

ORGANISE 96

UKRAINE

AIRIDESCENCE

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BRISTOL

DEFENDANT

SOLIDARITY

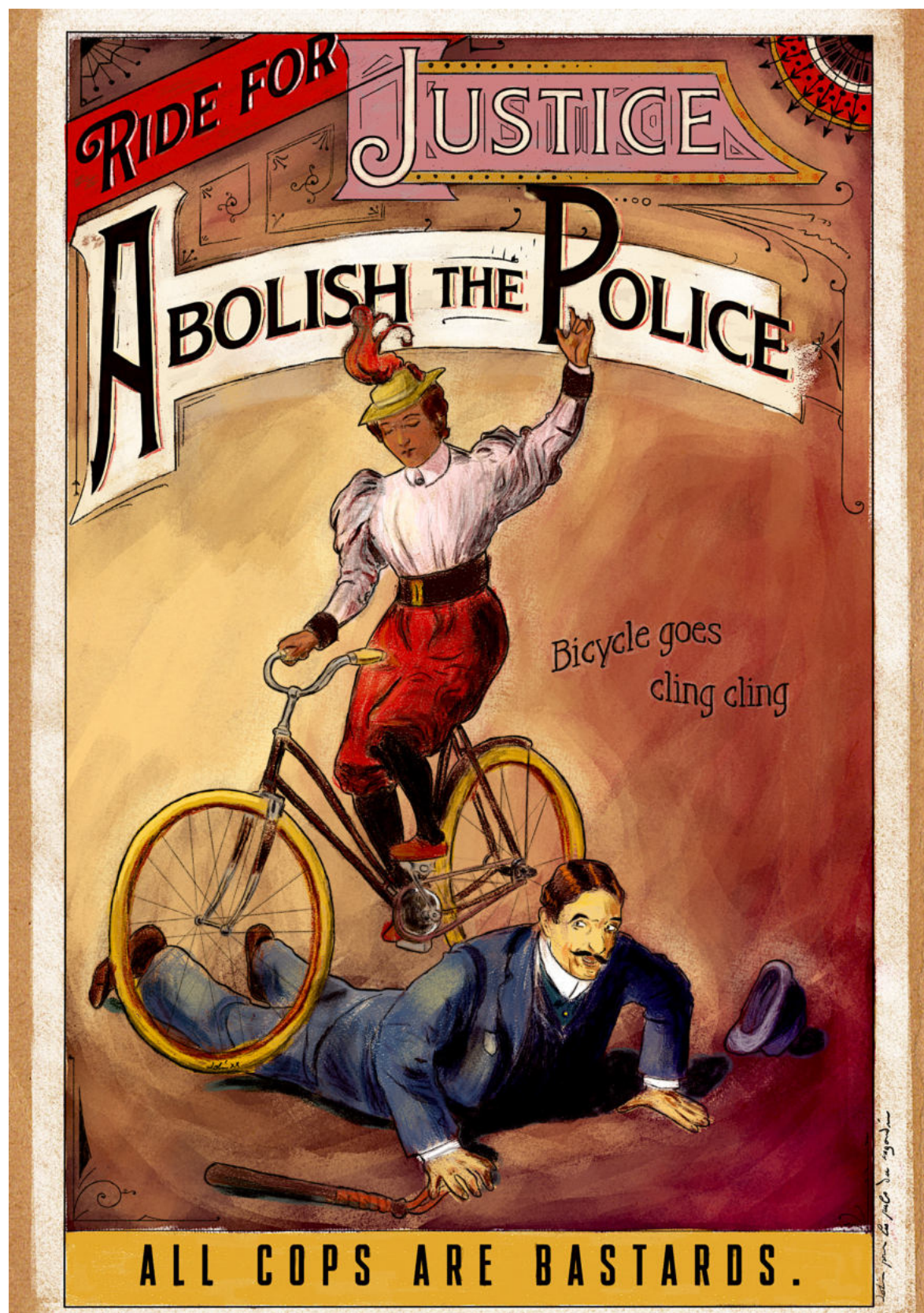
CROSSWALK

COLLECTIVE

ŌSUGI SAKAE

**WHAT THE PANDEMIC
CAN TEACH US ABOUT
SECURITY CULTURE**





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"As a practical matter, Anarchist-Communists believe that we should start to build the new society now, as well as fight to crush the old Capitalist am. They wish to create non-authoritarian mutual aid organizations (for food, clothing, housing, funding for community projects and others), neighborhood assemblies and cooperatives not affiliated with either government or business corporations, and not run far profit, but for social need Such organizations, if built now, will provide their members with a practical experience in self-management and self-sufficiency, and will decrease the dependency of people on welfare agencies and employers. In short, we can begin now to build the infrastructure for the communal society so that people can see what they are fighting for, not just the ideas in someone's head. That is the real way to freedom."

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (Anarchism and the Black Revolution - 1993)

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). As anarchist communists we fight for a world without leaders, where power is shared equally amongst communities, and people are free to reach their full potential. We do this by supporting working class resistance to exploitation and oppression, organise alongside our neighbours and workmates, host informative events, and produce publications that help make sense of the world around us.

We publish twice a year with the aim to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers and play host to any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, feel free to contact us through any of the details below. The articles in this issue do not represent the collective viewpoint of the AF unless stated as such. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air! We hope that this publication will help that debate to take place.

The outside and inside covers are the work of Loki Gwynbleidd.

Loki is a self-taught artist who likes cute animals, lame puns and revolution. They make digital posters and linocuts in French and English inspired by late 19th century art styles. They like to mess with advertising messages and communication codes to make anarchist, antifa, neuroatypical, pro-LGBTQI+ propaganda.

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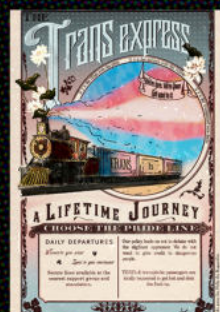
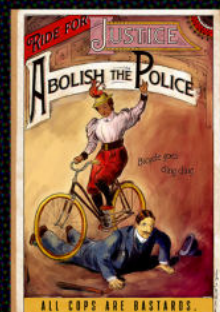
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EDITORIAL

The Anarchist tradition is one of peace. The greatest threat to this peace, is the nationalism and jingoism that drive the nation states of this world to send working class men and women to murder and main each other in their name. Whether it's driven by chauvinism, resources, or just the individualist greed of the powerful, we stand against each one. For the Anarchist there is only one war which matters and that is the class war, except for when it isn't. There are fascists that need fighting, there are despots, tyrants, and empires. They aren't going to go home due to your strongly worded petition.

The Anarchist were quick to reject and condemned the Russian casus belli of “de-nazification” as little more than a hollow facade, a vehicle to project collective responsibility upon 41 million people. An Ironic accusation as the Russian state sent in The Wagner Group and Chechen Jihadists. The bellicose screeds and speeches of Putin and others in the proceeding years have clearly illustrated a pretty singular reason for this war: to restore Russian hegemony, to build a new empire in the rotting shell of the Soviet Union. Well, that and the future of the oil and gas deposits found under the Ukrainians East and Crimea, or the former USSR's pipeline to Europe which the Ukrainians had been renting to the Russians which was scheduled to be cut off. It's really more justification for the Empire crafting. It's just how you manufacture consent, buy the working class with jingo and it's fat stacks of cash to the capitalists.

This of course is not anything new. In fact it mirrors the war with Georgia in 2008 after it became more friendly with “The West”, ultimately leading to the recognition and occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who along with the Chechen Republic remain the the thrall of their capitalist suzerain, the Russian Federation, independence coming at the end of a short leash.

Across Western and Ukrainian media, the war fervor is high. The dead bodies of Russians shared widely, POW's filmed and put on display, heroic narratives such as “The Ghost of Kyiv” and the “Ukrainian Reaper”, keep the morale high. The world is alight with

liberal populists screaming fury, vilifying every aspect of Russia's existence, every Russian is suspect, whether they are a wealthy capitalist or visiting art student. They are now all responsible for the actions of their homeland's government it seems. It's that collective responsibility once more, why blame the capitalists, generals, and leaders when you can just blame every Russian? This war has also already distinguished itself for keenly supplying the voyeurism of the world with videos, pictures and data. The world in turn keenly embrace the madness, cover their profiles with national flags and denounce the enemy with absolute venom. A wave of Tiktok soldats and international gawkers keep us all tightly fixed on the plight of Ukraine and her sweet and noble fighters. To question this is to be a contrarian or even “Betray Ukraine”.

Paradoxically it has also seen Russian fetishists and so-called communists, aligning with the conservative right who are utterly intoxicated with Putin's strong man illiberalism. Mind you some have just used it as another excuse to vent their particular brand of click bait bigotry, straight up blaming trans, homosexual, and immigrant communities for existing and having “weak liberals” tolerate their existence. Outfits such as Spiked magazine regurgitating the same hideous positions as America First, only behind milquetoast speculation - remember folks, it's not revolting bigoted dribbling if you're only asking the questions right?

It's the same thing on Russian media of course, their News talks about ancestral blood ties, the mistakes of Lenin, Ukraine's hostilities, and NATO's overreaching; all to manufacture consent for invasion. The bodies of your sons will not be forgotten, this war like those which came before it are just. The TV is covered with [Z] iconography as it filters through ever aspect of society, From the screen to children's toys. To disagree is to be unpatriotic and to “Betray Russia”.

