activist*]

followers and environmentalists of the regime repeatedly say to us that along with electric cars, our habits in moving have to change. With electric cars, people will mainly move with car sharing [ed. – see *‘A New Relation with Social Conflicts’*]. “The future? Electric, but connected and shared”, Diego Colombo for example writes in *Eco di Bergamo*. The reason? Simple: not everybody will be able to afford it!

This is an example of what we call “citadels” of the technological civilization surrounded by misery. Even the car, distinctive sign of the consumeristic society of the Seventies, becomes a privilege for the few.

Naturally here the point is not the environment because everything depends on what you produce energy with. If electricity is produced with fuel, it is evident that electric cars will cause more CO2

emissions on the planet than traditional cars running with petrol. Okay, but this will happen “outside” in the regions where there are coal-fired power plants. Once again we can suppose a dynamic which is not totalitarian but “citadel”-like of the next techno-capitalist regime: historical centres will have less smog, my lady!

And obviously all this frenzy for electrification will only nourish the nuclear power impulse of the scientists of death [ed. – see *Indigenous Anarchist Convergence – Report Back*].

Therefore the point is not to save the environment, as the ideologists of the palace tell us. The point is a global restructuring of society, with a more restricted fortress of inclusion and a bigger human mass of marginalized. The impoverishment of the “middle class”, as magnificent as it is metaphysical, tells us something about this overall process. This impoverishment can be linked to the “Afghan variant” in the broad sense, to the reactionary forces of many impoverished small bosses.



French youth give their review of their Republic's vaunted 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' at Auguste Blanqui high school during the Yellow Vest anti-austerity movement of 2018 onwards; which, let us remember, was sparked in part by the introduction – as agreed in the Paris Accords (see *Return Fire vol.3 pg7*) but first implemented in France – of raised fuel taxes as a 'nudge' away from current cars

This impoverishment is a necessary consequence, demanded by the new course. Still on the question of electric cars, it is estimated that between 30% and 60% of jobs are at risk in the car sector because of the production change from combustion engines to the electric ones. The ecological transition rhymes with digital transition; not by chance the Draghi government [of Italy] – a regime of National Unity in the name of capitalist redevelopment – invented the Ministry of

Ecological Transition and reinvented the Ministry of Technological Innovation and Digital Transition. As Roberto Cingolani, the Minister of Ecological Transition claims in Mephistophelian style [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg52*], the transition will have an

enormous social cost. Cingolani's armoured vehicles are marching on, mimicking Stalin's: capitalism and electrification are fluttering on the banners of new purges.

Never was the saying more real: you wanted a bicycle, now you pedal.

National Unity from Cremaschi to Bonomi

For this project to go on, for this huge redevelopment self-named Great Reset to be realized, mass impoverishment all over the West is therefore necessary. As we've seen, this goes through the loss of millions of jobs due to robotization and robotics. Electrification demands human flesh!

The Italian government took care of this by unblocking bans on dismissals, the actual measure for which the Renzi operation was kicked off to unseat the previous government and install Mario Draghi's government. Now that there are no more bans on dismissals, all pretexts are good to close down. And the global pandemic offers pretexts in abundance.

It was on 20th July when Giorgio Cremaschi, the historical leader of FIOM [the Italian Federation of Metalworkers], the former union of metalworkers within CGIL [the Italian General Confederation of Labour], and a member of the "centre-left" little party *Potere al Popolo!*, chirped in the grammatically wrong language of Twitter:

"Those who oppose #green pass⁵ should

5 ed. – "The Green Pass, also known as the "European Green Passport", is a document gradually introduced from the summer of 2021 by the Italian government. It is obtained only when you have obtained the so-called "vaccination coverage", after having received two doses of the vaccine (or, in other and rarer cases, when you have recently recovered from Covid-19). The document initially regulated access to public spaces, such as bars, restaurants, cinemas or festivals, hospitals... but its scope has gradually been extended to other aspects of social life. In particular, starting from 15 October, the Green Pass has become mandatory for all workers, both in the public and private sectors: under penalty of suspension from their jobs. In his absence, workers can only, and at their own expense, certify their condition of "negativity" using swabs. [...] Furthermore, thanks to the Green Pass, the government masks – through an authoritarian and punitive mechanism for workers – the will to continue its policies as in the past: cuts to healthcare, absence of preventive and territorial medicine, absence of investments and stable hiring in the school, no enhancement of public transport[...] It is the very gentlemen of Confindustria who in February 2020 lobbied to keep the factories open, who diminished the severity of the virus, who along with the democratic mayors of Milan and Bergamo were saying that we couldn't stop [who] want to impose the green pass on us today" (Against the Green Pass, against the State).

coherently oppose: driving licence health cards identity cards residence certificates any similar devilry of communist dictatorships. Crazy ones certainly, but also simply #undomesticated fascists".

In the same day Carlo Bonomi, the president of Confindustria [general confederation of Italian Industry], wrote a decisively less illiterate letter to Prime Minister Mario Draghi, unveiled by the daily *Tempo*:

[The headline: You don't get vaccinated? No salary. Confindustria's threat to workers]. With the purpose of protecting all workers and the continuation of production processes in the full respect of individual freedoms, Confindustria has proposed the extension of green certificates – i.e. the green pass – to have access to work contexts.

You don't need to be a conspiracy theorist to observe that the coincidence of dates is disquieting at the very least. But even assuming that Cremaschi's was "only" an unforgivable mistake and the symptom of a geriatric left to be locked more in a care home than in a social centre, a coincidence of this kind, however "unfortunate", gave the sensation of a media encircling for the security turn which would intervene a few days later.

You need to be very careful at the substance that the word involves when you use the expression "government of National Unity". National Unity is not a simple technical government or a mere political government of "large understanding". National Unity is a government where the Nation is united and mobilized for a supreme emergency purpose. From a parliamentary point of view, it is no different from so-called "large understanding": many parties that vote a political government together. But National Unity is something different. The alliance of government goes through the whole of society, social forces, intellectuals, common people: all are mobilized for the Homeland.

From this point of view Cremaschi's and Confindustria's concentric statements suggest us substantial unity, a real patriotic front to save the bourgeoisie from the crisis caused by Coronavirus. It is a proper mass bourgeois government which, unlike fascism, maintains plurality of parties and mobilizes them all in the patriotic war. With his declarations, Cremaschi, a fake opponent, is in fact included in the structure of National Unity, he declares himself mobilized for his choices of social butchery.

Of course in parts of the UK we already have the similar 'Covid Pass', but the Italian experiment could set the track for other countries in Europe and the world.

Covid-19 is a Symptom. Yes, But a Symptom of What?

We are not giving the pandemic a central role in our analysis. Not because what occurred wasn't eminently historic, from all points of view. But we think that Covid-19 wasn't an unexpected event, a meteor that struck the planet changing its course for ever. If anything, we think that Coronavirus is in some way a sort of expression of the spirit of the current times.



pandemic was the vehicle where these phenomena finally expressed themselves. The pandemic is the vehicle of the globalization crisis and of a new form of authoritarian turn, but both are not passengers, they are the drivers.

All right, but where are the current times heading to?

Sticking to a clinical metaphor, Covid-19 is only a symptom. Yes, but a symptom of what?

Unquestionably it is a symptom of the health condition of the planet. Moreover, it is a symptom of the way modern science functions: it creates a disease and then it sells the remedy. It is a symptom of what constant urbanization, intensive farm breeding and "natural" biological selection through vaccines and antibiotics can cause. But even assuming this was a plot, an obscure conspiratorial manoeuvre, it would all the same be a symptom: the symptom of the point that military apparatuses, big financiers, etc. have reached. And even if – an intermediate hypothesis – it was the result of an accidental leak from a research lab (with two variants: a) a military lab; b) a medical lab which studies viruses for the "good" of human-kind), again it would be only a symptom: a symptom of the social dangerousness of capitalist science, which is running autonomous and brake-free putting us all in danger.

In other words, it is a symptom and it remains a symptom. **That's why we need to give up the temptation to follow Covid and its dances with the deforming lens of technical reason. As usual it would be like choosing the battlefield and weapons imposed by the enemy. We must look beyond, at the real evil: the real evil is a strongly unequal world social organization,** which is plundering all environments, which is protected by a military apparatus without precedents in the history of humanity.

As it represents the spirit of the times, Coronavirus didn't invert the fundamental tendencies of our epoch; it simply accelerated them. The crisis of globalization was already foreseeable before the health emergency. Some of us, even with very poor analytical instruments and empirical data, had foreseen it for some years. Likewise we had foreseen we were going towards an authoritarian turn. The

We judge authoritarian devices such as the recent health passport, so called green pass, from this point of view. We are not strictly interested in the question of vaccination, in the technical discussion, in scientific debate that replaces political debate. Among the authors of these notes some are vaccinated and some are not, indifferently. A division that plays the game of power, whereby the State has deliberately accelerated in this direction to create further fragmentation among the exploited and the isolation of the "hotheads" among them. The green pass strikes first and foremost the freedom and privacy of anyone who has it: controlled when they board a train, go to the cinema or to the university, it is those with the green pass who are especially spied on.

As pointed out at the beginning, the goal is an ideological goal: the creation of a society where the horizon of subversion becomes ontologically impossible. In this context, the ideology of technique, impersonal and impartial as they want to describe it, becomes the only tolerated ideology. If technique says that we all have to be spied on, that it is the only rational solution to health problems... then we all have to be spied on. The decision-maker is logic and impersonal: another world is impossible – and exactly twenty years after Genoa [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg68*], Cremaschi and Confindustria are marched together on 20th July.

An Authoritarian Turn, But of What Kind?

In the columns of *Vetriolo* [ed. – *Italian anarchist periodical*], expressions such as "an authoritarian turn of a new kind" and "an authoritarian turn of a new form" were used to describe what would happen. It was basically a negative definition, without content. We limited ourselves to observe that the new authoritarian society wouldn't have the characteristics of historical twentieth century fascism. It was important to highlight this fact in order to avoid the danger of so called front-ism: antifascist unity in the name of democracy.

As we were beginning to debate these categories, here and in a good part of the world extreme right parties and so-called sovereignists were growing. We

feared what in fact happened: that antifascist alarmism would contribute to contain this right-wing wave, yes, but with the goal of reinstating world neo-liberal order. This was the case in Italy with the Draghi government and in the USA with Trump's "defeat". Once they achieved the result to reinstate liberalism, these movements deflated until they almost disappeared. **It is the eternal return of the cycle fascism-antifascism-liberalism, where movements got bogged down for the umpteenth time.**

At the time, therefore, the only thing we could do was to give a warning of the use that power would make of antifascism, trying to explain that the upcoming authoritarian turn was not the simple return of a totalitarian regime, but something very different. We couldn't give more information about the contents because we are not prophets. Reality would show us the contents. Today we can say something more. We can give some substance to the authoritarian turn of a new form.

The first fact is that the authoritarian turn came about in a substantial conservation of the liberal constitutional order. Someone might object that not even fascism in Italy suspended the Statuto Albertino [*the constitution granted by King Carlo Alberto of Sardinia to the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1848, which later became the constitution of the unified Kingdom of Italy*]. This is true, but we can't not observe that the old Italian monarchical constitution was very vague and, for example, it didn't include guarantees for parties and unions. Fascism suspended party plurality and union freedoms, carrying out a constitutional change in the substance of the political order. The current European constitutions are much more regulatory in respect to rights and duties. **The new authoritarian turn of a new form, this is extremely important, is not changing its features.** On the contrary, it is not obviously interested in this. Berlusconi's and Renzi's reformist attempts were more dangerous for reformists and leftists in effective permanent service in defence of the Constitution. In full state of emergency, nobody thought of changing western constitutions in an authoritarian way.

In short the ongoing authoritarian turn, while it locks individuals up in their homes, drives over workers on strike, demands health passports, sets up checkpoints at every corner of the streets and makes restrictive measures fall down like rain against anarchists and rebels; it is not at all intervening on the institutional core.

This seems surprising only from a superficial point of view. In fact it is strictly linked to the particular ideological, mystified nature of the one and only thought of technical reason. If there is one and only one compelling choice, if social, ethical, ecological questions have only one answer and if this answer is identified by the impersonal dynamic of problem solving, democracies don't represent any danger for new authoritarianism. Anyone who ascends to power will have to necessarily adopt the same policies because the solution is one and only and it is compelling.

Announcement of Blood

The authoritarian turn is reality. Therefore we are in a new historical epoch, which like any revelation worth the name, needs an Announcement, a radical symbolism, a passion of blood. In Italy this "announcement" took form in the massacres committed in jails in March 2020.⁶ Sixteen dead over whom a veil of forgetfulness was laid too soon.

First of all a radical reaction. In the face of the unprecedented revolt in Italian jails, a State confused by the irruption of the pandemic reacted as it could, as it knew: with an iron fist. Certainly a message to the rebels, but also for the whole of society: this is what those who rebel have to expect. The State is there. These are the world of the then Minister of Human Flesh Administration [*ed. – aka, Minister of*



6 ed. – "In response to the government taking away a variety of prisoners' rights (including visitation and recreation), prisoners rioted. As of March 9, more than 50 had escaped in the riots, though six more had been killed. Criminal trials were continuing even during the outbreak, though prisoners are prohibited from attending, supposedly out of fear they will contract the virus and spread it to those trapped in the prison system. Despite all the threats and risks, on the first day of the national lockdown, a few dozen protesters converged on the empty streets of central Rome outside the Ministry of Justice to elevate the demands of prisoners across the country in revolt" (*Against the Coronavirus and the Opportunism of the State*). In Modena and Ascoli Piceno prisons, the guards replied with blows and gunshots, leaving sixteen dead: hundreds of inmates from prisons all over Italy are on trial for having risen up in those days.

Justice, then Alfonso Bonafede]:

I'd like to point out that in all the most serious cases the institutions have proved to be compact: magistrates, prefects, police and all the other forces intervened without hesitation making the face of the State even more determined before the delinquent acts that were being carried out.

These words were pronounced by a minister of "justice" before a consenting Parliament. An unequivocal political and historical responsibility: we, colleagues in parliament, along with "magistrates, prefects, police and all the other forces of order", are responsible for the massacre. The 1920s of our century are being announced. A surreal feeling, when we are almost in the situation of having to thank hangman Bonafede for having finally shown us without veils, for what it is, "the face of the State".

This is the nature of the conflict we are going to face. We are all warned, anyone who doesn't feel up to it should perhaps take a step back now. Even the images of the tortures in Santa Maria Capua Vetere⁷ take on an important communication value in the terrorist message of power. In this slice of the century we learned how power wisely creates scandals out of torture: Guantanamo, Abu Graib are places of torture isolated from the world, if we learned something of what happened it is because the ideology wanted to show it. A warning, a shiver of terror for those who decide to fight arms in hand against the occupying army: I could be there.

Therefore it can't be by chance that the images of torture, amidst the big indignation of fine democratic souls, came out of a jail where there was no dead. It can't be by chance that only in Santa Maria Capua Vetere the screws were so stupid as to leave the cameras on. The truth is that sometimes certain information has to come out. So that you all are warned: the next ones could be you!

But the massacres in Italian jails were and still are a deeper test. They are a social thermometer on our inurement. Power wanted to test the level of reaction, of dignity left in the human flesh it wanted to

⁷ ed. – This prison, near Naples, saw systematic torture of hundreds of inmates by guards (such as being made to strip, kneel and be beaten by screws wearing helmets to conceal their identity) the day after a riot in April 2020 as prisoners demanded face masks and COVID-19 tests. Responsibility has been traced from the director, to the regional director of prisons, to then Minister of Justice Bonafede. Fifty-two prison guards have since been arrested (CCTV footage having circulated); Matteo Salvini, the leader of the far-right League and part of the ruling coalition, visited the prison this June "to bring some solidarity from the League to all prison officers".

administer. It wanted to see if we were really ready for electrification. Judging from the fact that the great majority of the population don't even remember the dead, and if you ask them to think of what March 2020 was like, their memories are well different (mass house arrest, terror of the virus), we can say that the experiment has been successful: the patient is dead.

The Autumn We Expect

With these premises the autumn we expect will be an autumn of fear, from anxiety over flu symptoms to anxiety over losing one's job. It will be an autumn of restrictions and witch hunts. Nothing makes us believe that it will be somehow a "hot" autumn. Better to throw an unpleasant truth in the face than continue to pretend nothing is the matter, than follow after the umpteenth social intervention and then get frustrated at its failure.

In spite of this sad starting set, uprisings won't be missing. The authoritarian turn, digital restructuring and social electrification are already generating resistance and desperation [*ed. – see **How the Left is Handing Over Protest to Fascism***]. Resistance together with desperation, the feelings of those who have their backs to the wall, can be the next social detonator. Radical refusal of this imposed future will be the rebels' next move.

In this context, the most authentic expression of the class war will be precisely nihilism, which seems a paradox. If another world is impossible, then the only alternative you left us is precisely the lack of alternatives, in the fury of the hunted beast. An absolute counter-blow from this world in which we'll be more and more crammed, poorer and poorer, more and more ill.

However, if this reaction limits itself to this, it also risks becoming the last backlash of humanity by now submitted to the impersonal dynamics of electrification. In order to take this second step what is needed is faith, a myth, an horizon of (non)sense, an horizon which is not there, which perhaps will never be there, but only if we move marching towards it can we overturn an already written history. A mass, a surreal energy which can bend the linear time of capitalistic technique. All this is profoundly human.

All this can be also done by example: by demonstrating that power is fragile, has many weak points, can be cracked. By demonstrating through deeds that history won't go as they want, that there are those who are ready to make them pay dearly.

The area of the world we are in, that governed by the Italian State, is among other things particularly strategist in this context of restructuration. It is not by chance that Italy is the country that received more money in so called NextGenerationEU, not less than 210 billions over 807.

It is not a good gesture from European domination, but the conviction that Italy is the big patient in the continent and the first country which risks breaking the dream of a European Super State. This pile of money is not only a help but also a chain. Europe wants to ensure that the Italian State doesn't collapse and at the same time to block it firmly under its command. Today Italy's instability is a possible, important thorn in the side of western capitalism. Perhaps it is from this last consideration that we should begin to act.

September 2021

A split between the rational and irrational is constructed by every rational system; each rationality creates a corresponding irrationality, that which does not fit inside of it. Therefore each rational system has inherent limits. **To break out of a dominant rationality one must also be capable of conceiving of that which lies beyond the limits of that system.**

Rational systems can be useful tools but they can also become mental prisons.

Some wish to reject all rational systems because they detest specific types of rationality, such as capitalist rationality. We live in a highly mechanized society where nearly everything has been ascribed a monetary value, where urban and rural spaces are ravaged by the needs of capital while human beings are left in arid lifeless environments drinking chemical laden drinks in cafes with subdued music. This leads some people crave the irrational: the chaotic. One can only listen to musak so long, before becoming filled with a desire to burn down the places that play fast music so that we will drink our drinks faster and leave. But it is not the irrational that can subvert capitalist rationality, **capitalism also has its irrational side and,**

like all rational systems capital creates its own irrational limit. We can find a more powerful source of subversion in our minds' imagination than in artificial splits created by the rationalities we wish to destroy. Imagination can show us well thought out ways burn down that Starbucks and not get caught. Imagination breaks out of habitual and necrophilic logics: imagination is anti-hegemonic.

The surrealists experimented with imaginative flights outside of necrophilic logics. Alejo Carpentier was a Cuban novelist that was friends with the Surrealists while he lived in Paris in the 20s and 30s. His writing reflects a surrealist influence but he found the surreal in history and everyday life, specifically American [*ed. – i.e. the Americas; not just USA*] life and history. Miguel Angel Asturias wrote fantastic versions of Mayan myths upon returning to Guatemala from Paris. The French surrealists and Latin American surrealist influenced writers attempted to break out of “Western” rationality in fundamentally different ways. The French surrealists emphasized the imagination of the subconscious whereas Carpentier and Asturias set the subconscious aside. **These two writers looked to the indigenous and African cultures in their own countries and regions, to cultural logics which were less subsumed by the “Western” rationality the surrealists so criticized.** Both Asturias and Carpentier were white, educated, city dwellers who were looking at these cultures from the outside and thus often romanticized them. Each culture's logic leaves openings that other cultures close. This is most obvious in the case of moral logic; one culture restricts that which another condones. **However, this method of subversion is inherently limited since it is merely replacing one code with another.** These two writers looked to other cultures for openings, for opportunities closed by their own cultures.

Carpentier thought that life contained realities that were much more shocking than the dreams of the surrealists. He looked away from the subconscious and found the marvelous real in the creative choices of human life. The ways in which the conscious imagination can subvert established rationalities are more willful and thus more powerful than what we can extract from the subconscious.

In the novel *The Kingdom of this World* Carpentier tells us a story of the overthrow of the French rule in Haiti and its aftermath. He went to the archives in Haiti to research the novel yet the story is written with trajectories into the physically impossible. He shows us the rule of Henri-Cristophe (after the removal of the French) as deranged yet following political logic. His abuses of power are perpetrated by a deranged man who is mad yet upholds the state's logic of repression and exploitation enough to function as a statesman.

The state, like capitalism appears to be hyper-rational but is sometimes terrifyingly irrational. Carpentier's conception of the marvelous real challenges the separation between the real and unreal as well as between the rational and irrational.

Carpentier also uses fights of marvelous realism in which humans fly or turn into animals but he bases this in voodoo beliefs, it is indistinguishable whether he is saying that a man flew away when he was about to be executed or if people merely believed this to be true. He therefore describes the physically impossible as rational, as fitting within voodoo's logic. The physical metamorphoses of Mackandal, an instigator of the insurrection, are accepted as normal by the characters. The novel is about the first anti-colonial insurrection that

overthrew European rule in America, which was also a generalized slave revolt. **The slaves find the insurrection more unbelievable than humans turning into animals. Voodoo was already generally accepted as having real power, while insurrection brought what was previously inconceivable.** Property was temporarily effectively abolished and what had been the slave-owners' assets became the loot of the slaves.

“After bathing their arms in the blood of the white man, the Negroes ran toward the big house, shouting death to the master, to the Governor, to God, and to all the Frenchmen in the world. But driven by a longstanding thirst, most of them rushed to the cellar looking for liquor. Pick blows demolished kegs of salt fish. Their staves sprung, casks began to gush wine, reddening the women’s skirts. Snatched up with shouts and shoves, the demijohns of brandy, the carboys of rum, were splintered against the wall Laughing and scuffling, the Negroes went sliding through pickled tomatoes, capers, herring roe, and marjoram on the brick floor, a slime thinned by a stream of rancid oil flowing from a skin bag.”
 – Carpentier, *The Kingdom of this World*

Revolt creates situations that are as outside of established reality as is magic (marvelous realism is also referred to as magical realism). Revolt is marvelously real because it demands the impossible. Only willed imagination has the power to crush the conceptions and relations that perpetuate the status quo.

Capitalist logic is necrophilic because it reduces life itself to a quantity. This logic brought to its extreme conclusion would result in the annihilation of life on this planet. **The crudest examples of this reduction are the selling of forests or human organs for a price, more insidious is the reduction of time to a monetary value.** Selling time for a number brings living death. Homogenous time brings abstractly equivalent moments; a flat expanse of seconds and minutes and hours spreads out in front of us.

According to the clock every 5:33 PM is the same. The logics of law and morality creep their way into our heads restricting and repressing, but rationalization is never total, human desires and actions perpetually elude domestication and classification. **There is always a tension between**



desire and the logics which constrain it, whether they be economic, political or moral. The revolt of the imagination rebels against necrophilic logics as well as their most obvious results, such as police and the state.

WHAT IS INSURGENCY?



[ed. – These theses were written from so-called 'North America' in the early 2010s, following the boom in insurrectionary anarchist ideas centering around

desire and creating affects of rebellion or defiance rather than 'quantifiable effectiveness': the substance of the theses is coming to terms with the shortcomings that the author/s identified with that tendency, before repression (perhaps combined with overextension proportionately to perceived results) reduced its activities significantly.

*In this way, this text could be seen as one of the bridges that some comrades travelled over with the aim to support their actions with some more logistically-based projects that followed: it would be interesting to hear perspectives from comrades there on how those shifts helped or didn't in the insurrection there last year (see **The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis**).*

*This is the context for the call (which we cannot totally agree with) in what follows to “decouple action from passion”. We welcome the call to think more concretely about the terrain we find ourselves in, dynamics, friends and enemies (hence our interest in diffusing the piece anew in this volume with its theme of re-examining the relation our struggles have to the Left), and more broadly the attempt to rectify a shift that happened some point in the middle of the last century when social movements seemingly started to have a predominantly performative (i.e. “protest”) role at the expense of self-organisation towards accomplishing goals without mediation and satisfying survival needs among the exploited. But, to us affect and symbolism really is important in what we create with our activity (as is non-material, or spatial, terrains of struggle, and the way – as the author/s agree – that the past inescapably lives on in the present; see **Ghosts**). We also cannot help but feel that, compared to what we have drawn closer to during the intervening years (see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**), the attitude towards social movement participants expressed below is pretty utilitarian in a way we fear to be self-defeating.*

We will leave it up to you, the reader, to say whether in your context much has changed since the author/s made these criticisms (though we will say that for us accusations of 'activism' we've encountered has usually been just as facile as those the theses attempts to move beyond): the last thing to say is that we also question the ideas outlined about the lack of relation between means and goals (though it is at least a fresh take on it), not least because insurgency is only one part of an anarchist project to us, albeit obviously an important one.]

Thesis 1: Up until this point critiques of activism have tended to focus upon the characteristics of activists that we find reprehensible.

It is easy to despise leftists. The popularity of their position inclines them toward slow and flabby thoughts, reassured by the supportive murmurings of their fellows and the ease with which they rebuke the equally inept ideas of their traditional opponents



on the right. It is simple to look at their love of the democratic form [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg61*], of representation and protest, and read into the frequency with which self described activists are also leftists, a conflation of the two. We find these critiques of activism proliferating in the anarchist milieu as of late, revulsion at the cycle of endless meetings, as well as a rejection of consensus and the concept of the all-controlling general assembly, the legislative form that permeates this sort of action, gutting the very possibility of volatility. However, as critics we are, as with so much else, inclined to first pluck the low hanging fruit and with activism reach immediately for the theatrical antics of incoherent protesters and the joyful naivety of the charitable who would build a better world one filled belly at a time. It takes little effort to dismiss their politics as nonsense, their motives as exhibitionist, their practices as invasive, or their endeavors as ultimately ineffectual, but the sort of examination which seeks merely to dismiss the activist position fails to grasp its conceptual underpinnings as the font from which these other things spring. It is not as though activists fail because they have long meetings or enjoy screaming at empty buildings; these are merely symptoms of a more general sickness. Rather, the failure of activism appears at the core of the activist injunction to act in all moments on the discursive terrain of a mythologized “social conversation,” and to declare ourselves victorious so long as “something” happens, that we did “something.”

Thesis 2: Activism constructs a symbolic terrain of engagement in a conceptual space, one defined by a politics of complaint fused with an injunction to act against problems defined in a completely despatialized way.

By activism we do not mean that thing that leftists do. Rather activism is defined by its enclosure within an

absurd Kantian [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg.54*] narrative of the so-called democratic space, in which opinion polls substitute for actual fighting, but the critique of activism can just as easily become

containable within the limits of our disdain for leftists. We cannot equate the annoyances that are generated by leftists for activism. Rather, activism is an enjoinder to act politically against bad things whether that political act is the representation of discontent through theatrics and complaint, or as divergent from that as the assassination

of an appropriately public figure as a sign of seriousness, encompassing activities on the political right as readily as on the left, and direct action as readily as protest. By this we mean that the bomber of an abortion clinic is likely every bit as much an activist as is the campaigner for women’s rights caught in the blast in that they both have constructed completely despatialized symbolic terrains within which to represent their discontent, merely differing as to their preferred symbols and the audience with whom they lodge their respective complaints.

Fundamentally, activism is based in the attempt to influence the symbolic operations of some unitarily defined concept-enemy that exists in an abstract and generalized terrain in which there are no local features, and in which logistical imbalance never occurs. The terrain of engagement becomes removed from the spaces within which actions occur, and the enemy becomes decentered from actual material things. It is not then a question of activists having a phobia of discussions of material fighting or narratives of effectiveness, discussions of terrain variance and police force movements, but rather it is that within their conceptual plane of engagement none of these things matter. It is not even that activists are unable to discuss these things, it is that within the conceptual limitations of activism they are nonsense.

Thesis 3: It is this formation that has led us to our current impasse, where attempts to transcend activism replicate the same formation but through actions of greater magnitude.

The move beyond activism is not effected by giving up the terms and tropes of the leftists. Activistic histrionics and theatrics find ample room to play amidst burning cars and glass filled streets, reminding us that a message can be wordless and an

object can be a symbol too. Reacting to the lived conservatism of the left, by which we mean activists, it can be expected that the thinking will arise that one may transcend activism, by which we mean leftism, through simply going beyond the limits of the sorts of actions they would be willing to undertake. Through bigger and more beautifully destructive displays the post-left activist constructs a mishmash collage by which to represent their dissatisfaction. In this way shallow criticism allows activism to don new colors and appear under other banners, its essential strategic principles and tactical formations unchanged. To be avoided is a mythology which pervades militancy in which institutions are treated as bodies through which one may strike blows, where linear escalations of force, *more smashy! Bigger bombs!* are interpreted as directly increasing efficacy, as though blowing up lobby of an IBM [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg73*] office disrupted the functional logistics of apartheid any more than smashing an ATM in the middle of the night disrupts banking.

Thesis 4: To overcome the impasse is not a question of moving past complaint into other forms of symbolic action against despatialized enemies, but of defining the enemy in an immediate and material sense.

Implicit in the operation of activism is the existence of a shared project to which the activist, their opponents, and various neutral entities are all party. An activist's enemies then are the particular set of abstract bad things they endeavor to set aright and their opponents are fellows who merely happen to be on the wrong side of the issue. By comparison, an insurgent's enemies are never abstract, but rather discrete entities of flesh, stone, or steel, from bodies to buildings, which at a specific time and place obstruct their interests. These enemies are not party to the insurgent's project and are instead defined by their exteriority to it, making elimination of the opposition the basic mode of conflict. Engagement with this sort of enemy is not defined by the effort toward annihilation in the sense that the enemy must die, or that things must be destroyed, but rather in such a way that they cease to be the enemy. This does not mean that there will be some Habermasian¹ moment in which a sort of communicative commonality will form where everything will become rational; conflict, action in itself, is arational as a material movement. Rather, this means that engagement with the enemy ends where they become logistically incapable of continuing to obstruct our interests. At the point of total attenuation

¹ ed. – Jürgen Habermas, German critical theorist dedicated to the possibility of rational communication in institutions.



of their force, conflict evaporates, but this can only be an immediate calculation.

Thesis 5: To define the enemy in an immediate and material sense means moving beyond hatred or rejection into a posture of hostility, or an immediate antagonism, in this case hostility in relation to policing.

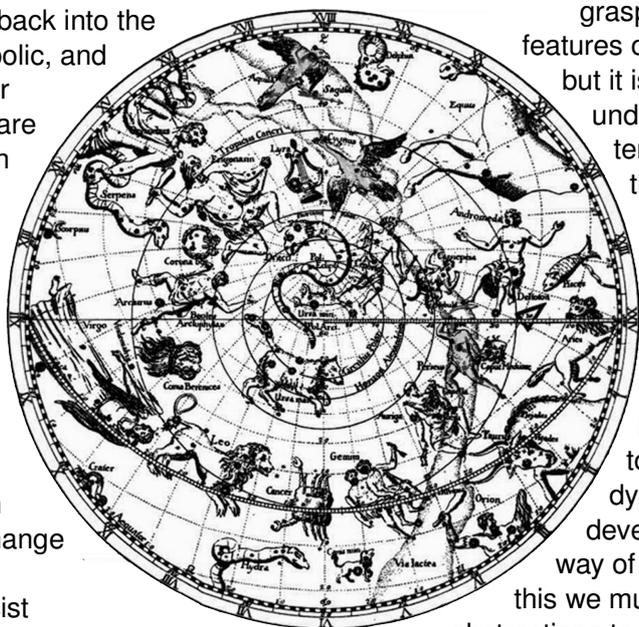
In defining the enemy we have to move beyond aligning ourselves against abstraction and into a posture of hostility toward enemies which are immediate and material. The enemy is that which is directly hostile toward one's objectives regardless of simple claims of political affinity. This means that in defining the enemy we must fundamentally shift our understanding of affinity, away from aligning ourselves along political theory or identity and into a conception which recognizes the potential presence of enemies all around us. This is clear to any of us who have dealt with the drudgery of working with liberals, only to find that they are a more effective force of deceleration than the actual uniformed police. Enemies surround us, but these enemies are not concepts, they are not the mythologized police as they are generally understood, the specter of the wealthy, or something like this. We do not fight ghosts and see no reason to become political exorcists: disembodied things cannot harm us.

Rather "enemy" is only a relevant categorization in relation to a material clash, finding its meaning in the immediacy of conflict itself, on a plane of engagement, in terms of where we fight, and when we fight. It is on this level that the enemy presents a direct threat, here that the enemy may be engaged, and it is only here that actual hostility exists. When we declare friends and enemies we are not merely claiming a structure of affinity, but more specifically we are distinguishing those we consider able to aid in our objectives from those that will impede this line of flight. Friends need not even be those that we trust, but only those we can either work alongside, or whom we can use.

Class war can be an effective mythology, as [Georges] Sorel discusses, but only to the degree that it generates conflict. In our case this conflict is not with the police as an abstract unity, but policing as an operation, as an actual logistics of force that functions in space and at a time. And for us this is a boon as to destroy the logistics of policing need not even require destroying police, necessarily, but only the disruption of their ability to manifest, to function in the streets [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Springtime Smoke Signals**]. At the point that we understand the material operation of the police as it actually confronts us in our homes and on our streets to be the enemy then our engagement becomes immediate and material, arraying us against the effort to define our existences through force. At the point of immediacy everything breaks down to strategy and tactics, and on this level direct clash is not a fight we will, or can win, at least for now. But hostilities need not require direct frontal clash as an enemy, even a single body, is always also a logistical operation the disruption of which can be accomplished through smart subversion and intelligence as well as through direct fighting.

Thesis 6: This move into hostility requires a reattachment of action to the space and time of the act, the immediate and material tactical terrain formed by conflict.