Despite this countless brave souls have continued to hold protests against this war, through revolutionary action, organised protest, even simply holding a white sheet of paper. Regardless the police have been quick to react and suppress an dissident voices. The state has imposed a severe and totalitarian response to any protest, thousands have been arrested already, and yet still they protest and take direct radical action.

Back in Ukraine many Anarchists have taken to defence of their homeland, some as part of the militias whilst others fight alongside their affinity cells, or in ad-hoc self-defence forces across the country. They have chosen to take up arms, to fight a war they wish they did not have too. It is clear that by far, the international Anarchist community stand alongside them. Large donations have flooded in from individuals and organisations (Such as the AF) to fund armour, medical equipment, petrol, food, and all the other bits you need to survive and repel an invasion.

The War Propaganda mind, is always the same, spewing out the same cesspool of self-aggrandising rhetoric and vilifications, each

and every war, our side and theirs. Anarchists are not beyond this ofcourse, we tell the same stories in our own vernacular. Too many, a little too keen to adorn themselves in Ukrainian flags and embrace the bullshit. However as a comrade noted, “This isn't to say that the “Anarcho-campists” align entirely with the jingoistic pro-West/pro-Ukraine camp, but plenty also align with the pro-Kremlin camp, often using identical rhetoric. Pro-Kremlin Anarchists have even taken up a number of antisemitic canards in their attacks against the pro-Ukraine camp. It's disgusting.”

All this has lead to a wave of ill fitting comparisons to the conflict in Kurdistan, The Second World War, and just about every other conflict being used to obfuscate and negate the realities of this specific conflict and those Anarchists who are out there as I type, fighting against an invasion.

War is imperfect. Theory is imperfect. Still, the distant rhetoric, statement swapping, and analysis from a-far, seems to be a steady flow as Anarchist theologians look for unshakable reasoning in hundred year old texts, waxing lyrical looking to fight “the right” position to have, us too.

I doubt the theory works past the first barrage of artillery on the neighbourhood. There is no revolutionary maxim that can guide you through the dead bodies of old men lining the road. No eloquent piece of dogma that can help you see the men turning your best mate into pink mist, as your comrades in an international class struggle.

War is a string of ugly moments and what those fighting it need is understanding, not this condescension from afar. We all know and accept that the citizens and soldiers of Russia and those of Ukraine, whether Anarchist or Nationalist, Left or Right, have more in common with each other than they do with their commanders, let alone the bastard politicians and oligarchs who are telling them to murder and maim for their countries. However right now your comrades are fighting a war and in war there is only a singular unquestionable fact. War is terrifying.

The last thing they need is finger wagging from those many thousands of kilometres to the west. If your Anarchism doesn't involve supporting those fighting against an invading imperial force because the lad one fox hole over maybe doesn't agree with every principle you hold, then it's little more than a sectarian old boys club, exclusive and useless. Our principles are not weapons to undermine those who fight, they are not absolute truths to be applied without regard for the local and situational context, nor are they immutable commands from the past and you should really stop acting as tho they are.

If this is the solidarity of your Anarchism, fuck you. I spit on your Anarchism. You need to do better.

From Russia and Catalonia a hundred years ago to Rojava and Chiapas today, Anarchists have fought alongside people from a wide array of political positions. Anarchism cannot stand alone, especially not when it is facing one of the largest armies in the world. Who are you kidding? I understand that some comrades would never fight in a conflict they feel is ostensibly between two states. This is fine, however to read the dismissal of those who do, whether from insurrectionary or mutualist voices fills me with a sick feeling. How readily the words of solidarity turn to lead in your mouth. We've seen accusations of nationalism and xenophobia, “No True Anarchist” nonsense, and the echoes of Russian media oozing out as all to many Anarchists who are so used to blaming “The West” for everything. You just can't bear to listen to Eastern European Anarchists eh? Too many have convinced themselves that if it's counter to their position (or more likely their lassitude), it's to be undermined and condemned. I guess solidarity is just too difficult a concept in the days of popularist hot takes. They forget to listen to the fucking locals as they act like the Politburo of Anarchism. Please kindly, shut the fuck up.

Those war fighters you so readily betray know as you do that the enemy is not the Russian peoples, but the Russian state and specifically Putin and his cabal of despots, like Kadyrov, Lukashenko, and whoever it is he intended to install into Ukrainian supremacy. They don't need your narrative policing. They need your solidarity. As do the many thousands of Russians who have gathered around the world alongside Ukrainians (and others) to resist this war.

From the Front lines to Red Square they know this. This doesn't mean they have suddenly become rabid nationalists. Listen to them and lend them your support.

What comes in the following days, no one knows. We can only hope there is some agreement and a withdrawal, the slow process of peace given a chance. As Anarchists, we should of course raise the flag of solidarity between the exploited classes, beyond and against any nation state. We look to love and international working class fraternity not the blinking cold of reckless hate, fuelled by despotic rage and zeal. The road to recovery between Russians and Ukrainian peoples will be long and I believe only possible when both communities break free of the the blood laced narratives of their states.

My solidarity to the Anarchist comrades and the people of Ukraine who fight against the occupation.

The same solidarity to all those who fight for a better world, who attend anti-war demonstrations and take direct and radical action against the bastards who are so keen to repeat the bloody slaughter of the past. ■

To the end of war.
PETER Ó MÁILLE

**NATIONAL GLORY
AND STATE INTERESTS
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN
BOUGHT WITH THE
BLOOD OF COMMON
PEOPLE WHO SHARE
NO INTERESTS WITH
THE RULERS THAT
DEMAND THEIR
SACRIFICE.**

ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

As anarchists we are against all state wars and stand in solidarity with the victims of those wars; the people whose lives will be destroyed as “collateral damage” in their rulers’ pursuit of power. Whoever “wins” this war, it is hard to see this improving the lives of either the people of Ukraine or the people of Russia. Many will die, many more will have their lives ruined, and the consequences of this war will impoverish the people suffering under both governments.

We hope that out of this bloodshed the people of all the involved countries are not duped into an even more aggressive nationalism and support for their corrupt leaders, but see these leaders for what they really are; power mongers hiding behind nationalist lies who care nothing for their subjects and will use them as cannon fodder for their own objectives. “National glory” and “state interests” have always been bought with the blood of common people who share no interests with the rulers that demand their sacrifice.

However, while we are neither fans of the Ukrainian state, the Russian state, or the western states supporting Ukraine, the majority of the blame for this war clearly lays at the feet of Moscow. This is an imperialist war of aggression against a territory that has traditionally suffered horribly under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. But we must also be clear that while the Russian state may be the aggressor, the Ukrainian state is still a despot over its own people, and its western supporters are no less imperialist than Russia, even if they may be the lesser of two evils in this specific situation.

In the face of this disaster, our solidarity goes out to all our Ukrainian comrades. Ukrainian anarchists are now forced to choose whether to fight against Russian imperialism and risk being drawn into practical support for nationalist and militarist institutions that all anarchists oppose, or to attempt to oppose all military action and risk allowing the people of Ukraine to have

a puppet state forced upon them that is likely to be even worse than the current Ukrainian state. We do not envy those having to make this choice, and we would not feel comfortable passing judgement on any of our comrades for whichever choice they make. We wish you all luck.

Our solidarity to the Russian and Belarusian anarchists who are no doubt doing what they can to oppose this war, and anyone else working against the war within those states. War very often brings an upsurge in nationalism and internal repression, and the situation is likely to become even harder for our comrades in those countries, who already have to work under a great deal of repression.

Our solidarity also goes out to The Resistance Committee and the peoples of Ukraine who have taken this stand against fascism and forces of the imperial invasion.

Our solidarity also goes out to the anti-war demonstrators around the world but especially to those in Russia and Belarus who are rising up against the tyranny that silences them.

And finally, Our solidarity goes out to all those who have self organised to provide much needed support and mutual aid not only to those fighting in Ukraine but also to the refugees.

If you are able to provide material solidarity please do so via these channels:

***THE RESISTANCE COMMITTEE
ABC MOSCOW
ABC DRESDEN***

Against all states and against all their wars! ■

**LONDON ANARCHIST FEDERATION.
AF NOMADS**

UKRAINE.

ANARCHIST APPROACHES

For a month or so on the Organise! website we have been rounding up statements and articles being produced by anarchists on the war in Ukraine. The starting point for this was to air Central and Eastern European voices, because relatively few western anarchists were seemingly in touch with their perspectives even though eastern comrades were explicitly asking to be listened to.

For the most part British anarchists have failed to keep pace with the deterioration of the political situation, with the brutal repression of dissent in Russia and Belarus, and the increasing likelihood of Putin coming through on his threat to invade more of Ukraine. But Anarchists in Ukraine saw the threat and began preparing to stay and resist or to flee. Many had no choice either way.

Usually, Anarchists are trying to bring the struggles of oppressed people to the attention of the public via our own media, struggling ourselves to make some noise above prevailing narratives. Our role is different here. Everyone knows what is happening. Our job now is to analyse war – both general and specific – in ways that will ultimately advance the Class War. As well as sifting fact from fiction in more widely available media, we do this by making sense of complex situations, drawing on our historical theory and on our insider knowledge from anarchists in the region.

The only anarchist fighter to have died in Ukraine, as far as we know, is Igor Volokhov, who died in Russian shelling near Kharkiv before 15 March. He wanted to establish a network on anarchist cooperatives in Ukraine. So what can we say about such an idealistic and tragic death? This article considers some of the issues relating to what anarchists are doing and saying in the countries most obviously involved – Ukraine, Russia and Belarus - and what anarchists in the West are saying and doing in response to the situation as it

evolves. Different perspectives have emerged within groups, networks, organisations, federations and internationals, both in and outside of the region. Here we present some of these perspectives and discuss them critically, but without the intention of making definitive statements. Like everyone else, the AF is still processing what the bigger picture holds, and we are listening to everyone else too.