In reattaching the question of action to the actual dynamics of action we move back into the material, away from the symbolic, and have to completely realign our understandings of where we are fighting. In activism the terrain of conflict is formed around conceptual relationships; chasing the connections between some specific corporation and global finance, demonstrating on Saturdays in an empty downtown where a bunch of liberals yell slogans at empty federal buildings, engaging in the game of attempting to “change consciousness” by openly debating some hopeless fascist conservative. All of these forms of action are founded on the myth of a symbolic enemy that we may fight on some general discursive terrain. What becomes lost is any actual engagement, which vanishes along with an understanding of where the enemy actually functions, how they function, and what the features of that terrain of functionality actually are.



Take for instance Deep Green Resistance [ed. – *authoritarian ecologist group advocating armed struggle when this was written*], where the terrain of action is reduced to inert points on a map, “infrastructure”, that is thought of as immobile terrain, a mentality that functions along the lines of strategic bombing, the reduction of targets to immobile points in space observed from 30,000 feet. Even within this metaphor they fail to grasp the functionality of strategic bombing in the age of the guided bomb which, understood through Parallel Strike doctrine, is an attempt to disrupt enemy command and control in order to set the stage for a material clash in a dynamic terrain, rather than as an end in itself. What is lost in this discussion of inert space, terrain reduced to maps, is that the enemy adapts, the enemy moves, the enemy rebuilds. Attack begets counterattack, and this continues until the enemy is unable to function, to move, to maintain a logistical ontology. To begin to make this move beyond inert conceptual enemies not only requires an understanding of the enemy in an immediate and material way, but also requires a recognition that all strategy becomes obsolete at the moment of clash; as Moltke² said, “no plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force.”

During hostilities the terrain becomes reconfigured by the very actions that are taken and adjustments must be made. On this level it is not only important to grasp the physical terrain, the features of terrain and their variance, but it is also important to understand the dynamics in that terrain, the things that occur, the other forces present, whether they are antagonistic or not. We will never fully grasp this terrain, as single actors of collections thereof. At most we can, through intense intelligence gathering come to understand some of the dynamics in a terrain, and develop a more or less effective way of making sense of things. In this we must never allow our abstractions to unmoor themselves from the material and, so liberated, wander away from us. And, if they do, by no means should we let ourselves be dragged off with them.

Thesis 7: The reattachment of action to the immediate and material separates the

2 ed. – Helmuth Karl Bernhard Graf von Moltke, strategist and architect of Germany's 1864–71 Wars of Unification.

question of strategy/fighting from the question of why we fight, from the terrain understood conceptually.

In the move away from symbolic terrains of engagement into a material understanding of action and conflict grounded in the immediacy of fighting, another fundamental shift must occur in which the meta-conceptual question of why we fight is separated from the question of what fighting is. Activists complete their absurd move into the symbolic with a simple assertion that we become our enemy if we are willing to employ the same means. Underlying this assertion is an odd sort of technological essentialism, one that mirrors the positions of futurists and primitivists, which would have us imagine a world where technologies have an essential content independent of their deployment. What is missed here is the use of means on the level of their positioning within a wider technics, one which must take into account the method and purpose of deployment, and the actual existence of a technology, or technique, as it developed in some particular historical moment in response to the dynamics of that history. We have to abandon the Ghandian reduction that underlies this assumption of some necessary connection between means and goals, and come to understand something simple about conflict: the means of conflict take on meaning only within their deployment.

To be honest with ourselves, the ways that we make sense of the world are always interpretive, arbitrary, limited, and dynamic, in light of which the idea that we can understand the present, let alone some post-revolutionary future, is an absurdity. And this absurdity carries a danger along with it that far surpasses the limitation of weapons or means by ideological concerns. In the effort to speak the totality of the present or to plan some future that is supposed to occur after a series of events so catastrophic that the categories we use to make sense of life are now no longer relevant, whether revolution or collapse, we lose sight of some-actual present, an immediate terrain of engagement of which we can at least attempt to make sense.

There is no ultimate tactic to be developed, no possibility that the past will recreate itself in the present or the future, no understanding what we have to do to cause shit to go down, there is no eternal moment and featureless terrain in which something like this could even be grounded or to which it could

actually respond. There are only present capacities, present dynamics and some objective that we conceive as being important. Given that we cannot actually understand the totality of the world, or even of a single moment, "putting our ideals into action" is impossible; both due to the impossibility of this sort of unity or consensus in an actualized form, but also due to our inability to ever inscribe some necessary meaning into our actions; things occur, for innumerable reasons, and we are left the task of making sense of them in vain, from across the infinite distance that divides the concept from the moment.

We each have our reasons for engaging in the ways that we do, and it is not as though we can opt out. We cannot opt out of history, everything we do sets the conditions for future moments. We cannot opt out of the social war; the state is a logistics of force that operates to the degree that this deployment of force is total. Warfare has become generalized in a shifting dynamics of innumerable immediate contingencies; it is on the level of immediate contingencies that engagement occurs; it is on this level that the decision must be made as to how we engage with total war. What side we choose, whether we side with the state or with the insurgency, is one that we have to answer for ourselves, for our own arbitrary, provisional, conceptual reasons. The question of what this implies, as an immediate form of the decision, can only be answered in the moment of strategy, necessarily embedded as it is within the dynamics of this clash. We have to decouple action from passion and come to terms with the stakes and risks of fighting. Insurgency is neither romantic nor passionate, it is material, strategic, and often tragic. The ultimate tragedy is that we have been put in a position where this decision must be made at all, but once a decision is made, the conceptual question becomes secondary, trumped by the question of survival, and strategic movement.

Thesis 8: This realignment is the move from activism to insurgency.

At its core the current and seemingly perpetual impasse, summarized in the question what is to be done, replicates the core of activism on a series of levels. The question itself, when spoken, implies an "us" that will answer this question, and a body of discursive engagement that exists on some consistent plane, replicating the mythology of consensus. More importantly the idea that there is even an answer to this question, one that can take hold on a wide scale, assumes a consistent terrain of engagement across time and space. It is here that all symbolic engagements are fundamentally structured, on the level of thinking that we are fighting a common struggle together, assuming that we are fighting this in the same way, or that there is an essential

commonality to the dynamics in which we fight. To move beyond this series of assumptions, which cause us to replicate the failures of activism, means to re-conceive the fundamentals not only of what one does, but also the context in which one does them. This is not a question of whether we should engage with activism in some general sense, whether the “movement” is something we should take part in, or a question of the *foco*³ or the underground. These discussions all, still, assume a generalized symbolic terrain of engagement in which it is tacitly understood that theoretical efficacy may be equated with material effectiveness. But there is no right tactic, nor universal form of engagement, and certainly no answer to the question of “what is to be done.” We must abandon the entire symbolic terrain of action itself, but this does not mean that we must abandon engaging with activism. Activism can be an effective tactic in escalation, as Marighella⁴ discusses, but it does mean that we have to abandon activism as an assumed mode of engagement, and begin to ground ourselves in actual dynamics and in a hostility toward the immediate enemy. This means embracing insurgency, an immediate material engagement on an immediate and material terrain, one focused on strategy rather than abstract political theory; a reorientation of the question of action and waiting around engaging when and how engagement is strategic, and only to generate the maximum effect.

We should not fool ourselves, we are facing nothing less than a war; one without defined battlefields, without limit and without end [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg5*]. A war so all pervasive that it conditions our possibilities for existence, that it has become the standard for normalcy. This is a war that structures our terrain, inspires our cities, and organizes our lines of movement through space. It is a war, nothing less, and it is on that plane that we must conceive our engagement. Pithy attempts to engage with passion are often poorly thought out, and just as often contact no strategic points of intervention. We see this often with the glorified lone wolf or the urban guerrilla, with their symbolic strikes against a symbolic enemy whatever their very material consequences. This engagement with the dynamics of history, in all their immediacy, in all of their materiality, is the shift from activism to insurgency.

Thesis 9: Insurgency is not something that can be defined in itself, except as an

3 ed. – The *foco* theory inspired by authoritarian communist leader Che Guevara’s experiences in Cuba; vanguardism by cadres of small, fast-moving paramilitary groups to provide a focus (in Spanish, *foco*) for popular discontent.

4 ed. – Carlos Marighella, Brazilian author of the *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* which influenced struggles of the '70s onwards.

immediate and material engagement of hostility toward an immediate enemy within a context of warfare.

To be an insurgent means re-evaluating our relationship to so-called social movements, and also our role outside of them. For example, liberals are not allies, even though there is often confusion on this question. Fundamentally, their goals always involve some paternalistic attempt to define everyday life, and to use the state to do so; it should then be no surprise that they often work with the police. This does not mean that they cannot be used, or that engagement with social movements may not be effective, but to be able to re-evaluate the relationship that any of us may have to social movements we have to re-conceive of what the so-called social movements are, and this requires a move away from understanding them as a necessity towards the conception of them as a tactic, a form of engagement that has dramatic limitations, but that may not be all together useless given the right conditions. But, to move to this point means moving beyond defining what we are doing as a thing that exists in some consistent way across time and space.

We have already discussed the need to move beyond the question of what is to be done, to recognize the particularity of the means and dynamics of engagement to specific terrains with which they evolve in parallel; the need to move beyond activism and into insurgency, an immediate engagement with the enemy in the context of warfare. But, as we make this move we have to be careful not to fall into the trap of defining insurgency as a thing, as some abstract object, as a series of tactics, as necessarily one thing or another outside of the immediacy of engagement. Insurgency is neither violent nor not, neither symmetrical nor not, neither armed nor unarmed. Insurgency is not a thing to be thought, but a form of engagement which plays out in a hostility toward the enemy, and reveals itself in a posture toward the war that finds us, wherever we are, in our everyday lives.

When we speak about the necessity of moving from activism to insurgency we are not speaking of an increased militancy; militancy can be just as dangerous as pacifism and is a form of activism in its own right. Rather we are speaking of the need to avoid the tragedy of the Red Army Faction [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg93*] just as much as the tragedy of Occupy, the need to abandon symbolic terrains of engagement, in which we struggle against unspecified enemies on abstract political terrain through the elaboration of our passions. We are speaking of the necessity of grounding our understanding of what we are doing, separate from that of why we are doing it, in the space in which

things actually occur, in the here and now, and to make the effort to base this engagement on concerns of strategy, of hostility toward the enemy in some specific sense, rather than some effort to make a point, “speak truth to power” or whatever might pass for action otherwise. We are speaking of a posture toward the enemy in which we strike when we have the advantage, wait when we do not, and use the means that will accomplish our objectives, rather than those which will leave us unburdened by conscience.

INSURGENT TACTICS 307

– T.E. Lawrence, Võ Nguyên Giáp,
& the Great Emu War

Prelude to War

As the First World War was winding down the so-called nation-state of Australia began preparing for the inevitable influx of ex-soldiers from the battlefields of Europe and the Middle East. As part of the planning vast stretches in Southwestern Australia were earmarked for the returning combatants to turn into profitable grain and vegetable ranches. The economic chaos of the Stock Market Crash, and the concomitant failure of the Australian government to pay any promised subsidies, especially for wheat, brought the farmers to near ruin. Then when least expected a marauding force of some 20,000 Emus, struck. Brought into the area, no doubt, by the abundant irrigation water and all those tasty unharvested crops. The farmers demanded the government do something about the avian insurgents and in response war was declared in October of 1932. The eclipse of homo sapiens, as the dominant species on the planet, began in that instant.

The Emu is the second largest flightless bird on the planet, eclipsed only by its African cousin, the ostrich. Emus can reach heights of six feet, weigh up to 90 pounds and can run about 40mph at top speed. Then as now, little is known of Emu behavior, individual or social. In general they are considered skittish, the females can be very aggressive to each other during mating as they compete for male affections. Emus tend to forage in groups, likely family or hatchling related. Finally Emus are omnivorous, eating bugs, soft plants and seeds, and definitely wheat.

Weapons/Order of Battle

Emus: 20,000 Emus (a fuckload). The Emu is effectively weaponless, save their ability to run fast and the fact that when threatened they will dodge left and right as they flee.

Humans: Seventh Heavy Battery of the Royal Australian Artillery led by Major G.P.W. Meredith. Two Lewis guns, 500-600 rounds per minute, muzzle velocity 2,440 feet per second, effective firing range 880 yards. 10,000 rounds of ammunition.

Initial hostilities were postponed due to heavy rain on October 31, 1932. Giving both sides the time to plan for the coming engagement. On November 2, 1932 a group of about 50 Emus were sighted near Campion.

The Australians began firing their Lewis guns from fixed positions and the birds, in a move described as “inspired chaos,” fled at top speed in all directions to minimize casualties. Only a handful of Emus were killed as a result of this first encounter. A modern commenter states that the birds “mobility, durability and blind panic rendered them virtually immune to machine gun bullets.”



Lesson: Ninety percent of all insurgent activity is evasion (Lawrence, Giáp).

On November 4 the war continued. This time a group of about 1,000 Emus wandered into an ambush set by the Australians. The Australians opened fire with their Lewis guns, which promptly jammed and once again, the Emus escaped with only a handful of fatalities. In this encounter a new Emu behavior, never previously recorded, was witnessed – the breaking of the birds into smaller groups, each with a lookout bird to raise the alarm when enemy forces approached. In the words of one of the Aussie soldiers,

The Emus have proved that they are not so stupid as they are usually considered to be. Each mob has its leader, always an enormous black-plumed bird standing fully six-feet high, who keeps watch while his fellows busy themselves with the wheat. At the first suspicious sign, he gives the signal, and dozens of heads stretch up out of the crop. A few birds will take fright, starting a headlong stampede for the scrub, the leader always remaining until his followers have reached safety.

Lesson: Intelligence is the heart and soul of insurgency, find the enemy, detect his strength, and

destroy him when you are able – run when you are not (Lawrence).

In a new twist it was decided by the human belligerents to mount the Lewis guns onto trucks in an attempt to shoot the birds as they fled. This closed the range for the gunners but it virtually destroyed their ability to aim the weapons they fired. And when they did get lucky enough to kill an insurgent Emu, the body – all 80 pounds of it – became enmeshed in the trucks steering mechanism causing the conveyance to careen wildly off the road and destroy a full 100 meters of fence.

Lesson: The more complex the weapon system, the simpler it is to destroy or render useless (Giáp). Oh, and Emu bravery and self-sacrifice is second to none.

By November 8, 1932 the Australians had expended 2,500 rounds of ammunition to kill about 200 Emus, a rate of ten to one. The Australian Parliament exploded in indignation, one state legislator asking sarcastically if medals were to be minted for the heroes of the Emu War. Another legislator shot back the decorations should rightly go to the Emus who “have won every round so far.”

Lesson: The essential battlefield in an insurgent struggle is the court of public opinion, controlling the discourse, as the Emus did, is of tantamount importance (Giáp, Lawrence).

Major Meredith launched a new offensive on November 13, but it too fizzled due to the superior tactics of the Emus. There seemed to be no way to increase the bullet per insurgent ratio of 10 to 1. And with 20,000 insurgent Emus a full 150,000 rounds of ammunition would have been required to even make a dent in the population. Meredith was recalled and the humans surrendered on December 2, 1932. Likely the celebrations down in Emutown included much wheat eating. Unfortunately, the war really didn't end – it just entered another phase – the Australians adjusted their tactics – providing ammunition to the farmers and offering a cash bounty on Emu beaks. In one six month period in 1934 over 57,000 bounties were claimed for Emu beaks.

To sum up, a quote from an ornithologist who was a first-hand observer of the Emu War,

The machine-gunners' dreams of point blank fire into serried masses of Emus were soon dissipated. The Emu command had evidently ordered guerrilla tactics, and its unwieldy army soon split up into innumerable small units that made use of the military equipment uneconomic. A crestfallen field force therefore **withdrew from the combat area after about a month.**

GHOSTS

“Hurl me into the next existence, the descent into hell won't turn me. I'll crawl back to dog his trail forever. They won't defeat my revenge, never, never. I'm part of a righteous people who anger slowly, but rage undammed. We'll gather at his door in such a number that the rumbling of our feet will make the earth tremble.”
– George Jackson [ed. – see **Notes on “The Criminal Child”**]

*Say, 'I am a child of Earth and starry Heaven;
But I descend from Heaven alone. This ye know yourselves.
But I am parched with thirst and I perish.
Give me quickly
The cold water flowing forth from the Lake of Memory.'*

*The sun in justice is perfectly balanced by its mirror in the sign of insurrectionary attack. The feather is weighed against the heart by the jackal, and the devourer waits to see the results. Is your heart light?
“One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.”*

In Ancient Greece, the word “hero” referred to a person who had done extraordinary deeds in life or died in unusually violent circumstances, and therefore possessed an exceptionally great amount of power after death. Heroes were worshiped with nocturnal libations¹ and annual chthonic [ed. – i.e. *underground*] sacrifices at the site of their tombs, and if properly propitiated in this way, served as protectors of the town in which they were buried. If neglected, an angry ghost could make their posthumous power known by terrorizing the city until acknowledged as a hero and appeased with offerings.

In Greece today, hero cultus is still practiced. Four years after the murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas (Killah P) by a neo-nazi Golden Dawn follower, 2000 people marched in Athens in his memory, explicitly honoring Heather Heyer² as well.

- 1 ed. – The ritual pouring of a wine, oil, grain etc. as an offering to a deity or spirit, or in memory of the dead.
- 2 ed. – Killed by a fascist during his car-driven attack on the anti-fascist counter-protest to the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, USA, August 2017; a State Trooper prevented anarchist medics' attempts to resuscitate her.

Dozens of hooded warriors attacked the police protecting Golden Dawn's offices with Molotov cocktails, chanting "Pavlos is alive! Crush the Nazis!" Their incantation reveals the unique nature of the antifascist and anarchist hero: **the offering is the attack, the attack is the offering.** The attack is the posthumous demonstration of power, the posthumous demonstration of power is the attack. The anarchist martyr negates the transitional period between suffering as a haunting ghost and thriving as an honored hero. For the rest of society, our dead are eternally vengeful ghosts, their worst nightmares realized. For us, our fallen comrades are venerated through immediate action and attack.

The ancients sacrificed pigs to Demeter and Persephone, Goddesses of Earth and Underearth, by burning them whole. Demeter who single-handedly held all life on earth ransom and forced Zeus to accede to Her demands, Persephone who sends the souls of heroes back to the surface of the earth. The swine is still the most appropriate victim for the Powers Below, all-consuming fire the best method, nightfall the most auspicious time. **The golden dawn is no match for the black dusk, and the annual firestorms for Pavlos, a self-described "spawn of Achilles," in the nights leading to the autumnal equinox are proof.** "Pavlos is alive! Crush the Nazis!" The affirmation of glorious life after death and the statement of implacable hostility towards the fascists.

Simultaneous to Pavlos's hero-festival in Athens, St. Louis [ed. – so-called 'United States'] avenges the murder of Anthony Lamar Smith at the hands of a cop, taking the war to the very homes of the enemy. 1000 people surrounded the mayor's house and smashed her windows. In the glass shards, we scry both past and future, the all-too-timely words of Lucy Parsons, anarchist of Black and Mexican and indigenous descent, widow of the Haymarket Martyr [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg86*] Albert Parsons: "Let every dirty, lousy tramp arm himself with a revolver or knife on the steps of the palace of the rich and stab or shoot their owners as they come out. Let us kill them without mercy, and let it be a war of extermination and without pity." Or, as 2Pac Shakur said, "The ground is gonna open up and swallow the evil...the poor people is gonna open up this whole world and swallow up the rich people." At the time of writing, the demonstrations have continued every day

for a fortnight, specifically targeting rich white neighborhoods and malls, making the name of Anthony Lamar Smith unforgettable even in the palaces of the rich.

With trash can lids and bricks thrown through shop windows and at cops, a promising beginning was made towards spiritually cleansing the deep-set miasma of Delmar Boulevard, the dividing line between the Black and white neighborhoods of St. Louis. **Every border, however well fortified and guarded, is a crossroads, a liminal place, where the Man in Black or some other way-opening spirit might appear to offer sorcerous power.** The



inside and the outside are not static places, but exist only in relationship with one another. The shattered windows at the mayor's house and on Delmar Boulevard demonstrate what happens when this ancient relationship is subordinated to the egregores³ of class and race, the false hopes of white men who fear death and would stop at nothing to cling to their paltry and fleeting secular power. Neither their homes nor their borders are impermeable. Through every broken window, a portal to the Otherworlds is opened, through which the Dead return to the earth, through which wild and inhuman spirits enter, through which the Gods make manifest Their blessings.

The night of September 16th [2017], police officers on the Georgia Tech campus ['U.S.A'] murdered 21 year old Scout Schultz, a queer anarchist loved by many. Following a mourning rite two nights later, some who loved them struck back against the forces responsible for Scout's death: hospitalizing a couple police officers and setting one of their vehicles ablaze. The days to follow saw the predictable response from the powers that be – calls for order, criminal charges, intimidations, interrogations, expulsions – so many efforts to erase Scout's memory and the fire lit in their honor. In a subtle response, a poster circulated reprising the infamous image of a burning police cruiser with the text "no apologies", with the date altered to read Sept 18th, 2017 – Georgia Tech. This poster originally emerged after the largest queer uprising in US history, San Francisco's White Night Riot of 1979, and depicted one of several SFPD [San Francisco Police Department] cruisers burnt that night.

3 ed. – A non-physical entity that is both made up of, and influences, the thoughts of a collective of people.

The queer struggle remains, as always, the struggle to respond when one of us dies. The history books remember the White Night as a stepping stone in the progressive path toward gay political careerism. We understand it instead as a collective moment of response to another faggot death; a death – this time – affecting more than just a small circle of friends and lovers. And yet visible or not, we continue responding: another bashing, another dead on the streets, another shooting, another mass shooting, four dozen in a night club, three dozen in an underground venue, millions of AIDS deaths, countless suicides – by cop or not, privately or not, planned or not, always because of this society, always because of its enforced isolation, its scarcity and its industrialization of care.

Whatever story the cybernetic media says about Scout, we see through to the center of the matter: another queer death. We are aware of our own mortality – yes, we will die, just as all that draws breath must someday cease – but more, we hold a certain proximity to death. Especially the transfemme among us, the dark-skinned among us, the indigenous among us, the hustlers among us, the houseless among us, the mad ones among us, We walk with a closeness and a certainty toward death. We walk with an ambiguity too: who will remember, who will know, who survives us? We aren't guaranteed the unbroken line of heternormative transmission afforded our cousins. **And so we find other ways, build other kinship structures, weave other webs of affinities and promiscuities, carnivals and households, love and hate, friendship and enmity in such complex and crystalline formations so that we can't tell the dichotomy and we are left, vast and varied, subterranean, broken yet ever-necessary, extended family.**

Queers, anarchists, extended, through time and space yet hyper-specifically etched into places: bars, alleyways, apartment complexes, relational memory. The great paradoxical queer ancestral current – straddling on the one hand the desire of each generation for the betterment of the next, and on the other our traditional proximity and orientation toward death – transmits to each of us an inheritance, affirming and negating all at once. And so to honor

the ancestors of the tradition, while staying alive long enough to do so, we devise novel strategies of survival, techniques to walk the tightrope across the abyss of lost generations. We weave those ropes into tapestries and quilts telling stories which enable us to keep fighting. We hold to the possibility that we may choose, all of us together, to give up neither our lives nor our different-ways-of-life. We can choose to continue, because we fight for continuance and so do the dead.

Our deaths are not the end. We die, but the web remains. By means of collective grief the web is woven and rewoven, never the same but possibly fiercer, possibly more resilient, all wrapped up in the spirits of ones we loved and ones we never met. The rituals of mourning – the candles, the songs, the teary ecstasy, the storytelling, the art of memorial, the healing work, the offerings – these strengthen the web and strengthen our ghosts. (Milo⁴ dead-named⁵ our friend and then the storm swallowed his home.) And so we grieve, together and alone, all dancewoven up together, the dead like paper skeletons above us fluttering on our breath as we exhale their stories.

In September 1923, during the Showa period of violent Imperial Japan, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake broke off the coast of Tokyo. The imperial government and vigilantes used the pretext of civil unrest to murder tens of thousands of Ethnic Koreans [*ed. – colonised by Japan at the time and source of a large anarchist movement and diaspora*], with the help of the city's police. The imperial army took the same opportunity to repress political dissidents.

Kaneko Fumiko, a Japanese nihilist, and her anarchist friends were locked up, accused of precipitating the earthquake, intending to use the confusion to start a rebellion against imperial fascism. These now-ancestors were convicted of high treason for an assassination attempt on the emperor. Whether their plans truly had that aim, whether they were rounded up in the postquake chaos in the same style as we have seen after J20⁶ and now after Scout Schultz's murder, whether these treasonous types had merely dreamed of freedom in their meager beds and burning hearts is irrelevant. The rebellious spirit is enough of a threat to any emperor, colonial force, or police force. Kaneko Fumiko's words from jail

4 ed. – Trump supporter Milo Yiannopoulos, whose speaking event at California's Berkeley University in early 2017 was vociferously counter-protested by various anti-fascists, as was his planned return later that year.

5 ed. – Using the given name (i.e. that is "dead") of a transgender/non-binary person against their wish.

6 ed. – January 20th 2017: the US Presidential Inauguration of Trump, accompanied by rioting in the capital.

before she refused the emperor's pardon: "It does not matter whether our activities produce meaningful results or not...[they] enable us to bring our lives immediately into harmony with our existence."

There is something to be said for tradition, though, unsurprisingly, our enemies say it wrong. "One important aspect of tradition is the consciousness of possessing the tradition – a grasp of revolutionary methods, a knowledge of what to do in a revolutionary situation." Likewise we the living possess the voices and imaginations of those before, of Kaneko Fumiko, of Scout Schultz, of the entire heavenly island of Puerto Rico.

The Ojibwa story of the constellation commonly called the Big Dipper tells of a mink who ascends to the heavens escaping greedy villagers. The selfish cousin of the mink was keeping the birds of summer locked in tiny cages to steal the warmth of spring for himself and his faithful people. The mink, along with his animal friends, determined to set summer free for all, fought his cousin and released the birds. The last of the cages of hummingbirds was smashed, but the mink came up against the angry villagers as he escaped. The stars whispered to him "Brave mink! You are one of us!" He climbed into the heavens, joining the stars. His earthly form now gratefully immortalized in clear winter skies.

This ancestor of some is an ancestor to all when the stories are told. We descend from the stars themselves. **When we yell "Pavlos is alive! Crush the Nazis" and when we're on the steps of the mayor's house, without mercy, we are giving life to our own rebellious spirits by blessing our attacks with the sacred spirits of those new and**



Left - 28.06.19: Early-morning visit to the Mayor of Hamilton (so-called Ontario) beats on the door and blasts speakers to return the favour for Canadian police dawn-raids the week before against anarchist queers accused of defending themselves and others from homophobic preachers and Nazis who crashed a Pride march. Right - Posters in Manchester, UK, in solidarity with the arrested in Hamilton.

old constellations we greet in our skies. Tradition is not power over another.

"The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'emergency situation' in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history which corresponds to this. Then it will become clear that the task before us is the introduction of a real state of emergency; and our position in the struggle against Fascism will thereby improve."

Those who seek to subdue and cage – the seekers of supremacy and the makers of solitude as torture – will meet the bright mink, emptying the cages. They'll see Scout again, and Pavlos, in us on their doorstep. Those lost and taken return to us, and return to the descendants of fascists, cops, to the thieves who take life by taking away the sky [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg50**]. Our enemy's failure of vision will in turn fail them spectacularly when they meet the returning, strengthened ghosts of our beloved dead. The jailers didn't account for solitude being a type of freedom, even when applied with force. They didn't account for George Jackson. Or Michael Kimble.⁷ Or Assata.⁸ The St. Louis PD didn't account for the will of the mourning to approach the mayor's house. The fascists will reckon with the curses heaped upon them by the living and the dead they helped kill, the heroes they helped make, the hummingbirds from whom they stole flight.

In the exposed cracks we've always seen the light; in the paths our friends journeyed bravely and stubbornly, we see how their dedication to freedom brightly colored all their living moments until their last. They live now everywhere, but can be called to for guidance, for validation, for power in moments where winning comes on the wings of our ancestors in resistance. The hearts of those dead are ours to keep richly lit and dressed with fresh flowers and tokens of memory in the form of attack. **The spirit of rebellion meets the spirit of tradition. Revenge makes friends with joy.**

Some spirits need light, some need vengeance; Scout got both from a burning SUV and in the voice of our ancestors we say again: "No Apologies!" To this society we offer and accept none. This is an old war and we – queers, anarchic, anti-fascistic,

- 7 ed. – An anarchist active in organising inside the US prison system since 1987 (sentenced for defending himself and a friend from a racist, homophobic attack), including publishing and distributing 'INACELL Da Mag', a magazine of revolution, hip-hop, and Black history.
- 8 ed. – Assata Olugbala Shakur, former member of the Black Liberation Army convicted of 1973 cop-killing then jail-broken in 1979 and currently under asylum in Cuba.

She bent her pale head with a sigh
 and fell asleep
 for ever
 Above her the sky mountainous
 Barren landscape -dark-
 stones only and rocks not even rain...
 Bride you with the plastered mouth red
 Brocade hands melted handiwork
 Offered pleadingly
 Some lilies
 Around the fresh earth your girlfriends
 Sad and over-painted
 Making strange noises
 As craving attention
 In order to play in some film
 Here this ring child poem
 Word of Honour
 This hour that the future-ones
 Learn the eagle's flight
 This hour that your forehead
 Reveals what is hidden
 Always the same hour
 That the RED KNIVES
 Kill the Different ones...

*[from the fourth collection of the often-
 antagonistic poetry of the Greek anarchist
 Katerina Gogou, published 1986]*

*"The red knives in the poem referred to the traditional
 communist policy against homosexuality deemed by
 the KKE [Communist Party of Greece] "a bourgeois
 perversion that will disappear with the revolution". The
 mid 1980s was a time of fierce gay liberation struggle
 in Greece. Only a few years before, in 1979, the right
 wing government had proposed a law for the
 displacement of homosexuals to barren island camps.*

*The law was overturned only by way of mass
 grassroots reactions as well as international pressure
 from intellectuals like Foucault and Guattari. The
 struggle against the displacement law was the cradle
 of the gay liberation movement of the 1980s mostly led
 by the leftist group AKOA. The most militant part of the
 struggle however was played by transvestites (this was
 their self-referential term) who even clashed with riot
 police forces. Sonia was an anarchist transvestite
 closely related to Paola, the leading anarchist trans
 figure of the decade who published Kraximo
 (Heckling) a transvestite anarchist magazine that led
 her to numerous arrests. Sonia's assassination and
 the abandonment of her brutalised naked corpse on
 desolate rocks on the Attiki coastline was an
 emblematic call to arms affair at the time." – Switch-
 Blades in Dirty Dead-Ends, Negative Press*

uncontrollable, other – have been fighting for
 lifetimes. This conflict has many sides. Over the
 same weekend, cowards from [US neo-Nazis] Identity
 Evropa tweeted cellphone pictures of a lackluster
 'vigil' for the "victims of anarcho-terrorism." Let
 McKinley's [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg86**]
 bloated corpse have Twitter posts and tealights and
 his name over dreadful middle schools. Our dead
 have May Day [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**]
 and plazas and entire uprisings. We can laugh at
 their sad attempt at ancestor veneration, but we
 would do well to keep an eye attending to the spiritual
 techniques of our enemies; attending specifically
 toward how we might undercut their relations and
 embolden ours.

For every president honored by the cynical fascists,
 may the millions genocided and imprisoned and
 enslaved under his regime rise up to swallow his
 memory in waves of judgement and fury.

**For every anarchist executed, may new festivals
 of fire be born.** For all of our dead may new rituals
 slowly impose a new shape to time, a new
 history.

*Long life to Heather Heyer and Killah P, as long as
 there are walls we will write your names upon them.*

*Long life to Scout Schultz, may the fires give you
 warmth.*

*Long life to Anthony Lamar Smith, for whom the
 streets still writhe.*

*Long life to Leon Czolgosz [ed. – see **Return Fire
 vol.1 pg86**], who fought for love.*

*Long life to Kaneko Fumiko, and all the treacherous
 women [ed. – as the many rebel women of her
 generation were known in Japanese society].*

All power to the gay and anarchist ghosts.

*Strength to those fighting, those imprisoned and
 those on the run.*

*Let us bring our lives immediately into harmony with
 our existence.*

'THE IN-BETWEEN ONES'

If warfare is also psychological & informational
 and if it's the new means by which we will be fucked
 with

we will resist invasions and ambushes in the form of

stories, spells, dreams that re-frame, re-inscribe, re-late (the root of the word relate means to bring or carry something back).

we will wage mythopoetic guerrilla warfare in reaction to widespread political terror and disenchantment.

we will tell our stories to dis-arm & seed-bomb with the green tendrils of our humanity

we will imagine a future when dominant culture can no longer imagine one.

we will be #dreampunks.

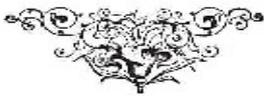
supreme authority can not imagine its own de-centering or demise, except in the form of un-analyzed hatred and otherization of people. that is what passes for its “imagination.”

we, as trans and non-binary folx (& all marginalized folx) are used to living forward into the unknown.

we are used to maybe expecting our own untimely demise.

we have been there and done that.

we have reimagined our bodies, we have experienced our desire or our joy as something sacred, to be transmitted not always through biological reproduction, but through other means.



apocalyptic times require movement between worlds. between institutions, cultures, genders.

the wild ones know it – they (like the “eastern coyote”¹) hybridize when their habitats break down. they walk between species. (hybridization is distinct from assimilation)

apocalypse (ἀποκάλυψις) actually means an uncovering, a revealing, not an ultimate end.

the center was always fed by the edges, that’s the secret they don’t want us to know.

people argue about gender and bathrooms, and turn us into a tool for their own transformation.

we become tools for them to think with [to paraphrase Peter Brown’s “men use women to think with”]

in the meantime, what do we think with? dream

1 ed. – A wild North American coyote-wolf hybrid which appeared in the 1930s after the extirpation of the gray wolf in southeastern Ontario, Labrador and Quebec, thus allowing coyotes to establish themselves in the former wolf ranges and mix with the remnant wolf populations.

about?

finding the space to dream is a radical act right now.

and dreaming with the land (and informed by more-than-human relationships) is an endangered ancestral skill.

(just like grieving – the two are coupled)

too often now we forget our dreams because the images in mainstream media are stronger than our dreams.

that is not just psychological warfare, it is war against the soul.



You who walk on the edges – know that you are well equipped to be with mystery.

We tend mystery when dominant culture sees it as inconvenient. (They would build a wall to keep it out.)