THE POSITION AT THE POINT OF PRINTING

The war shows no signs of drawing to a close, through ‘victory’ to either side or diplomatic solution. Ukrainian citizens are still being bombed out of their homes and as they try to flee the most stricken areas, being kidnapped and taken into Russia as forced labour, or being tortured and executed. Over 5 million Ukrainians are already internally displaced or are sheltering in other countries. Ordinary people in Ukraine are fighting back with everything from externally supplied weapons to simply reasoning with tired and desperate young Russian conscripts. The sinking of the Moskva, marks a turning point in terms of Ukrainian resolve as well as significantly impacting Russian capability in the Black Sea, but 10,000s more people will be killed or be found to have been killed, nonetheless.

The situation between people on the front line is disintegrating as the scale and barbarity of the war crimes, including by individual Russia soldiers, becomes clear. There are emerging stories of inevitable atrocities on the Ukrainian side as well. Of course, they pale in comparison, but most Russian soldiers are victims of war too, even if that makes little immediate sense to the people they are massacring. For such reasons, Anarchists consider all wars to be crimes.

Factors fuelling refusal to fight and desertions from the Russian army range from fear, to cold and hunger, to anger, and also to solidarity with Ukrainian civilians. The death of perhaps

500 sailors in the Moskva will not have helped moral in the navy either. Refusal to join the expanding war is reported in Belarus as well. But the scale of such resistance so far does not give much cause for hopes that it will demolish Putin’s military capacity.

The popular perspective in the West is that states should be sending more arms to the Ukrainian forces and intervene decisively, short of actually provoking Putin to spark a nuclear war. People seem to want this military build-up just as much as they want to help refugees. There are many cynical things to say about why the West cares more about Ukrainians than, say, about Afghans, Kurds and Sudanese people fighting for freedom, not least about skin colour. But there is certainly an appetite to get involved on a deeper level than just condemning Putin, passing sanctions and funding relief work. Does it seem strange then, that some anarchists are taking a more cautious view of support for the military struggle within Ukraine than is the wider public? That is to say, in not wanting to send money for weapons when they are being requested by anarchists for self-defence.

First, some background.

ANARCHISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

Our starting point for commenting on these events is what we know through involvement in the International of Anarchist Federations (IFA-IAF). We have worked over past decades with groups in or associated with IFA in Slovenia and Croatia, Belarus, Czech Republic and Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia, and been involved in solidarity with the International Workers’ Association (IWA) in Croatia, Serbia and Russia. We have worked with comrades from the ex-USSR based group Autonomous Action, distributed and reviewed its papers when they were in print, and also the English-language journal Abolishing the Borders from Below. We have practically supported exiles from countries in the ex-USSR as well as anarchist and anti-fascist prisoners kept in unimaginable conditions, without affordable legal representation, for many years at a time, not to mention tortured and even murdered. At the same time, our comrades in the ex-Soviet bloc more widely have been actively hunted by fascists with guns and knives and had their families and homes threatened for their activity against the far-right.

Since when we first joined IFA, members of its ex-USSR sphere federation were telling us, ‘You can’t understand. It’s different for us’. It was, and is, and is getting worse. We have worked to be aware and to make other British anarchists aware of this situation, and in recent years the movement in Britain has been enriched by comrades from eastern Europe who know all this anyway. Even so, there is still the danger

that we are operating in parallel but unequal realities.

What we mean is that, on the one hand, there are the theoretical and historical positions honed by classical anarchists and adopted by their ideological successors like the AF-IFA and SolFed-IWA in Britain, and less explicitly by the majority of British anarchists not in organisations. This position is that there is ‘No War but the Class War’, and that the response to all wars between states is, ‘a plague on both their houses’. We then blame the militaristic ambitions of our own countries and the role of NATO. But it is far easier to fight the anti-militaristic class war in ‘democratic’ countries, with things like the right to protest, to legal representation, and to relatively transparent trials and proportionate sentencing. Yes, these things are being eroded; welcome to the least extent of what comrades in Russia and Belarus have been facing for decades.

At present there are just three significant anarchist groupings in Russia, all publishing in English as well; the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC Moscow), The Russian section of the International Workers’ Association KRAS-AIT and Autonomous Action. Autonomous Action is a network and internet platform for anarchists from a variety of perspectives and is probably the most up-to-date and relevant place for people outside of Russia to look for information, although it was finally official blocked within Russia itself on 8 April this year.

In terms of Belarus, it is no longer viable to organise openly as anarchists, if at all. Support is given to anarchist and anti-fascist prisoners via ABC Belarus, but the focus has turned to Ukraine, with the website Pramen saying (6 April 2022), ‘Our struggle is primarily aimed at the protection of the people from the atrocities of the Russian dictatorship’.

ANARCHISM NOW IN UKRAINE

Before addressing the positions of anarchists outside of Ukraine, it is worth pointing out where the words of Ukrainian anarchists themselves are to be found. These are easy to come by. Just in the last weeks numerous articles and interviews with anarchists in Ukraine – Ukrainians and foreign fighters – as well as commentaries about the situation are appearing on the site Enough 14. This is a site which references the uprisings in Ukraine in 2014 and links to sites and papers all over the world, bringing together anarchist perspectives not least on Ukraine itself, and dovetailing nicely with LibCom.org. There are currently war diaries by a Belarussian fighter, up-to-date interviews, and articles by groups which pre-date the war, for example the ‘food-not-bombs’ type initiative of Black Flag in western Ukraine which has been going since 2016.

Since the war began, the most obvious group is the Resistance Committee, »

which was formed as an anarchist ‘territorial defence’ unit. Ukrainians are not necessarily supposed to be in the army proper, but are often in these more grass-roots level groups. Their semi-autonomy is what made the Resistance Committee viable at its inception.

Operation Solidarity is a group and website which carries news of support for such units, most explicitly promoting humanitarian relief and defensive equipment to fighters. For example, on 10 April 2022 they posted: We handed over a thermal imager, power banks, gas masks and carbines to the air reconnaissance unit involved in the fighting in eastern Ukraine. A new helmet, knee pads, elbow pads and two boxes of medicines were handed over to the paramedic, who is also in the East. And the territorial defense of Kyiv received 3 bulletproof vests, thermal imagers, turnstiles, carbines and watches. Solidarity is our weapon!

On the other hand, from our contacts it seems that guns – including those of the territorial defence units and therefore anarchists within them – are now ultimately at the disposal of the Ukrainian army, because structures have been established by the military to regulate the holding and movement of arms. An Autonomous Action author predicted this as far back as 13 March 2022. So has it been proven wrong to arm Ukrainian anarchists just as the rest of the Ukrainian resistance is being armed, because of the possibility that they might lose those guns to the state?

OUR INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE WAR

Some AF-ers (London and Nomad groups) issued a response to the war very early on (5 March 2022). (*Page 7 - Ed.*)

It is an interesting statement for the AF. In accepting an armed role for anarchists already in and heading for Ukraine, those two groups were in-step with much of what was being said by anarchists in Ukraine, in Russia and by the Belarussian exiles.

Closest to it was perhaps that of our sister federation in France (FA-IFA). But their statement also alluded to a problem: *‘We stand in solidarity with our comrades in the region, who have decided to flee or fight in the Ukrainian self-defence squads, although we know that far-right forces of fascist and nazi ideology (but in large minority, despite Putin’s displeasure) have also been operating there since 2014’.*

The presence of an armed and recently powerful far-right in Ukraine was going to be an issue, and remains one. Other issues – which we’ll address first - relate to things like, whether our traditional anti-militarist analysis still holds true or whether Putin’s war in Ukraine is something we have to approach differently, and the role of NATO in our analysis.

NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR?

The statements issued by most anarchist organisations, including the three internationals, rest on the analysis that all wars between states must be opposed. This is rooted in tried and tested general observations about the nature of warfare. Few anarchists would disagree with the IFA that *‘We condemn the criminal aggression to Ukraine promoted by the Russian government, alongside all militarisms, and we stand in solidarity with oppressed people from both sides of the border, promoting active support to the victims of the conflict, to refugees, deserters and prisoners from all sides of this war and of its potential expansion’.* The IWA considers both sides different only superficially though: *‘Revolutionaries...must act in the interests of the working class, and not in the interest of a capitalist formation of any sort. It should be understood that regardless of certain differences between them, which paint them in this or that segment with nicer colors – the struggle against the interests of the working class is common to all capitalist forces’.* Anarkismo goes even further in its equal handedness, condemning both Russian and Ukrainian ‘imperialism’: *‘Our revolutionary and class duty dictates the organisation and strengthening of the internationalist, anti-war and anti-imperialist movement of the working class. The logic of more aggressive or more progressive imperialism is a logic that leads to the defeat of the working class’.*

But the point being made by Ukrainian and many Russian and Belarussian anarchists is, who will be around to fight the Class War in the immediate term if we treat all sides with equal hostility? Not them, if things carry on as they are. The internationals’ analysis is, from that perspective, full of abstractions and unreal at ground level, from where Ukrainian anarchists are asking for our practical help including military equipment to defend themselves.