Now, they would be healed by apprenticing to it – to the unknown, to fear of death, to fear of identity loss. Like the white supremacists who are grasping for identity™ while sneering at ours.

some say Western society is experiencing a failure of imagination. an inability to dream new futures.

funny because I don’t feel a loss of imagination at all. I feel an excess of it. Maybe that’s what happens though. Maybe when the cultures of control lose their future, pretty much everyone else disempowered by that system gains a future.

and anyways, the in-between ones and the Others and other-than-humans among us know how to live without a future.

we have been through despair while they are digging their heels on the way into her inevitable vortex.



when we lost the thread of our futures, we wander with the more-than-human world, with the land.

Then we remember that there are billions of futures in this world.

And only a tiny sliver of them are human.

Maybe that’s what they are scared of.



'SOME SECONDS OF LIFE'

At the point that you realize that the “scum”, the suicidals and the murdered ones of this world are the most alive and vibrant figures of it, that’s also the point that you understand this world’s value structure and its structural violence. We’ve been destroyed many times by the coldness in the eyes of the people around, we’ve been destroyed slowly and brutally while experiencing everyday death.

From the dead time of wage labour, the sucking of every vitality by the automation of production, the freezing passionless gazes in pain, from miserable survival, the heart-breaking encounter of the unknown in the mirror, to our transformation into information quantum for modern biotechnology, to the psychological depression and the sadness that totally locks the windows of pleasure, of play, of genuine social interaction. A whole authoritarian complex is created, reproducing death, reproducing the authority of the economy, of the state, patriarchy, the nation, reproducing the values of submission, of self-enclosure, of social elevation, of producing normativities and stigmas.

During the early hours of Tuesday 6th of November [2018], we attacked by hit-’n-run the Postal Savings Bank of Eurobank, on Afxentiou street in Ilisia [Athens, Greece], destroying the cameras, breaking all of the windows and the ATM.

Also, during the early hours of Sunday 11th of November, we attacked by hit-’n-run a jewelry shop in Kolonaki [also in Athens], at the corner of Skoufa and Massalias street, breaking the windows and the entrance of the store.

All these gems and gold jewelry (that were not meant for any of us) got exposed to the night of the city center. They reminded us of the exposure we feel when we walk alone in the street; they reminded us of the exposure that each one of us feels towards the social do’s and don’ts. This is for all of you – fathers, bosses, pimps, Greek patriots, and those of your people. We collected our pain, our suppression, our anger, our whining, our sex drive, and here we are; we lashed out. And day by day we discover new ways to act – it emerged as a necessity. **If only time was always so insignificant yet at the same time extremely important as it was during the moment in which the windows of the bank were harmoniously and chaotically broken. We synchronized together, for each other, to steal back some seconds of life.** Let’s take back our fun – even for a little bit – for those hands that were vigorously laid on us, for those

stares that still hunt us, for those university desks and the labour-hours that suck us

empty, for these skirts that we would like to wear but we never dared to, for our perverted thoughts, for our deferred desires, for our unexpressed values.

We repeatedly live in the Groundhog Day, in the disgusting smell of the metropolitan gutter that sucks us in and throws us out like machines, as performances of those roles that were inflicted on us from the day we were born. And, according to ethical norms, we chose total submission to the aggressive barking of the dominant of this world; with some exceptions, whose choices were met with suppression, violence and death. As a point of resurgence of the revolutionary flame, as a point of reenforcement of the anti-authoritarian struggle, we would like to mention some fallen ones of the social war, dedicating to them the above lines and the present action. **Not to honour them as holy totems, as untouchable memories, only as historical semiology, but as lively war cries, as detonators of social and personal controversy, as points of emergence and expansion of insurrectional consciousness, as starting point of the creation and bonding of relations, and also as production of radical forms and contents.**

– Alexis Grigoropoulos, who fell dead by a cop’s bullet in Exarchia, on the 6th of December 2008 [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg17*].

– Sebastian Oversluij, who fell dead by security guard’s bullets during a robbery of a bank in Chile, on the 11th of December 2013 [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg26*].

– Zack Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh, lynched to death by a crowd of bosses, Greek homeowners and cops, on the 21st of September 2018 [ed. – *a trans drag-queen, part of the struggle for queer liberation in their circles, who was brutally murdered while robbing another Athens jewelry shop at midday*].

– Mikhail Zhlobitskiy, who ended his life in a bombing attack in the Secret Agencies of Russia (FSB), on the 31st of October 2018 [ed. – *breaking the silence over torture of his imprisoned anarchist comrades at the time by the FSB*].

Ps: Comrade Dimitris,¹ have a nice journey. You will live forever in our struggles.

1 ed. – Dimitris Armakolas; anarchist fatally electrocuted in late 2018 while trying to hoist a banner from a pylon in Athens in solidarity with Marios Seisidis shortly before Marios trial there, also known for his queer solidarity with Zackie Oh. Marios was underground for 11 years accused of bank robbery, was captured in 2017 and given 35 years.

“IT WAS WARTIME”

– *eco-anarchist struggle against Nestle’s water-grabbing & state-sanctioned hit squads in Mexico*

This interview was conducted more than two years ago from when it will be read. The delay in publication has more to do with the appropriate publication outlet than security or, more so, concerns for providing feedback on how an action group was “effectively halted.” The proliferation and intensification of violence in Mexico against anarchists, and especially organized women, has only increased since this interview.

The actions and concerns animating this interview are fueled by the acknowledgment that the world’s capital can appropriate territory anywhere, on top of not only the water, hills and jungles, but also discipline and absorb the people of the region as an almost-free labor. The Mexican government thus articulates the art of violence which has only been on the rise since 2011, where subjugating the environments has become a prerequisite to break local inhabitants and to establish networks of profit. The Mexican government articulates its own version of the “Shock Doctrine.” Meanwhile, the people from across the different territories saw this militarization and ecocide demanded a reply. Some people (named “indigenous” by the state) who generally view industrial development as the continuation of White invasion, which is a war shared by many anarchistic beings always watchful of attempts to build walls around them. The following shares experiences for this struggle, from this war.



When the middle-term Federal elections were coming up in June 2015, some Indigenous communities – well, let us say communities that are against development projects – these

communities are the only communities that are not peddling the same official discourse. Because all of the people and organizations that are carrying the flag of struggle...they have the same discourse as the enemy, but with makeup and dressed up as resistance such as ‘Energy for Everybody’¹ and Human Rights – it’s the same shit. So the only people that have a discourse against this, are organizing and picking up weapons against this discourse of [capitalist] progress are Indigenous communities. One of the concerns that we had as anarchists here was that all those communities had autonomous initiatives or self-determination projects and that they were going to be hit by the machinery of the state if they were not helped in some way. It was declared illegal to try to convince someone not to vote or participate in elections in Mexico that June.

Q: So Peña Nieto made it illegal.

Yes, not to participate in elections.

So all of these communities were boycotting elections in their territories, they were all doing something that was declared illegal by the government. And this is the reason why some anarchists thought that they could aid them somehow by creating noise and disruption in some other places during the elections periods so those communities would not be the sole target of the media being labeled as ‘opponents of



08.03.21: Palacio Nacional (seat of the federal executive and official residence of the President of Mexico) attacked during rage against the country’s ongoing crisis of femicidal violence which has sparked increasing waves of riots and occupations in recent years; the same day multiple other Mexican cities saw attacks from within the demonstrations on police, public buildings and also on churches, as was additionally the case in the Colombian capital Bogotá

1 See un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/energy/

democracy' or being targeted by soldiers or armed forces to harass them. So many anarchists thought, if there was noise and disruption made somewhere else they would draw the fire that way and away from people who had autonomous projects.

Q: Wait, so what you are telling me is that the idea for the declared Black June that year [ed. – anarchist call for actions all month] was actually based on this idea of indigenous solidarity to protect the autonomous communities fighting?

Yes, that was one of the main ideas. I talked to the people that called for the Black June and we were discussing this. That is why many of the things written for it and various actions² had references to communities that were fighting for self-determination in the names of their environments like Cherán in Michoacán,³ the Yaquis⁴ and the fruit pickers of Baja California⁵ where the big strike happened, it was pretty big. The police who were sent to pacify them were using live ammunition, they were not using rubber bullets, they were using 12 gauge shotguns and AR-15s. All of those workers are Indigenous and many of them....

As you will remember on June 1st there were many actions taking place everywhere. And in Xalapa [Veracruz] one of the main things was the water basin (*Cuenca*), because it was one of the main water sources and Nestle had the plans to build a dam there and promoting deforestation for cattle grazing. You know they are Nestle: Nestle was using The Zetas, as a name (and I see it as a name because it is not a real organization any more; the Cartels in Mexico are just random names from a list that represent different protocols that they are running and they could put any name to it, but that protocol has many levels of operation and organization)⁶ to break the social fibers, to control every little corner form of organization that might escape the state. People that do not actually threaten the state, they don't, but their organization naturally encrypts and transports information that escapes the grid of the state. So to prevent that it uses the Cartel as a protocol to get into all of those spaces, and with Nestle it was pretty clear. Nestle employed these

2 es-contrainfo.espiv.net/2015/06/03/mexico-a-provocar-el-junio-negro/

3 pvangels.com/news-mexico/5021/self-determination-and-self-defense-in-cheran-michoacan

4 mexicovoices.blogspot.com/2015/03/sonora-mexico-new-war-against-yaquis.html

5 theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/25/mexico-baja-california-farm-workers-strike

6 For a deeper conversation on this see Oswaldo Zavala's (2018) *Los cárteles no existen: Narcotráfico y cultura en México*.

protocols for protecting their investments and began searching for actors that could be a threat to their investments. This was also what happened in Bolivia [Cochabamba Water War]⁷ with the water and the loss of investment would not happen again. That was a lot of money to lose, so they construct a map of actors and locate the groups that are opposing them.

The Groups that were making the most noise about Nestle were groups in the University. So they were targeted; not necessarily because they were a threat to the state, but because they were a threat to the project investments.

Q: And therefore could be a potential threat if they did not stop them there.

Because water is a primary resource, it's a primary resource for war right now. All the governments have announced this.

Q: According to counterinsurgency, the logic is that they see insurgency in three phases: preparation, non-violent and insurrection. It sounds like this is going towards a typical pre-emptive, kind of preparatory period counterinsurgency approach.

Exactly... They used the Zetas and an organization of highly trained military-policemen with a fascist name, the Civil Guard (*Guardia Civil*). I saw them, they stopped me in the street. They were like the Marines (*Marina/Navy*) – they were dressed like Marines, they were as tall as Marines because they were from the Northern part of the country (where there are tall Mexicans), they were equipped like Marines. They were dressed like Marines, but called the Civil Guard and the first municipality where they were tested out was in Coatepec, which is the same municipal where Nestle has its [coffee] facility.⁸

Q: This is in the state of Veracruz?

Yes, it's in the state of Veracruz. So that is where Nestle has its facility and it's situated next to a river and it's taking tons and tons of water and they want to build a dam ten minutes away, half an hour away and they want to flood many towns.

Q: Ouuuffff.

Nestle has its bottling facility there. And in Coatepec and San Pedro in Monterrey, where there are all the

7 The Cochabamba Water War was a series of protests that took place in Cochabamba, Bolivia's fourth largest city, between December 1999 and April 2000 in response to the privatization of the city's municipal water supply company SEMAPA.

8 enlaceveracruz212.com.mx/nota.php?id=77839

corporate headquarters, those were the two municipalities where the Civil Guard were tested out.

Q: So in Monterrey and Veracruz...

San Pedro also has big neighborhood with a lot of gangs and all the headquarters of the companies: Bancomer, HSBC, City Bank.... The thing was water, because Coca Cola, Nestle and Odebrecht, the Brazilian giant, those three bought the concession for that whole basin and it is one of the last mountain rainforest environments. So that is there where Nestle, Coca Cola and Odebrecht....

Organizing State Extra-judicial Repression

In May, 2015 we were training, doing martial arts with the *compas*,⁹ and a guy that was working out with us warned us that he was training in a gym, a Muay Thai Dojo, and a huge cop approached him, razor-shaved head. The cop complemented them on their fighting and told them: "There is a job offering for people like you, who are very good at martial arts. The job is about protection, it's about forming a security group to protect businessmen and politicians, it's a security group for them, it's to give them protection."

So, this guy first thought it would be a body guard thing because of offering security for businessmen, as you could imagine, but the guy continued to talk and told them: "One of the first things the group is going to do is to take out a group that is led by the *Bore*." So that was going to be the first task of this group that he was invited into.

Q: So what is this group they are targeting? Is it some type of university group, non-profit or some type of leftist or even anarchist group?

"I do not know if you have seen them," the guy told them, "but you might have seen them around the city. They are always protesting in the Universities, making disturbances and making noise about things. So if you are interested, it is with the police forces, but you will not have a uniform, you will not be a policeman," he told them, "but the job is with the police force. They work side by side, but you will not be police officers. You will be a new group, but you will not have formal recognition."

Q: So ultimately they are talking about forming an extra-judicial hit squad?

Yes. *[awkward laughter]* And this guy was eighteen years old. While this policeman was pretty tall, like a

⁹ *Compas* is short for *compañeros* that translates directly into companions [*ed. – though not with the same meaning as the English; see 23 Theses Concerning Revolt*].

1.93 meters.

Q: Let me make sure I am hearing this right. So you have a friend training in a Muay Thai Dojo and this tall police captain type guy is coming in to recruit people out of the Dojo?

Yes, and he told them he is going to many gyms and looking at the fighters, looking at who has talent and he is hand picking them, he told them. And that was in May 2015.

Q: Before we go on, I am familiar with the *Bore*, but what is this group he targeting, who are they going after?

They are going after mostly university students or people who graduated university recently.

Q: Okay, I will quit fucking around. If whom I think the *Bore* is, they are not someone necessarily associated with a group. I believe that their politics is about not having a group necessarily or an organization. The *Bore* is an anarchist, so this cop is blatantly coming into gyms and trying to recruit fighters for an extra-judicial hit squad to go after anarchists. Is that what is going on?

Yes, it is.

Q: Is there any specific reference for going after anarchists?

Well, he did not mention the word anarchist to him when he approached him at the Dojo. He just mentioned it was a group of youngsters who make noise and who protest. He did not use the term, but yes that group was mostly comprised of anarchists and it wasn't really one group, it was informal.

Q: The fact is it was a bunch of people who wore similar clothes and would protest and are willing to vandalize property or break shit and tear things down.

Exactly, and paint and redecorate the city. They did lots of city redecoration, yes.

Q: This is crazy, this a bit odd to me that he would come in and even mention the *Bore*, because the *Bore* is a very kind and normal fellow. How we are talking about them right now in this conversation is already positioning him as some type of mastermind, with some evil anarchist conspiracy or really some type of vandal conspiracy – this is fucking crazy.

And he used the name of the *Bore*, they did not use his nickname. He used his first name.

Q: Do you think they had his last name?

Yes.

So that was in May and on June 1st the Black June took hold all around the country. On June 5th, many of the students who were celebrating a birthday party one block from the Humanities Faculty at the University [of Xalapa], they were attacked by a group that fits the

description that this guy mentioned. Because there were people wearing masks or wearing black hoods, similar to what the anarchists wear, but the main person, who was in front, had a mask of a clown.

Q: The extra-judicial group that was attacking them?

Yeah, and they tore down the door and they attacked them with machetes and sticks with nails.

Q: Holy fuck... So what happened? They raided it with a clown mask, baseball bats with nails coming out of it, what happened?

They beat them.

Q: Like broken bones and bloody?

Yes... machetes.

Q: Did people lose limbs or [need] stitches?

Stitches, a lot of stitches and gouges..... Yeah they attacked a mixed group of men, women, youth and old. There was even an old guy passing and walking in front of the house when the group attacked the birthday party and they saw him, and because he was a witness, they pulled him in the house and they beat him as well even though he was an elder who had nothing to do with the scene. That scene and that operation was a protocol the Mexican Government calls *mando único* (single command),¹⁰ which combines all levels of the security forces under one central jurisdiction for specific actions so you have all sorts of people interacting in state actions.

Q: In the military they call it "unified action"¹¹

¹⁰ news.vice.com/en_us/article/j59a8x/mexicos-efforts-to-tackle-police-corruption-are-failing

¹¹ FM3-24. (2014) *Insurgencias and Countering*



The banner reads; "OUR DREAMS DON'T FIT IN THEIR BALLOT BOXES... BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS ANARCHIST PRISONERS TO THE STREETS FOR AUTONOMY FOR THE PEOPLES AND BARRIOS!!! FOR A BLACK JUNE"

were they have all the different institutions, and all the different security agencies working together.

This eliminates jurisdiction and it was the same protocol that killed the Ayotzinapa 43 [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg61*]. It was a *mando único* operation. So they [the public] always says: 'Was it the police, was it the military, was it the Narco, who was it?' It was a combined action of all the forces, of all of them. And that was the same protocol that was operating that night when that group attacked

the birthday party full of people who you could roughly identify as being sympathetic to anarchists.

Q: Ahhh, this was a way to try and take away their support base.

Yes, and some of those people at the birthday were accused of being anarchists. This happened the June 5th, 2015, so on the 7th there was election day. There was a big boycott of the elections, countrywide.

Also there was a girl, she was at the party and after the group left, she came in running and was screaming how it was terrible and that she went for help and that she could not find anybody... but she was an undercover agent and she was training that same day when that *compa* told us that there was a group recruiting and she heard that guy talk to us about that group, she was there training because she was an undercover agent. So she knew, so the security forces knew that the anarchists were aware that the group was being formed to go after them, because the girl heard the warning and she was an undercover cop. On the day of the party, she was inviting everyone there, saying: "Hey, you have to come, you have to come."

Q: So she organized the birthday party?

No, but once she saw it she used it as an opportunity to set up the trap.

Q: What's this woman's name?

Soledad.

Q: Is that her real name, the name she went by or the code name you are giving here?

Insurgencias. Available at fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf

I think it's her real name, I do not remember her last name. And she was a pedagogy student.

Q: Is she still in Xalapa or did she move?

The last time they saw her it was at the carnival of Veracruz and she was wearing a police officer uniform and she was one of the security personnel at the carnival. People took pictures of her with a police uniform on. My guess is, she did not have that uniform when she was undercover and that she won that uniform by what she did, that is what I believe and that effectively helped out Nestle because the group of people making noise about it was neutralized.¹²

Journalist Murders & 2016 Oaxaca Insurrection

That girl that was murdered in Mexico City, Nadia Vera. She was murdered in the Navarte with a journalist with a photographer from *Processo* [ed. – *Leftist news magazine of Mexico*]. It was big news because it was a downtown neighborhood and they were executed along with a Colombian girl. That Nadia girl, she had a tattoo on her arm with a phrase from Ricardo Flores Magon, the anarchist. So she was an anarchist and that photograph revealed a lot of stuff about the government and did coverage for the Black Bloc when they were active.

Q: In 2013?

In 2014, 2013, 2015...

Q: When things were kicking off strong here?

Yes. His pictures never revealed the faces.

Q: He took a photos at respectful angles?

His photos would reveal the police violence as opposed to the vandalism of the Black Bloc and he was executed, I believe it was the 31st of July or August 1st of 2015. It was Black June, June 5th when the group was assaulted, the elections, and then a month later an anarchist and sympathetic journalist were executed in Mexico City. Then the governor of Xalapa (Eduardo Jolate) blamed it on the anarchists, he said, "Robin Espinoza had an argument with the "hooded figures" (*acapuchados*) and that was the day he left Xalapa and he went to Mexico City, so his problem is not with the

12 ed. – In June 2020, during riots in Mexican cities after killings by police there (and also in solidarity with the concurrent anti-police and anti-racist insurrection north of the border; see **Siege of the Third Precinct**), the house this infiltrator organised the ambush in was dealt an incendiary barrage during the chaos, plus anti-police tags.

government officials, but with hooded figures so go ask them about their murder." So he blamed it on hooded figures, implying anarchists.

Q: So the journalist killed in Mexico City worked in Veracruz?

Yes, because he fled Xalapa because he knew the government was after him. And that is why they got him, because he activated all the security protocols for the journalist that the government setup, but those protocols are also for Human Rights defenders. They put security on you, and security always has to do with control, about you letting them know and so they can help care. He filled out all of the forms, and he did the whole procedure for journalists.

Q: He got the button you press on your cell phone?

Yes, he got all of that and he was executed days after that. So it was rough times as you can see. People were being killed, groups were being attacked at birthday parties, boycotts were happening and anarchist were being executed outside community radios in Oaxaca.

Q: Yes, in Chiapas, Guerro, Oaxaca, Michoacán and Veracruz.

Yes, and so that happened and the police tested its new force *Gendarmería Nacional*¹³ was tested out on that day, it was like their first action day. It was a huge day because the national forces were overwhelmed, there were not enough police in the country to suffocate the resistance against the elections. They were overwhelmed and they lost in many places around Oaxaca and Guerro, they lost 6-8 hour long battles with big truck trailers burnt being used as barricades by the people in those towns boycotting those elections.

Q: Yes, I think I saw some run their car into a line of police.

Yes, so this happened two days after the hit squad attacked. This move, and what resulted from, effectively halted the group that was actively doing something about Nestle. The other group that remained and took over were the Reds – the Marxist-Leninists. Who consider this a victory... they acknowledged that the anarchists did the hard work, therefore they got the biggest blow, but then they took over just like in the Russian Revolution.

Q: And in Spain.

Yes, and that is what they are boasting about right

13 Founded August 22, 2014

now. So that happened, then one year later in the summer of 2016, ten years after the Oaxaca Commune¹⁴ that was on June 14th. Then on June 16th, 2016 Oaxaca was invaded by the Gendarmería and the police to break the blockade of the teachers. While I was in a taxi in Oaxaca, I heard a woman talking with the taxi driver, and they were saying that “It is pretty clear that there is going to be fight with the Federal forces, any day soon.” None of them were teachers, but they said:

Well let’s be honest about it, the teachers are the only organized group doing something about all the bullshit that the government is doing. If we think about it really, their struggle is our struggle because if they lose right now the gap is going to close and the government is going to do whatever they please, so we have to help out the teachers to stop this gap from closing, so we have a bigger window of action.

Q: They are talking about control.

Yes... so they all agreed and none of them were teachers, you could say they were “normal people,” but they all agreed that the state would have more control over their lives if they did not help the teachers win that battle. So when the Federal forces came on the 16th it was violent.¹⁵ It was not like ten years before that, because ten years back, during the last days of the Commune the police used helicopters with gas and armored transport (*tanquetas*), as well as live ammunition. While in 2016, the whole thing began with the helicopters raining down tear gas, and after a few clashes live ammunition was being used on both sides. The level of violence was the highest that had been seen in many, many, many years. The teachers ran at the first sign of conflict, but many Oaxacan people, many natives from the Mixteca region (where Nochixtlán, the town where the combat began), and all of that, who were pretty upset that there were armed forces marching around their towns, going after whoever. They were annoyed that armed forces were marching around shooting people. So they took out their guns, small caliber – hunting rifles – that are legal to have for a farmer (*campesino*), and started hunting the armed forces in their towns from corners, underneath cars or on rooftops. Because the armed forces have high caliber weapons they made a lot of noise when they shot,

14 ed. – Sparked by a teacher's strike before generalising, leading to authorities being ejected wholesale from the capital: the state was declared “ungovernable” by the national government, and only crushed after many weeks of self-organisation and battles with government forces.

15 telesurtv.net/news/8-muertos-22-desaparecidos-y-decenas-de-heridos-en-Oaxaca-20160620-0014.html

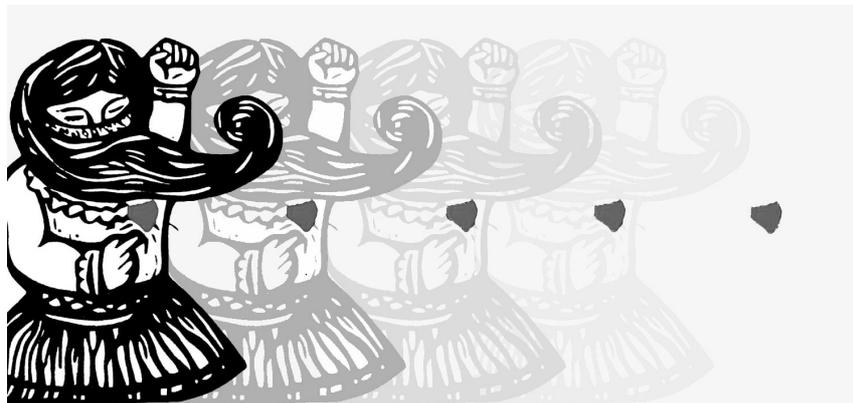
but low caliber does not make much noise. So they were not able to hear where they were being shot from and they sustained heavy, heavy, heavy losses.

Q: How many people do you think were shot, wounded or killed?

On the day?

Q: In the 2016 insurrection.

Counting both sides?



Q: No, when you say the indigenous were hunting military forces, how many do you think were wounded on that side?

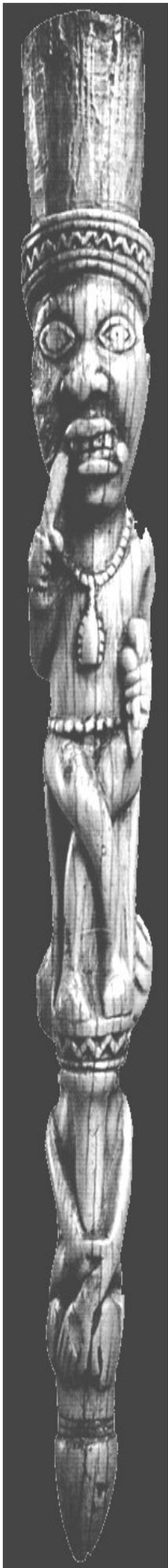
Uhhh, I would say somewhere between 30-50 policemen died¹⁶ because one thing that also happened was that once they were sustaining heavy losses they took over and occupied all the public hospitals in Oaxaca. They kicked out all the doctors and the nurses and brought in their own military doctors and nurses and the police and the military took over the hospitals and was arresting any wounded person that would go to a hospital and they were only accepting wounded police officers as patients. And they took over many hospitals and filled them with wounded police officers, what does this tell you about their losses? They were filling up hospitals and kicking out patients. Normal people were kicked out to give their beds to police officers.

Q: This could be a way for the state to invoke collective punishment against the region, in hopes making people turn on each other, to divide the people in those areas.

Also many of the doctors that were angry about it, they hijacked their ambulances and they went to the other side and gave medical services to the people who were fighting the police.

Q: Do not answer anything you feel

16 cnn.com/2016/06/20/americas/oaxaca-mexico-clashes/index.html



uncomfortable with, but where were you, how do you know this?

I was in a village and in that village, the nearest battle against the police happened a few kilometers away....

Q: This was 2016, and so this was again against elections?

There was discontent about politics in general, but the main reason was the Education Reform Act. They had blockades all over the country, but on those blockades normal people were able to pass, the only thing that was being stopped were commercial trucks. So bus passengers could pass.

Q: But commercial ones not?

Not commercial ones.

Q: Like every Oaxacan road blockade.

And that was 2016 and the Zapatistas [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg39*] were going to have an event, of art – it was called Comparte – and they cancelled it. Then they donated tons of native corn and beans.... The Zapatistas are one of the few peoples that have the native corn to give as a gift. While there are over fifty varieties in Mexico, the majority of the communities do not have enough corn for their whole diet and it is necessary to mix their diets with corn that the government gives them through social programs or the Secretariat of Social Development (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Social*), or SEDESOL. It is genetically modified hybrid male and people have to mix it into their diets, but the Zapatista's, even though the weather there is pretty harsh, they have enough for them and enough to give out.

Q: They have a surplus.

They have a surplus of native corn and they have many varieties in

those mountains, they have many colors of corn. They are like bees that are keeping alive the genetic diversity of all of these plants. It is not just corn, it's an ecosystem that they make with a log of fungi and a lot of things interacting there. They had a surplus in 2016 and I know I know people who were in the central valley fighting and I heard firsthand accounts from many of the anarchists who were involved in fighting on the frontlines and, even though I talked with them at different times, their stories match about the level of violence, the level of wounded cops.

Q: During the time of the uprising in the Central Valley, there was also an anarchist murdered, Salvador Olmos García,¹⁷ in one of the villages.

In that village there was an eight-hour battle where the town first defeated the Federal Police and they retreated, then came in the Gendarmería, they were defeated and retreated. Then came in the army and the soldiers approached the barricade at the entrance of the town and they told them that they came to negotiate prisoners.

Q: Because they took police and Gendarmería prisoner?

Yes, and the military acted as an intermediary to exchange the prisoners. The police handed over villagers that were captured and the villagers handed over their people. It is not a village, it's a city, Huajuapán de León, it's the main artery... it's the *camino real* which the Spanish used [*ed. – during initial colonisation*] to move resources on to the capital. It's the old road. The military is being used to act as an intermediate between civilians and Federal forces... you see this is a balancing act. There are tractor-trailers blocking the highway on fire and the military are not intending to enter the town, instead acting as a neutral intermediary force and that is how the people view them as they were not engaged in combat with them. If the soldiers had intended to enter by force, they would have also been met with resistance and all of this was against the education reform.

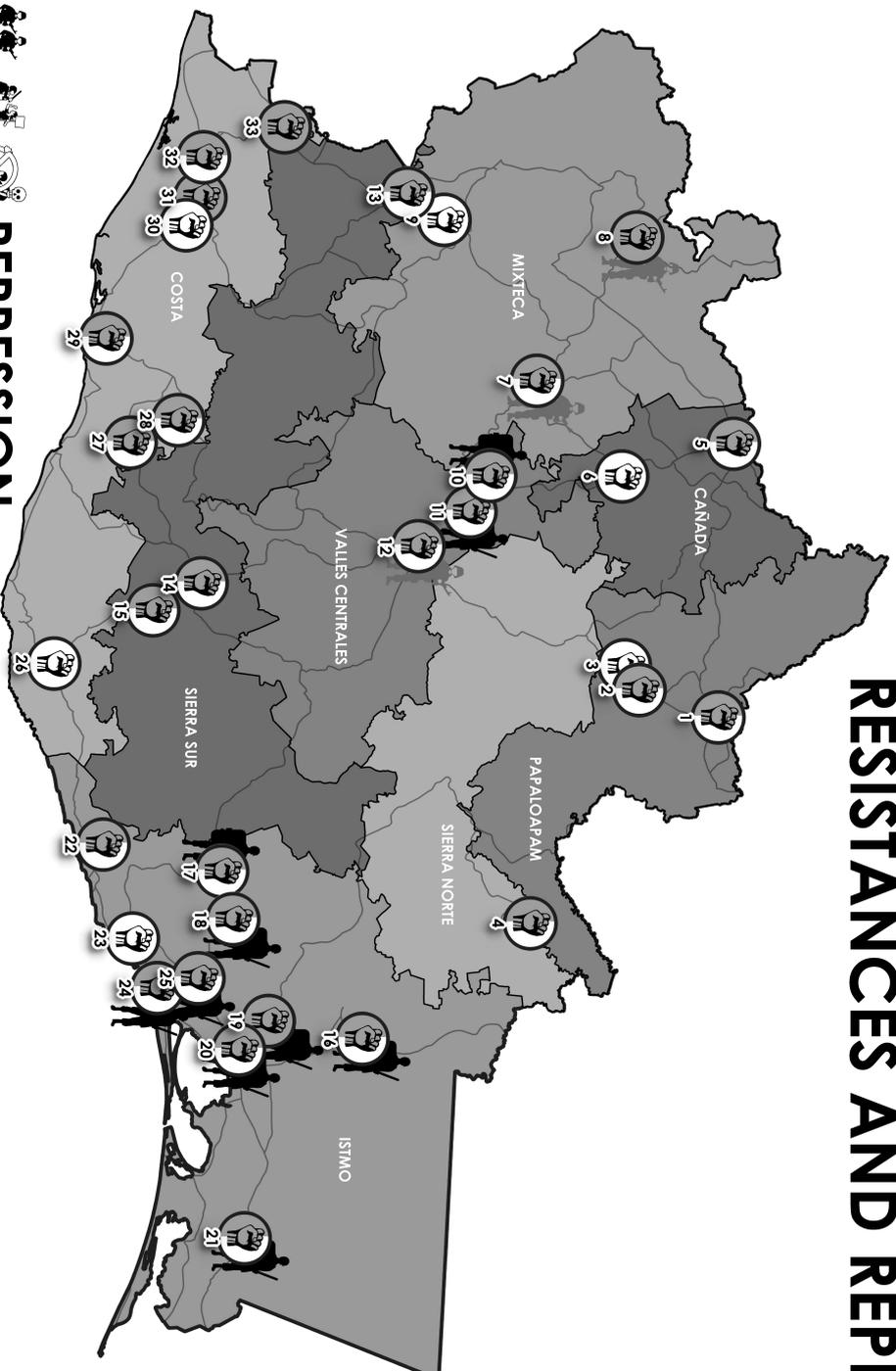
Q: Am I sensing that you are frustrated that this barricade fell because people started negotiating with the military?

Not necessarily, because I think it served its purpose. Yes, the counterinsurgency afterwards was terrible, but I do not think it would have been possible to sustain that barricade as an autonomous zone forever.

¹⁷ itsgoingdown.org/assassination-anarchist-salvador-olmos-goes-court/

RESISTANCES AND REPRESSION IN OAXACA:

JUNE 2016



Legend

- Roadblock during the week before June 19
- Roadblock during the week after June 19
- Roadblock during both weeks
- Roadblock that faced repression
- Roadblock that faced repression including killings

Roadblocks by Region

- PAPALOAPAM**
- Tuxtepec
 - Vega del Sol
 - Paraje la Bocca, Valle Nacional
 - María Lombardo de Caso, puente carrizal
- SIERRA NORTE**
- Teotitlán de Flores Magón
 - Tomeilín
 - Nochixtlán
 - Huajuapán de León
 - San Andrés Chicahuaxtla
- CANADA**
- San José del Pacífico
- SIERRA SUR**
- San Francisco Teixitihuaca
 - Huizto
 - Oaxaca de Juárez (IEEPO, Zocola, Hacienda Blanca)
 - Putla de Guerrero (3 bloques)
 - Milchutlán, población Agua del Sol
- SIERRA CENTRALES**
- San Francisco Teixitihuaca
 - Huizto
 - Oaxaca de Juárez (IEEPO, Zocola, Hacienda Blanca)
 - Putla de Guerrero (3 bloques)
 - Milchutlán, población Agua del Sol
 - San José del Pacífico
 - Mofitas Romero
 - Magdalena Tequisitlán
 - Jidapa del Marqués
 - Ciudad Xitlapepec
 - Juchitán
 - Zanatepec
 - Sta. María Huamelula
 - Morro Mazatlán
 - Salina Cruz
 - Tehuantepec (varios bloques)
- COSTA**
- Huahuatlán
 - San Gabriel Mixtepec
 - Santa Catarina Juquila, localidad de San Lucas Cerro del Valirio
 - Río Grande, Tlaxiahuatlán
 - Santiago Jamiltepec
 - San Andrés Huixtlipepec
 - Pinotepa Nacional
 - San Juan Cocahuatlepec

REPRESSION

Oaxaca State Institute of Public Education (IEEPO): On the afternoon of June 11, various roadblocks were erected in three strategic points of Oaxaca including the Istmus of Tehuantepec, Tuxtepec, and in the capital city outside of the Oaxaca State Institute of Public Education (IEEPO) offer the arrest of Francisco Villalobos Ricárdez and Rubén Núñez Gines, leaders of Section 22 of the CNTIE (the teachers' union). At nightfall, federal forces arrived and evicted dozens of the IEEPO encampment by throwing tear gas grenades and beating them.