But for a society at war against a neighbour to progress to being a society at war with its rulers, requires an embedded revolutionary ideological and organisational base within the working class, one that can resist whatever the state throws at it. This is far from being the case in eastern Europe. Even the most positive and detailed anarchist evaluation of the anti-war movement in Russia (KRAS 1 April 2022), scrapes around for significant examples even of cross-class defiance of state militarism. There have been demonstrations in hundreds of Russian towns, but this just seems to increase the total number of arrests (over 15,000 as of March 13), imprisonment and even sentencing to forced labour (123 people from St. Petersburg alone). It is simply impossible to mount a serious threat to state oppression there and it is no wonder that anarchists are amongst those who have had to flee the country. This is no judgement on the anti-militarists, let alone the anarchists, and it isn’t unique to this war of course.

ISN’T PUTIN JUST ANOTHER CAPITALIST THUG?

Which is to say, all politicians and all states are as bad as each other, right? So why would anarchists get involved in defending Ukraine, especially if anarchists have made little headway there in its recent history?

As an author in Autonomous Action wrote in February, just before the war: *‘The results of the first 30 years of “democracy” in Ukraine are, to put it mildly, unconvincing. The economy and the media are in the hands of rival oligarchs, corruption is at staggering levels, economic development lags behind many African countries, and in addition, the country has become the center of the neo-Nazi movement around the world. And these problems are basically home-grown, not the result of the Kremlin’s intrigues.’*

But they go on: ‘Yet, the alternative is even worse. Putin is not just the gendarme of Europe, but the gendarme of the whole world—from Syria to Myanmar, whenever a dictator tortures and kills thousands of his own people, Putin is there to support him. There are no elections in Russia anymore. Even the most moderate attempts to change something results in criminal cases and persecutions’.

The author also draws on our anarchist heritage, pointing out that both Bakunin and Malatesta agreed that flawed democracy was a better environment for anarchists than imperialism or dictatorship. Ukrainian anarchists also take this view. They consider that there is much to fight for in Ukraine in terms

of political and personal freedoms which are threatened infinitely more by Putin than by Ukraine’s capitalist class.

As a Ukrainian Anarchist remarks, *“Some foreign comrades were surprised and even got angry with the fact that in Ukraine we have built resistance, taken up arms and fought back. We are not charmed by the Ukrainian State (it’s neo-liberal rather than nazi or strongly authoritarian) — it has a lot of troubles like an oligarchic system, corruption, destruction of social safety nets, cop and nazi violence etc. At the same time Ukraine is a space of relatively low State control that is growing, from one side, but from other it’s also a space of uprising progressive social powers.”*

So for many Anarchists in ex-USSR, it makes most sense to help anarchists in relatively democratic Ukraine to defend themselves. While they can defend themselves, that is. Zelensky has shut down at least 11 Ukrainian political parties/organisations, all be they mostly quasi-genuine and pro-Russian, kleptocratic and authoritarian. He had already shut down pro-Russian media at the start of February. States will always censor dissident voices in wartime. Hardly anyone in the West has even commented on it, though, probably because he can seemingly do no wrong. But any state censorship is a red flag for anarchists. Further to it, police recently visited the Operation Solidarity office too. Luckily things went OK, this time, but for how long? And if there is one sure way to leave anarchists at the mercy of their own state, it is to neglect to offer active and public solidarity, if only so that their oppressors know we are watching. »



14 IS OUR HISTORICAL ANTI-MILITARISM WRONG?

It could be argued that the essentialist anti-war position – which Malatesta developed and adhered to, and from which Kropotkin famously departed in 1914 – was drawn up in the days before fascism and before the over-riding global capitalist incentive for war. Anarchists have fought fascists in various settings and are now at the forefront of exposing the benefits of war to global capital. But in terms of who the enemy is, the World has not simply moved from old-fashioned imperialism through fascism to capitalism. Putin embodies all three. The ideology that led Turkey to the Armenian genocide in 1915 is alive and well again in his approach to Ukraine. It fact never went away, for all the supposed ‘peace’ brought to the world by the mutual militarisation of the great nations and their proxy wars since WW1. Like Franco, Mosley, Hitler and Mussolini, not to mention Stalin, Putin is a genocidal maniac. Anarchists have fought all of them, and never without making compromises and decisions along the way that turned out to be wrong. Even so, we were never welcomed with open arms in anti-fascist circles, be they ‘democracies’ or the authoritarian Left.

How does this relate to the present situation? Because anarchists – including foreign fighters - have fought in recent wars too, most obviously Syria, and had support from much of the movement. How is this different to Ukraine today? Perhaps because there were anarchist movements significant enough that, if successful militarily, they could go on to see the social revolution succeed. Just as there were, for example, in Makhnovist Ukraine, 1930s Spain, and modern Chiapas. In other words, the risks seemed worth taking? Does the fact that this is not the case in Ukraine, lie unspoken (at least publicly) behind the reluctance of some of the biggest anarchist structures to support Ukrainian anarchists with forms of military defence?

Surely, we don’t only support anarchists who we expect to win their struggles; we support our comrades with whatever they say they need. If this is not so, what are the implications? Do anarchists in the larger, ‘freer’, liberal democracies get to decide the fate of anarchism in countries with weaker movements? In other words, we get to decide what ‘solidarity’ they actually need?

As the representative of Operation Solidarity makes clear in a YouTube roundtable, external support and political attention could make a huge difference to the credibility of Ukrainian anarchism, and thereby to its future viability after the war, won or lost. He is clearly arguing for our help on the basis of the potential future relevance of the movement there. But if external credibility is what is being sought, it does seem as though this would come at the price of stifling an important anti-war critique in the west.

NEITHER NATO NOR MOSCOW!’

Such is the cry of the authoritarian Left, and also from some anarchists without a local knowledge of eastern European. But NATO means different things to comrades in East and West when it comes to our specific, material reality. Even from the same ideological background, we experience the world order subjectively differently. In Ukraine and Russia, NATO feels like a very distant sort of enemy, given that it is reigning Putin in to some extent. More immediately, to oppose NATO as a propaganda priority makes no sense in a Russian or Ukrainian context. It could appear to be pro-Putin, missing the point about who the aggressor is to the extent of pitting anarchists against the majority of the population, and at a very bad point strategically for Anarchists.

But the situation concerning NATO feels very different in the West. The grip of NATO insulates our own states from the anti-militarist critique at all social levels, rolling back decades of struggle against nuclear weapons and the deployment of NATO forces as part of the US’s own proxy wars. Anarchists in the West have paid our own price for this activity. We cannot forget either that Anarchists in the Balkans were themselves bombed by NATO. Anarchists in countries where we can organise in relative freedom, cannot oppose Russian militarism without seeking to undermine our home states and its military master too. However it might look to comrades in eastern Europe, not only is NATO not the great saviour, it is an oppressor of working class self-activity.

But a distinction has to be made between an anarchist analysis of NATO and that of the Leninist Left, most recently critiqued in an article on a demonstration on 9 April 2022 in Berlin. The expansionist aims of the growing NATO family undoubtedly pressed Putin’s panic button, but to blame NATO primarily for the conflict is implicitly also blames countries such as Poland, Balkan and the Baltic states which liberated themselves from the ex-USSR. Recent articles by eastern European anarchists in Freedom call this way of thinking out. Most recently, an author actually in Ukraine has responded to British Left assertions in relation to the banning of the Ukrainian parties noted above, that they were Left wing groups. We are not opposed to outing authoritarianism on Zelensky’s part, but these parties are clearly not Socialist!

The point is, if the Left deliberately parrots Putin’s own ‘de-nazification’ justification for the war, it shows at best an aloof disregard for people in Ukraine, who will pay the price. But western Anarchists also have to think really carefully about how to position ourselves in terms of NATO. Or rather, how and where it is politically useful and sensitive to express our position.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE RIGHT?

The Class War is not being fought in Ukraine. No one is turning on the state or even seriously criticising it. Even anarchists admit that cross-class alliances are the norm. How could it be any different, given the starting point for Ukrainian anarchists as things stood in February.

What is unifying Ukrainians, then, is ‘patriotism’. Of course, we resist any level of patriotic sentiment, but it is hard to go as far as the opening statement of the Autonomous Action article ‘War and Social Struggle’ (8 April 2022), that ‘*The worst thing Putin has done in Ukraine is to reconcile the authorities with the people*’. This seems a little detached on the scale of ‘worst things’. But to put it differently, it seems to the author that the war, even if won by Ukraine, will make social change less achievable, because people will forgive the government for future hardship in the name of national unity. Quite probably. The KRAS are even more extreme (1 April 2022) ‘... many “leftists” and “anarchists” eagerly rush to support the bloodshed, intoxicated with patriotic rubbish’. In the rush to be anti-militarist though, because of the link between war and xenophobia, it is condescending to equate taking up arms on the part of Ukrainian comrades with rightism, however rife ‘patriotism’ is in the wider population.

Should we bother worrying about ‘patriotism’ in Ukraine, on the grand scale of things? There is no trace of patriotism in this statement by the Rev Dia unit in Ukraine, ‘*Why do Anarchists go to War?*’. They say, ‘*The point is that this is not a war between Ukraine and Russia, but a war for the future of all the countries of the former Soviet Union (USSR). The Russian government has long been the guardian of the dictatorial regimes in the entire former USSR. It has supported them in difficult times, as it did in Belarus and Kazakhstan.... The war in Ukraine might be the last chance to overthrow and abolish the dictatorship*’. This is anarchists taking up arms for Internationalism.

The more important question emerging for anarchists is that of the far-right with which anarchists have to contend. It seems certain that aside from in the East of the country, where there Azov regiment is an embarrassment to Ukrainian ‘liberalism’, the far-right has lost the base of support it previously had. The fascist threat can never be underrated or ignored, but Ukraine does not seem to be become increasingly nazified through the process of war.

Nonetheless there is a far-right in Ukraine which is against Putin, and is part of the territorial units and the official army. It is far from clear that all anarchists there are negotiating this issue in the way that anarchists should. We do have the right to comment on this, whilst at the same time being

aware of misinformation or unrepresentative reports which might serve the Ukrainian army, Putin or the western left. Toleration of fascism, however pragmatic, by any element of the anarchist movement world-wide, would discredit us all. At very least, it makes it unclear within the working class what anarchists actually stand for, because we are opponents of ‘liberal democracy’ ourselves. A confusion between fascists and ourselves must not be allowed to emerge in countries where fascism has had to be fought militarily before, as in Ukraine itself.

CONCLUSION

In his 1912 article ‘*The War and the Anarchists*’, Malatesta said of the Italian war in Libya, ‘*We abhor war, which is always fratricidal and damaging, and we want a liberating social revolution; we deplore strife between peoples and champion the fight against the ruling classes. But if, by some misfortune, a clash were to erupt between one people and another, we stand with the people that are defending their independence*’.

Two years later, the European anarchist movement was split over the issue of whether to take sides an even more devastating imperialist war. Anarchists now agree that Malatesta was correct to oppose Kropotkin’s support of the Entente against the Central Powers. Why was he right? In part, because the two sides were, that time, on a more equal footing and there was a far better prospect of a resultant class war. As the KRAS put it recently, ‘...recall the mass hysterical processions that swept through the countries on the eve and in the first weeks of the First World War. Then several years passed - and the masses, enraged by hardships, deceit and suffering, almost did away with the world of states and capitals, which gave rise to wars ... Now, alas, it is infinitely far from that’.

It is not as though these sorts of issues are new to British anarchists either. We developed nuanced approaches to Syria and were supportive of Kurdish Anarchism whilst maintaining an anti-militarist position. But these approaches were developed out of mistakes made by some in the 20th Century, notably some British anarchist approaches to the break-up of Yugoslavia and to the very immediate struggle against the British occupation of Northern Ireland. People were arguing all sorts of conflicting ‘anarchist’ positions, from supporting NATO bombings as the ‘lesser of two evils’ concerning Serbia and Bosnia, to championing the Irish Republican Army (IRA) even though its brutal approach to anarchism was well-established. Western anarchists have had to develop pragmatic as well as ideologically coherent approaches to wars of all types. But these are surely most valid when developed in conjunction with anarchists most directly affected by them. ■

FUCK WESTPLAINING

Earlier this week, the Polish parliamentary progressive left party, Razem, issued a statement in which they announce that they are cutting ties with two European organisations: Progressive International and DiEM25.

“The Russian aggression in Ukraine demands a lot of work from us and- unfortunately- explaining of many issues to the west European left,” Razem states on their socials, “Yesterday, our National Council decided to leave Progressive International and DiEM25. Why? For reasons incomprehensible to us, both movements did not unequivocally condemn the imperialist and aggressive actions of the Russian Federation and did not unequivocally support the sovereignty of Ukraine, dangerously relativising this war.”

I support this very polite and carefully worded statement, but this is Freedom so let me deliver this message by Razem differently: Fuck.You. Or, at the very least, Shut.The.Fuck.Up.

This text isn’t specifically about the Western anarchists. Despite an odd “Ukraine’s Nazi army” here and there, I think the anarchists are not too bad on the issues of Russian imperialism: both presently and historically. Some more work needs doing for sure but, especially compared to some other parts of the UK, and wider, Western left, I give my anarchist comrades a B minus here. You still know fuck-all about Eastern Europe and the only word in the relevant languages you are familiar with is “kurwa”, but at least most of you are not struggling to establish who is the baddie in the current situation. Now, you pathetic tankies and other cranks, it’s your attention we wish to have for the next few paragraphs.

This text isn’t exclusively about the ongoing Russian invasion in Ukraine either as much as it is about a much wider trend in Western leftism. You can apply the points raised below not only to the discourse around Eastern Europe and the so-

called post-Soviet world. Similar themes were, disgracefully, displayed in the leftist discussion around the Syrian War, for example. Large parts of the left, supported by their glorious leader Jeremy Corbyn, struggled to identify who is in charge of the vast majority of the war crimes committed in Syria (Spoilers: it was, ofc, Assad supported by Putin). But, while back in the day I partook in some Syria solidarity actions, I also do not think it is my place to speak about this conflict. There are better people to do this, and if they are so inclined then I can say: be my guest.

This text was written with consultations with other Eastern European comrades. I am signing it with my name, mainly so you can then give me the joy of an accusation of myself being CIA-funded or something, but be informed that many East Europe leftists are on the same page here, and we have been discussing it for a while now.

This text will be a bit chaotic and I request you put up with this. Like most Eastern Europeans, I have spent the past week or so living in some kind of haze, where news cycles really last 24hrs, there is no sleep, and your phone rings constantly. Some of my friends, those from Central and Eastern Europe mostly, want to share their worries, they are organising support networks, collecting money, publishing How-To-Flee-Ukraine guides in multiple languages, cooking, driving scared and exhausted people to their temporary accommodation. Many, rightfully, share their disgust in the differences in how the Polish state and society (and wider, European states and societies) approach another “refugee crisis” just a bit further north, on the Belarusian parts of the Polish border, or the “refugee crisis” in other parts of Europe. Some are facing the very real possibility of finding themselves in combat soon. Some worry about their family currently in a war zone, some are in this war zone themselves. All are angry. All are sad to the point you are unlikely to understand. While you are



exchanging hot takes on Twitter, we are busy.

Every day, I wake up and the first thought in my head is: the Russian Army is invading Ukraine. After a few days of a sluggish parade, it looks like they are now seriously aiming at Kyiv. I have never thought I will be coming up with such sentences in a present tense. It is terrifying. You, the Westerners, will never get it. Partially because most of you have a completely different experience of history, and it is that of living your life in a dominating country. Partially because you can’t be arsed to listen, and you never were. It is just simply inconvenient for you to give an idea that won’t fit to your already established view of the World a thought, and let’s face it, deep down most of you think that your ideas and your concepts are better, and more legit. Western exceptionalism is a worm in your brain, a worm you pretend to escape, only to parade your yankee, Queen of England ignorance around. You are better and more legit. You have better insights. You are used to being listened to. You not gonna use Google translate, because how come things are not in English, the terror!

But the Westerners call too, so I do my best explain the basic stuff I grew up with and some of the stuff that was passed on to me by the generations of trauma. Or what is the correct pronunciation of Kharkiv. Or, the worst: they want to explain to me how this is a NATO created conflict, or, if they happen to feel more generous, they come up with some kind of “both sides to blame” rhetoric. Look, Ukrainians are waving national flags, FASCISTS! If we could erase and dismiss your entire regions as easily as you do ours we absolutely would, sadly the internet is once again, also pretty much controlled by

your lot. Well done – direct action right now would be log off, at least our timelines would be polluted less.

Your lack of knowledge on the issues of Russia and the rest of the world formerly behind the Iron Curtain is, frankly, astonishing, surprising and the lack of curiosity – shameful. In London and the wider UK, you got comrades coming from all these countries that joined the EU since 2004 and apparently you have never bothered to even attempt to understand what we are about. We were good for some things, mainly, in the leftist reflection of the mainstream trope of a “Polish builder” or “Lithuanian cleaner” (good, hard-working, simple people), we were good for more hands-on stuff. But never good enough for actually having opinions: apparently even about the stuff we grew up with. The unique version of Orientalism that you hold towards us, seeing as either simpletons, or racist, primitive, but honourable – you know exactly what we mean, admit it.

I came to the UK in 2004: 18 years ago. Culturally, it was and still is a very bizarre experience and maybe one day I will write another rant about it. One of the aspects of it is the tolerance, or simply embracement, of the Soviet imagery and sentiments (the sentiments and imagery, let me point out, that do not belong to you). At some point, you guys made Red London, a Stalinist page, the most popular leftist FB page in the country. You tolerate giant portraits of Stalin and Mao on Mayday marches, and fucking hell, in 2017 you tolerated the flag of something called Syrian Social Nationalist Party being sported on Mayday march in London, despite it looking fascist AF even without any knowledge on Syria. »

To you it's all a joke to put on a mug or your other merch. Fuck you.

You, decades after the Eastern European version of communism collapsed and Russia turned into a turbocapitalist, authoritarian regime, are still claiming that the man in charge of it is some kind of “anti-imperialist” hero, despite him doing pretty much all he can to assure his stated aim of rebuilding the Russian empire and beyond. Similarly, in your heads, NATO and other Western organisations are always on the wrong side, and always perpetrators of everything bad in this world. You could, ofc, google it, but who would bother if you have such intellectual figures as Noam Chomsky with his disgraceful, relativising stances to tell you what to think.

In the weeks coming to the Russian invasion, the Westerners contributed a fair few texts to Freedom and in them, they tried to push this narrative. I rejected them all as they were dishonest and frankly gaslight-y. In response, one of you, someone I published before, got back to me, asking “where have you been in the past 20 years?” and “‘Being Polish’ is no kind of response at all”. Ofc, in their mind, “being British” is enough to have strong opinions on the issues affecting other nations, and other people's borders. As we know, it usually ends really well when British people do this, innit.

So, let me tell you a few things about Eastern Europeans and NATO and Russia.