Failed Attempts to Displace Roadblocks: (Roadblocks 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25): Members of the federal police, state police, gendarmes and/or the army attempted to clear the roadblocks using tear gas and rubber bullets. Several times they enlisted the help of helicopters. When the repressive forces withdrew, the roadblocks were reinstalled.

Nochixtlán: On June 19th, a violent operation headed by members of the federal police, state police, and the gendarmes repressed the roadblock using helicopters, tear gas, rubber bullets, and high-powered fire arms. 11 people were killed by state forces: Andrés Aguilár Sanabria, Raúl Jiménez Santiago, Anselmo Cruz Aquino, Jesús Cadena Sánchez Meza, Oscar Nicolás Santiago, Idrain Jiménez Santiago, Omar González Santiago, Antonio Pérez García, Oscar Ramírez Aguilár, Silverio Chávez Sosá y César Hernández Santiago. Seven people are reported missing: Angel Santiago, Hernández Juan Valasco Méndez, Daniel Medina Mora, Carillo, Gustavo Moreno Bravo, Innocente Pincho y Alejandro N. 27 people were arbitrarily detained, 18 of whom were attending a funeral. All were finally released on June 21. Hundreds of people were injured.

Hacienda Blanca and Viguera (Oaxaca): After the attack in Nochixtlán, in Hacienda Blanca helicopters launched tear gas grenades and flew overhead for several hours. On the ground, members of the federal and state police also arrived to repress the roadblock, shooting with fire arms. Azrael Galán Mendoza, an 18 year old young mechanic, was killed by a bullet from the Federal Police near the crossing with Viguera.

Huizto: On the same day, June 19, at least 10 barricades were built at this point where the repression occurred after the attacks in Nochixtlán.

Huajuapán de León: In the middle of the night on June 26, municipal police killed Salvador Olmo García "The Lawyer", a young libertarian and anarcho-punk, community based communicator, musician, and defender of the Mixtec culture. He was a broadcaster for the community radio station Tuun Nluu Say- the Word of the People of the Rain, the station that was critical to informing the community during the massacre in Nochixtlán on June 19.

Sources: Federal Police Twitter account, Local Press, and Free Media Icons: ICONOCLASISTAS.

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Oaxaca Libre

Sin Justicia,
No Hay Paz



Q: Totally.

I think the barricade served its purpose and the fact that there was a negotiations... I do not see it badly in those terms, there was no re-election.

Q: No, no, the only reason why I ask is I thought I heard that. I know that in my head, if you can make it to that point when the military is negotiating hostage exchanges then that is the time when people are normally like: "Okay, it is not going to be much longer before the tanks roll in, let's try to ride this out." Everyone has the state in their mind, they know what is going on. There is this: "fuck you we will fight to the death," but once the adrenaline exhaustion sets in, after six hours of fighting, then everyone is like, "holy shit, we made it this far... fuck!" And then the military comes, and people realize this is the time... pfff. Real quick, in that town we were talking about there was an anarchist who was killed (Salvador Olmos García) and the way I heard it, it was an extra-judicial unit that came in and disappeared him.

It was the Ministerial Police (*Polícia Ministerial*).

Q: And did this happen after the barricade for retribution?

He was more. He was a punk. He had a punk ideology, but was one of those punks who really believed in self-organization (*autogestión*) and he had his own place in the market and was famous in the market because he did not seek profit. What I mean is that he got his living out of selling fruit, but he would also help the people in the market and was organizing people, but like being with them and living with them. Many people in Oaxaca knew him because he was always helping others, if there was like Tekio [*ed. – volunteer forestry service*] or community work to do he would go do it and help. He was also a voice on the community radio, so he was on the radio when he saw movement and the Federal Investigation Police. People said that there were cars of the ministerial police around and he went to go help his friends at the radio station, but he never made it there. He walked into their trap and they did an execution.

Q: Why do you think they went after him?

I am not from that village, I am not sure, but it was murky times and there was a lot of violence going on – it was wartime.

HONG KONG: ITS RELEVANCE TO THE REST OF US...

...its resistance to the science & technology of social control



[*ed. – The following takes off from developments in social struggles that have rocked Hong Kong, the South Asian former UK island-colony (the last sizable one to be relinquished by the British crown) where British police commanders experienced in riot control were still operating to direct local forces during the revolts of 2019 that this article refers to; and that year the British state invited a Hong Kong delegation to a London arms fair even when they had supposedly halted exports of tear-gas used to quell the rioting...*

When Hong Kong was handed over in 1997 from UK rule to that of the so-called People's Republic of China (PRC) it was with special provisions supposedly to prevent the island's complete subsumption into the communist totalitarian state until fifty years later: provisions China has been constantly rolling back ever since. The recent social unrest in particular relates to the legal move to enable the extradition of Hong Kongers (including for 'political crimes' such as selling books banned in the rest of China to locals and visiting mainlanders) to the mainland penal system, while dissidents had already begun to be disappeared for several months at a time. Fears are that the island could be brought to heel by introduction of a similar regime to that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) operates in Xinjiang (which the West has finally 'noticed' now it's convenient to geopolitically...). Additional steam was added by street actions on the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 when student protesters demanding democratic reforms were killed in Beijing and around China by the so-called People's Liberation Army. Rioting was sustained and intense for months on end, including after the first wave of COVID-19 temporarily dampened things; the governing Legislative Council was suspended at some points of 2019 due to level of disruption (and being invaded and totally trashed), and general strike has been carried out.

This piece focuses on an aspect normally missed in how many here in the West talked about it (i.e., in terms of national sovereignty) and, unlike the worst of current anarchists, this author takes a hard stance against the

rhetoric of democracy that the Hong Kong (HK) movement has too-often espoused. The overwhelmingly-young demonstrators (many being 16-21 years old) have consistently identified, avoided and/or destroyed the infamous surveillance architecture of the regime. The following report, after demonstrators used a portable angle grinder to fell a surveillance tower in August 2019, gives an example of their tactics: “they dismantled the tower, and quickly examined the parts inside. After confirming that the towers were constructed using the same components as the surveillance systems in Xinjiang, more than twenty towers were attacked that day. That evening, we asked an older comrade what he thought about the action: “This was the smartest thing people could have done. The government said they were not going to be used for facial recognition. The only way to verify that is to tear the thing down.” The next day, the company that supplied the parts for the towers announced it was canceling its contract to install an additional 350 of the same “smart lamp posts” [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg31**] throughout the city” (‘Summer in Smoke: Report from the World’s Biggest Black Block’). Also see **The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis** for other influential HK protest innovations .

What follows is only one aspect of the street movement, and is itself only one aspect of the surveillance nightmare that today’s rebels face, in London as much as Hong Kong, San Francisco as much as Berlin. (Two years after it was written, it is of course ironic in the (widely-discredited) COVID app tracing age to read the part stating that “in the ‘democracies’ such crude coercion is not used to force smartphones onto people in the same way”: compared to much Orientalist hang-wringing about China today, this author at least emphasises that such technological intrusion is no exclusivity of the PRC.) Our task is to find the cracks in these innovations (which are sold as more effective than they often are; facial recognition for instance usually being easily foiled by wearing sunglasses, etc.) and overtake them, demolish them and lose the fear of their presence in our lives. The fighters (among them, anarchists) of Hong Kong, under one of the most punitive surveillance webs globally, are inspirational in this regard.]

The almost universally-held discourse that the movement in Hong Kong concerns only the people of Hong Kong, China and the Chinese diaspora conveniently ignores the essential: its more general implications for the rest of the masses of individuals throughout the world. Whilst factors specific to Hong Kong are the inevitable catalyst for this movement, implicitly central to it is a resistance to modern forms of science & technology in the service of intensified totalitarian social control – certainly *not* something that only concerns the Chinese.

The current opposition to Hong Kong’s proposed extradition law¹ (temporarily suspended [ed. – though

1 For details see this: qz.com/1636663/the-37-crimes-included-in-hong-kongs-proposed-extradition-law/. It’s worth pointing out that illegal extradition termed “Extraordinary Rendition” has long been used by “the free world”. And China already operates similar things in

superseded by a similar National Security Law]) is also an implicit opposition to the obvious intensification of totalitarian control that is central to China’s current method of maintaining class power, primarily involving the application of science to vastly intensify hierarchical power. An underlying thread running throughout this movement is a resistance to the development of technologically-equipped social control, though in a confused and contradictory manner. This is no tenuous link – opposition to the looming technologically-equipped terror is at the back of the minds of many of the protesters and is at the semi-conscious root of much of its motivation, even though this is not always clear or explicit. This is certainly implied by this report from June 14th: “...a recirculated South China Morning Post report from last December has sparked concern that a visit to Xinjiang [Muslim Uighur region where at least 10% of the population are in education camps] by Hong Kong anti-terror police, ostensibly to learn rapid incident response methods, may be a sign that HK authorities may have been importing ultra-repressive security measures from the region.” **And these fears are explicitly stated by some of those involved in the Hong Kong movement: “Hong Kong’s tech-savvy protesters are going digitally dark as they try to avoid surveillance and potential future prosecutions, disabling location tracking on their phones[...] Who knows if it would become like Xinjiang the day after tomorrow, because things can change so quickly”.**²

Taiwan [ed. – now unrecognised by many countries as distinct from China]. And not just there: “Kidnappings beyond its jurisdiction have brought the PRC no major negative consequences, opening the door to more cases like that of Gui Minhai (桂民海), the Swedish editor abducted in 2015 in Thailand.” The snatching of citizens of other putatively “sovereign” countries is something that the PRC has made a habit of for some time – it has arrogated to itself complete command over every individual of Chinese “nationality” that resides in China or anywhere else. The contentious law of extradition now being used to undermine the remaining bourgeois rights of HK civil society is merely the imprimatur of official “legality” by the local colonial office to sanitize an already routine arbitrary seizure of troublesome people at the will of the CCP. Even Australian kids – though not through extradition – are trapped within China with no complaint from the Australian state. And many Chinese Uighurs who have permanent residency in Australia are fearful of ‘rendition’ also. And here’s a report on a vile little shit who hoped to cash in on extraditing a Chinese dissident from US (impalement is too good for him: he’s beyond the pale): aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/elliott-broidy-plotted-force-chinese-dissident-nyt-180420121835645.html.

2 hongkongfp.com/2019/06/14/become-like-xinjiang-surveillance-savvy-hong-kong-protesters-go-digitally-dark/

One can see an aspect of this also in the use of umbrellas to hide from drones.³ Another has been the avoidance of electronically traceable railcards by those going to the demonstrations: “Many of the protesters ...took pains to keep from being photographed or digitally tracked. To go to and from the protests, many stood in lines to buy single-ride subway tickets instead of using their digital payment cards, which can be tracked...”⁴ And here.⁵ “Local Hong Kong residents almost never use these ticketing machines these days to buy single-journey tickets. For starters, everyone has a rechargeable smart card, called the Octopus card, that is widely used across the city to pay for everything from transport to meals and groceries. Purchasing a physical ticket not only takes time, it also costs more than the equivalent trip paid for with the Octopus card. **The protesters’ deliberate decision to use cash, despite its seeming inconvenience, also shows how increasingly cashless societies can present dire privacy concerns.**”



Road-blocking Hong Kong protest simultaneously deploys umbrellas upon drone arrival

- 3 It’s worth pointing out a development in drone technology that so far has not been used (as far as I know): “The drone features four high-powered gas propelled chambers, each of which is capable of firing 20 pellets per second. It is also capable of firing other similar-sized pellets, including paintballs and solid plastic balls with an ammunition capacity of 4,000 pellets. While the company has not disclosed the recipients of these mobile projectile dispensers, Desert Wolf’s managing director Hennie Kieser told the BBC that many of them are based in South Africa. “Some (are) mines in South Africa, some security companies in South Africa and outside South Africa, some police units outside South Africa, and a number of other industrial customers.” (siliconrepublic.com/digital-life/item/37317-airborne-riot-control-pepp?) ...but even drones are not immune from a crowd’s desire to enjoy themselves (more here: latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-kings-game-drone-no-owner-20140616-story.html) “After a light tap from an unidentified object on its left side, a black Kings T-shirt knocked the drone on the right and sent it careening down within arm’s reach of the fans. Video footage shows the drone getting pulled into the mass, where it was smashed to bits by a skateboard”. However, attacking drones or sheltering from them by using umbrellas necessitates that one recognises a drone when you see one. China can now get round this by using drones that look like doves for surveillance (and in France, the state is training eagles to bring down hostile drones).
- 4 nytimes.com/2019/06/13/world/asia/hong-kong-telegram-protests.html
- 5 chinadigitaltimes.net/2019/06/surveillance-fears-shadow-hong-kong-protests/

Nevertheless, many used the supposedly encrypted mobile chat app Telegram, oblivious to the fact that the state (both that of mainland China and Hong Kong) have long ago hacked this app.⁶ “Telegram is not more secure than Whatsapp. In many circumstances, it’s worse[...] its encryption

features, were highlighted by tech media as one of its big selling points. Despite its reputation, many conversations on Telegram are not end-to-end encrypted – in other words, not secure. And to make matters worse, the company has developed a reputation for problems with its technology that have led some users to have their information and messages exposed, in some cases to other users. **Over the past year, Global Voices has reported on multiple instances of Telegram users running into serious trouble with the app’s security.** Telegram users in Russia – some of them journalists and activists – have reported that their accounts were hacked. Another user in Ukraine reported receiving private group messages through her Telegram app for a group that she was not part of. And there has been concern in Iran about the company’s compliance with government requests for certain material – bots [ed. – accounts run by automated programs] mainly – to be blocked on the platform.”

An underlying fear of the movement in HK is the totalitarian nature of China and its use of surveillance technology to repress dissidence before it hits the streets, schools, universities or workplaces. **Such technology is already being used to a lesser degree in Hong Kong: people have been arrested merely for discussing organising the protests on their smartphones.**⁷ Surveillance technology is the constant fear – “Even if we’re not doing anything drastic – as simple as saying something online about China – because of such surveillance they might catch us”...Many said they turned off their location tracking on their phones and beefed up their digital privacy settings before joining protests, or deleted conversations and photos on social media and messaging apps after they left the demonstrations... Anxieties have been symbolised in a profile picture

- 6 See this: advox.globalvoices.org/2016/08/09/dear-hong-kong-activists-please-stop-telling-everyone-telegram-is-secure/
- 7 For just one example, see this: globalvoices.org/2019/06/14/in-hong-kong-authorities-arrest-the-administrator-of-a-telegram-protest-group-and-force-him-to-hand-over-a-list-of-its-members/

that was being used by many opponents of the bill: a wilting depiction of Hong Kong's black-and-white bauhinia flower. But protesters have become increasingly nervous that using the picture online could attract attention from authorities and have taken it down".⁸

Some of the confusions and limitations of this movement are obvious. For example, there's an illusion that the extradition law will stop foreign investment in Hong Kong – “*We're afraid that in the future we won't have jobs to go to*”, some teenagers have said.⁹ Nonsense, of course. Whilst some individuals working for businesses may feel reluctant to go there, companies as a whole nowadays have no compunction about complying with mainland China (and, of course, this is independent of any basic critique of jobs, of the misery of wage labour). And sadly, this illusion detracts and distracts from the main reason for this movement – their resistance to impending totalitarianism. This resistance can certainly not be won if they somehow believe that they can rely on the wafer-thin margin of freedom expressed in the lesser forms of totalitarianism implicit in current bourgeois democracy.¹⁰ Whatever

8 hongkongfp.com/2019/06/14/become-like-xinjiang-surveillance-savvy-hong-kong-protesters-go-digitally-dark/

9 chuangcn.org/2019/06/anti-extradition-translations/

10 More than just ‘sad’ are the ideological expressions of how wonderful this margin of freedom is. Whilst no-one wants their lives to get worse, which given this catastrophic epoch is almost inevitable outside of a growing social movement to fundamentally change the world, articles by this French admirer of the neoliberal Macron (see, for instance this: theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/07/macron-europeans-french-president) praising the Hong Kong movement whilst parading the ‘universalism’ of republican values, just contribute to illusions in ‘democracy’, the very ideological manipulations that were used by the French ruling class to justify going to war with Germany in 1914, leading to the massacre of over 1,500,000 soldiers on the French side. She talks of “*the right to speak freely*”, which conveniently ignores the very obvious fact that if you exercise your “right” to free speech to a teacher, to a boss, to a cop, etc. you find your speech is not so free at all. Besides, speech is colonised by the monologuers of the media, and inculcation by the official educators and of all the dominant forces of pseudo-communication. Originally, in the 18th century in France and beyond, the demand for “free speech” had something radical about it, insofar as it opposed the monopoly of ideological expression spouted by the monarchy, the aristocracy and priesthood. But the ruling class are the only section of society who have the power to put their free speech into effect, whose ideas have the most obviously concrete consequences; for the rest of us, it's a constant battle to express ourselves freely, and we do it at risk of being imprisoned or crushed in other ways. An example of this in France at the present are the arrests for

obviously totalitarian countries pursue is merely one step ahead of the ‘democracies’, which slowly but surely also develop similar methods of social control, constantly obscured, however, by the language of “rights”.

Joshua Wong, one of the leaders of the 2014 Umbrella Movement, who was recently released from prison, possibly to calm things down, has written “*As American security and business interests are also jeopardized by possible extradition arrangements*

the crime of ‘outrage’ of some people I know a bit, who have been accused of chanting “*A cop who commits suicide is half-forgiven*” – the prosecution is calling for the maximum sentence of 2 years in prison (meanwhile, the killing in Marseille of an 80-year-old woman closing the shutters of her flat by cops firing teargas grenades on a ‘yellow vest’ [ed. – *anti-austerity*] demo last December has led to no prosecutions whatsoever).

To quote T: “*Democracy, like all other tools for the false unification of antagonistic forces, is based on abstract concepts: “rights”, “justice”, “equality before the law” “rule of the majority” etc. Their abstract nature conceals (and meant to conceal) their concrete use. “Rights” are an historical product of a violent war between owners and non-owners which produced and reproduces capitalism and its classes, its money and wage-slavery, their inherent misery and contradictions. Rights were created at a certain point when the bourgeoisie and its copy-writers were forced to come up with a way to reform its exploitation and abuse, to refine their methods of enslavement. As subordinates of a hierarchical power, we are “granted” rights after-the-fact, after that same power had already taken by force our freedom to create and decide about our so-called lives. One of the biggest lies is the “right” to be a slave and to exchange the life that is stolen from you every day for crumbs of survival and alienation. You now have judicial rights that (only technically) guarantee some level of this survival, abstract equality and a “just” legal procedure only because the owners of society were forced to grant those rights when the fierce resistance of the slaves (traditional slaves and wage-laborers) became a real threat to the entire system of production and its hierarchy. The revolts and insurrections that forced the owners to abolish the traditional forms of slavery have not yet brought about the total abolition of slavery, only its modernization and its accompanied rebranding, an official equality for everyone in the powerlessness over their own lives.*

Everyone in a democracy is “equal” before the laws of governance and the justice systems that are perhaps dictated and ministered by democratically elected bureaucrats, but are inherently designed in such a way so that not only they cannot change the established order of alienated life, private property, owners and non-owners, of those who decide and those who take orders – they also reproduce and anchor in our minds a mystical belief in the absolute rightness of those systems and the order they protect. But everybody knows, even those who are still under the mystique of this alleged “lesser of evils of all

with China, I believe the time is ripe for Washington to re-evaluate the U.S.–Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992, which governs relations between the two places. I also urge Congress to consider the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. The rest of the international community should make similar efforts. A victory for Beijing is a victory for authoritarianism everywhere. Keeping an eye on this place sends an important message to Chinese authorities that democracy, not authoritarianism, is the way of the future. It also keeps our hopes alive knowing that we are not fighting alone.” This is the kind of rubbish one would expect from a politician, however apparently ‘dissident’ (he’s secretary-general of the pro-democracy party Demosistō). Apart from the fact that it takes sides in the cold (and potentially hot – check out tensions around Taiwan) war between China and the USA, it’s a typical example of the current colonisation by dominant language – phrases such as “international community” which merely means the international “community” of capitalists, whether state capitalists or individual capitalists. This is the “community” of the commodity which Wong clearly hopes to have a political niche in. And of course, his contrast between ‘democracy’ and ‘authoritarianism’ nowadays makes little sense – democracies everywhere are becoming increasingly authoritarian and we hear of so many new examples almost every day that this text would run to 1000s of pages if I were to list every one of them over the last few years – it’s sufficient to note the ones mentioned here and there throughout this text. But so far there’s a difference between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, even though it’s also vital to realise that totalitarianism grows out of the polluted soil of authoritarianism.

The ideology of self-determination put forward by his party is an ideology that’s been around since President Wilson advocated it as a tactic in the US’s struggle for imperialist hegemony at the end of WWI, an ideology where the vast majority of “selves” determine nothing. And besides, no rulers of any state can determine their country independently of the pressures of the global market. Wong’s appeal to the US state contradicts this ideology of ‘self-determination’. The constant shifts, between the various capitalist states, from rivalry to complicity, from competition to alliance, and back again, the inevitable product of the different states’ balance between mutual dependence and rival economic interests, means that the US can’t be relied

forms of government”, that even the rights and the “welfare” that are given to us under the law are corrupted daily and in secrecy, without possibility of redress. Judicial law will always be subordinate to the more fundamental laws of this society.”

on even as an ally of those aiming to mobilise (some of whom want to eventually rule) Hong Kong against the rulers of China. After Tiananmen Square, the US imposed sanctions on China, which however, did not stop George Bush snr. from secretly doing deals with the Chinese bureaucracy immediately after the massacre of at least 10,000 Chinese workers and students. And at the end of May [2019], just a few weeks ago, the Belgian state, through its Beijing embassy, in an unprecedented move, called on the Chinese police to arrest and disappear a family of Muslim Uighurs seeking visas to enable them to reunite with the father of the family in Belgium: “Belgian officials say their small country can’t risk offending China”. When Wong refers to the “international community” and “knowing that we are not fighting alone” he’s encouraging illusions in so-called allies who will, if convenient, stab such ‘friends’ in the back.

“Not fighting alone” can only be developed by striving to recognise and act on the connections between different struggles amongst those who are fighting their own states and bosses and the market system not only in mainland China but also throughout the world.



Do Chinese Bureaucrats Dream Of Electric Sheep?: China as world leader in the development of technological social control

However, the fear of Hong Kong becoming more like the mainland is also engendered by knowledge of the advances there towards the most totalitarian use of social control technology in history. For the few reading this who don’t know – in a year’s time the state there will have completed its database of the whole of the population, a database intended to standardise the assessment of everyone’s economic and social reputation, or ‘Social Credit’: a database of

every individual's recorded incident from the cradle to the grave. **Some aspects of this 'social credit' system are already being used 'voluntarily' in apps in China by a combination of both the state and private industry, called "new forms of behavioral incentivisation."**

Already, in the Muslim Uighur area, one of the areas that in the past that has had significant revolts against the Chinese authorities, the Chinese bureaucracy is collecting the DNA of most of the Uighur population.¹¹ The state is also demanding that "all neighborhood households' cutting tools with blades exceeding 10 centimeters [have] QR codes embossed on them", and enforcing this demand by the use of spot 'security checks' (perhaps even by China's new Dalek-cops).



"... Xinjiang knives could clearly be used to slit the throats of China's new cops (below)..."



China is universally recognised as the world's no.1 country in the production of the technological means of social control. The cops there now have sunglasses with in-built facial recognition technology to facilitate the rulers' law enforcement. Not only is facial recognition surveillance capable of picking out a wanted individual amongst a crowd of 60,000, but their facial recognition cameras are now starting to be used in school classrooms because they can also recognise a person's *mood*: anxious, furtive, scared, happy, disgusted, sad, surprised, angry, neutral, discombobulated or desperate-for-a-piss. "The system has been touted as a way to ensure students are attentive and happy, learning quickly and,

11 See also: dialectical-delinquents.com/articles/daily-life/the-myths-of-dna/

ultimately, scoring well on tests."¹² In addition, schoolkids are obliged to consult an app on their phones mixing information with Xi Jinping Thought [ed. – *ideology of President Xi Jinping*]. **"Schools are shaming students with low app scores. Government offices are holding study sessions and forcing workers who fall behind to write reports criticizing themselves. Private companies, hoping to curry favor with party officials, are ranking employees based on their use of the app and awarding top performers the title of "star learner." Many employers now require workers to submit daily screenshots documenting how many points they have earned."¹³**

Fortunately, some Chinese people have not been so intimidated as to avoid speaking out against this suffocating development: "This technology is so twisted. It's anti-human," said Zhang Jing, a 23-year-old photographer who spoke out online about the Hangzhou classroom. He envisioned a future where teachers demand students to smile in class and "then there's no difference between students and robots, right?"¹⁴

China now has school uniforms that, along with the ubiquitous facial recognition, track students' comings-and-goings, which make truancy almost impossible. Whilst facial recognition cameras in the classroom inform teachers if a student has fallen asleep in class in case they hadn't noticed (but this is very unlikely considering how thrilling their studies are – "primary school textbooks may soon include definitions for terms like "price-to-earnings ratio" or "buy and hold"¹⁵).

And in certain areas, sanitation workers are being required to wear GPS-tracking smart bracelets to not only monitor their location at all times, but audibly prod them if they stop moving for more than 20 minutes. **And just in case you think that this is merely an example of the development of totalitarianism in China alone, take a look at this development in Canada, only in its initial stages:** "Researchers at UBC Okanagan's School of Engineering have developed a low-cost sensor that can be interlaced into textiles and composite materials. While the research is still new, the sensor may pave the way for smart clothing that can monitor

12 theglobeandmail.com/world/article-in-china-classroom-cameras-scan-student-faces-for-emotion-stoking/

13 chinadigitaltimes.net/2019/04/xi-thought-goes-mobile-with-new-ideology-apps/

14 *ibid.*

15 theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/18/chinas-primary-school-students-to-learn-how-to-avoid-stock-market-pitfalls

human movement. The embedded microscopic sensor is able to recognize local motion through the stretching of the woven yarns that are treated with graphene nanoplatelets that can read the body's activity".¹⁶

Moreover, China's voice recognition technology as a means of social control is certainly going to be developed way beyond its borders. And whilst voice recognition is paraded as simply a tool for 'writing' without using one's fingers, its use for the police is obvious (though *so far*, it's a rather haphazard tool, since disguised accents can fool it, and also voices can be scrambled). And there are also certain areas where you can only get toilet paper if you're on the facial recognition database, apparently aimed at preventing toilet paper theft and rationing toilet paper use. If Orwell's 1984 had envisaged a world where Big Brother restricted how much paper you used to wipe your arse and knew how often you took a shit he would have been thought of as deliriously absurd.

In parts of the country, facial recognition is used to shame the horrific crime of jaywalking: "*The public shaming has very visible effects ... being publicly shamed could impact a person's credit rating, as well as their insurance and pension premiums.*"¹⁷

China's state even uses "Minority Report"-type predictive policing for those they believe will commit what they have designated as a crime.

Orwells That Ends Well: From China to the rest of the world

"This is not just about Xinjiang or even China – it's about the world beyond and whether we human beings can continue to have freedom in a world of connected devices[...] It's a wake-up call, not just about China but about every one of us." – quote from this¹⁸ article about the horrendous affects of predictive policing in China's Uighur areas

So don't delude yourself into thinking that these developments will remain purely within China's borders. **Predictive policing technology, for example, is being taken up by police departments throughout the world.** Moreover, China's social credit system "could interfere in other nations"



sovereignty" (ignore the ridiculous title – the notion of national sovereignty has always been dubious, even within its own bourgeois terms). On top of all this, China's renowned use of internet censorship is being increasingly adopted throughout the world. And just the other day, on 19th

June [2019], Google rejected attempts by many of its shareholders to close down its "Project Dragonfly", a censorship- and surveillance-enabled search engine designed to facilitate the company's return to the Chinese market.¹⁹ In Germany, the state closed down

¹⁹ Due to technical problems, this footnote is divided into 2 parts, firstly about Google, then about Germany.

On 18/12/18 Google stepped back from its Big Brother collaboration with the Chinese bureaucracy. This was essentially because principled individuals within the company exposed the machinations of the Google techno-authoritarians, but it seems like it was only a temporary retreat. Developments of this kind are expressions of core capitalist values and should be expected by all those who have an inkling of how the system works. The other half of the subject matter covered in this article illustrates the degree to which capital has become entangled with the business of legitimizing authoritarianism – openly, on a contractual basis. In October 2018, Google's CEO defended helping the Chinese bureaucracy's censorship plans, a reversal of a decision from about eight years ago, when Google pulled its search engine, which was also censored, from the Chinese market. The CEO said the time had come to reevaluate that choice. "It's a wonderful, innovative market", he enthused so as to justify the logic of capital accumulation by working for the genocidal Chinese police state. Also notable was the opposition within the company. In September 2018 Google's upper management forced employees to delete a confidential memo detailing the censored search engine the company was planning to launch in China, indicating a certain similarity between the surveillance the Chinese state imposes on its citizens and that which Google imposes on its workers. In August 2018, there'd been some resistance to Google's collaboration with the totalitarian state in the form of a petition against this project, but it's indicative of the climate of fear in the company that one of the employees who helped organise it wished to stay anonymous (see also this: chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/08/anger-grows-over-googles-china-plans/).

Germany: And in May [2019] the German state allowed for detention without trial for up to 35 days for those who the state thinks might commit a crime. This law is called the "Polizeiaufgabengesetze" (police tasks laws), which were first introduced in several German "Länder" (regions) last year. These laws give the police the right to arrest suspects in certain cases to prevent them from committing a crime, to imprison them, BEFORE they have done anything against the law. There is no trial but

¹⁶ sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/05/190516142923.htm

¹⁷ mashable.com/2017/06/21/china-facial-recognition-jaywalkers-shaming/?europa=true

¹⁸ chinadigitaltimes.net/2019/05/hrw-report-reveals-how-xinjiang-police-profile-uyghurs/

Indymedia in August 2017, saying that they were intent on destroying the German Constitution.²⁰ And now the UK could well be bringing in a law allowing for “North Korean-style censorship”.²¹ Sure – they often overkill with excessive suggestions to test the water before a bill is debated so that when they finally re-phrase some of the more obviously draconian features they can show they’ve “listened” [*ed. – as seems to possibly be the case with the much-protested UK bill of this year; see 1 May 2021...*], but bit by bloody bit internet – and other – censorship is very obviously on the increase in the democracies.²²

Countries and institutions outside of China constantly and hypocritically condemn the move towards totalitarian social control in China in order to make a show of differentiating their ‘freedoms’ from more overtly repressive conditions. And to more insidiously develop similar repressive controls hidden behind this show of contrast. Behind this show, in practice capital outside China needs China’s vast mutual trade and

the person would just be released after the event the “suspected threat” refers to is over – e.g. a football match or a political summit.

There was a lot of public outrage against these laws last year and large mobilizations by a broad spectrum from liberals to Leninists to more radical factions. In the end, the politicians made some minor changes (specifically, reducing the detention period from 74 to 35 days) which preserved the essence of the laws and passed them. True to current Kafkaesquisms [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg52; i.e., legalese nonsense*], those arrested are not informed of any offense they are suspected of being about to commit.

20 Democracies’ interaction with more fascistic forms is not confined to censorship of course. For instance, read this report about a Hong Kong-based American security company, whose head was responsible, under the aegis of the US state, for killing 14 unarmed Iraqi civilians, helping the Chinese ruling class to set up a training centre in Xinjiang:

theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/01/blackwater-founder-erik-prince-to-build-training-camp-in-chinas-xinjiang.

And there was a recent report showing British cops training Sri Lankan war criminals in riot practice.

21 theguardian.com/technology/2019/apr/08/online-laws-threaten-freedom-of-speech-of-millions-of-britons

22 As an example of how totalitarianism is beginning to develop also in a country widely believed to be resisting neoliberal forms of this totalitarianism, it’s worth noting this: a social network site in France set up a collection at the beginning of January this year for an ex-boxer, Christophe Dettinger, who punched a cop during a ‘yellow vest’ demo and later got a 30 month jail sentence. The state not only blocked the bank account of this collection (they’d accumulated over 100,000 euros in just 2 or 3 days) but also officially summoned 56 of the people who’d donated money to this site – apparently anonymously – to explain themselves at their local police station.

investment – e.g. the Belt & Road/Silk Road initiative, embraced especially by the far-right Italian government and France’s neoliberal one, though it also involves infrastructure development and investments in 152 countries and international organizations in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, South America and Africa. Meanwhile sections of capital outside China are eager to develop similar surveillance technologies and are both supplying much of them to China as well as buying them from there (see, for example this²³ and this²⁴). At the same time, Chinese internet censorship methods are being exported throughout the world (for some of their methods, see this about censorship of the protests in Hong Kong²⁵ and this²⁶ about censorship there generally), and increasingly it’s being acknowledged that its surveillance techniques are also being exported everywhere.

‘Mood recognition’ camera technology is not in any way confined to China but is being developed elsewhere, though not always directly in the form of forms of legal or state-initiated repression but as a method of market research and consumer manipulation. *“A supermarket might use it in the aisles, not to identify people, but to analyse who came in in terms of age and gender as well as their basic mood. It can help with targeted marketing and product placement.”*²⁷ But there are, outside of China, the usual ‘law enforcement’ uses for such Big Brother technology: *“UK firm WeSee, for example, claims its AI tech can actually spot suspicious behaviour by reading facial cues imperceptible to the untrained eye. Emotions, such as doubt and anger, might be hidden under the surface in contrast to the language a person is using. WeSee says it has been working with a “high profile” organisation in law enforcement to analyse people who are being interviewed.”*²⁸ As if this wasn’t enough to maintain repressive social control, the Chinese state is now developing ‘gait recognition’: *“...the system can identify people from up to 50 meters away, even with their back turned and their face covered. “Gait analysis cannot be fooled by simple limping, walking with splayed feet or hunching over, because we are analyzing all the features of an entire body.”*²⁹ In the meantime, before such technology is fully developed, *“the police can*

23 chinadigitaltimes.net/2019/02/how-to-resist-the-digital-iron-curtain/

24 chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/11/report-warns-of-spreading-china-model-of-digital-control/

25 youtube.com/watch?v=EpFE49oo_8&t=102s

26 theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/16/how-china-censors-internet-information

27 bbc.com/news/business-44799239

28 Ibid.

29 securitytoday.com/articles/2018/11/12/new-surveillance-tool-gait-recognition.aspx

use hand-held devices to search smartphones for encrypted chat apps, politically charged videos and other suspect content".³⁰ And in Xinjiang residents are forced to install surveillance apps on their mobile phones.

Of course in the 'democracies' such crude coercion is not used to force smartphones onto people in the same way. **Nevertheless, for increasing kinds of means of survival, smartphones are as "compulsory" as cars have become for many in this society** – no Deliveroo rider or Uber taxi driver or care worker would hold onto their jobs for longer than 10 minutes without one, and there are certainly many other forms of wage labour that require them. And they surveille all movement, to the point where it's impossible, if you want to hold down your job, to not conform to a kind of modern form of utterly isolated individualised time and motion control where the smartphone polices your speed, your time of arrival and departure and probably more. Of course, in democracies such wage labour is "voluntary" – wage slavery is not like slavery but allows you "freedom", to use a word favoured by liberal ideologists, evasively contemptuous of the condition of those who have no other way to survive but to sell their labour power. Sure, you can try to avoid using smartphones for anything that might draw the attention of the state, but if the state already has you in its crosshairs, it still has your phones at home and at work to tap.

At the same time, the smartphone is not just a means for the most obvious forms of social control such as police surveillance. It's also a mediation of immediate relations and is thus also a way of being sucked by specialised effects and other artistic forms into a distraction from non-virtual human contact [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net*]. In the democracies, smartphones are not compulsory yet. But people get hooked on them – seduced by the attraction of endless applications of narrow aesthetic 'subjectivity' – and then, like all drugs, are finally controlled by and through them. **Whilst with the more normal notion of what constitutes a drug habit, being controlled by drugs is subjective and can, with effort and a sense of purposeful perspective, be resisted and eventually kicked, in the case of addiction to technological toys, the control is not just subjective, voluntary, not just dependent on will.** It's not just you watching Big Brother but Big Brother Watching You 24/7.

There's been, in the UK, in the development of electronic tagging (the 'nice' alternative to the

³⁰ chinadigitaltimes.net/2017/12/advanced-surveillance-spreading-xinjiang-across-china/

totalitarian panopticon [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg8*] of prisons) a device that can monitor adrenalin, alcohol and anger levels, and heightened tension.³¹ And I've heard, in the US, that there's a personal yoga meditation program available which monitors your moods – priceless data about someone that would be easy for the state to hack into. How much more invasive is it possible to get? These technologically-based elements are clearly pieces constituting an enormously enhanced system of social nano-control, one that was always embedded in capitalism's project of what [Cornelius] Castoriadis referred to as "pseudo-rational pseudo-control", but which, as the world falls increasingly into ecological collapse, wars and crisis, can and will – insufficiently contested – be justified as a means of "maintaining order".



The slogan, during months of revolt rocking Chile the same year as Hong Kong (see *Rebels Behind Bars; This Latest Chapter of This Story*), reads: "WE WILL NOT RETURN TO NORMALITY, BECAUSE NORMALITY WAS THE PROBLEM"

Of course, the powers-that-be invariably present themselves as far more omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient than they in fact are in order to induce a soul-destroying resignation amongst those who might be tempted to revolt against their power. **It should be made clear that one of the strategies of the state – for a long time – has been to make people think that the state is like a materialist God – it knows and controls everything.** Its presentation of itself is intended to instil absolute resignation: "You can't beat the system", as a widely-distributed ad warning against fare-dodging on the tube put it – in London as

³¹ See this: dialectical-delinquents.com/articles/uncategorised/hidden/lord-of-the-meanderings/hong-kong-trying-to-block-the-road-to-totalitarianism/prison-technologies-stoa-report/

far back as *the 1980s*! Although the means available to it now is far vaster, petrification – terror and submission – in the face of it all is what the rulers want above all, as if the technological means of absolute control at the disposal of the state is perfect, regardless of how much, in fact, it is. As this article says about America’s accumulation of data by the NSA [National Security Agency]: “...*while capturing and storing data is easy, data by itself is not information. The NSA’s enormous capability to intercept data has not been matched by any corresponding ability to analyze it, much less to act on whatever information is extracted. Data mining has shown some promise in keeping track of known suspects, but has been nearly useless at uncovering new ones. The forces of order are therefore left to wrestle with unmanageable masses of data on people who are little threat to them, while those harboring nefarious intent can slip beneath the radar merely by taking some basic precautions*”.³²

So, in relation to facial recognition cameras, awareness of how social control technology works can help you consciously alter your image and behaviour. Actors know full well that gait can be disguised by imitation of others and not just something you can disguise by the far-too-simple use of limping, walking with splayed feet or hunching. Actors know full well that mood can be consciously repressed, for example by recalling situations one has lived other than the real life actually being lived, or imagining and empathising other people’s situations. Such professional techniques can be used outside any professional career, in daily life, by those who have developed a certain distance from their own habitual facial expressions and body language, though of course, this reduces the element of spontaneity in resistance to external authority: one has to always calculate a risk well beforehand, though some aspects of calculation can become easy routine habits with constant repetition. As for facial recognition’s ability to see a discrepancy between one’s words and one’s micro-expressions, in certain circumstances/countries one can still refuse to talk to law enforcement agencies. And refusing to be sucked into the dead-end of consumerism, and to predictable consumer habits, can enable people to avoid being seduced by “*targeted marketing and product placement*”. **Nevertheless, this remains a purely individual solution under siege to the watchful eye of the state constantly looking at every breath you take, every move you make, every step you take, every single day, every word you say, every game you play, every vow you break, every smile you fake, every claim you**

32 isiw.noblogs.org/post/2014/09/29/two-pieces-on-surveillance/

stake. Despite the danger of over-estimating such technologies, there’s also a danger in under-estimating them: it’s well-known that the thought of being constantly surveilled causes an enormous amount of stress, which wears and tears at each person (there are even some people who cover the camera on their mobile phones for fear of having their every activity monitored, even though they don’t even do anything or discuss anything illegal). As previously said, totalitarianism, any more than any other *ism*, is never a completed goal – there were even revolts in the Nazi’s concentration camps and in Stalin’s gulags.³³ But it certainly is a process constantly capable of extension and intensification.

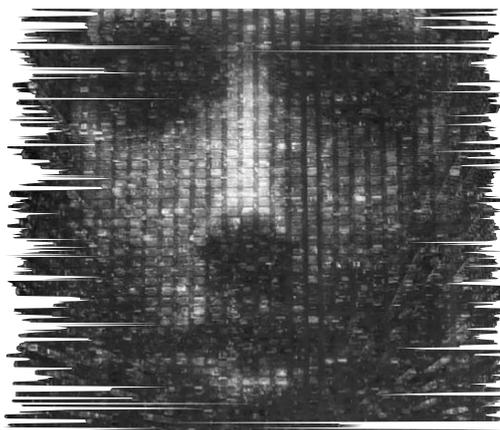
Holidays in Your Own Misery: Totalitarian leisure

It has to be made clear that the development of totalitarian technology is also already pervasive in areas of life considered to be ‘free’. As a compensation for being robbed of the freedom to change your world and your life, you are granted the freedom to change compensations. Such compensations turn communication into its opposite with those “feeds” or supposedly personalized “suggestions” and “recommendations” pushed on you by Smartphone apps, Youtube, Facebook³⁴ et al. or

33 E.g. this: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vorkuta_uprising

34 A few people only see in Facebook the epitome of a narcissistic culture whereby people *voluntarily* expose their intimate moments and personal life to strangers in order to get attention. They only see it as the playground for a pseudo-communication organized in the form of “likes” and a self-promotion on their own page, on their own media. Which, even if partially true, is a very narrow, reductionist, take on it. Elements that are putatively “personal” are part of an integrated order of generalized social control, as well as artifacts of the contemporary conditions of class struggle. Naive and vulnerable youth, growing up in a culture where Facebook is as banal a part of social life as TV used to be, write whatever comes into their heads and then find their innocent writings being used against them or to pressurise them at some later date. For instance, in August 2011 a young guy (in Wolverhampton, if my memory serves me well) wrote “*Let’s have a riot in the town centre!*” (or something like that) on his Facebook page. Despite taking it off Facebook after 20 minutes, he was arrested, tried and sent to jail for at least a year – for inciting a riot that never took place! In addition, the idea that the kind of self-promotion one sees routinely in social media (esp. ones utilized for seeking work like Linked-In) are simply individual psychological aberrations caused by a purely voluntary engagement with Capital, fails to take into account the extent to which people are *forced* to market themselves in order to secure employment (and are thus another symptom of precarity) as a consequence of, amongst other things, the destruction and marginalization of the more traditional expressions of class struggle. Also, an increasing minority of people use it for political discussion. And in France at least, it’s often

disguised as articles (those “Around the Web” and “Recommended For You” boxes at the bottom of many online news articles, created by advertising companies such as Taboola etc.), who ask you over and over again and without your initiative, to pick and choose from what they have “for you”, creating by this the habit of staying within the comfort of their clickable bosoms. What was once a personal and passionate exploration of thoughts and knowledge that began by your own initiative, of which an important part was the social exchange of recommendations and ideas between people who actually know and communicate with each other – a direct experience that could lead to discussion and to a mutual development of the people engaged – has, for the obedient spectator who’s only inquisitive about what this society deems acceptable to be inquisitive about, been eliminated and replaced by an isolated and unilateral absorption of material intentionally designed to serve itself and to be consumed repeatedly: easy-to-access (directly available at any moment, especially those moments of void, when boredom or anxiety kick in), easy-to-process, having a harmless, purely entertainment/educational/commercial value, as well as leaving no room for surprises, chance and the unpredictable. What we have here is a vertical edification, identical to all, of which the form guarantees that the content remains confined to the limits of the form. **These platforms (and the capital and exploitation behind them) derive their full power**



An endless amount of pieces of information are streamed, uploaded, broadcasted or talked about in Youtube-channels, Facebook-live and similar platforms – but on the condition that they remain pieces of information or entertainment, that they remain details. They then (or while you’re watching them) immediately recommend you to continue and click on

precisely from isolation and passivity, and they create isolation and passivity in return. This may not seem like direct censorship, but its effects on mental capacities and social relations are often even worse.

*“If I have only an historical knowledge of thought, truths, and facts, they are outside my spirit; i.e. for me they are dead; my thinking and my spirit is not in them; in them my thought is not present, and my inmost being is not there either. The possession of purely historical facts is like the legal possession of things I do not know what to do with. If someone stops at the mere knowledge of what this or that man has thought, of what has been handed down, then he has just handed himself over and renounced what has made him a man, namely his thinking. In that event he is preoccupied solely with the thinking and the spirit of others; he investigates only what has been true for others.” – Hegel [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg55**], Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

other sources of the same kind, so that you will never be out of the loop. **Only what is telegenic is allowed, that which can represent or sell an already existing object or concept that can be regurgitated by specialists, stars or “influencers” (be it a news-event, a commodity, a type of personality, an ideology, a moral attitude, fascism: yes or no, anti-fascism: yes or no, leftism, veganism, a new and “correct” way to say something, a lifestyle, a “real-life story” to be watched alone at home as a compensation for your lack of real life...);** only then can this information be given a fixed and official rank of quantitative importance in the spectacle, creating mini-worlds of bits-and-pieces with which you have to be familiar; information-things or culture-things separated from each-other or with only one fixed and official relation to each-other, with the result that you would never be able to think dialectically about anything around you, including yourself and your life, to develop a subjective understanding of your world,

been used – and this since 2010 – to gather people together for political reasons (in 2010 high school students used Facebook to organise strikes to support the anti-pension reform movement; in 2018 the yellow vest movement was initially started by Facebook discussions). And not just in France – Facebook contributed to the Arab Spring [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg87**] in Egypt (though, admittedly, this was much exaggerated by the Egyptian middle class, since the majority of participants didn’t have internet access). Even amongst non-political teenagers, it’s been used for genuinely social self-organised events: dialectical-delinquents.com/articles/daily-life/france-facebook-festivals-may-2010/. Whilst the critique of narcissism is partly pertinent – it’s certainly worth critiquing the shallowness of individuals’ lives and communication partly resulting from what they ‘choose’ (within their ever-narrowing margins of choice) – it’s important to also look at what is *not chosen* and what is *not narrowing*, what is objective and partly and increasingly determinant – the widespread use of this information by businesses and the state, who gather this data for obvious manipulative purposes as well as to check for deviant tendencies (see, for instance, this recent new requirement for a US visa: bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48486672).

of the causes of, the need for or the use of what is shown to you, of what is really desirable for you or not.

What is now called thinking is not really thinking at all; it has long ceased to be the process of thinking for yourself – a creative, passionate and at times frightening, conflicting and difficult activity – and has been replaced with merely having consequence-less opinions about what goes on in an existing and unchangeable reality, to which you are only coincidentally related (usually when the need arises to make you feel guilty about something or to mobilize you for or against a person or a group). This type of “censorship” works in a circular way: it informs you about a supposed reality about which you are only supposed to have an opinion, in which you are only supposed to take a passive part, and by this effect strengthening that same forced passivity and ensuring the past’s domination over the future.³⁵

Will We Rage Against the Machine... ...or does everyone love Big Brother?

“A report by Ant Financial’s much-maligned social credit system (SCS), Sesame Credit, indicates that 96% of Chinese users born between 1990-1994, and 94% of those born between 1995-1999 have chosen to opt in to the social credit system.”³⁶

“I couldn’t tell which terrified me more: China’s all-encompassing network of facial recognition surveillance cameras, or that my countrymen were proudly cheering them on... Many people in China seem to be happy about the physical security promised by the surveillance network. Our mind-set, long ago, was wired to see safety and freedom as an either-or choice. Huawei’s Hong-Eng Ko put the public safety argument more bluntly this week, arguing that “if privacy wins, criminals win.” The acceptance Qian describes is mirrored in widespread public support for China’s various emerging social credit systems as mechanisms of accountability for untrustworthy behavior, as found by Genia Kostka through surveys and Manya Koetse through analysis of social media discussion.”³⁷

The final subhuman product of the system: docile spectators hoping to eradicate everything in themselves and in others that doesn’t reduce them more and more to the level of a predictable machine, who are nervous if they don’t think they are being supervised, deludedly dreaming of being defended by

35 My thanks to T. for most of the previous 4 paragraphs, very slightly re-written by me.

36 ub.triviumchina.com/2019/01/chinese-users-overwhelmingly-approve-of-social-credit-systems/

37 chinadigitaltimes.net/2019/04/safeguard-or-shackle-chinese-views-on-surveillance/

the very world that destroys all security. One of the first orders of any revolutionary movement is to make this type of subhuman impossible and to spare no instance in which they can be denounced, demeaned, denigrated, and subjected to condescending pity, while taking every pain to praise and encourage them at whatever acts of rebellion they may belatedly engage in, and understanding that this is something that regularly happens to all of us because it is embedded in the civilization that we must destroy. The first revolutionary act is disobedience.

“The universe is simply a great machine...Man, like the universe, is a machine” – Nikola Tesla (scientist, developer of the Alternating Current)

“...a scientist is ...above all, a choice utterly submissive to the dominant reification of human beings, their reduction to a machine, to their role within the commodity economy which demands the repression of subjective desire, which demands their reduction to a functional machine within the overall process of exploitation and capital accumulation. Trial and error reduced to the fetishism of examining cells or natural elements, separating them, re-combining them, comparing and contrasting them, outside of their usual (natural or social) context, in a lab, narrowed such experiments to what is acceptable to quantifiable capitalist social relations.” – “Frankenstein’s Monster”

It’s not for nothing that scientists are helping China’s apartheid system in the Uighur region – science has always been an essential weapon of the ruling class.

Science has become the new religion [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg33*], a materialised religion that creates the illusion of ‘order’, the order of machines, of ‘rationality’, of people too terrified to give their lives meaning by affirming themselves against an ‘objectivity’ and ‘order’ which escapes their grasp, which reduces them to commodities.

With the development of large industry, scientists were almost invariably loyal servants to their capitalist masters and to the commodity economy as a whole. Science in the early years of capitalist development invented for its bourgeois masters machines that gave them the spur to brutally expropriate the peasantry of its means of survival and force them to be wage slaves to the owners of these machines. Now this is being extended in more subtle, less blatantly crude, ways which further reduce the modern proletariat to a docility that no longer needs such openly horrendous methods to satisfy the rulers’ rabid thirst for capital accumulation. **Today, in parallel to the development of Artificial Intelligence which hopes to make robots more**

'human' and 'emotional' (at least within the notion of 'human' and 'emotion' created by a world aiming to repress the unpredictably uncontrollable and the negative) – human beings become more machine-like (though, unlike machines, they become depressed and mentally ill). In the past one might be forgiven for believing that science, in reaction to superstition and religion, had a liberatory potential – its progressive nature more linked to dreamt-of future possibilities than the immediately lived grim reality. Today, as science continues its logic of contributing even further to our “progress”, the progress of alienation, the progress towards the abyss, its ice-cold tentacles aim to strangle subjectivity at birth or even at conception. Science and capital aim to short-cut the conditioning process of family rearing, schooling and media manipulation and just stifle revolt when it's only a twinkle in its creators' eyes.

In July 2018, scientists endorsed the use of genome editing to engineer the traits of future children and generations [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg26*]. In August 2018 there was a report about scientists having discovered how to suppress the part of the brain that experiences anger and the desire for revenge. More recently (at the end of March 2019), scientists discovered the DNA of a genetic mutation that suppresses pain and anxiety. It also *conveniently* induces forgetfulness. Now imagine how the rulers of this society could use combinations of such insights and methods (assuming that these scientists, hoping to entice vast vault-loads of moolah, aren't excessively exaggerating developments that are hardly beyond a wishful-thinking fantasy). Given their record of repressing anything that might threaten, even a little bit, their race to accumulate capital there'll be nothing to stop them investing their surplus value in applying these discoveries to vastly intensify the passivity of those they govern. If it's in their toy cupboard, it's unlikely that they won't eventually play with them. When ideological manipulation and technologically-induced fear proves inadequate, genetic and other forms of biologically-applied manipulation may well come to their rescue. **No pain, no anxiety, no anger, no desire for revenge and no sense of life, because those surviving the ecological apocalypse will have forgotten why it all happened and who was to blame, having been genetically modified at conception.** A Brave New Night of the pain-free Living Dead: chase all your cares away, Sing Hallelujah ...get happy, get ready for the judgment day... Don't worry – be happy.

Now, of course, these worst-case-scenarios seem like really over-the-top sci-fi, and doubtless reinforcing the separations inherent in class society

and indoctrinating people with the ideological justifications that would support such a project would take a bit of time. However, the majority of human beings most of the time do not need to be genetically manipulated to be imbued with the values of the commodity economy. A report from February 2019 about people being prepared to sacrifice other human beings so that robots are not endangered shows how, as Artificial Intelligence develops, so too does reification, entailing, amongst other things, treating electronic objects as more important than human beings, and human beings as lesser objects. Which has long been the case amongst the rulers and their head-cracking cops, but is now being intensified amongst the increasingly atomised novelty-technology-obsessed masses. Thoroughly alienated humans, not content to get angry with people outside pubs for leaning against their precious cars, are now increasingly prepared to feed their robots and let people starve. And in future owners of the cars leant on will have no need to get angry – the cars themselves will get angry on their behalf, because machines can out-do people anyday.

Scientists may act all concerned and moralistic about certain developments,³⁸ but the mercenary logic of scientists is not merely “indifferent” to such ‘moral’ questions (which they intermittently roll out to defend themselves against accusations of cold-heartedness), but, given that he who pays the piper calls the tune, the abstract ideology of knowledge-for-knowledge’s sake (and to hell with the consequences, other than the effect on their bank accounts) means in practice that most are prepared to sell themselves to absolutely anybody and any state.

And already totalitarian ecologists are waiting in the wings ready to harness all these marvelous new methods and inventions [*ed. – see the supplement to this volume of Return Fire; 'Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism'*]. And doubtless the world's ruling class are ready to set up home in the South Pole in the lush countryside, whilst creating the mirage of a Green Earth for the rest of us. They will surely justify an ‘orderly’ totalitarian control as the only way to protect the planet, even though the result would be protecting a world of people reduced to machines and machines imitating such thoroughly predictable people so that machines and people

38 E.g. this: theguardian.com/science/2017/nov/13/ban-on-killer-robots-urgently-needed-say-scientists

become indistinguishable, with the result of further reducing the survivors to increasingly anxious survival sickness.



Commercially-available laser pointers of sufficient strength, as pictured above in Hong Kong, are trained on police camera lenses for a period of seconds destroy the latter's mechanism; beware the risk of being identified at the other end of the beam (see Return Fire vol.5 pg84)

INGREDIENTS
(Cleaned of fingerprints)

1.5 Litre empty bottle of water, with 3/4 benzine(gasoline) and 1/4 lamp oil

Crowbar & cloths

IN A SOCIETY OF OPPRESSION AND ABUSE, THE CAMERAS JUST COME TO ADD TO THE JOB OF CONTROL AND REPRESSION. THEIR DESTRUCTION IS ONE MORE ACT OF RESISTANCE OF ALL THOSE WHO DENY THE SUBJECTION AND CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Instructions

We break open the right door of the green, white or black box, which is near the camera pole, by putting the crowbar in positions 1 or 2.

We put the cloths at the bottom of the box, you bathe the inside and the cloth with the mixture.

We stand the bottle straight with the remaining mix in the box and we throw inside a lit piece of cloth from a metres distance.







DESTROY THE CAMERAS

LEAVING THE SPVM BEHIND TO ATTACK A HIGH-TECH HUB

This May Day, Montreal's annual anti-capitalist demonstration organized by the CLAC [*Convergence des Luttes Anticapitalistes*] gathered in Jarry Park under the theme "No old normal, no new normal". It was a sunny late afternoon, and the energy was high amid the banners and black flags as the demo began to snake through the residential streets of Villeray.

Heading west on De Castelnau, fireworks were set off, and construction cones were used to block the road behind us. The cops [*ed. – of the SPVM, the*

Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal] seemed confused about the route we were taking, which meant that there were less of them in our near vicinity. Dropping south onto Jean-Talon, the demo continued west through the viaduct beneath the St-Jérôme commuter rail line.

Leaving the Police Behind

Turning south on Parc Avenue from Jean-Talon, the demo excitedly entered a second viaduct under the same rail line. This time, a surprise was in store for the police vans and bike cops waiting for the crowd to pass to the other side before continuing to trail the demo: smoke bombs were set off in the viaduct, and crowd's feet were deployed on the road to puncture the tires of any cop vans that might brave the smoke-filled passageway. These actions effectively blocked the viaduct, a chokepoint in the area, to all traffic.

With the majority of the cops stuck on the north side of the train tracks, the demo took a hard left toward rue Saint-Zotique immediately upon exiting the viaduct. Garbage and terrasse furniture were pulled into the street to further protect the demo, and our pace quickened.

We don't have to accept the police surrounding our demos, flanking, filming, and harrassing us, or tailing us with a dozen riot vans ready to tear-gas us at a moment's notice. Some situations may call for direct confrontation, but on this day our best bet was evasion. With a little inventiveness, foresight, and collective intelligence, we can leave the police behind.

Paying a Visit to the Artificial Intelligence Headquarters

About two minutes later heading east on Saint-Zotique, the demo took a right on Saint-Urbain. An assortment of bike cops were observing the demo from about a block away, but their riot cop backup was nowhere in sight, and the bike cops kept a safe distance.

On our right stood the "O Mile-Ex" building, which functions as the headquarters of Montreal's artificial intelligence sector, as politicians and academics have strained over the past five years to position the city as a global AI hub. The inter-connected buildings at 6650 and 6666 Saint-Urbain house MILA (a research institute affiliated with Université de Montréal that collaborates with Google and Facebook), Thales (a French defense and security contractor), Borealis (the AI lab of the Royal Bank of Canada), Quantum Black (the AI lab of notorious global consulting firm



A.I. solving problems

McKinsey), SCALE AI (a “supply chain supercluster” controlled by the Desmarais family), and a couple dozen other labs and startups.

While they talk a lot about “ethics” to distract the public, these companies develop technologies that strengthen the hold of capitalism and authority over our lives. **Whether they lead to more efficient supply chains for large corporations, automated video surveillance and facial recognition to protect the government and the property of the rich, or workplace monitoring algorithms that impose dehumanizing conditions on workers, we know who stands to gain from these tools, and it is not the exploited, excluded and oppressed of society.** As anarchists wrote recently, “what is at stake is our capacity to have secrets, to resist, to agitate, to attack what destroys everything we love and protects everything we hate.”¹

In addition, the O Mile-Ex facility with its hordes of tech yuppies is a massive driver of displacement in the surrounding area. Together with the new Mil campus of Université de Montréal, its effects spill over into Parc-Extension, a working-class, mostly immigrant neighborhood under increasing threat of gentrification.

Technology companies have exploited our isolation during COVID-19 confinement measures to increase their profit margins and expand their presence with little resistance, **and as the crisis of the pandemic gives way to the next phase of the crisis of capitalism, they seek to shape a “new normal” that cements their power.**

For all these reasons, it was a beautiful sight to see multiple crews within the crowd target these buildings. As MILA’s windows were broken one after another by hammers, rocks and other projectiles, any illusion that these businesses and researchers enjoy

the benefit of a social consensus shattered as well. Smoke bombs were tossed into the building through the holes in the windows, hopefully setting off the sprinklers and causing water damage.

After the attack on O Mile-Ex, some cops that appeared toward the south on Saint-Urbain received volleys of rocks and fireworks. The demo headed east on Saint-Zotique, continuing to evade major police deployments, turning south on Clark then cutting through Parc de la Petite-Italie to then turn north on Saint-Laurent.

The park and the many intersecting streets on Saint-Laurent provided respectable opportunities for de-blocking and departure. The dispersal was accelerated by riot cops that began charging up Saint-Laurent behind the demo, firing tear gas. Some police were even spotted on the roof of a residential building, dropping tear gas canisters on the crowd: an unexpected maneuver. A civilian driver who was aggressively trying to push through protesters was confronted and had his car windows smashed out. The cops that swarmed the area where people were dispersing detained a few people, arresting two, but no serious charges have been laid. Blocking streets more consistently with garbage and other obstacles in these contexts could have been helpful.

It is a precious experience to take risks together in the streets with hundreds of comrades and anonymous accomplices, who dream of **a world after capitalism, of burning police stations and border posts, of looted supermarkets, of forests, mountains, and rivers protected from all forms of industrial degradation and returned to the nurturance of indigenous peoples’ territorial autonomy.** Although the accomplishments of one May Day demo may be minor as regards the whole landscape of our aspirations, we believe the relationships we develop through these moments should not be underestimated.

– Anarchists



11.06.21: Wild demonstration, anarchist banners & fireworks outside the Google London HQ construction

1 mtlcounterinfo.org/ctrl-alt-delete-ai-development-in-montreal/

WHEN THE BARBARIANS INVADE THE PERIPHERY

– *the commercialization & destruction of
the Catalonian Pyrenees*

Let's say then that we ourselves do not share his interest in "demanding the repeal of existing laws", let alone "territorial democracy" or "self-government" in the mythologised "agora", and feel these discourses to be dangerous to anarchist struggle. On this topic we recommend Peter Gelderloos' essay 'Diagnostic of the Future', and we shall save our own words for now.]

[This text deals with the theme of tourism, which has been a prime concern for many of our comrades around the world in affected areas. For example, in parts of southern Europe such as Portugal (see the insightful text Theme Park & Living Laboratory from Avalanche #12, available online), Spain (see Precarity in Paradise, also online), and Greece, in some cases the changes wrought by designation



as tourist colonies by the European Union – although in many cases inseparable from gentrification more generally – have meant that dislocation due to unaffordability has been more effective at dispersing anarchist circles than direct State repression. These last two years have shown more than ever the social damage this has wrought, the crisis-within-a-crisis during COVID restrictions of their being both a shortage of housing and no money coming in from the precarious platforms such as AirBnB et. al. Restarting precisely this trap was a clear priority of the States of these countries with their 're-opening plans', often – as in the case of the World Cup football fans from Britain who were encouraged to flood Porto before the Portuguese general population were clapped back into lockdown – at the expense of the rest of society.

*This contribution deals specifically with the rural environment, a space that we have previously printed words from southern Europe regarding on this topic (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg52**), and it is intelligent that it links struggle for transformation of countryside with that to transform the urban environment. It is authored by Miguel Amorós (active since the '60s), one of his generation of class-struggle anarchists who to this day has made more effort to sharpen an anti-industrial critique, including of the latest faces of "green capitalism" (see **Green Capital & Environmental "Leaders" Won't Save Us**). It won't be first article that mentions democracy (see **Hong Kong: Its Relevance to the Rest of Us...**) that's critically published in this volume of Return Fire's theme of the Left and its overlap (or lack thereof) with our anarchisms; although the Right in all truth has as much claim to democracy as the Left. (This is evidenced in the past decade in its 'direct democracy' clothes by populist initiatives such as Brexit in the UK, the Citizens' Initiative Referendum in France, etc.)*

In a globalized world, and therefore in an urbanized society, where a good part of the population has enough buying power, its own private automobile and sufficient "free" time, businesses serving the needs of recreation and escape are becoming the fastest-growing economic sector.

Leisure occupies an increasingly more important place in the alienated life of the people of the major urban concentrations [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg52**]. In the periphery, with the collapse of industrial production due to declining competitiveness and a lack of technological innovation, the economy took refuge in other activities that involve less "value added", such as, for example, logistics, construction and, above all else, mass tourism. This was what happened in the Spanish state, and, as a corollary, in Catalonia as well. **With the onset of the crisis of 2008-2014, at least in the Catalonian region, industrial tourism became the main driver of the economy, which inevitably entailed a considerable environmental impact and a profound alteration of the territory on a qualitatively greater scale than all previous changes taken together, leaving an unprecedented ecological footprint.** Tourism "is a source of wealth" and "a driver of growth", according one of the Generalitat's [ed. – *Catalonian semi-autonomous government*] technocrats, but it is also an industry that gives rise to immediate disruptions; it is a factor of disequilibrium and trivialization of the first magnitude, as well as a source of low-wage jobs and a powerful factor for the promotion of industrial food. Foreign investment, the construction of new urban concentrations, with their infrastructure and buildings, the super-exploitation of the cultural, historical and natural patrimony, the waste of energy, the pollution and the accumulation of waste on a vast scale, etc., are the heralds of a new territorial reality.

These signs of barbarism reveal the true meaning of what government leaders, technical specialists and expert advisors call “injecting value” into the territory, “optimizing” its resources, “making it profitable”, and, to top it all off, “offering incentives for the development of entrepreneurial skills” and “cultivating leadership”. **This lexicon, borrowed from the marketing industry, clearly indicates that what they have in mind is the conversion of the territory into a commodity.** As a result, the local patrimony, customs, history and the natural landscape itself constitute a new type of capital. When the valorization process, which is also a process of regulation, is fully deployed, all other kinds of activity that do not fit into the territorial side of the economic “supply” formulas, that is, activities that do not give rise to monetary profit, such as, for example, traditional agriculture and livestock-raising, disinterested cooperation, barter, hospitality, or free recreational activities, are living on borrowed time. **We will pay for everything, for gathering mushrooms, for camping, for sitting quietly and meditating by a waterfall; the enormous demand for recreation will soon render payment compulsory for every activity in the territory.** The total conversion of the territory into a diligently managed business, or to express this same idea in technical jargon, its transformation into a “brand”, leaves its inhabitants outside the decision making process, expropriated, since the only needs that matter are those demanded by the accumulation of capital and the dynamics of power, not those of the residents of the territory. Life in the mountain counties will then be totally redefined by the political, administrative and financial hierarchies that will control, at each and every step, the use of the territory, a use that will be determined by a continuous series of development plans, each worse than the previous one.

This trend has a long history. What we are witnessing today is nothing but the integration of a regional market into a global market. **The process of the commercialization of the Pyrenees Mountains began during the 1960s with the construction of the first ski resorts (the first one was built at Baqueira-Beret), but it did not really take off until the 1980s with the generalization of the ownership of second homes, and exploded a decade later with the avalanche of skiers, the growing popularity of adventure sports, and the now-common practice of spending one’s vacations and weekends in the country.** The first phase did not have much of an impact, since not everyone owned a car back then and the cars that were owned by ordinary people weren’t very reliable for long trips, and television, which had by that time

made its appearance in proletarian homes, kept people glued to their couches. The second phase was worse, since the generalization of private automobile ownership multiplied the mobility of the city-dwellers. Leisure was “democratized”. The third phase, corresponding with the creation of the Pyrenees “brand”, required State intervention to build highways and other basic infrastructure. The Barcelona-Manresa highway was finished in 1994 and the Manresa-Berga highway was completed in 1999, opening the floodgates like never before to the urban hordes. The ongoing decline of livestock-raising and agriculture, the final crisis of the textile industry, and the closure of the mines opened the door wide to the intensive exploitation of snow, rivers, meadows, forests, mountain peaks, houses in the country and backwoods trails. The fourth phase, that of the internationalization of the brand, began in 2004 with the creation of the Euroregion known as Pyrenees-Mediterranean, accompanied by a multinational program of violent and extremely disruptive development of the territory, based on an increase in the number of recreational facilities, the systematic expansion of transportation networks and a deliberate project of social disintegration. **Thanks to the interested contribution of foreign capital, the mountainous territory will be completely “redesigned” to accommodate the arrival of a wave of tourists from other countries.** Tickets for air travel, an excursion to the casino, and a day at the beach will be included in the price of the package deal. The goal can be none other than the complete transformation of the Pyrenees counties into a vast theme park, an alpine Disneyland.