We see NATO in a completely different, and I dare say much more nuanced way. We are not fans of it, and we can agree with you on many, many reasons to criticise it. But when you say “Fuck NATO” or “End NATO expansion”, what I hear is that you do not care about the safety and wellbeing of my Eastern European friends, family and comrades. You are happy to put my mum at risk for cheap political points you would not even be able to act on, you bastards!

When you talk about “expansion”, with everything this word implies, really, you are referring to this process in which Eastern Europe, for the reason of other countries making decisions over our heads in 1945, quite literally tip-toed around Russia petitioning it to allow us do what we wanted to do. Eventually, this resulted in Russia signing something called the *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO* and the Russian Federation. This happened in May 1997 and Russia, finally, agreed to what you are now calling “expansion” provided that certain conditions are met. These conditions effectively made us second-class members of NATO, but hey ho, that is all we could get and we went for it. Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO in 1999, the Baltic countries followed in 2004. And

for now, I want them to stay there, and it doesn't have much to do with politics tbh. It is a self-preservation instinct, but this is another thing you will just not get. You talk more about “NATO expansion” than you talk about the fact that you are the funding members of it.

Further, you talk about how you desire to stop “NATO expansion” but you don't really mention what, exactly, would be a viable alternative to it. This is not acceptable at all, it just shows your privilege of growing up in a country where your life story was not littered with, how exciting, tantrums and aggressions of various scales of this great, unpredictable force that assumes it can throw its way anywhere where there is no NATO. So tell me, how exactly will you assure our safety? What is this NATO alternative you are advocating for? Have you considered asking us what we think of it? Or did you just decide, as you did many times in your history, and to many other countries you felt superior towards, that it will be you, and your leaders, who will be setting the cards on the table, and we just need to submit? Did you already take out your ruler to make straight lines on the map, except that this time it will be the map of the place where I grew up?

And this is beyond Personal is Political – what is most enraging is that the people doing the Westplaining are absolutely the same ones that will cry over Trump over Twitter, but will not lift a finger to get his yilk out! You are not some soldiers, you are cowards! And when you are a coward, the only self-respect you may have is some moral virtue, or superiority. It may get you followers, but it costs lives, it costs faith, it costs political disorientation, it reproduces docility. Antifascism is protecting people from individuals with structural power. Right now that is Putin. If you are protecting his hegemony over his vast and increasing empire, if you are What Abouting into helplessness, you are part of the aggressor. So pick up a weapon, or organise a fundraiser, or welcome a refugee, but even more preferably at this point – shut the fuuuuck up. Log out, touch grass, leave this war with people that actually know what they're fighting for. You're fighting for likes – it's humiliating – to the left in general, and to future generations who will be left demoralised, rather than inspired to fight for a world sans dictators. Yes, your leaders are some of them, so take care of taking them down. Sadly we seldom even trust the leaders you'd put in their place. This is the level of faith that you're losing. Look in the mirror, destroy the imperialist exceptionalist cop inside your head. Good luck.

Or, at the very least, learn how to pronounce our names properly. JFC. ■

ZOSIA BROM
FREEDOM NEWS EDITOR

A THOUSAND RED FLAGS

Those of us who survive Russian imperialism shouldn't have to be writing this anymore, but here we are.

Real ones know Russia is still not a thing that the left needs to protect and while we're here, neither was the Soviet Union. The imperialist expansionism nurtured by both are connected, whether you're for it or against it. We said it when Putin allied with Assad and started bombing hospitals in Syria. We said it when he invaded the Caucasus. He came for Georgia, Crimea, Dagestan, anarchists, journalists, feminists, pacifists, all of us, he's not on our side, (and he wouldn't like your Labour party either).

“One thing's for sure – the western “left” was completely and utterly caught with a pie in the face.” – said our friend Philip, who also thinks the DSA's statements are fucking useless btw.

Every ex-Soviet country watching the news this past week



Suddenly headlines are dominated by a region which it turns out nobody really understands anything about and once again Discourse is a complete fucking nightmare.

If your first reaction to Russian aggression anywhere is to bring up the Cold War or NATO (or anything you think the US or UK governments have done worse), your priorities are in the wrong place. We just need you, even for one single day, to simply and firmly stand with victims of Russian imperialism, or fucking stay quiet.

If your second reaction is to denounce armed resistance? 🚩🚩🚩 again. It's hard to understand outsiders wielding language like “civilised” and suddenly “European” and then also shouting at everyone to be pacifists like are we being classed as violent or civil today? I can't keep up.

A lot of us grew up with these stories, you'd know the butcher was the kid who sabotaged the invaders' ammunition. That old woman who squeezes your face and gives you apples? She once drove a tank over a second lieutenant. Part of the normal fabric of life is knowing our great grandparents made sledges out of the frozen dead bodies of invading soldiers and it's both heartening and heartbreaking to watch each next generation being raised on new versions of the same stories about resisting imperialism.

Whether or not we happen to be written as “European” or “civilised” today, it's weird to ignore or not know about how much war Eastern Europeans and Central Asians have known very very recently. A lot of people are telling on themselves that they don't have enough mates from ex-Soviet countries. And a lot of this civilisation talk, as always, forgets how barbaric the suited royal and constitutional figureheads of this civilised society are. »

Violence is contextual though, each act can't be judged equally. We can't let #Discourse move towards a blanket discomfort or disapproval with any kind of fighting. We should keep finding some joy in stories of Russian tanks getting stolen by teenagers, videos of people towing them away with tractors, women making molotov cocktails, kids throwing them, or men carrying mines off into the forest, because we are anti-war and so are they.

On the bright side, one side effect of collectively forgetting recent violent pasts is at least Eastern Europeans are suddenly coded as welcome in the West! 🚩🚩🚩 (Allegedly).

It's predictably racist for western observers to be selectively shocked and sympathetic towards white Ukrainians fleeing violence. It has proven to itself that boycotts, sanctions, and divestment can be effective. In one week, we've seen a painful amount of examples for how the "international community" can in fact step up and declare their solidarity with victims of war. What British politicians are currently putting Ukrainians on a pedestal for, they lock Muslims up for. Black people bear police brutality for being suspected of anything illegal, and now we're clapping when we see white people sharing "how to make molotov cocktails". Prominent Lords and Ministers are going "We must not turn our backs on Ukraine, they are our neighbours, we're the same, we're all white, we all hate Muslims..." (alright this isn't a direct quote but we all know it could be).

However, in practice, the UK is actually giving Ukrainians the bare minimum. They're projecting blue and yellow onto their government building 🚩🚩 while suspending visa applications from Ukrainians. They're giving us ceremonial flag-waving, rounds of applause, empty gestures of solidarity while continuing to profit off Russian billionaires' donations and investments. 🚩🚩🚩🚩🚩🚩 You can't have your муравейник and eat it too.

It's going to take a lot more than Putin's aggression to make Britain fully abandon its deep discrimination against Eastern Europeans. Some MPs are still standing up in parliament saying they've "done their bit" with Eastern European migration and they've had enough, they're done now, gates closed 🚩. The rest of them are suddenly acting like they didn't just spend years building their political campaigns around hating Eastern Europeans.

It's a double-edged insult to all of us. Palestinians or Syrians or Afghans aren't civilised enough to be welcomed or supported or even acknowledged. Ukrainians are just white and European enough to have a few buildings lit up in blue and yellow, but not quite enough to allow visas or safe passage. They can

pit victims against each other by wielding the language of who's "civilised" and "European" enough to be worthy of support, while in reality they're offering nothing but trivial gestures to anyone.

On the other side of our cursed political spectrum, some observers are voicing their concerns about the sort of patriotism we can see in Ukraine, but Ukrainian resistance to Russia is not the same sort of nationalism we get nervous about in the UK. From the outside, seeing crowds waving national flags, joining armed forces, and defending state borders might appear to be the sort of harmful violent devoted patriotism we've spent our lives campaigning against. But this isn't comparable to the UK. Here, we can be justifiably anxious about flag-waving and militaristic language around "defending our land". The English and the Union flags have both been backdrops to street and state-level fascism. They each conjure up mental images of the EDL, Combat 18, bricks through Muslim families' windows, "send the Bulgarians back to where they came from", Tories and poppy shaggers, Morrissey, the Brexit campaign, This is England, and that one day last summer when everyone fucking hated Italy. Whether you're foreign or not, many of us have no time nor tolerance for any sort of pride in this country. And we're right to oppose it; British nationalism is and has always been a vehicle of absolute fucking cruelty across the world.

We can't risk assuming the same logic applies when Ukraine and the UK are incomparable. While the latter is literally an imperialist force, nationalism or patriotism (or however we feel most comfortable defining it in English) can be empowering and important for people who are under threat of imperialist invasion. Around the world, the fights for citizenship, autonomy, and self-determination come alongside asserting certain flags, languages, religions, and cultures. This isn't the same as far-right, neo-Nazi groups who do it on behalf of somewhere like England. Fascism punches down, resistance is not the same. From Ukraine to Scotland to Western Sahara to Palestine to Tatarstan, we stand with the people resisting imperialism.

Ukraine, like Russia, and every European nation, is a racist and white supremacist society, we've seen enough examples over the last 🚩 week. But the portrayal of all Ukrainians as inherently and naturally jingoistic, xenophobic Nazis is a different story, it's one of the ways Putin is justifying his aggression. This rhetoric has a long history. Stalin called Ukraine a land of Nazi sympathisers in order to justify committing genocide. Throughout Putin's reign, he's been redrafting historic lies to build support for his own military interests.