First, the industrialization of the Catalan economy, followed by tertiarization [*ed. – i.e., the service economy; see Return Fire vol.5 pg13*], created a monster, the Barcelona metropolitan area, which constituted an urban system in conjunction with other, lesser metropolitan areas connected by roads, highways and beltways. And this monster harbored a large middle class whose desires to consume territory had to be taken into account. Life in the metropolis had become so impoverished, and so claustrophobic, that a widespread longing to disconnect from it for even a short time, to escape to nature just as the bourgeoisie and the aristocrats did in the past, was irrepressible. **For this class, and for the proletariat that imitated it as much as it could, leisure was not relaxation and inactivity, but a reason to set oneself in motion and to do whatever was fashionable. Thus, the neurosis caused by the deterioration of urban life lies at the origin of the commercialization of leisure, which turned it into just another kind of work.** “Free” time, thanks to the stress and emptiness of

private life in the urban areas, became the raw material for an industry that would inflict a demographic upheaval on the Pyrenees counties, disarticulate the territory, orient the life of the people towards consumerism, pander to the vulgar tastes of the visitors and ruin the beauty of the landscape. The mountain sunburn would become a mark of distinction among the people of Barcelona and other metropolitan areas, a trophy, the trademark of the Pyrenees brand. It was among those who thus sought refuge from the metropolis that the capitalist regime found its most fervently loyal social base, ready to vote as directed for any pro-tourism candidate; and all the candidates were pro-tourism. In the meantime, the major beneficiaries of the invasion of motorized weekend warriors fleeing boredom and ennui were gloating over their success at FITUR¹ and over the recognition of the Pyrenees zone as a first class tourist destination by the European Union. The Pyrenees were submerged in the European market and Barcelona shared with other major metropolitan areas on the other side of the border the role of colonizer. **It was the latest form assumed by the idea of progress [ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg11]: the noxious and malignant rule over nature and society by science, technology, the economy and the State.**

Tourism isn't cheap; it must be connected with the transmitting centers. It therefore requires huge expenditures on highways, petrol stations, access roads, power lines, pipelines, garbage dumps, tunnels, bridges, etc. Thousands of vehicles traverse the zone each day causing traffic jams during the weekends and holidays, so that there is an urgent need for new traffic lanes, bypasses, interchanges and various other improvements. Considerable expenditures on the provision of accessory services, supplies and non-residential structures are also urgently needed, such as, for example, parking lots, chairlifts, water supplies for the snow-making machines, horse stables, garages and storage facilities for mountain bikes, all terrain vehicles, 4x4s, canoes, kayaks, whitewater rafts, motorbikes, hang-gliders, and installations for ski lifts, etc. **All mountain sports, from heli-biking to whitewater rafting, and from trekking to snowboarding, are just so many manifestations of the primordial capitalist mentality: the taste for competition, for overcoming obstacles, for demonstrating endurance, for the cult of hard work, for risk-taking, for exhibitionism...** The spirit of capitalism is reborn with the sportsman [sic] and even more so among the spectators.

Real estate deals are conducted with fewer

1 transl. – International Tourism Trade Fair

hindrances in the counties of the interior than in the coastal regions and the metropolitan areas, since profit is the only factor that counts and the economic profits from tourism, compared with any of the activities that it is replacing, are vastly greater. Hotels, campgrounds, houses in the country, advertising for vacation getaways, discotheques, fast food restaurants, shopping centers and huge numbers of automobiles, reproduce the conditions of the urban habitat and impose the values of a life that is the prisoner of consumption. **Real estate prices and rents skyrocket, the native folklore is degraded into a spectacle, local festivals take on a superficial and corny atmosphere; the past is turned into a museum exhibit and moral bonds between people are replaced by other, commercial, bonds.** The tourist has no interest in knowing the places that he [sic] tramples, and much less their inhabitants, which is why he will conform to the stereotype of his kind. He is not too demanding when it comes to authenticity: a few elements of local color and a few local specialties are enough for him. The guardian angel of kitsch accompanies him and protects him from an excess of originality: vulgarity and bad taste are in the driver's seat. We could say that the metropolis provides a new material and spiritual form to the territory; it standardizes it, weakens it and corrupts it without the territory being able to defend itself, for a lack of forces and means. Tourism leaves the local capacity for social interaction in a much more fragile state than ever before. It means the end of the community spirit and the helping hand, and of the very idea of the "people". When the car became a kind of prosthesis for the inhabitant of the big city, the territory was completely subjugated by the city and ended up reflecting it in all of its aspects. The territory is now a peri-urban space, a satellite of the Barcelona metropolitan area and its vicinity. The parasitic life now plays a decisive role in the territory and as a result new entrepreneurial and neo-rural classes are emerging within it, connected directly or indirectly with the one-way development now underway. **To change things in the countryside, things will have to change in the city.** To restore the old ways of life without shifting the burden of economic costs for such a change onto the periphery, it will be necessary to dismantle the center. No liberation of any kind will be possible unless we put an end to capitalism, but we cannot put an end to capitalism if we leave all its structures intact.

As the labyrinthine destructive forces of tourism gain more and more ground, diversify and become more mobile, and wild spaces are subjected to mass consumption and depersonalization, the landscape is eroded and

'THE TERRORIST & THE TOURIST'

The tourist seeks out Culture because – in our world – culture has disappeared into the maw of the Spectacle. Culture has been torn down and replaced with a Mall or a talkshow – because our education is nothing but a preparation for a lifetime of work and consumption – because we ourselves have ceased to create. **Even though tourists appear to be physically present in Nature or Culture, in effect one might call them ghosts haunting ruins, lacking all bodily presence. They're not really there, but rather move through a mind-scape, an abstraction ("Nature", "Culture"), collecting images rather than experience.** All too frequently their vacations are taken in the midst of other peoples' misery and even add to that misery.

Recently several people were assassinated in Egypt *just for being tourists*. Behold... the Future. Tourism and terrorism: just what is the difference?

Of the three archaic reasons for travel – call them "war", "trade", and "pilgrimage" – which one gave birth to tourism? Some would automatically answer that it must be pilgrimage. The pilgrim goes "there" to *see*, the pilgrim normally brings back some souvenir; the pilgrim takes "time off" from daily life; the pilgrim has nonmaterial goals. In this way, the pilgrim foreshadows the tourist.

But the pilgrim undergoes a shift of consciousness, and for the pilgrim that shift *is real*. **Pilgrimage is a form of initiation, and initiation is an opening to other forms of cognition.**

We can detect something of the real difference between pilgrim and tourist, however, by comparing their effects on the places they visit. Changes in a place – a city, a shrine, a forest – may be subtle, but at least they can be observed. The state of the *soul* may be a matter for conjecture, but perhaps we can say something about the state of the *social*.

[...] **Tourism's real roots do not lie in pilgrimage (or even in "fair" trade), but in war.** Rape and pillage were the original forms of tourism, or rather, the first tourists followed directly in the wake of war, like human vultures picking over battlefield carnage for imaginary booty – for images.

Tourism arose as a symptom of an Imperialism that was *total* – economic, political, and spiritual.

What's really amazing is that so few tourists have been murdered by such a meagre handful of

terrorists. Perhaps a secret complicity exists between these mirror-image foes. **Both are displaced people, cut loose from all mooring, drifting in a sea of images.** The terrorist act exists only in the *image* of the act; without CNN, there survives only a spasm of meaningless cruelty. And the tourist's act exists only in the images of that act, the snapshots and souvenirs; otherwise nothing remains but the dunning letters of credit-card companies and a residue of "free mileage" from some foundering airline. The terrorist and the tourist are perhaps the most alienated of all the products of post-imperial capitalism. **An abyss of images separates them from the objects of their desire. In a strange way they are twins.**

Nothing ever really touches the life of the tourist. Every act of the tourist is *mediated*. Anyone who's ever witnessed a phalanx of Americans or a busload of Japanese advancing on some ruin or ritual must have noticed that even their collective gaze is mediated by the medium of the camera's multifaceted eye, and that the multiplicity of cameras, videocams, and recorders forms a complex of shiny clicking *scales* in an armor of pure mediation. Nothing organic penetrates this insectoid carapace which serves as both protective critic and predatory mandible, snapping up images, images, images. At its most extreme this mediation takes the form of the *guided tour*, in which every image is interpreted by a licensed expert, a *psychopomp* or guide of the Dead, a virtual Virgil in the Inferno of meaninglessness – a minor functionary of the Central Discourse and its metaphysics of appropriation – a pimp of fleshless ecstasies. The real place of the tourist is not the site of the exotic, but rather the no-place place (literally the "utopia") of median space, liminal space, inbetween space – the space of travel itself, the industrial abstraction of the airport, or the machine-dimension of plane or bus.

So the tourist and the terrorist – those twin ghosts of the airports of abstraction – suffer an identical hunger for the *authentic*. But the authentic recedes whenever they approach it. **Cameras and guns stand in the way of that moment of love which is the hidden dream of every terrorist and tourist. To their secret misery, all they can do is destroy.**

The tourist destroys *meaning*, and the terrorist destroys the tourist.

nature retreats, the flora soon disappear and the fauna withdraw and migrate wherever they can.

The contradictions of developmentalism are manifested in the form of out-of-control urbanization, environmental crisis, resource depletion and social

malaise. Although the awareness of the eminently destructive nature of economic growth has yet to assume the form of open opposition, with the exception of minorities engaged in indefatigable battles in defense of the territory, the anxieties of

those who are economically dependent on tourism concerning losses occasioned by the over-saturation of their districts by the tourism industry, have awakened a certain kind of sensibility in favor of conservation and environmental protection. **The magical expression, “sustainable tourism”, issues from the mouths of the representatives of the so-called “stakeholders” [“actores sociales”]: employers associations, environmentalist groups, trade unions and political parties.** While the market model is unquestioned, the proposal is made for “alternative local development”. The promoters of this kind of development want to associate consumption, devastation and growth with good times, economic recovery and equity, on the basis of “instruments for intervening in and transforming the economy”, that is, with laws, ordinances, taxes and fees, contracts and programs promoted or supported by the stakeholders. They do not want to de-commercialize the territory, but to implement a somewhat less aggressive form of exploitation, by resorting to the supplementary use of a marginal economic network that is supposed to palliate the effects of and serve as a counterweight to the endless pillage implied by totally unregulated development. **Nothing is challenged; certainly not the capitalist system.** They call for a sustainable use of the land without even considering de-urbanizing it; they talk about the right to choose and cultivate one’s own food without proposing measures against agribusiness and the food processing industry; they demand rational legislation without also demanding the repeal of existing laws that are so permissive with regard to dubious practices; they extol certain traditional customs without questioning the legitimacy of existing commercial law; in short, they want a less conventional, more ecological tourism, disregarding the fact that ecology and tourism are mutually exclusive. In any case, this soft and fluffy tourism will never affect more than a minuscule part of the existing market demand; it will never approach the popularity of mass tourism. The new middle classes of the counties of the Pyrenees are anxiously watching their territory being destroyed, since their interests will be harmed over the long run by this trend, but they do not want to confront those who are

responsible. They are romantics and materialists at the same time, bourgeois and popular. They are sitting on the fence. They want development and progress without the consequences these things necessarily entail. They want harmonious relations with the environment without removing it from the reach of the market economy or the control of the State: they want rain (or, more precisely, snow) and good times.

Neither the regeneration of the territory, nor the restoration of its authentic inhabitants, can be achieved with half-way measures, nor can they be legitimately brought about by government administrators, politicians or the economy itself. Co-management between government authorities, trade unions, associations of young people, and employers, is only a mechanism to harmonize the most catastrophic sort of development with the interests of the half-domesticated population, for the purpose of rendering conflicts unnecessary. The typical clichés of “sustainability”, “responsibility”, “participation”, “transverse democracy”, “quality”, “local”, etc., make this perfectly clear. Territorial democracy is something completely different and instead involves the capacity of neighborhoods or districts for autonomous self-organization and living in common without either leaders or commercial mediations. To revitalize the territory we have to de-parasitize it, which means that we have to remove it from the economy through a plan for decentralization, de-industrialization and de-urbanization that will involve, on the one hand, a confrontation with the ruling classes and their political servants, and on the other hand, extensive ruralization. The ruralists must stand on a solid commitment, for they need clear goals and strategies for achieving those goals.

Occupations and mobilizations for the defense of the territory must allow for a

correlation of forces favorable for the autonomy of the rural population, precisely in order to encourage a new and different kind of exodus from the major urban concentrations, so that not only will people be available to repopulate places that have been or are currently being abandoned, but the conditions will be created in which a network of farmers and livestock raisers can be articulated that will be able to resist laws, regulations and



21.01.03, Abetone, Italy: All 90 cabins of a chairlift at notorious skiing resort torched in their overnight shed (ruining the season, & during the all'Abetone races of the European Cup) in defence of the mountains & during a hunger-strike of imprisoned mountain-roaming saboteur Marco Camenisch (now free; see Return Fire vol.5 pg31): 7 million euros damage, & the same night bombing of a TV antenna & burning of 3 mobile phone masts are also claimed in solidarity with Marco (on his birthday)

administrative controls. Despite the fact that more than five hundred Catalan municipalities are in danger of extinction due to their locations outside the circuits of the tourism industry, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to engage in free resettlement of the affected towns and villages and to pursue independent agriculture. **The State gets involved when private initiative has not already done the job: it forbids settlement, registers all the livestock, counts the trees and measures the acreage of the cropland, monitors the seeds, in short, it establishes the conditions for all authorized activity.** It mandates the labeling of products, its files contain photographs of the land and buildings, it prohibits direct sale of products by farmers to consumers, establishes quotas and fixes prices, levies specific fees and collects taxes. Few are those who openly defy these laws and regulations, and their voices are not heard from so far away. Others prefer to be “pragmatic” and fall into line. Even so, the struggle continues. **The defense of the territory has two sides, one destructive, and the other oriented towards reconstruction. It is a two-pronged struggle to liberate the territory from financial and administrative straightjackets, and to promote a free, deeply-rooted way of life in the country, in equilibrium with the environment and alien to the law.** It is a constant battle to stop the big useless projects of the developers and government bodies, and to block the passage of the frenzied urban hordes; and it is at the same time a battle to create forms of self-government and collective labor, to restore open councils, neighborhood committees and the commons. It is therefore also a struggle to rediscover the city, to give it human dimensions, to manage its affairs from the agora. A free territory cannot exist if it surrounds an enslaved city, nor can an emancipated city exist within a servile territory.



SEVERAL NIPS AGAINST THE DOMESTICATION OF MOUNTAINS (AROUND AUGUST 19 2017) [France]

[ed. – An attack communique from recent years that caught our imagination on the previously-discussed topics; even though we don't agree with all these authors say either, it creates something of a contrast in perspective with what preceded: not to pose such positions as binary.

Especially apt is their acknowledgement that the mountains in question are not in fact 'pure' regarding capitalist defilement (indeed a green-washed biomass power plant of the type slated to proliferate in France, often - as has been the case in the UK - to prevent the coal plants hosting them from being shut down, would be sited there despite it being designated a national park); but that they seek to find joy and re-enchantment there regardless.]

If we love mountains, it's for their excess. Their chaotic forms, the power reflecting the different forces that shaped them. Mountains form an imaginary of wildness and intensity, the sensation – rare and precious – of escaping for a brief moment the suffocating, artificial and grid-patterned world.

Mountains enrich us with the challenge that they represent, the hostility of their abrupt slopes, the initial inaccessibility of their summits. Because they do not offer comfort, obvious answers, or ready-made paths and they require detours, doubt, will, risk-taking but also humility and patience of those who want to wander them.

Because there remains a small taste of the unpredictable, because there are no straight lines, no logic of profitability. Because they are still a refuge for many living creatures, because they aren't adapted to a world of hyper-speed, productivity, profit and control. We love that they are, if not an obstacle, at least an interruption, to the running of this world [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg119*]. That architects don't know how to build cities on them; their contours block signals; their crevasses trap hikers too habituated to the reliability of asphalt.

And so, of course, there are roads and tunnels. Chairlifts and groomed trails. There are markings, trail managers, all-comforts cabins, GPS coordinates. There are antennas, pylons, high-tension lines, pastures reserved for livestock farming, quarries and mines, clear-cut forests, agriculture that encroaches ever higher.

Obviously, the will to control and the profitability of the human species doesn't end at the lowlands and

hills. It's been a long time since all the mountains here have been studied, mapped, secured, colonized, made profitable. A long time of playing with the life-like action figures, a long time that the mean capitalists work to raze everything and the nice ecological activists demand the creation of more natural space and the better management of wild species [ed. – see *'The Decoupling Thesis'*].

None of this interests us. Each new trace left by civilized society on the mountains enrages us a bit more. We want to destroy everything which seeks to control, not because we want to make these spaces sacred, but because the civilizing process is less advanced here than almost anywhere else. Nothing remains here that resembles wild plains, whereas chaos persists in the mountains. We rebel against the idea that they will become the preserve of the voracious appetite of the human species. So we attack what controls and seeks to profit from these spaces.¹

It's a battle against civilization and all domestication. Our gestures are and will probably remain insignificant, if they are compared to the power of processes that we aspire to attack. **However, it's not a perspective of victory that animates us, but only the desire that this world never win the battle it wages on us.** That in spite of everything, we listen to our instincts that push us to evade the death machine and to destroy it. Even if we will never be finished, and we are fully conscious of this, we want to relentlessly attack. For us, for our accomplices, for our comrades, known and unknown.

So that this civilization never completely domesticates us, so that this flame of the will to live wildly burns forever, a little, which appears extinguished in so many people.

If they tell us that what we do is futile, that we'll never change anything by sporadically attacking [ed. – see the supplement to this volume of *Return Fire; 'Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism'*], we respond that we aren't interested in this dialectic of

1 ed. – Here, we would encourage those responsible to notice the wild (or chaos, if you prefer) – if not this society's specific construct of 'wilderness' (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg24**) – everywhere in a constant struggle with the forces that would civilise it: and that there, whether that might be plain, mountain or cityscape, we can be there as part of it, a part of the non-homogenous “human species” that does not seek to benefit by “control [and] profitability”, alongside surviving indigenous and land-linked cultures where they exist.

winning and losing a hypothetical social war, or in the economic analysis of our gestures, because we find them much too rigid and moralizing. Because we want to act without the expectations that others do the same, because we are impatient to begin with, and then because we assume that at heart, we don't want the same thing. We don't want our acts to be conditioned by the hope of a change, because we feel it's illusory. **We don't want this to be what gives us energy, but an irrepressible will to reappropriate our lives in the present. We want to be strong and proud, and in attacking we find the means to grow stronger, in the process of preparation we can also question our relationships, to destroy our social constructions, our reflexes of submission faced with people and institutions deemed stronger than us and our reflexes of domination towards those assumed to be weaker.**

In joy and for attack

We proudly claim responsibility for:

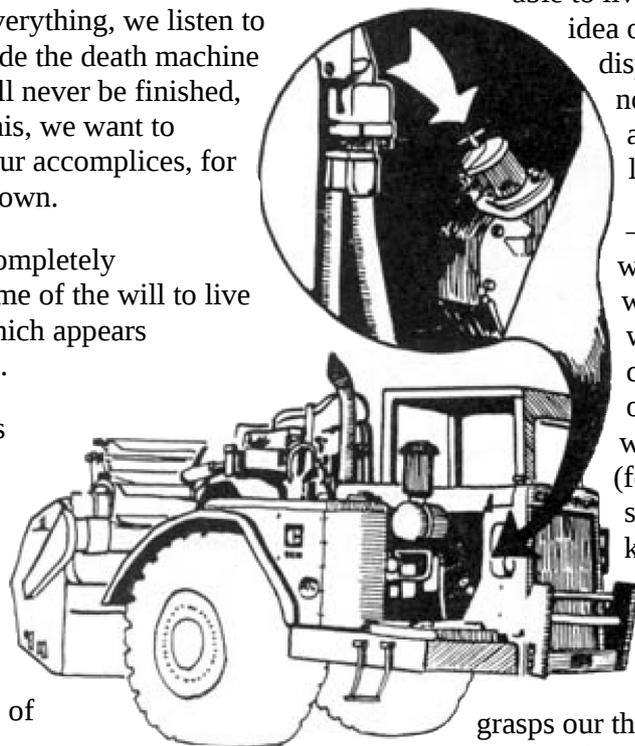
– A tag on an anti-wolf and pro-livestock billboard ('long live wolfpacks, destroy livestock' you can read on the sign after we passed). Although in this case reintroduced by humans, we want wild animals to be able to live without obstacles, if the

idea of wolves eating sheep displeases them, it suffices to not provide the wolves with a giant pantry by keeping livestock.

– An attack on a woodcutting machine (which we put out of service without fire, despite our compulsive pyromania, in order to avoid a forest fire) with the help of bolt cutters (for cables and hoses), screwdriver (for the tires), key and hammer (to access different fuel-tanks that we filled with earth). We don't know how to speak of this emotion which

grasps our throat at the sight of the cadavers of trees, devastated forests, these machines that make the massacre so profitable... it's just that in us sadness transforms quickly into aggression.

– An incendiary attack on a communication node of Mount Aigoual (major Cévennes tourist destination). After fruitless attempts to force the doors with crowbars, we finally managed to cut the grill of a



window and find the necessary space between the bars to break the window and empty 10 liters of gasoline in the building. Although we could see the flames soaring in gusts below the star-lit sky, the damage didn't reach the height of our expectations. We desired to simultaneously trash this nauseating tourist zone, and this installation which participates in the control of the human [sic] over the world. Telephone network outages imply the so-called endangerment of human life. It seems to us important to distinguish that we don't glorify life in itself, and even that we don't want to protect it at any price. We would prefer to avoid physically harming anyone who we don't clearly identify as an enemy. But the question which arises is this: is each person who makes this world go around consciously or by their passivity not in part our enemy? The most sure method of not harming anyone is to stay home (if you have one) and let life go by under the anaesthetic of getting wasted, elections [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg61*], and the small pleasures of a normal life [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg48*]. **Starting fires or attacking the routine of this life is dangerous. And it's also for this reason that it**

“Today, systemic vulnerabilities are concentrated in strategic nodes: transport and communications infrastructures (key roads, airports, high-speed rail links, ports, cellphone towers, electricity infrastructure), symbolic sites linked to capital accumulation (e.g. tourist sites), and distribution depots (e.g. petrol stations, warehouses). Targeting such sites is a growing trend among movements the world over. It is effective because just-in-time production and reduced state spending have left the infrastructure increasingly vulnerable, the system increasingly close to the wire: a small shutdown can shut down a massive network dependent on it, and have immense effects, since the system requires constant flows in the absence of stockpiles.”

– *The Future of Insurrection*



“We all have ways of casting wishes. In the anarchist milieu, one of the most common of these practices is the communiqué. Written as a story and shared in our world, communiqués attach a group of intentions to their departure. Each intention cannot be known, but every communiqué at least wishes for connection. It is the desire for resonance, a sharing of inspiration. The communiqué carries the wish for feeling and perceiving between people, for speaking in the space that alienation strangles into silence. Green anarchists know that civilization is responsible, at root, for alienation – the impassable distance between all of life. When we write about an event that has occurred, especially an event that breaks with normalcy, we aim with our intention for that barrier. We hope (despite our hopelessness) that even the slightest tingle of a real feeling will be felt. [...] In the course of my growing, I have experienced communiqués and other forms of sharing as small openings into the unknown. Little splinters in the skin of the existent. It is in practice and in actions that I've searched for those pinholes and have attempted to tear further. As an insurrectionary anarchist, I communicate with the desperate urge for those moments. As a green anarchist, I believe that the material torn is the spiritual body of civilization.”

– *Ways of Casting Wishes*

gives us such pleasure.

We desired to speak of these fortuitous encounters with the animal world that inspires us, the glance of a boar or a fox, with the dazzling stars that are so abundant and which artificial light deprives us of the majority of the time [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg50*]. Speaking of our hearts which beat so hard, after a long walk, with excitement for the approach of the target, the wildness so strong that it's difficult to keep our balance. Of the trust and complicity that there is between us, in our eyes, our laughs, our fears, our ravings. But it's hard to put into words things that are so intense, rare, stolen, chaotic. We recognize with pleasure that others aspire to destroy, passionately and madly, this hypercivilized society, and to find pleasure and self-affirmation through attacking. We think of all the arsonists and other saboteurs whose words spoke to us and in whom we often recognize ourselves. We imagine their smiles in the night, and send them ours. So it's one more barbeque...² It goes without saying that we don't want to enter into any competition, that egoist acts of revolt are beautiful, as are the will to move beyond one's fears and limits, the desire to put oneself at risk in words and acts and to not stay in your comfort zone. It's courage that we want to acknowledge, audacity, impertinence, and not only the quantity of damage inflicted.

What's more important to us is the hand that made the act and their expressed intentions than the act itself.

Speaking of those who put themselves at risk, and who have courage, we want to send greetings to two people still locked up in the case of the cop car [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg86*] who

² ed. – Reference to the claim for 'barbeque' arson of similar masts in Puy-de-Dôme discussing others in France 2017.

despite months of prison hold onto their firm positions faced with the justice system. We sincerely think of you, in hoping that these words reach you and echo in you. Kara we send you a howl at the moon and several fragments of stars...



The trial for these charges will take place the 19-22, in Paris [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg86*]. **We propose for groups and individuals in revolt to use these dates to nourish the blaze and the raids against the forces of police**, so that the fires spread from the mountains to the courthouses of Paris!³

A thought for the Italian individualists who face repression in Florence. Bombs for fascists, mutilations for cops.⁴

Always on the lookout,
– *Some jaded ones who have been able to wonder.*

3 ed. – There was indeed a great proliferation of solidarity acts in France and other countries around this time; indeed, following one action (in which 1,500 square metres of the Vigny-Musset gendarmerie barracks, including several dozen police vehicles and a forensic lab, burned to the ground), the French state pressured two Indymedia sites in that country to take down its claim on the grounds that it was “advocating terrorist acts”, which they did; reminiscent of UK Indymedia's decision to stop hosting anarchist attack communiques during the wave of actions during 2011-2014 (see *Return Fire vol.3 pg50*).

4 ed. – A bomb placed in a notorious fascist bookshop (previously attacked, including with explosives) was unwisely removed by a bomb-disposal cop with bare hands who was badly injured as a result when it went off; as comrades of that city noted in a pamphlet following the subsequent witch-hunt of anarchists, “an accident at work which – unlike those that take place in factories and building sites every day – doesn't deserve one tear.” Three anarchists, Salvatore 'Ghespe' Vespertino, Giovanni 'Giova' Ghezzi and Pierloredo 'Paska' Fallanca, were imprisoned for the attack.

'PROJECT CYBERSYN'

[ed. – First published (untitled) in *Fifth Estate* #394.]

Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile, Eden Medina, MIT Press, 2014, 344 pp.

Eden Medina's *Cybernetic Revolutionaries* provides an account which is sympathetic to Chile's Project Cybersyn. She uncovers and details the largely forgotten and extraordinarily fascinating history of how information and communication technology was seized upon as a way to realize President Salvador Allende's socialist aspirations.

After his election in 1970, Allende led Chile on what he described as the “Chilean road to socialism” which was to differ from the revolutionary path charted by figures such as Fidel Castro in Cuba. In contrast to the Cuban example, the democratically elected Allende aimed to use already existing institutional channels to peacefully introduce socialist policies to his country. His plan was offered as a third way that did not explicitly align Chile with either of the two superpowers that were waging their Cold War and using smaller countries as pawns.

Similarly, Chile's road to technological prowess was to differ from what conventional wisdom suggested. The generally accepted path forward for small lesser-developed states was to make big friends and then import modern technology and expertise from them. Instead, Allende took an interest in the emerging field of cybernetics as a way to more creatively think about how to use the computer technology they already possessed – which was far from the most advanced – to create systems that even the superpowers could not yet accomplish. **They set out to build something akin to a nationwide internet before the existence of the internet.**

With the help of eccentric British cybernetician [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net*], Stafford Beer, Chile launched Project Cybersyn to create an information network that would make a state controlled economy both feasible and efficient.

Those involved in Project Cybersyn sought a way to capture and manage the flood of information needed to be processed in real-time so that state officials could make informed decisions about how to most efficiently run the economy.

The current obsession with real time information was effectively being pursued in 1970s Chile.

State officials would know if production goals were being met, if raw materials were being delivered, if a work stoppage was interrupting their plans, and vast amounts of other such quantifiable data pertaining to the economy. They wanted models predicting how the economy would respond in the future based on current data.

With such information delivered in real time, the state could theoretically be able to shift and adapt so their desired end targets were achieved. Production quotas could be altered, raw materials could be rerouted, difficult workers could be circumvented, and so on. According to cybernetic theory, the state needed to be as homeostatic and as responsive as a living organism.

The political aspect of the project was highlighted in Allende's intention to solve the dilemma between maintaining a stable state and allowing for personal autonomy. Individuals needed to have the freedom to live as they chose while at the same time not jeopardizing the stability of the state. Beer and his Chilean colleagues believed that cybernetics could ease this tension by creating a more dynamic state that could allow both. Medina's book, however, fails to point out that this, in reality, is a sleight-of-hand trick which allows the individual to do as they wish provided the state can easily neutralize their efforts. One can do anything provided it is without consequence.



Since the Allende government defined its policies as socialism, it was also important to at least pay lip

service to the notion of worker participation. The operations room of Project Cybersyn in Santiago was supposed to be accessible to even the uneducated rank-and-file. It included screens but only a few buttons. It included chairs but no tables and no paper.

Information was to be displayed graphically so it could be readily understood and acted upon. Keyboards were out because their presence would have implied secretarial work (and bureaucracy) which in turn implied the presence of women in the operations room which is not how the rank-and-file were generally pictured [ed. – *similarly to the prejudices of 'revolutionary' leftism in Spain earlier that century; see **Memory as a Weapon; 'These Women Refused to Sacrifice'***]. Indeed, a gentlemen's club was proposed as one aesthetic model for the design of the operations room. In hindsight, the completed command center has drawn comparisons with the War Room in Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove*.

Yet as novel as Allende's political supporters thought his road to socialism was and as innovative as the cyberneticians considered their system, the message of Medina's book, when read from an antiauthoritarian or anarchist perspective, is that these are but nuances on the organization, development and administration of the industrial system [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg5**] on which a new label was tacked.

Although Allende may have dreamed of a different road or path, his cybernetic industrialism had more in common with Fordism [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg98**] and Taylorism [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg28**] than it did with humanity's emancipation.

The 1973 U.S.-backed coup that ousted Allende from power and installed the Pinochet dictatorship prevented Project Cybersyn from ever being completed. This fact allows supporters of the project to keep their dreams intact as to what might have been if it had been free from interference. Even Medina seems to occasionally resist criticism in this fashion. **But to advance this line of thought, to defend the project in this way, requires that at least some sympathy for its goals of a highly coordinated industrialism.** It may have been wildly successful if it had proceeded unimpeded, but in a process which was fundamentally flawed.

Allende, like Marx, thought that socialism could modernize and ultimately be more productive than capitalism. But if that is not the desired destination, it is of little consequence which ideology will purportedly get there faster.

Capitalism and socialism are essentially two different strategies both seeking to make mass society possible. There is nothing radical about simply picking one side over the other; rejecting capitalism only to embrace socialism. The project of mass society needs to be **rejected outright**.



'FROM FRINGE PROPHECY INTO VOGUISH IDEOLOGY' [France]

On the night of 21 November [2017] we got inside La Casemate scientific centre [*ed. – a nationally-renowned centre for “scientific, technical and industrial culture”*] in Grenoble (easier than expected since the door was open: lame!) and trashed stuff (anyone who has ever thrown computers across a room will know what we are talking about) then set a little fire [*ed. – which quickly spread; firefighters were able to save nothing, and the centre was not predicted to re-open for several months at least, with damages running to several million euros*].

While the telegenic fablab manager is getting pathetically worked up in the media, **we are releasing this communiqué, an inseparable echo of our incendiary gesture against this toxic institution, which is notorious for spreading digital culture.**

In the 1970s, loads of revolutionaries were attracted by the internet at a time when the computerisation of our existences was only just beginning.

People gushed about horizontality, about the amazing potential for information and sharing and even, for the most moonstruck, about emancipation through computer connections.

The people's appropriation of this emerging technology would, it was claimed, undermine all attempts by governments or businesses to use it for control or money-making purposes.

This naive Utopia changed, over the course of half a century, from fringe prophecy into vogue ideology.

From state leaders to leftist intellectuals, from dotcom entrepreneurs to environmental groups, everyone is spellbound by the digital revolution.

The figure of the hacker has become a new subversive icon and everywhere people sing the praises of social networks, open source, collaborative working, transparency, the "free" economy and boundless immateriality.

But the idea that we were leaving behind the industrial era showed itself to be a great fat lie: thousands of miles of cables under the earth and the oceans; datacentres in every corner of the world; a profusion of nuclear power stations to keep the economy alive, sophisticated products with accelerated obsolescence, screens everywhere you go, intruding deep into our daily intimacy: all this depends on massive industrial infrastructure, on the destruction of

remaining non-urban spaces and on the brutal or subtle exploitation and elimination of human and non-human individuals.

The digital bait continues to work.

Even though in 1954 the priceless Norbert Wiener was already describing cybernetics as the art of governing by machine.

Even though it was the world's largest military power that developed the first computers and built them into a network with the sole aim of war-winning efficiency.

Even though it is Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple who programme the web and get rich from it.

Even though it is the state that polices and monitors digital space.

Indisputably, money and control preside over the fantasy of immateriality. Society ends up being little more than technological totalitarianism, cleverly constructed, an ever-more authoritarian administration of our lives.

What do the revolutionaries do about it? They co-manage their own alienation; create digital currencies and make sure even their squats have wi-fi.

When everything in our lived reality conspires to reveal the ideology as a lie, the ideologists have to double their inventivity. Communication and images have to distort the world so that the reign of falsity can be protected.

Now we have "Internet Towns" as well as "Towns in Bloom", the latest techno-junk is always "smart" [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?*], the bureaucrats of the educational system hand out digital school bags to infants.

New recreational digital interfaces are being set up everywhere. Town officials satisfy money-hungry start-ups and the geekiness of the general public by opening fablabs in trendy neighbourhoods. Although these may seem very diverse, they all aim to speed up the acceptance and social use of the technologies of our sinister times.

We couldn't care less whether these fablabs were born from the imagination of a celebrated hacker, which isn't the case, or whether they were the fruit of profitable scientific collaboration in one of the temples of technocracy, the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technologies), which is the case; it is because they are a public nuisance that we came to destroy one of them.

But it is not a question of criticising this or that aspect of the technological hell, of deploring the progress of state omniscience; the efficiency of the commercial world or our increasing domestication by the machine.

We may target the cybernetic project forcing us into greater submission, but it is the totality of this object world that we are attacking.

We are a bit late for the 16th (trial date); but we send our support to comrades in operation Scripta Manent [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Sentence of Anarchist Prisoners in Scripta Manent Appeal Trial*] (particularly those suffering censorship). We also send strength to the three Montreuil comrades currently in detention and to the comrade in solitary [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg86*].

Comrades in Chile have called for a month of Black November. Although we like the idea of an international campaign for anarchists we don't identify with one which "demands the liberation of prisoners". While the idea of attacks in support of rebel prisoners appeals to us, we refuse to enter into the logic of dialogue with the state (or power of any kind).

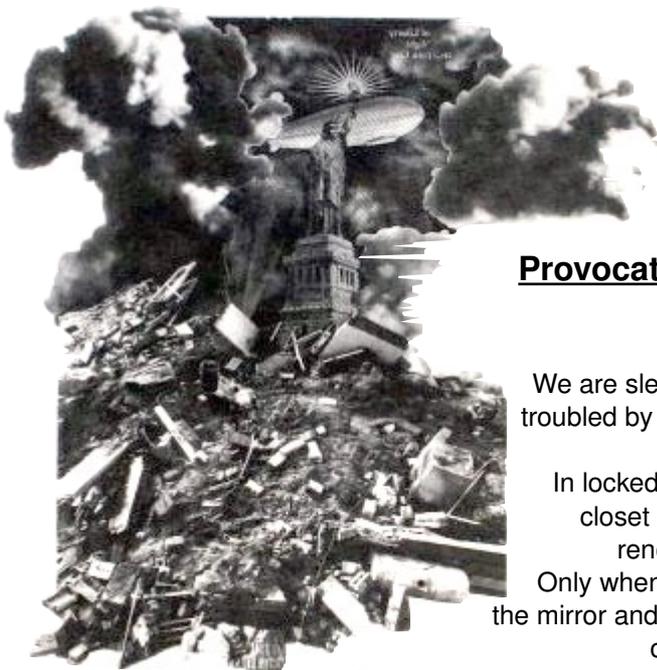
Last night we burned La Casemate, tomorrow it will be something else and our lives will be too short, whether we are in jail or breathing free, for everything we hate to be reduced to ashes.

POEMS FOR LOVE, LOSS & WAR



Plastic World

Freedom was taken for granted
 advertised on giant screens
 wrapped in colorful plastic packages
 and sold as cheap staple good
 amidst the spectacle of brightly lit glass-palaces
 where people with RFID chips in their necks were busy to catch it.
 Plastic world, inhabited by plastic people with plastic dreams
 their essence ends up being swimming islands in the oceans
 once they'll form an eighth continent
 – the new world – *Plastika*
 they'll welcome us with a Statue of Liberty from plastic waste.
O almighty Plastic God, bless our civilization!



Provocation of a Dream

We are sleepwalkers
 troubled by nightmare
 flashes,
 In locked wards we
 closet our vision,
 renouncing...
 Only when we break
 the mirror and climb into
 our vision,
 Only when we are the wind together
 streaming and singing,
 Only in the dream we become with our bones for spears,
 we are real at last
 and wake

– Marge Piercy



MEMORY AS A WEAPON

The Hebridean Land Revolt

[ed. – We read this history – an overview of one phase in the ongoing struggle for access to land and subsistence in what is now known as Scotland, notorious for its land ownership structure to this day – as the echos of the international rent strike called at the beginning of the COVID pandemic have yet to fade; indeed, recall that mobilisation was itself supported by organisers already holding rent strikes in recent years in Toronto and Los Angeles before the pandemic. Like many others, it is a tale of attempted, resisted, and eventually successful recuperation in its day, which we republish here to keep these complex and rich legacies bright in our minds during the struggles of today and those to come.]

The Hebridean land revolt was a major uprising by the rural peasantry in 19th-century Scotland. Rents went unpaid. Fences were cut in the night. Land was illegally occupied. Telegraph poles were cut down. Roads were blocked with boulders. And government officials were attacked and beaten by mobs of women and men and children. Finally, in November 1884, the British government authorised a military invasion, dispatching gunboats and hundreds of marines.

In Scots Gaelic there's a word, *dùthchas*, that can't easily be translated. It describes a hereditary connection and entitlement to the land, a sense of belonging and obligation, a heritage of the soil. **Below the Cuillin Mountains' black bealachs [passes] and coires [glacial hollows], you can see where the foothills have over centuries been ribbed with lazy beds, the hillside carved in**



ridges and furrows, as though the grass covers some ancient temple. You get a sense of how hard it must have been to cultivate

this land, but also how attached people must have been to this landscape, and how traumatised they must have been by their deracination [ed. – i.e., 'uprooting'; see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*].



Background: the end of Feudalism

The islanders' entitlement to the land ended in the years following the Jacobite Rebellion, which was a failed attempt to

reinstate the Stuart Dynasty to the British throne. In 1689 the Roman Catholic King James II of England (VII of Scotland) was replaced at the bequest of parliament by a

“Nothing would escape falsification and trivialisation, save through the obstinacy of the few in practising what is the subversive activity par excellence in dark days: remembrance.”

– Miguel Amorós

Protestant couple: Princess Mary and her husband, William of Orange (AKA King Billy, whose picture adorns so many gable-ends in Belfast). William was King James's nephew, and Mary was King James's daughter. **William and Mary signed the English Bill of Rights, which laid the foundation for a centralised nation state that over the next 200 years would come to dominate the world.** By getting rid of an archaic absolutist Roman Catholic monarchy, Britain got a hundred years' start on France, and in the 18th-century its comparatively rationalised and centralised state would outpace the Bourbon monarchy in the race to despoil the world. For the merchant class this was great news, but it was obviously bad news for the Stuart Dynasty and the Kings of France. In 1745, while the French monarchy and the British state were busy fighting over territories in India and Canada (and over some weird business to do with an Austrian princess), the grandson of the king who'd been deposed in 1689 – Bonnie Prince Charlie – decided he would reclaim the thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland. He landed with seven mates in the Outer Hebrides and tried to persuade the Highland clans to fight for him.

Now, traditionally, the Highland clans had never needed a good reason to go to war; on the Isle of Skye [ed. – in modern Gaelic, *Sgiathanach*], for instance, the MacLeods and the McDonalds fought

each other for hundreds of years, until, in 1600, the MacLeod Chief's sister was wed to the MacDonald chief's son. It seemed this might finally end the feud, but after the MacLeod girl somehow lost an eye, the MacDonalds returned her to her brother on a one-eyed horse led by a one-eyed servant and a one-eyed dog, which led to the War of the One-Eyed Woman. So, all things considered, why not fight for some dandy who wanted to sit on a fancy chair?

With the Highlanders providing the muscle, Charlie and his seven mates managed to conquer the whole of Scotland and most of England, before changing their minds and walking all the way back to the Highlands. Exhausted and hungry, many of the Highlanders began to desert back to their villages, and Charlie's diminished force was comprehensively defeated at the Battle of Culloden, near Inverness. The Prince escaped and hid in a succession of caves, before disguising himself as a woman and rowing to the Isle of Skye, from where he returned to France. Back on the continent, he had an affair with his cousin and became an alcoholic, which suggests that he'd have thrived in Scotland had he been able to stay a little longer.

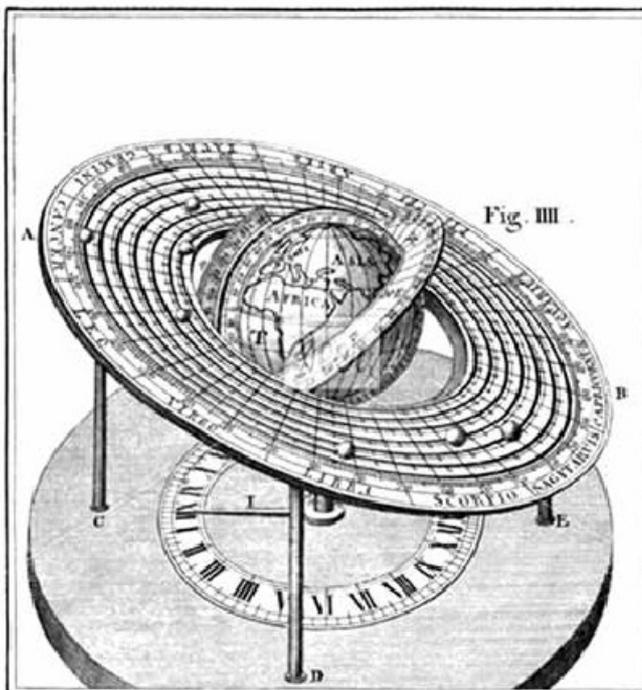
From our perspective what matters is that after this episode the Highlands were occupied by the Crown's soldiers, and Highland chiefs were forbidden from commanding armed men. This meant they no longer had any use for their clan members besides accumulating wealth from their labour. As industrial cities expanded in England and lowland Scotland, there developed a great demand for wool and meat, and soon the clan chiefs realised they could make more money from running a sheep farm – or selling the land to a sheep farmer – than they could ever make from the meagre rents paid by their impoverished tenants. **So those tenants were forced off the land to make way for the sheep, and many emigrated to work in Glasgow and Edinburgh's developing industries,¹ or to New**

1 ed. – In turn the following generations in Glasgow saw a fierce rent strike in 1915, as landlords attempted to capitalise on many poor households being reduced by the men being called up in the First World Slaughter; they underestimated 'Mrs. Barbour's Army' (as the strikers were named after Mary Barbour, a worker of the southern part of the Govan neighbourhood), who fought police and had workers at the armament factories threaten strike in solidarity. As often the case with rent strikes, organising activity was at a distance from Leftist institutions but

Zealand or North America, where in turn they would speed the disentanglement of the Maori and the Native Americans.

But this mass emigration was paused during the Napoleonic wars at the start of the 19th-century. So long as the Peninsular War was ongoing, it was difficult to import Spanish *barilla*, which at that time

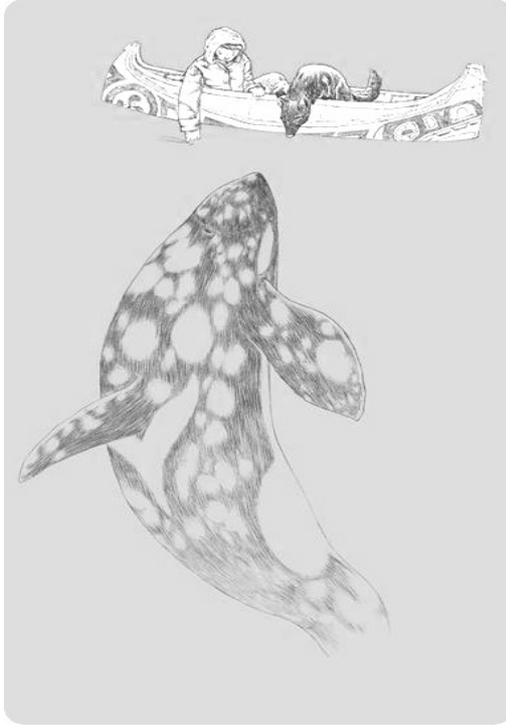
was used to manufacture soap and glass. One viable alternative was kelp, and so, as the value of kelp inflated, the Highland lairds [ed. – i.e. lords] lobbied for legislation to increase the price of transatlantic freight beyond the means of the peasantry.



The clearances continued but instead of being forced to emigrate, the crofters were relocated to smallholdings of infertile coastal land, where they had to supplement their incomes by collecting seaweed. For a time, Lord MacDonald made £14,000 a year selling kelp for £20 a ton, while paying only 30s a ton for its production. **But when the Napoleonic Wars ended, the kelp industry collapsed and the crofters were left to support themselves from their diminished plots.** As in Ireland, people became dependent on the potato, and when the European potato blight hit the Hebrides in 1846, the crofters were driven to eating roots and seaweed. Whole families were dying of scurvy, typhus, and cholera. The fourth Lord MacDonald bought a cargo of meal in Liverpool to alleviate the suffering of his starving tenants, but meal prices were rising every day that winter, and so he sold the cargo in London at a substantial profit.

instead took place in streets as well as the kitchens and wash-houses that defined the initiators and leaders of that struggle like many others: those relegated to the 'feminised' sphere of the home and social reproduction. Later feminists sharpened the critique precisely of these spaces of triple exploitation (by landlords, husbands, and the State) and reproductive labour in contexts such as the rent strikes and 'auto-reductions' of utility bills that accompanied the autonomist movement in 1970s Italy.

Eventually the Highlanders, unlike their Gaelic brethren in Ireland, benefitted from a substantial relief effort, and the famine abated, but conditions for crofters remained abject. John MacPherson, who became the best known of the Skye agitators, was unusual among crofters in that he was literate and bilingual (most spoke only



Gaelic), and in 1883 he provided a vivid account of life in a Skye crofting community. "We have very miserable dwelling houses," he explained. "They are thatched with straw; and as our crofts do not produce the required amount of straw for fodder for the cattle and thatch for our houses, and as we are prohibited from cutting rushes or pulling heather by the proprietor, the condition of our dwelling-houses in rainy weather is most deplorable." Crofters could be jailed for the crime of collecting heather from the hillside, and so "Above our beds come down pattering the rain, rendered dirty and black by the soot on the ceiling." According to Macpherson, of the twenty crofters' houses in his settlement, there were only two in which the cattle did not share the same room as the family. **When those who lived in the coastal settlements of the Braes were denied their ancient right to graze their cattle on the slopes of Ben Lee, they launched a rebellion that spread across the Hebrides and provoked the last naval invasion on British land.**

The Battle of the Braes

Today, Ben Lee, overlooking the Sound of Raasay, is an unremarkable and economically insignificant hillside. But in 1865, when the crofters' landlord, MacDonald of Sleat, let out Ben Lee to a sheep farm, it was a devastating blow for his already impoverished tenants. For fifteen years they stoically endured the confiscation of their grazing rights, but when the sheep farm's lease expired, they petitioned the landlord to reinstate their rights to Ben Lee in exchange for a fair rent. When the petition went ignored, the crofters declared a rent strike, and drove their animals onto the hill in violation of the law.

So on the 7th April 1882, Sheriff Office Martin and a small entourage left the island's capital, Portree, to deliver eviction notices to some of the most senior and troublesome tenants. Their party was intercepted at the north entrance to the Braes and surrounded by a jeering mob of 150 women, men, and children. They ceremonially burned the eviction notices, and then, as the *Aberdeen Daily Free Press* reported, "Certain domestic utensils [*ed. – i.e. chamber-pots*], fully charged, were suddenly brought on the scene, and their contents were showered on the unlucky assistant, who immediately disappeared, followed by a howling crowd of boys."

This was intolerable, and the Sheriff of Inverness-shire was determined to put on a show of force. Since he had only 44 police at his disposal, he appealed to the City of Glasgow Police, who agreed to send 40 officers north. So on April 19th a combined force of Glasgow and Highland police marched into the Braes and made it as far as the entrance to Balmeanach.

Balmeanach still has a dozen or so houses, although most of them are holiday homes. The township is huddled on a plain of flat land between the sea and a steep embankment that's now thickly covered by trees and shrubs. As the police contingent attempted to escort their prisoners back to Portree, it was between this steep slope and the hillside that the fighting commenced.

The crofters, initially taken by surprise, were soon running from every house in Balmeanach and from the neighbouring communities. They ran from their homes and fields carrying whatever weapons they could find: stones, sticks, scythes, hoes. The battle was fought in weather that, according to a contemporary report, "for sheer brutal ferocity had not been experienced in Skye for a very long time." In the gale and deluge, the crofters began to chuck stones, while others attacked with branches and agricultural tools. The police baton charged unsuccessfully and soon they too resorted to hurling stones. Writing in the *Dundee Advertiser*, a journalist who had accompanied the police expedition, described how "Stones were coming down like hail, while huge boulders were hurled down before which nothing

could stand. These bounded over the road and descended the precipice with a noise like thunder.

(...) **Here and there a constable might be seen actually bending under the pressure of a well-directed boulder, losing his footing, and rolling down the hill, followed by scores of missiles.**"

Sometimes, as they fought hand to hand, police and crofters would slip in the mud and roll down the hillside together, crashing at the bottom of the slope. As the police escorted their prisoners towards Portree, they were attacked again and again. The reporter from the *Dundee Advertiser* saw "Sheriffs and Fiscals forgetting their dignity, and taking to their heels." It was amazing that nobody was killed: by the end of the battle, men and women lay stretched on the hillside with blood pouring from their heads. The exhausted police force made it to Portree with five prisoners, but they were booed and jeered by the townspeople, and they were soaked and covered in mud and blood. The Dundee reporter recalled seeing that "one of the Glasgow men had his nose almost cut through with a stone, and was terribly gashed about the brow."

The whole episode was a humiliation for the forces of law, and *The North British Daily Mail* satirised their expedition to the Braes with a parody of Lord Tennyson's famous poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade":

Forward, Police Brigade!
Charge each auld wife and maid!"
E'en though the Bobbies knew
Someone had blundered!
Their's not to make reply;
Their's not to reason why;
Their's but to do or die;
Into the valley of Braes
Charged the half-hundred.

The immediate effect of their humiliation was that there was no hope in Hell that the Glasgow police were ever again offering assistance. **This was a major problem for the Sheriff, since out on Skye's most westerly peninsula, in townships closer to the Outer Hebridean island of North Uist than to Skye's capital, an even more threatening rebellion was plaguing the landlords.** Again, a rent strike was provoked by the denial of grazing rights on a hill that had been let for sheep farming. Exhausted by the hostility he faced, the sheep farmer had declined to renew his lease, lamenting that the crofters "went about with pitch-forks and scythes and poles pointed with iron or steel, and it was a mercy no one would serve the processes upon them, or they would have murdered him sure enough. You cannot get a sheriff's officer to serve a process on any tenant in Skye." Recognising this, the Sheriff made an extraordinary appeal: he requested that Skye be invaded by a

British military and naval force. But the Lord Advocate for Scotland, J.B. Balfour, was at this stage unwilling to authorise military force, arguing that the enforcement of law ought to be handled by the police. And so, on 11th January 1883, an unfortunate Messenger at Arms was despatched from Glasgow to serve court orders on the highest-profile Glendale rebels. And you can probably guess what happened next.

The Glendale Land Revolt

Glendale is a scatter of two-dozen, white-rendered buildings, surrounded by undulating hunter-green moorland. It's along the coast from Dunvegan Castle, the ancient seat of the chiefs of the Clan MacLeod, in the shadow of MacLeod's Tables, two large flat-topped mountains plonked in the centre of the windswept Duirinish Peninsula. Glendale is big enough to have a café and a post-office/shop. The post-office and village shop is housed in a small, traditional "but and ben" building, with a roof of corrugated metal. There was also a post office in Glendale in March 1882, and it was there that notices appeared advising of the rent strike and warning that, "Any one of the tenants at Skinidin who will pay the rent, not only that his House and Property will be destroyed, but his life will be taken away or anyone who will begin backsliding. Not to be removed."

Nobody admitted affixing these notices, but the Landlord's representatives believed the most dangerous rebels were John MacPherson and four other men who lived further out the peninsula in the settlements of Upper and Lower Milovaig. It's a long walk to Lower Milovaig, and when you get there it feels like the edge of the world. Sea eagles nest in steep cliffs that plunge into Loch Pooltiel and seals bask on seaweed-green rocks. **In January 1883, the unfortunate Messenger at Arms never made it this far.**

On his journey from Dunvegan, he and two local police reached the bridge that crosses the Hamara River, and there the path was blocked by a crowd of 60 crofters. Along the glen, others were blowing horns to summon their neighbours. The river is two or three metres wide at this point, cutting its way through banks of fern and hawthorne, the water, in dry weather, shallow and calm. The Messenger at Arms approached the crowd with his ceremonial wand of peace upheld, but he later reported that "one of the men took hold of me and placed a short stick to my breast and with the assistance of another two or three gave me a push which shoved me back some four or five yards, saying 'turn back now, you won't be allowed to go further towards Milovaig.'" Then, in case this wasn't understood, the crowd,

which grew to number 200, followed the lawmen through the townships of Fasach, Colbost, and Skinidin, and drove them across the Brunigil Burn. Along the way they occasionally lobbed stones and tripped and clubbed their victims, while yelling "*Glacadh beo e, Am poll-mona gun cuir sinn e.*" (Let him be caught alive so that we can put him in a peat bog.) According to one version, by the time they'd been pushed off the estate, the Messenger and his assistant were vomiting blood.

Still determined to avoid military intervention, the government resolved to send a Hebridean Gaelic-speaking civil servant who had a reputation for assisting crofters. If anyone could reason with the Glendale rebels then it was Malcolm MacNeill. "Inhabitants of Glendale," he said, "I have come here to speak to you one last word on behalf of the Government. It may be that you are not aware how serious is the offence which you have committed in deforcing and maltreating an officer carrying out the orders of the Supreme Court." But once again the Government was underestimating the crofters: they knew exactly how serious the situation was, and they had no intention of going toe to toe with the British Army. But they also knew that public opinion was increasingly in their favour.

So, at this point, Macpherson and the others who were to have been summoned to court took the clever step of travelling to Edinburgh and voluntarily surrendering. They appeared at the Court of Session on February 20th, and through a Gaelic interpreter they were charged with offences including contempt of court and assaulting a shepherd who worked on the disputed Waterstein Hill. The accused used their court appearance as an opportunity to debate the land question, and when each was finally sentenced to two months in prison, the public benches rose to applaud them.

None of this did anything to dampen the revolt in Skye. As a correspondent telegraphed to The Dundee Evening Telegraph from the rebellious island, "The people now freely state that they will carry on the agitation to the bitter end, and will never surrender until their grievances are redressed. The sentence of the Court of Session has tended to cause the agitation to spread and take a deeper root and hold on the minds of the people."

In Ireland, similar disturbances had quickly been repressed with violence, but the people of the Highlands, who in the 18th-century had been despised and feared, had in the 19th-century been celebrated for their contribution to the British Army and defence of the empire. Plus, their way of life and their landscape had been romanticised in Victorian

art and literature. And so, instead of sending the army, the Government's next move was to establish a Committee of Inquiry "To inquire into the condition of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and all matters affecting the same or relating thereto, and to report thereon."

For a time, this had the desired pacifying effect. But when the Napier Commission, as the Committee became known, reported its conclusions, their recommendations fell far short of the crofters' demands. They proposed, for instance, that secure 30-year leases should be available, but only to those crofters who paid more than £6 a year in rent; in Lower Milovaig, nobody had a farm of that size. As Roger Hutchinson puts it in his excellent *Martyrs: Glendale and the Revolution in Skye*: "There would have been no place for MacPherson or any of his neighbours in Lord Napier's new Highlands."

And so the revolt restarted and spread across Skye and the Outer Hebrides. Rents went unpaid. Fences were cut in the night. Land was illegally occupied. Telegraph poles were cut down. Roads were blocked with boulders. Finally, in November 1884, the British government authorised a military invasion.



The Naval Invasion & the End of the Highland Clearances

War correspondents descended on Skye, reporting that the crofters were raising an army to fight the marines, and it was true that around Uig crofters had posted sentries to watch for the arrival of ships. But at the same time, John MacPherson and others were touring the island, urging the most militant crofters to offer no armed resistance. On the morning of 17th November, when two gunboats escorted HMS Assistance and 350 marines to the Bay of Uig, the invaders were met with a scene of total tranquillity. Confused, the boats waited in invasion formation, as the first seventy marines were dispatched to protect police in Uig. Desperate for a story, one correspondent reported that "an old crone" had "cackled" at the soldiers, but this was the extent of the disorder that he could relay.

On November 28th, two gunships docked at Colbost jetty having navigated the waters around Eilean Mor and other islets. As the landed troops began their



march to Glendale, they ascended the pass at Cnoc an t-Sithein, where they saw 600 crofters gathered in a glacial trough above the road. Fearing this was, finally, Skye's armed resistance, the soldiers readied their rifles and some took up positions on raised ground. When a cheer went up from the crowd of crofters, the soldiers imagined it was either a shout of derision or a battle cry. But as Hutchinson relates, "Luckily their senior officers, one of whom was riding a donkey and smoking a cigar, remained cool, because it was neither." In fact the crofters were cheering a speech by John MacPherson, who had told them to be unafraid and had pledged that the agitation would continue no matter how many police and soldiers the government sent. **As the troops passed, the crofters completely ignored them.** At the side of the B884, near where this incident took place, there stands a walled memorial "To commemorate the achievements of the Glendale land leaguers, 1882-1888."

The occupation lasted seven months and not a shot was fired. In fact, the major challenges the soldiers faced were dealing with the excited attentions of crowds of young boys, and trying to understand the flirtatious innuendos that were spoken in Gaelic by local girls. **In contrast, the police continued to be heckled and jeered.** When the soldiers left in 1885, the agitation restarted, but it was increasingly a parliamentary struggle: the 1884 Representation of the People Act had extended the franchise to all men paying an annual rent of £10 or more, and this included many of the more affluent crofters. The number of people eligible to vote in Inverness-shire, which included the Isle of Skye, rose from 1,664 to 10,265. At the 1885 General Election, the land leaguers stood five "Crofters' Candidates" in the Highlands, and four of them were elected. In 1886 the government agreed to pass the Crofters' Holdings Act, which secured land tenure and access to common grazing rights. It was the end of the Highland Clearances.

Scotland Today

It was certainly not the end of land injustice. Today, half of Scotland's non-public land is owned by 432

people, few of whom reside in the country. In March 2016, Conservative and Scottish National Party MPs voted down proposals that would have imposed limits on the amount of land that one individual can own. Across Scotland, tenant farmers continue to pay rent to rural lairds, even when their families have worked the land for generations.² While some land is owned by descendants of clan chiefs – in 2000, MacLeod of MacLeod attempted to sell the Cuillin Mountains, asserting his ownership based on a charter from 1611 – much of Scotland has been bought more recently; for instance, the third biggest landowner is Danish billionaire Anders Povlsen, who owns 265 square miles. The biggest landowner is Richard Scott, Duke of Buccleuch, who owns an area bigger than Hong Kong. Some of this land has belonged to his family since his great, great grandfather helped King James II bump off the Earl of Douglas. Some of it has belonged to his family only since the 17th-century, after Charles II conceived an illegitimate child with his great great great great great great great grandmother in Rotterdam. The struggle continues.



² ed. – Tenant farming was only ended in Ireland by the British Crown in 1903 due to another extensive rent strike in Roscommon County in 1901, including barricades and fighting with police, and illegal new home construction.

REBELS BEHIND BARS

– text by prisoners & repression news

Ten Years Since the Massacre in the San Miguel Prison: Memory & History of Struggle [+ update] (Chile)

[continued from *Return Fire vol.6 chap.1*]

Without doubt, there are places which store thousands of histories. If the high walls of the prisons could speak of the experiences of those who were (and are) locked up behind them, perhaps they would tell us many histories. They would tell us histories where poor people would be the protagonists, or perhaps they would tell us of the immense yearning for freedom that fills the hearts of those who populate the dungeons and cells.

Unfortunately, the prison walls are silent witnesses to the experiences of the people locked up behind them.

Telling what happens in these places is the responsibility of those of us who are kidnapped by power, and those of us who want to end the current system of terror.

The history of prisoners is our history and it cannot be lost. In the prisons, sadness reigns. It is the master and lord. It is present in the vast majority of the lives of those who pass through this grey place. The San Miguel Prison not only holds histories full of sorrow, but also many experiences of resistance and struggle.

In the early 1990's, the San Miguel Prison locked up several political prisoners. Men of different organizations filled the cells of the towers until their transfer to C.A.S. in 1994 – a transfer that the combatants resisted with weapons.

During the search of the cells after the confrontation, the guards found a Browning 7.65mm pistol with seven cartridges in the magazine; an Italian Trident 38 revolver; a Dachmaur pistol with 15 cartridges; a Llama 7.65mm; a brown purse with 13 bullets; another leather purse with 18 more bullets; a NEX brand cell phone and three homemade explosive devices.¹

In the confrontation, several jailers were injured as well as some inmates, including Mauricio Hernández

Norambuena. The commander Ramiro relates the story in the following way: *"I was wounded in the scuffle. I had never been shot before, and it was in prison where I was shot for the first time"*.²

The same event was told by Ricardo Palma Salamanca in an interview carried out in Paris on January 27th, 2019: *"Amidst the confrontation, they shot two people. I was also armed, but was not hit by a bullet."*

The weapons used in the resistance against the transfer to C.A.S. were originally intended for an escape. Mauricio Hernández tells the story as follows: *"We were able to get various weapons into the San Miguel Prison, and we designed a really interesting escape plan with help from the outside. People from Mapu-Lautaro and the MIR [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg73*] were involved. The idea was to escape in a large group. Outside there was support from around 15 or 20 combatants. There were sufficient weapons. But that plan failed."*

"The whole operation was organized. Those on the outside were to take a house that had a wall behind the prison, which they were going to explode. We had to go through a gate and exit there. A few days before we carried out the escape, we were transferred to C.A.S. At that point, the weapons we had gotten together for the escape were used to resist the transfer".³

This was not the only escape attempt at the San Miguel Prison. In 1997, a group of ex-members of the FPMR [ed. – *communist Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front*] attempted to leave the prison through the roof, using a system of ropes and pulleys, in order to reach one of the streets that borders the prison. The failed escape attempt led to a riot, and the prisoners who participated were transferred to the prisons of Colina I and Colina II. Among them was Jorge Saldivia who was killed in 2012 during a bank robbery.

The walls don't speak, but they hold marks which are sometimes difficult to erase. Many inmates say that in Tower 5 of the San Miguel Prison, where 81 prisoners were burned to death, the stains of the bodies were never completely erased...the inmates say that the marks seem to be of oil, and that no matter how much wax and paint they put on the floors and walls, they are always different from the other parts of the prison.

1 Interviews with Ricardo Palma in the book "Retorno desde el punto de fuga" by Tomás García

2 "Un paso al frente" Mauricio Hernández Norambuena

3 *ibid.*

There are many anecdotes related to ghosts and spirits in Tower 5, beliefs, myths or realities...however the death of the 81 prisoners does not go unnoticed by the inmates of Tower 5, and should not go unnoticed by any prisoner.

Ten years since the massacre in the San Miguel Prison: Active and combative memory!

Until all cages are destroyed!

– **Mónica Caballero Sepúlveda**

Anarchist prisoner



To contextualise the above contribution from Mónica, some recent history is in order. Last December, Mónica and her co-arrestee Francisco (who is not in the San Miguel prison but the high-security wing of the *Cárcel de Alta seguridad* or CAS, the maximum-security prison modeled on those in Germany and Ireland designed to break revolutionary prisoners of the last century) undertook a brief hunger-strike to re-establish prison visits which were then ruled out under quarantine measures; strikes and mobilisations on this same demand were active throughout the Chilean prison system at the time.

In March, the two anarchists joined many others in an indefinite liquid hunger-strike demanding the release of Marcelo Villarroel Sepúlveda (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg92**) as well as of “all the subversive and anarchist prisoners and prisoners of the Mapuche liberation struggle [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg59**] and of the revolt” (i.e. across the Chilean territory which formed the context for Mónica and Francisco's arrest), and specifically a repeal of a law which “considerably toughens the possibility of accessing the so-called conditional release, extending in some cases for decades – affecting a large number of prisoners who see their sentence become permanent.” The strike lasted into May; in a letter at the end of the strike, the comrades reflected that “*Thousands of lessons can be drawn from these 50 days. The essential thing is the strength of our convictions which, since the deepest horizontality, in affinity and mutual aid, has succeeded, through a plurality of forms of action, to pass our demands in many languages and in many different territories, by deepening the anti-carceral struggle of our time.*”

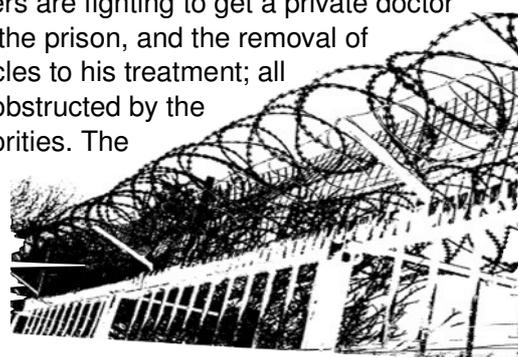
However, by the first week of June a blow was delivered to this vibrant circle of imprisoned rebels

when the CAS transferred out a large number of inmates to another prison nearly 100 kilometers away from Santiago and their support networks (and with notably worse conditions due to being privatised); ostensibly to conduct works on the CAS. Mónica wrote at that time that “*It is also important to emphasize that in the territory dominated by the Chilean State, free transit between regions is not allowed due to measures for the prevention of the spreading of Covid 19.*”

In the Metropolitan region there are at least three prisons to which they could have taken my comrades, perhaps the powerful took advantage of this transfer to isolate and further segregate the prisoners, perhaps none of the nearby prisons meets the security conditions to guard high-risk prisoners, or it could simply be just another form of revenge. ”

Once there, they were additionally subjected to 14 days of round-the-clock isolation as a COVID-prevention measure (despite not having had any contact with other prisoners). For these reasons, little more than a month after the considerable previous strike, the transferred comrades once again launched a mobilisation to refuse food and liquids, which lasted until the end of the month. Close to 40 prisoners participated; on June 9th, disorder broke out in the module containing Francisco and the other comrades transferred from the high-security wing with paper and materials burned until the jailer-firefighters took them out of their cells, finally breaking their isolation that way.

Francisco benefited briefly from the subsequent relaxation of hard COVID measures and was 'released' from the highest-security cells into wider prison population, but on September 22nd was hospitalised with diabetes; the comrade was on the verge of a coma. The jailers responded by returning him to the high-security wing after he had achieved the most minimal stabilisation! His glucose levels are still not recovered, and he is experiencing significant vision loss without receiving any medical attention in this regard; as of the end of September his comrades reported that the prison conditions were “worsening our comrade's health condition day by day.” Currently his supporters are fighting to get a private doctor admitted to the prison, and the removal of other obstacles to his treatment; all of which is obstructed by the prison authorities. The struggle will continue.



Springtime Smoke Signals

[+ update] (France)

On May 19 [2021], after eight months in pretrial custody in the Nancy prison, state agents will be putting the anarchist B. on trial for an arson attack on two cellular relay towers during the big lockdown [*of spring 2020*]. It's well known that solidarity means attack, and here is a perfect opportunity to not leave a companion alone against these scumbags in robes, while also continuing the urgent task of demolishing the old world...

Salins-les-Bains (Jura), April 10, 2020. While self-isolation was in full swing all over the world, an anarchist climbed the slopes of Mount Poupet. With conviction and determination, this person made two big relay towers go up in smoke before disappearing into the night. These antennas were used by the police and the gendarmes as well as by telecom companies. This was far from the only action, since at least 174 other towers have officially been sabotaged all across France in the past year, half of them by fire. And on top of that, there is of course all the sabotage that's taken place against fibre optic cables, telecom companies, and companies that supply cables and electronic equipment.