Now, he wants people to think he is liberating Ukraine from Nazi rule. While he is leading a war, he appeals to Russian public opinion with claims that xenophobic Ukrainians simply hate Russia. And still some Russophiles blame Ukrainians for being angry about being invaded, before blaming the invader 🚩🚩🚩. These are the defensive tactics used by people who have always chosen the wrong side.

Speaking of, taking this particular moment in history to sing love songs for Milosevic? 🚩🚩🚩🚩 Racism watchdog says woof woof woof woof woof. This is another tactic, they're justifying Putin's actions by declaring retroactive support for Milosevic. Chomsky fans (🚩 !!) are out there rewriting narratives for their own political gain at the expense of people who witnessed and survived genocide. Ignoring people who still live with these experiences who try to point out, for example, that Milosevic was a racist genocidal criminal, or how Russia committed genocide against half a million Muslims in Ukraine in 1944, or that Putin is an absolute antisemite. Behind every person speaking out with remarkable clarity to explain why Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not aptly comparable to NATO's intervention in Kosovo, there's a load of 🚩 QTs calling them liars.

Bad-faith accusations of Russophobia are corrupting our ability to properly criticise how pointless it is to arbitrarily ban everything Russian. I get that Russian people often get tied closely to the actions of the state and it makes sense, Russians have famously played a big part in the formation and destruction of governments. Russians and Russian things are often seen as political even if they're not. Everything is pushed through some ideological prism and used for endless manipulations of the political spectrum. And while it is truly understandable that many people hate Russia and Russians and anything to do with Russia, part of the narrative Putin is giving to Russians is that he is the only person on their side. "It's us against them". He says the rest of the world hates us, watch how they treat us. He says Ukrainians are Russophobes (imagine). The insular, exceptional nationalism which Putin has been carefully nurturing and weaponising will only become more effective if the rest of the world turns its back on Russian people.

It also isn't anti-left to be anti-Russia, but taking Russian bands off festival line-ups also isn't going to help anyone. Do you think Putin watches Eurovision? Do you think cancelling football will finally stop him? Is de-platforming meerkats going to help? Do you find yourself suddenly crying when you hear Tchaikovsky for some reason? If so, have you considered simply not telling everyone about it? 🚩🚩🚩 The red flag machine is going brrrrrr and Eastern Europeans are losing their minds. I just want to fill my eyes with anything

that isn't an aggressively friendly #content list of "How to cope with the Ukraine situation" 🚩🚩 written by someone who's never been anywhere near it. Or old men screeching "Woke Police!!" "cancel culture did this!" "this is all Greta Thunberg's fault!!" because they only actually have one joke 🚩🚩. If things weren't bad enough already (!) our social media feeds have become a personally curated selection of the absolute worst opinions on Earth.



But as cathartic as it is to laugh at them, these takes aren't as sinister as those which talk over people who have been on the frontlines of resistance against imperialism.

The extent to which some factions have collectively talked over, justified, or ignored Russia's violence in the past has played its own part in what's happening today. If you were platforming Holodomor deniers, Assadists, or calling Ukrainians Nazis or CIA shills, or refusing to accept anyone critical of the Soviet Union into your movements, you've laid the foundations for this invasion to be turned into another opportunity to double down on pro-Russia, anti-Ukrainian, or a pointless "both sides" takes.

A thousand red flags led us into genocide, forced deportations, wars, famines, and still people in the West will hold them up high. What once had a hammer and sickle now has the three stripes and those who once fought against them now get to watch their grandchildren do the same. It's shameful, it's heartening, and it's enraging all at once. Each generation will keep being raised on stories of resistance until there is nothing left to resist. ■

DARYA RUSTAMOVA

A small clarification for those confused about this: hating Russians or banning Russian things because of Putin's actions is unhelpful, misguided, and it is aiding Putin's pro-war campaign. But the point is this isn't the right battleground for this conversation.



WHY DO ANARCHISTS GO TO WAR?

Many people still do not understand why the anarchists decided to go to war against Russia.

Partly due to Russian propaganda, which positions itself as an anti-fascist force that fights against Nazi Ukraine. Partly because many people see Putin as a fighter against U.S. imperialism.

The point is that this is not a war between Ukraine and Russia, but a war for the future of all the countries of the former Soviet Union (USSR). The Russian government has long been the guardian of the dictatorial regimes in the entire former USSR. It has supported them in difficult times, as it did in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

In Russia itself, a dictatorial regime was being implemented. With a total ban on freedom of speech and imprisonment for 15 years for participating in peaceful demonstrations. If Putin's dictatorship wins the war in Ukraine, all this will not only become a reality for the Ukrainians, but will also be consolidated in Russia and implemented in other countries. For a long time there will be no possibilities to change this order. Moreover, this will give Putin the ambition to expand his dictatorship to other countries. Not to mention the fact that all activists of any kind of movements will be destroyed, including anarchists, regardless of what position regarding the war they supported.

The war in Ukraine might be the last chance to overthrow and abolish the dictatorship. That is why it is so important to use all possible means to put an end to the dictatorial horde. ■

REV DIA, MARCH 13, 2022
TRANSLATION BY RIOT TURTLE

IGOR VOLOKHOV REST IN POWER

Ukraine. Anarchist Igor Volokhov recently died near Kharkiv. Since the first days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he joined the defenders of the city and fought bravely to keep the occupying forces at bay. He died as a result of a missile attack.

Igor was a determined and ideological anarchist. He supported his friends who were or are prisoners in the Russian Federation – such as Alexander Kolchenko and Yevgeny Karakashev. As a law student, he was at the forefront of his students' union. He dreamed of organizing a network of cooperatives throughout Ukraine. He was a bright, cheerful and imaginative person. He was an inspiration to many. ■

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY A2DAY.
TRANSLATED BY RIOT TURTLE



CHAGOS STRONG!

It's about damn time. In February, 5 members of the long-exiled Chagossian community were finally able to return to their islands without British supervision, for the first time in 50 years.

In 1965, the British Empire granted the Republic of Mauritius its independence. In doing so, like many of its other colonies from Anguilla to Cyprus, the Empire carved off a section of its territory and kept it under its rule. The Chagos Archipelago, now known as the British Indian Ocean Territory, became subject to the unilateral dictatorship of the British colonial system. The 1,000 people that called the islands their home were denied a democracy, they were even denied citizenship in the territory that they had continuously inhabited for hundreds of years.

The Chagossians, originally brought to the islands as slaves, had eked out an independent life following their emancipation, relatively free from the dictates of a state. But in the late 1960s, they came face to face with imperial authority, as the government of Harold Wilson looked at the islands not as a living community, but as fertile ground for the construction of a military base.

The British Empire declared the Chagossians to be outlaws on their own land, implementing a policy of ethnic cleansing to forcibly remove the islanders and deport them to lands they had no history in. Not even their pets were spared, with hundreds of dogs being ripped away from crying children and gassed to death. By 1973, this vile and contemptible act was completed. The Chagossians were now scattered between the Seychelles, Mauritius and Britain, banned from ever returning to their homeland. Meanwhile, the British Empire handed the archipelago to the American military, opening the gates for thousands of Americans to swarm the islands and litter their coasts with rubbish and debris.

This arrangement suited the British and Americans right down to the ground, as it created a situation of diplomatic ping-pong, where they could point at the other when the Chagossian community demanded a right of return. When the Chagossians successfully appealed to the courts for their right to return, the government of Tony Blair turned to the unelected House of Lords to reverse the decision. The subsequent Conservative-led government then permanently denied their right to return home, imperialism being one thing that Britain's two main parties completely agree on.

All seemed bleak, until the international community finally stepped in. The International Court of Justice found the separation of the Chagos islands from Mauritius to be unlawful. The government of Mauritius, justifiably accusing the British of "crimes against humanity", demanded that the territory be returned to their sovereignty, backed up by the United Nations.

The UK has attempted to divide and rule the Chagossian community, offering them supervised, temporary visits to the islands and promising them compensation – compensation which they would never receive. The British government's true feelings towards the Chagossians were confirmed during the Windrush scandal, when a number of Chagossian exiles were faced with deportation to the Seychelles. The treatment of the Chagos islanders, up until this very day, remains grounded in centuries of British racism.

Weeks ago, a number of Chagossians decided to put a boot to British appeasement, themselves chartering a ship from the Seychelles to return to their islands, this time without British oversight. For the first time in 50 years, on 12 February 2022, these 5 exiles finally set foot on their place of birth. In open defiance of the crumbling British Empire, the delegation from Mauritius has now raised their flag over the islands. »

This is truly an historic and wonderful moment, but it is worth keeping in mind that a brief visit of 5 people to the islands does not mean a right of return has been secured. Nor does Mauritius raising their flag mean that Anglo-American imperialism has been ousted from the islands. But hopefully it marks a turning point, the beginning of long-awaited justice for this community.

The UK Chagos Support Association commented on the developments that: “The ongoing injustices that face all Chagossians every day - whether that is the denial of the right to return, the denial of British citizenship rights or the refusal to deliver adequate compensation - will only be resolved by the UK and Mauritian governments working together and prioritising the rights, needs and ambitions of Chagossians. We hope this trip, and the reaction to it, prompts the governments and all bodies involved to put the people of the Chagos Islands first.”

The Chagossians need our support now more than ever. Now is the time to uphold justice for the victims of colonial oppression. Now is the time to take the British Empire to task for its crimes against humanity. Now is the time to prove that Chagossian Lives Matter.