The powerful consider it unacceptable in itself for a single person who believes in freedom to go for a stroll under the stars and break links in the digital chains that bind e-commuters to their exploiters and students to their classrooms, to interrupt the flows of technological control. **But since this act was part of a larger struggle, stubbornly diffuse and formless, the justice system really got riled up,** as well as Oracle, a group created by the powerful specifically for such situations. Oracle launched a speedy investigation with the support of the local police from Dijon and a division of the Besançon gendarmes, since a previous arson on March 27 in that city had destroyed a tower belonging to the telecom company SFR on Mount Brégille.

The least we can say is that they didn't skimp on resources in the months after finding some DNA at the foot of the scorched tower that they attributed to B., a companion well known for his subversive ideas: the GIGN came down from Paris to put him under surveillance. They followed him, installed a camera in front of someone's home, attached GPS trackers to vehicles belonging to his friends, got authorization to install microphones in apartments and even in public squares. They used IMSI catchers [*ed. – see **Return***

Fire vol.4 pg7] to listen in on telephone conversations and carried out simultaneous searches in three residences. **And for all this they didn't get much.** Not only did they repeatedly lose track of our hardy anarchist cyclist during their investigation, they also had to withdraw the charges connected to the Besançon arson (although the investigation is likely still ongoing against others). They were left with no choice but to conclude that B. had destroyed the two relay towers in Salins-les-Bains alone, which he had clearly told them when he took responsibility for his actions following his arrest on September 22, 2020.

After locking B. up in the Nancy-Maxéville prison and launching their inquiry the judge and her colleagues continued the dirty work: they denied B.'s request to be released on bail with an ankle bracelet in February, then refused to allow visits from any non-family members until the inquiry wrapped up in March, and then the prosecution tried to coerce him into expressing regret and penitence by offering a pseudo sentence reduction through a plea deal – which B. refused without hesitation. Finally, they announced he was scheduled for trial on May 19 of this year.



In our world, the electronic leashes are tightening and being permanently connected is a core part of state and capitalist restructuring – as enemies of authority, of course our attention will turn

towards infrastructure like relay towers and the spreading web of fibre optic cables. We will also be paying attention to the producers and installers of cables, towers, and networks, like Axione (Bouygues), Axians (Vinci), Circet, Construtel, Dorsalys (Eiffage), Nexans, SNEF, Sogetrel and Sopelec, some of which received friendly visits in recent months. In this moment where the ravages of the techno-industrial system on the planet and on our minds becomes more obvious by the day, opposing it without concession is truly the least we can do. Those of us who refuse to give up and accept the technological paradise will of course continue to do so... Sometimes the springtime sky is so clear that it seems like a smoke signal could reach someone behind even the tightest of bars.

*Solidarity is attack
Freedom for all!*

– Some anarchists, in complicity and solidarity



Since the previous article was written, Boris – as the comrade has now been named by his supporters – was put on trial in May this year and sentenced to 4 years prison (to serve at least 2) plus a hundred thousand euros in damages. He was subjected to the process via video-link (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg90**). French media have devoted considerable attention to the wave of arsons against telecommunications – though also other digital¹ – infrastructure during the first year of the COVID pandemic in Europe, giving air to muttering of the intelligence services about the few anarchists and “ultra-leftists” whose websites publicise and promote such action (though the majority of this wave, with the exception of Boris' actions, does not necessarily seem to be from our camp). About his trial, Boris reports the judge predictably coming to *“the refrain of the [ed. – hypothetical] poor sick citizen who can't call the hospital anymore, from the depths of his countryside, to be treated.*

I simply retort that it is time to learn to live with each other, what society has taken away from us by isolating us behind machines, with screens making us blind, blinders making us deaf to the atrocity of this world, which exploits, poisons and kills living beings, human and non-human. I then give a personal example, about the fact that I myself grew up without a cell phone and that there was certainly more mutual aid and support between people, a time when we didn't need an application to talk to each other, to meet each other, to kiss each other...”

In addition, more details than mentioned above have come to light about the police investigation into anarchist circles in the same areas of France. The following is published by 'Anarchists from Besançon': *“In Besançon, a few months after Boris' imprisonment, at least two people have been approached by the cops since the beginning of 2021. If we don't know what happened to the first one, the second one has been approached several times. A classic move; blackmail for papers combined with, as is often the case, isolation, precariousness, possible legal problems, or simply the fact that these people*

1 “No fewer than 20 coordinated sabotages took place in the Paris region on 5 May on the fibre optic network, causing many employees to stop teleworking, several police stations to stop communicating, and several companies, such as the online poker site Winamax, to cease trading. Their system is everywhere, diffuse. That makes it vulnerable: internet cabinets on every street corner, cables in every sewer, base stations on every hilltop” (Burning the Centers of the Technological Virus).

gravitate towards the periphery of anarchist militant circles.

It all starts with a first meeting: they are offered a job, money or accommodation in exchange for information. They are told that they will be able to speed up their administrative procedures, and that they will be slowed down if they refuse. Under pressure, this person thus put his finger in the gears and agreed to go to regular meetings with plainclothes cops in a park near the police station.

His missions were the following, while the investigation against Boris was not closed and he was still under investigation for “criminal association”:
– *To participate in collecting information about people designated as close to him, to locate the relationships between them and to identify vulnerabilities/pressure tactics, to be on the lookout for future actions of support/solidarity.*

– *going to militant places and events (outdoor struggle assemblies, canteens) to identify the presence of particular anarchists, understand the links between groups and individuals in the same city, identify political connections between different cities.*

– *identify certain profiles and attitudes: potential saboteurs, people who are more vehement or charismatic than others (in their own image, the cops are always looking for a leader!)*

This kind of situation is very disturbing and cannot be ignored. The manipulation of cops has no limits, and the use of informants has always been part of their methods to map subversive and anarchist networks and try to glean sensitive information.

We can't say it often enough: it's useless to think you're a double agent, *it would be known by now if it worked. Talking to the cops is playing their game and exposing yourself to further pressure. Talking to them means informing them, even in a harmless way, for example by divulging details that are not meant for them. Talking to them means putting others at risk.*

To talk to them is to collaborate. *To talk to them is to betray those close to you and to lose any bond of trust while ruining your militant life.*

The eyes and ears of the state will never cease to intrude into our intimate and political lives, with technology as well as with human intelligence.

In the face of this, let's be careful everywhere and all the time without becoming paranoid, by finding ways to build and deepen relationships of trust and affinity, while learning in general not to speak lightly, including among ourselves.”

Finally, the most heart-rending news we must add to this timeline is that – as of August 7th 2021 – Boris has been in an induced coma in the burns unit of Metz hospital, his condition life-threatening, his respiratory tract highly damaged by smoke and ash following a mysterious fire in his cell. **Because of this, judges at his scheduled appeal trial in late September “released” him without any controls (though this is only until he is judged well enough to return to trial and prison...).** As of the end of November, he is still not able to speak or write, nor is it known when and if he will recover. Let's keep the comrade present in our thoughts and deeds, and always with the hatred in our hearts for the system that confined him to these death-traps.

'WITHIN OUR REACH EVERYWHERE'

In solidarity with Boris, who has been in a coma for a month now following a fire in his cell, an Orange vehicle was set on fire in front of the Orange offices in downtown Grenoble on Sunday night.

Why Orange? Simply because we read the minutes of Boris' trial, and we saw that Orange, through its lawyer, tried to push our companion to the maximum. Of course the judges, prosecutors and wardens are just as responsible for his situation, but we wanted to start a campaign against Orange, because it is easily within our reach everywhere: slashed tires, broken store windows, tags, burned cars, burned antennas, etc., **there is something for everyone who wants to take part in this little campaign, to show that we do not forget Boris and that we think of him,** with our heads held high, our hearts burning!

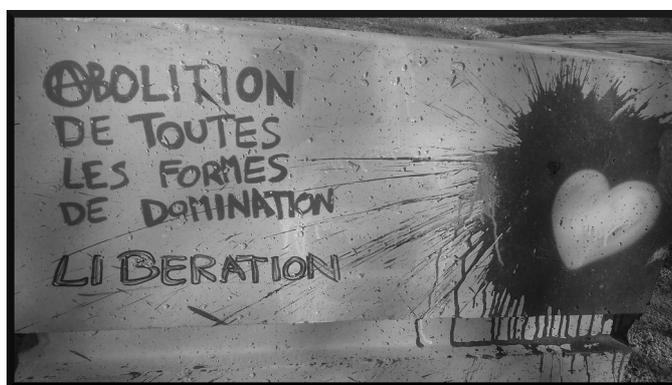
We take advantage of this little communiqué to participate in the debate on anarchist solidarity. For us this solidarity should not be limited to repression, because society has many ways to destroy us, and in all these situations it seems important to us that anarchists support each other, to show that affinity is not just an empty word. Especially since the beginning of the Covid crisis, which has considerably isolated many anarchists. We also wanted to say that solidarity is not only attacking, that there are many ways to express solidarity with the anarchists around us.

We also take the opportunity to express aloud the thorny problem of attack targets, which in the last years have become a common point with fascists/conspis. From antennas (remember that in almost all the antenna burning trials in France Boris was the only person who did not express conspiracy

ideas), to vaccination centers. **What does this say about current anarchism? And how can we not confuse anarchist acts with conspiracy acts, and why is this important? That leftists have been pounding the pavement hand in hand with fascists/conspis for weeks should alert us to the danger of the idea of common struggle, which means that we don't care who we struggle with as long as we have the same practices and the same target.** We forget that these people whose actions we applaud or with whom we demonstrate have positions opposed to ours on almost everything, and that we would be their target in other contexts.

Full of strength and courage for Boris and his family!

– Refractories in solidarity



'ABOLITION OF ALL FORMS OF DOMINATION
LIBERATION'

Lisa on the Street with Conditions (Spain)

[continued from Return Fire vol.5 pg95]

As reported last chapter, Lisa opted for deportation back to the Spanish State from Germany. as of last summer. The following news was posted to Barcelona Indymedia this spring: “After 3 and a half years of closed prison and 1 and a half in so-called “semi-liberty”, on Monday 19 April 2021, having completed 2/3 of her sentence, she has been given parole, a measure that can be revoked or suspended at any moment if the authorities decide that the conditions have not been met.

We want to thank all those who have shown their solidarity and support to the comrade during this period, but don't forget that as long as prisons exist, no one will be free!

[...] Strength and solidarity to all those who struggle inside and outside the prisons!”

'THE DECOUPLING THESIS'



[This article was written as part of a longer work taking on the state of things in the world of 're-wilding', in its many forms. Rather than touch on the veritable industry that has cropped up around re-wilding as a lifestyle choice, the parts we reproduce here tackle that concept as used within so-called 'eco-modernism'; a bizarre ideology that is crossing over into more parts of the ecological, leftist and the worst of the anarchist scenes in the era of 'Green New Deals' and the like. It advocates acceleration of existing technological trends (nuclear energy, genetic modification, and even geo-engineering: see **Return Fire vol.3 pg8**), rejecting all limits, and trusting that sufficiently insulating humans from the rest of the living world – so-called 'nature' – apart from each other and their technologies, in hyper-dense urban conditions so as to leave a large 'outside', will lead to ecological regeneration of the latter. (Aside from the blatant mobilisation of the philosophy, failed as well as genocidal, of considering sufficiently-civilised humans as apart from nature – while 'natural' indigenous peoples and their ecologies can continue to be plundered to support that civilisation – it's ironic they chose the word 'eco-' when ecology is supposedly the study of precisely how interconnected the relationships between all parts of life are, not how easily they can be 'de-coupled'.)]

Of course, this jives quite well with established Leftist orthodoxy of the socialist tradition; epitomised today most clearly in the call for 'Fully Automated Luxury Communism', but present in a more muted degree behind many other tendencies too. Best-selling UK author (as well as advocate of nuclear power, and critic of anarchism) George Monbiot for example cashed in on the re-wilding craze with a vision of a 'Feral' future that is emphatically not about de-civilising humans – indeed, he reassures us that many of us could continue working the same jobs as before in his scenario, joy of joys! – and while surely he would reject eco-modernism in principle as overly techno-optimist, leaves the door wide open for its entry in this way. As for eco-modernism's militant wing, see the supplement to this chapter; **Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism**.

We must say that we didn't warm much to this author, John Jacobi, or his own vision which (at least at the time he was writing these texts) owed a little too much to the very 'deep ecology' tradition that he critiques, including its influential Dave Foreman; the latter's rejection of 'un-natural altruism', as Jacobi implies it below, lead to his vociferous defence of border regimes for 'environmental protection'. While we like the basic sentiment of this article, and the way he relates it to eco-modernism, we also think that with the range of important (often indigenous) voices in circulation well within reach of anti-industrial critics today, we can do a bit better for source material than Sigmund Freud.... Jacobi is also known for his support for what some have called imperial science (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg33**), doubling down on the most imperial parts when taken to task in print by Alex Gorrion on the matter (see the latter's 'Science Revisted' and earlier 'Science' at theanarchistlibrary.org.)]

Lately a new kind of rewilding has been

gaining ground: the 'rewilding' of ecomodernists. Ecomodernism claims that technological progress will 'decouple' civilised people from the land, allowing them to continue living comfortable, modern lives while reducing their influence on the nature around them. Accelerate technological progress; intensify production in civilised areas through aquaculture and industrial farming; shuffle rural people into cities: this, they say, leaves and will leave vast regions of the Earth to the wild.

Outside of the decoupling thesis, ecomodernism's version of rewilding is more obviously revisionist. For example, some ecomodernists advocate 'de-extinction', or using biological technologies to revive extinct species, so that they can reintroduce those species to their once native habitats. While considering these ideas, I have always been struck by a comparison with the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, 'to repair the world'. In recent years, left-wing Jewish groups have utilised this concept to push a narrative of progress, emphasising the fight for social justice as the most important element. But the man who taught me of *tikkun olam* repudiated these hubristic interpretations, stressing that the concept came from the *Aleinu* prayer, in which the Jewish people collectively pray for God to 'remove all idols from the Earth, and to completely cut off all false gods; to repair the world.' **As I learned it, these idols include man's [sic] unending faith in himself to fix the world.**

The debate about rewilding is like the debate about *tikkun*. Ecomodernists have declared that 'this is the earth we have created', so we should 'manage it with love and intelligence' to create 'new glories'. They call this 'rewilding'. But rewilding is not about continuing technical domination; it is about removing the idols of Progress, the dams, the roads, the corporations – and this includes man's unending faith in himself.

Many ecological philosophers and conservationists have already tackled the problems with ecomodernism. Eileen Crist writes:

Importantly, modern development proceeds by converting and exploiting a massive portion of the natural world, and that particular portion is not one humanity is decoupled from. The portion of the biosphere that modernization assimilates, humanity is and will be very much coupled with; except

that “coupled” is hardly the right word – comprehensively dominated is a more accurate depiction [...] On all fronts, industrial food production is a ruthless, machine-mediated subjugation of land and seas as well as of wild and domestic beings.

But Crist critiques ecomodernism from the perspective of bio- or ecocentrism – the original philosophical justifications Dave Foreman and others gave for rewilding – and ecocentrism, too, has some problems [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg24*]. It is a strain of ethics in the Deep Ecology tradition that argues that nature has intrinsic moral worth. Theorists argue over the unit of moral worth – is it the organism, the ecosystem, the biosphere? – but the end result usually looks the same: ecocentrists protect nature because nature is deserving of their moral consideration. And when they are against civilisation, they are against it for the sake of nature. Among other things, this idea leaves room wide-open for decoupling strategies. The ecomodernists are right: under this version of ecocentrism, accelerating the development of civilisation is desirable if it results in more wild lands. **It can only be rejected if we proudly claim that the whole point of preserving the wild is because we want to experience and ideally live in wilder conditions.** And there are even bigger problems with the philosophy.

Some argue that ecocentrism follows an observable trend of humans expanding their altruistic capabilities from the band to the tribe to the nation and now to all of humanity. The next step, clearly [ed. – to *Westerners in the Aristotelian 'Great Chain of Being' tradition; see Return Fire vol.4 pg95*], is to include non-human life. But this argument ignores an important point: an expanded ‘moral circle’ depends on and is the result of civilised infrastructure. Biologists have found that altruism in organisms, while an important part of their evolutionary strategy, evolves to only a limited degree. In humans, it seems as though natural altruism is limited to about 150 people [ed. – according to some... see *'The Position of the Excluded'*], after which groups need to devise rules, rituals, and other regulatory mechanisms to maintain cohesion. Of course, the exact number is irrelevant. The issue is that altruism beyond a certain point has to be instilled. This is the difference between *solidarity* – the altruism of natural man – and *civility*: the altruism of civilised man.

Norbert Elias writes about a historical example of moral cultivation in the first volume of his magnum opus *The Civilizing Process*. Elias argues that, instead of simply adopting [modern] European social mores, the people of the Middle Ages underwent a long period of education that shaped their behaviour

through shame, guilt, disgust, and other such feelings.

For instance, Elias reviews several etiquette manuals and points out that commands now reserved for children were being issued, regularly, to adults. People of the Middle Ages had to be told not to defecate on staircases and curtains, not to touch their privates in public, not to greet someone who is relieving themselves, not to examine their handkerchief after blowing into it, not to use various pieces of public fabric as handkerchiefs, not to use their eating spoon to serve food, not to offer food that they have bitten into, not to stir sauce with their fingers...

Beyond direct instruction, European society also developed taboos around sex, defecation, and urination; they passed laws; and they made non-compliance of cosmic importance by employing Christian dogma. In other words, the European ‘second nature’ developed only through multiple, interlocking systems and over a long period of time.

Elias argues that instilling a second nature into Europeans became necessary because right around the same time the patchwork of feudal territories, chiefdoms, and cities were being consolidated into much larger state-based societies. Nowadays, with states and their systems of education already established, a large-scale social transformation is unnecessary, and citizens usually go through the same processes of education in their youth.

Today the dominant ideology of global civilisation, in terms of power, is secular humanism [ed. – with some question marks over how secular any such concept can be; see *Return Fire vol.4 pg39*]. Among other things, this asserts that all of humanity belongs to a single moral community, and that each member of this community has a moral obligation to recognise all others’ rights and intrinsic dignity, which, conveniently, includes the right to live industrially. This is the ideology preached by the United Nations, universities, NGOs, and progressive corporations like Facebook. Connectedness between people becomes an important goal; development, another. The ideology is sustained by civilised infrastructure, like mass communication and transportation systems. Without it, humanism is untenable. Ecocentrism would be similarly untenable, because it further enlarges the moral circle to include non-humans. The

trick, however, is to reject the artificial moralities completely.

Let me be clear. *Solidarity*, cooperation and altruism in small, natural social groups, is necessary for human flourishing. The human animal needs mates, parents, peers, elders to go beyond simply surviving and to live well. But *civility* must be instilled; it is a technological modification. Consider Freud's thoughts on the matter in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, in which he writes that one of the characteristic elements of civilisation is 'the manner in which the relationships of men to one another, their social relationships, are regulated – relationships which affect a person as a neighbour, as a source of help, as another person's sexual object, as a member of a family and of a State' (much like social manners began to be regulated in the Middle Ages).

But Freud warns that the repressed elements of human nature may express themselves in two ways. On the one hand, these desires might be redirected toward problems within civil life '... and so may prove favourable to a further development of civilisation.' On the other hand, these desires 'may also spring from the remains of their original personality, which is still untamed by civilisation and may thus become the basis ... of hostility to civilisation. The urge for freedom, therefore, is directed against particular forms and demands of civilisation or against civilisation altogether.' **Rewilding cannot be about trying to create a particular form of civilisation, like expanding its concept of justice to include non-humans.** Rewilding will involve casting off the chains of artificial regulations that currently bind our 'original personality, which is still untamed'.

This kind of rewilding won't look at all like the kind that is found on websites with e-stores, on Instagram profiles, or in lifestyle magazines. It will, in fact, be regarded extremely negatively. For instance, in 1785 a group of freed and runaway slaves and white indentured servants settled in a wilderness area now known as Indianapolis. Peter Lamborn Wilson writes:

They mingled with Pawnee Indians and took up a nomadic life modeled on that of local hunter-gatherer tribes. Led by a 'king' and 'queen,' Ben and Jennie Ishmael, [...] they were known as fine artisans, musicians and dancers, abstainers from alcohol, practitioners of polygamy, non-Christian, and racially integrated [...] By about 1810 they had established a cycle of travel that took them annually from Indianapolis (where their village gradually became a city slum) through a triangle formed by the hamlets of Morocco and Mecca in Indiana and Mahomet in Illinois...

Later 'official' white pioneers detested the Ishmaels, and apparently the feeling was mutual. From about 1890 comes this description of an elder: 'He is an anarchist of course, and he has the instinctive, envious dislike so characteristic of his people, of anyone in a better condition than himself.' [...] The observer continues: 'He abused the law, the courts; the rich, factories – everything.' The elder stated that 'the police should be hanged'; he was ready, he said, to burn the institutions of society. 'I am better than any man that wears store clothes.'

Are we ready to be viewed like the Ishmaels?



THE SOCIETY OF MASTERLESS MEN

[*ed. – Continuing the above theme of drop-out rebels from the European colonial project, one from further north on the continent of Turtle Island: a revised version of a text by Seaweed, which he reworked a decade after its original publication.*]

When I began thinking about outlaws and outlaw history I realized that if outlaw just means one who breaks the law, then I could write about the lives of nearly every citizen. So, I define outlaw as one who not only breaks the law, but who *survives by breaking the law or consistently lives outside of it*. And the more I delve into Canada's past, the more outlaws I discover, many of them worthy of our attention. As an introduction to Canadian outlaw history, here is the story of a group of Newfoundland rebels who survived without masters for half a century.

The story of the Society of Masterless Men (which included women and children) began in the 18th-century settlement of Ferryland, in the eastern Canadian province of Newfoundland.

Newfoundland was part of the traditional territory of the Beothuk – a Mi'kmaq-related, hunter-gatherer people who no longer exist as a distinct group,

resulting from the invasion and occupation of their lands by the British Empire.

In order to colonize Newfoundland, the British Empire created plantations. These were settlements of indentured servants, primarily Irish, many of them very young – thus their name: the Irish Youngsters – abducted from Ireland either by force or guile and brought to the south shore of Newfoundland where they were literally sold to fishing masters. Their price: \$50 a head.

In 1700s Newfoundland, the British Navy wielded its authority over its seamen with zero compassion, nothing but discipline enforced by abuse and violence. Because there wasn't a local police force, they also helped reinforce the authority of the local fishing masters. These masters were essentially the Lords and Ladies of the villages, living in luxury and security while surrounded by dozens, even hundreds, of indentured servants who fished and labored in the camps processing the catch. **These village plantations were primarily set up by consortiums and cabals of wealthy merchants in England. British frigates were stationed in the harbors and marines patrolled the town.**

The workers in these fishing villages were essentially in bondage. Corporal punishment was routine and everyday life was harsh and brutal. In the small settlement of Ferryland, for instance, there were three whipping posts and a gallows located in separate regions of the town. When a man was sentenced to be flogged for stealing a jug of rum or refusing to work for one of the fishing masters, he was taken to all three posts and whipped at each, so the whole town would have an opportunity to witness the punishment as a warning.

The settlement of Ferryland was founded by Sir George Calvert around 1620, and was also partly intended as a "refuge for ...Catholics." I'm not sure if this meant strictly for the Catholic servants or if there were any "free" Catholics as well. This was a time of penal law and repression of Catholicism in Britain and at least some Irish Catholics voluntarily came to the New

World to escape persecution. Unfortunately, the laws in Newfoundland were the same as in the Old World. The orders given to the governor from 1729 to 1776 were: "*You are to permit a liberty of conscience to all, except Papists, so they be contented with a quiet and peaceable enjoyment of the same, not giving offense or scandal to the government.*"

This order wasn't always strictly followed but around the mid 1700's there was a crackdown on Catholicism. In 1743 the governor of the time, Smith,

"I thought of [Nathaniel] Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

You may remember the story. In case you've forgotten, I'll remind you. The setting is the New England of the earliest Founding Fathers of American Democracy. The story begins in the chapter titled "The Market Place," on "*the grass plot before the jail, in Prison Lane.*" On a certain summer morning, "*the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people... could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit, on whom the sentence of a legal tribunal had but confirmed the verdict of public sentiment.*" The culprit might be "*a sluggish bond servant, or an undutiful child,*" "*an idle and vagrant Indian,*" or it "*might be, too, that a witch... was to die upon the gallows.*"

On this particular morning, the culprit was a young woman who had given birth to a child, a baby girl whose father was not the young woman's long-absent husband. For this crime, not against nature but against the laws of legislators democratically elected in a renowned New England town council, Hester, the culprit, is not only imprisoned; she is condemned to wear a brand on her breast, a scarlet letter "A", as a lifelong reminder and visible sign of her "sin." She was further condemned, on emerging from prison, to climb a scaffold which "*constituted a portion of the penal machine,*" the platform of the pillory, where she was to expose herself and her brand to "*the stings and venomous stabs of public contumely, wreaking itself in every variety of insult.*" Above her were "*the Governor and several of his counsellors, a judge, a general, and the minister of the town; all of whom sat or stood in a balcony of the meeting house, looking down upon the platform... They were, doubtless, good men, just and sage.*"

But out of the whole human family, it would not have been easy to select the same number of wise and virtuous persons who should be less capable of sitting in judgment on an erring woman's heart..." The repression of an individual by the iron machinery of the State has rarely been so powerfully depicted. Yet this is only the beginning of the story. The sequel is an unrelenting exposure of the Bigotry, in its various guises, of the founders of the American Way of Life.

One of the ministers on the balcony overlooking the platform is "*the Reverend Master Dimmesdale, her godly pastor,*" of whom one of the spectators says that he "*takes it very grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation.*"

And one of the spectators is the long-absent husband, turning up just in time to see his branded wife, clutching another man's child, on the platform of the pillory. This man changes his name to Chillingworth and undertakes to find the father of his wife's child. His researches quickly lead him to "*the Reverend Master Dimmesdale, her godly pastor.*"

" – *The Machine Against The Garden: two essays on American literature & culture*

wrote to the magistrate in Ferryland, John Benger, instructing him to be mindful of the “Irish papists” in the area. William Keen the chief magistrate of St. John’s was killed by a group of Irishmen in 1752. Following this assassination, penal laws were strictly enforced for the next thirty or forty years.

Court documents from the Renewes area (the nearest settlement) show there was growing fear among the authorities of an insurrection. In fact, about fifty years earlier the French war ship *Profound* attacked Renewes, where there were seven ‘residents’ and one hundred twenty servant fishermen, many of whom were Irish. These servant-serfs were recorded as not caring who owned the place – that is, they didn’t jump up to protect their masters from the attack.

Life wasn’t much better for those in the British Navy patrolling the area. Food rations were slim and flogging was common. For instance keelhauling – dragging a seaman on ropes under the keel of a ship, thereby shredding his flesh on the sharp edged barnacles – was still a legal punishment even though it frequently resulted in death.

Some like to refer to the Society of Masterless Men as lore or a traditionally told story, one for which there is little documentary evidence. But there does seem to be a fair amount of facts that are known about the Masterless Men. And, as a matter of context, we know a lot about the injustice of the British Empire and of the cruelty of many of its enforcers. We know that indentured servants were brought to Newfoundland and treated brutally, as were the seamen in the Royal Navy. We also know that one Irish-born Peter Kerrivan was among those young indentured servants and abused seamen. Some say he was a reluctant seaman, having been pressed into service.



Depiction of common 1700s practice of press-ganging (i.e. forced recruitment), and the resistance to it

Some time in 1750, while Kerrivan’s ship was docked in Ferryland, he escaped (historians usually choose the word, “deserted”). Together with two or three escaped fishermen, he helped establish a lookout and base in the Butter Pot Barrens, a wild area of the Avalon Peninsula, for the outlaws to hide. This was the beginning of The Society of Masterless Men.

Hunted by the authorities, the Masterless men soon established a way of life based on subsistence skills and sharing. Apparently, they came into contact with Newfoundland’s aboriginal peoples, the Beothuk, who taught the rebels survival skills. They learned how to hunt for food primarily based on the caribou herd on the Peninsula.

At the time, one could be hanged for running away, but nevertheless many young men escaped from the plantations and took up as outlaws. In 1774 a petition written by Bonavista merchants, justices of the peace, and others, was sent to Governor Shuldham, complaining of a number of “masterless” Irishmen who had gone to live in a secluded cove and “*were there building fishing rooms.*” Kerrivan’s band of young companions were among the luckiest and best organized.

Naturally word of the well organized free men spread and fresh runaways from coastal settlements came to join them. Eventually their numbers swelled to between twenty and fifty men. There were also women, but their numbers are unknown. **The literature I found mention the women simply as “wives”, although I imagine them as rebellious women sickened by the misery and cruelty that surrounded them who also yearned for a freer and better way of life** and who joined their outlaw husbands voluntarily.

After a while the group of comrades began trading caribou meat and hides with allies in the remote villages, receiving supplies such as flour, tea, and of course bullets. They also organized stealthy raids against the fishery plantations.

By this time the British authorities, without a police force or militia of their own, were beginning to fear that this group of anarchic rebels would inspire too many others to desertion, so they ordered the navy to track the freedom loving band down and make examples of them.

However, some years passed before the first expedition against the Masterless Men was organized and by then the rebels had become skilled wilderness

inhabitants. Anticipating the attack or perhaps somehow being forewarned, Kerrivan and his comrades cut a series of blind trails which confounded their pursuers. The party of marines sent to capture them often found themselves lost or led into bogs and impenetrable thick bush.

Eventually the navy did manage to close in on the rebels camp near their lookout, but they found the log cabins deserted, “*with every rag and chattel removed*”. Taking advantage of their pursuers confusion, Kerrivan and his friends had moved off the north and west. The navy set fire to their little village but had to return to their base without any prisoners. The Masterless group rebuilt their cabins and the navy burned them down again. The navy burned down their cabins three times and each time they were rebuilt.

Two, possibly four, of the rebels were captured and hanged, but the state never did succeed in destroying the Society. In fact, the young runaways who were captured had joined the band only a few weeks earlier and had been taken by surprise away from the main body of the rebels. They were hanged with great dispatch from the yard-arm of the English frigate in Ferryland. No other Masterless Men were ever captured after this incident, presumably because this only made the outlaws more cautious.

Some of the tracks that had been carved partly to support their wilderness ways and partly as subterfuge became Newfoundland’s first inland roads. In fact, their road system had eventually connected most of the small settlements of the Avalon Peninsula.

For more than a generation the Masterless Men roamed free over the barrens! Over time, perhaps as military rule began to relax or for reasons unknown to this author, their ranks began to dwindle. In 1789, thirty nine years after escaping, four men gave themselves up on condition that their only punishment would be deportation to Ireland, which was agreed upon. Many of the other rebels settled in remote parts of Newfoundland’s coast and survived as independent fishermen. **Kerrivan, who was never captured, is said to have had a partner, four sons, and several daughters, and is believed to have remained on the barrens well into old age, never returning to civilization.**

The children of the Masterless Men gradually drifted out to the coast and settled down in small coves never visited by the navy. They married the children of other outlaws who had settled there generations earlier and together they raised families.



The Society of the Masterless Men is exceptionally inspiring because they succeeded. A group of people voluntarily joined together in common cause and broke free from their masters, most never to be captured nor return to their work prisons.

There is still a lot of land out there. It isn’t nearly as overflowing with abundant wild life as it was pre-colonialism, thanks to the ecocides and environmental devastation wrought by industrialism, but a group of people with a similar world view could perhaps leave the brutal, empty world of the civilized behind and live their lives according to principles of voluntary association and mutual aid, supported by subsistence ways. If you live in the Americas, Australia, or New Zealand, keep in mind that much of the land has historic claims to it by their traditional occupants – peoples you could be consulting with, and joining, in their re-occupation efforts and resistance.



Clashes between indigenous Mi’kmaq warriors (preventing fracking) and cops in modern so-called ‘Newfoundland’; see Return Fire vol.1.2 pg61

**English-language
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, Secession, Subsistence (rejoining rebellion with the land) anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca

Anarchy Radio (streaming and downloadable hour of global news and anti-civilisation analysis, every Tuesday) johnzerzan.net/radio

A-News Podcast (weekly curation of selected posts and topics for those without time to read anarchistnews.org) podcast.anarchistnews.org

Autonomy News (UK & global) autonomynews.org

Bad News (collaborative presentation every month from audio shows across the world) aradio-berlin.org/en/tag/badnews

Ears & Eyes (multi-lingual, documentation of surveillance against our movements and spaces by states) earsandeyes.noblogs.org

Enough is Enough 14 (global) enoughisenough14.org

Indigenous Action Media (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

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.wordpress.com

Segadores (multi-lingual, anti-colonial anarchist analysis and translation) segadores.alscarrers.org

Warrior Up (sabotage techniques) warriorup.noblogs.org

**sources if not already cited:
(anonymous if unlisted)**

**'Necrophilic Logics & the
Revolt of the Imagination'**

– by Leila, from the Killing King Abacus Anthology

'What is Insurgency?'

– Insurgencies #1

'Insurgent Tactics 307'

– by Paul Z. Simons

'Ghosts'

– Otherworlds Review #2

'The In-Between Ones'

– from 'Trans(Eco) Futurism & Dreampunk', by So/@borealfaun

**'Hong Kong: Its Relevance to
the Rest of Us...'**

– by Sam FantoSamotnaf

'The Terrorist & the Tourist'

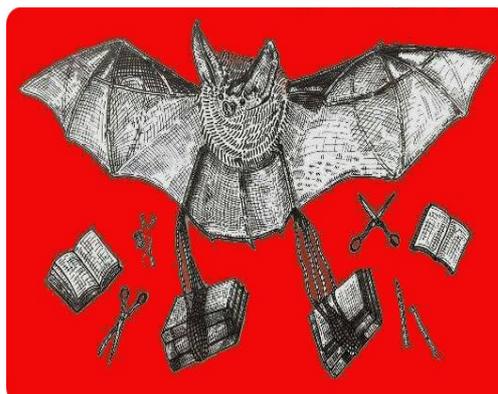
– from 'Overcoming Tourism', by Hakim Bey

'The Hebridean Land Revolt'

– by DD Johnston

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 a supplement; **'Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism: Andreas Malm's Authoritarian Leftist Agenda'**, by Klokkeblomst. If not included with this magazine, find the PDF online at our site.



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