If you are from the UK, you can help by getting involved with the UK Chagos Support Association, either by donating money, writing to your MP or a journalist, volunteering your time and skills, or raising awareness in your community. If you are an American citizen, you can also help by getting involved with Let Us Return USA. ■

EMMA HAYES



SUDAN DISPATCH #5

April 24th - Kereinik, Darfur, Militias gathered on 250 motorcycles to the North, To the West they were on horseback. Government Rapid Support Forces took the East and the South blocking escape.

Gunfire would rage through the day, on the 25th footage of burning buildings with gunfire in the background would turn up on like. Militia men laughing over the burning buildings.

This is the second massacre that has been perpetrated in the Kereinik area in the city of Al-Geneina. The RSF has been involved in such massacres against the weak and helpless in Darfur since 2003 our Sudanese comrades write:

“Sometimes the situation is calm there, and sometimes they are subjected to massacres. This is a big event and it will happen more, but things will change and the waterfall of bloodshed and the killing of innocents in our community will stop, if the revolution is victorious and the tyrants are uprooted.

And we, the anarchists, will work hard for the victory of the revolution, despite the violence that the government follows towards the revolutionaries and is trying hard to abort the revolution.

But no way, we will not allow that”.

May 4th - It was a great day, we did a heroic epic against the government forces despite the brutal suppression of the fascist government forces, we were in a state of steadfastness and resistance. The government forces tried new tactics and the addition of police dogs and horses to clamp down on the rebels.

Unfortunately one protestor Mojtaba, a resident of Al-Sahafa City, Khartoum State, was ran over by government forces, He was taken to hospital by his comrades but died because of the sheer trauma and number of broken bones. ■

INTERNATIONAL ROUND-UP

MYANMAR

The struggle against the Junta continues as it continues to brutalise the people. A one-day scorched earth campaign saw some 600 family homes were burned to the ground across five Sagaing townships. Meanwhile a pro-Junta terrorist who call themselves the “blood comrades” have claimed the murder of eight opposition leaders in Mandalay across six days of violence. Despite this, protests against the regime continue, both on the streets and in political offices. Army desertion has risen greatly as the regime loses grip and long standing pressure energy giants PTTEP and ENEOS have began pulling out of operations in Myanmar. This ofcourse will mean little to the some 1800 people who have been murdered by the Junta or the 13,000 in it’s cells.



KURDISTAN

On 17 April, Turkey began it’s “Operation Claw Lock”, pushing into Duhok Governorate, in northern Iraq. This, the latest “Claw” operation is ostensibly to stop a “major attack by the PKK”, began with Turkish aircraft bombing several Kurdish villages in Duhok. Shortly after this three YPJ were killed in a drone strike in Rojava. All of this is marking a escalation in violence in the region as the Turkish, Russian and Syrian states are once again flexing their brutal might.

HONG KONG

“They put them in prison and don’t try them with anything, and just wait and wait and wait - until they plead guilty” . Hong Kong’s DoJ has taken to detaining democracy protestors indefinitely via the refusal of bail, a change brought in by the new national security law. China has a long history of silencing opposition by using such obscene punishment in prisons and infamous “black jails”.



MEXICO

Feminists continue to take the fight to the state after yet another murder of a young woman takes place. Susana Escobar was first groped by a taxi driver and after escaping the taxi was attacked and murdered by another man. Eleven womens are killed in Mexico each day and the country current has around 20,000 missing women. 75,000 women marched for IWD. They were met by riot police. Over 40 people were subsequently injured with 8 being sent to hospital, 6 of whom were police.



BARBADOS

Barbados gave the Monarchy the boot. While still a part of the Commonwealth, they no longer have Lizzie or the monarchy sitting above them. Well done Barbados! We only hope Britain will someday be so savvy!

WHAT ANARCHISM MEANS TO ME

The following is a series of responses to the promp “What Anarchism means to me”, these opinions come from multiple tendancies and the Anarchist Federation offers no commentary here, leaving them for your own consideration and perhaps you’ll even write to us and tell us what anarchism means to you.

J.P. WOOTTON

There are many published accounts of the development of anarchism, and these are immensely important for our appreciation of it and it’s roots. Of equal importance are accounts of what anarchism means to contemporary activists.

Every anarchist will have a unique life story, a particular perspective on struggle, and a distinct journey into activism. This will give them an exclusive view of the world, and will shape the anarchism they advocate and practice.

It is through dialogue and comradely engagement that the future of anarchist thought will develop and i wish to contribute to this discussion with what i believe to be at it’s heart.

Solidarity and mutual aid

To position oneself alongside another person, no mater the situation or cost, with only one question in mind - How can i help? - is a beautiful thing. That anarchism places so much emphasis on solidarity and mutual aid as fundamental values, and encourages their adoption, highlights the positivity with which it is imbued.

Solidarity and mutual aid are inescapably intertwined, and both are absolutely essential for harmonious community life. For those rendered powerless by the state, capital or domination, they offer an opportunity to raise oneself up, and ultimately to rise up and create change. Without these, we are all simply individuals trapped in a fiery maize of alienation and ruin.

Direct action and propaganda of the deed
Direct action is exactly what it says. If there is a problem, or something needs done, and you have the power to do it, then do it. This applies to individuals, communities and society as a whole. The aspiration behind direct action is a society that does not rely on hierarchical bureaucracies to solve problems. Ideally, communities and individuals can collaborate through solidarity and mutual aid to ensure a global spirit of unity and accord.

Propaganda of the deed, setting aside its somewhat controversial history, is the outworking of direct action and is essentially the setting of a example. It is easy to talk about aspirations as abstract theory, but the real challenge is living up to them. Although in our current society it is not possible to live as free as our ideals, there is still scope for sincere effort. Ultimately, we cannot fail to lead. And we must lead by example.

Opposition to coercion and domination
Real freedom cannot exist while coercion and domination do. This mutual exclusion sets all forms of control up as a prime target. How can people live a liberated life if they fear their thoughts or actions may invite violence or social exclusion? How can you be free if forced to act against your own will?

As anarchists it is important that we offer organic support to those who find themselves on the harmful end of these forces, that we seek to challenge them and that we are ever vigilant of the new forms emerging.

Ultimately, my goal as an anarchist, is to bring to the fore all the above concepts as fundamental values in our global society.

PI

The abolition of all heirarchy and authority by any means.

CARMEN

Anarchism is an effective framework for criticizing power structures, and for identifying your position within them. It allows you to dissolve notions of solidarity with those who dominate you, and to dispel the myth of choicelessness in your domination of others. More than that, it’s an aid to imagine a world free of such domination, free of intentional disparity, and free of artificial struggle in the name of progress.

Anarchism is an invitation to shed the performative cruelty we are all taught and re-learn the compassion we were born to feel.

SASHA

Anarchism offers a way out of the cycle in which, even with the best of intentions, people gain power only to be corrupted by it.

Anarchism puts trust in people, once the structures of alienation are removed, to be responsible for themselves and for the wellbeing of their communities and our planet. As a member of multiple groups that are regularly infantilised and told we don’t know what’s good for us (autistic, trans, disabled, etc,) that is immensely empowering.

Anarchism connects me to the antifascist history of my great-aunt and her partner, who met when both were nurses with the International Brigades in Spain.

Anarchism gives me tools to understand what keeps me and people like me from truly thriving. Understanding gives hope for change.

PHIL

Knowing that no one is coming to save us, and that we have a responsibility to save and serve each other.

BURN DOWN WORK

The complete and irreversible destruction of all that oppresses me.

SUNDAY

Anarchism to me means freedom, love and solidarity. Freedom from oppression and coercion to self actualize and be our true selves, without fear or judgment. Freedom for all people from persecution and violence. The love and solidarity of our comrades and all people. The immense strength and power we have when we stand together, matched by our compassion for each other. It is community and hope for a better future, as well as actively taking steps towards it.

It also means taking the best ideas, and learning from the rest, constantly expanding and evolving to always be relevant and avoid stagnation. We do not deify or promote revisionism as we are not ‘anyone’-ists, simply anarchists.

No-one more valued or important than another and all are welcome, which is our strength.

POOLE

Anarchism is a direction. Anarchism is not something that is achieved, but rather a never ending process of flattening hierarchies.

SWEDISH SOCIALIST

To me Anarchism was simply the answer of how we can actually create communism. It also gave full clarity into what happend with the failed projects of the 20th c.

MATTHEW

Movement that developed out of European socialism, holding a belief in the ideal of anarchy (an end to domination & exploitation), and which is also a theory of social change based on a specific analysis of the state & capital, & which sees a necessary unity between means & ends. If you didn’t mean a precise definition, then it means freedom and solidarity, both as an end, and as the means to achieve that end.

PETER

I’m not a particular advocate of Bakunin’s writings, but I think one of the most illuminating qoutes comes from his work “Reasoned Proposal to the Central Committee of the League for Peace and Freedom” ritten in 1867 it ultimately saw him and his support resign the following year. Most anarchists know it well. It reads “As we are convinced that Liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; and that socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality”.

For me this is a keystone to my understanding of Anarchism. No matter how many tomes, ‘zines, articles and graffitti I read exploring Anarchism’s nature, ever further atomising it, exploring every nuance, nook and cranny, ultimately it comes to a simple understanding; that humans and the communities thrive best, when they live in relative balance between their personal needs and that of their communities.

Everything else is built up this knowledge.

SYPHILIA

Non-hierarchy, mutual aid & abolition of state, capital and religion. The only hope for humanity.

ELISHA

Viewing things from an anarchist perspective has done a lot for me over these past few years. It’s helped me learn more about the world, about myself and about my community. It’s given me a deeper understanding of struggle and a framework for what a future society can be. ■

“PROPER BOXES”

ADHD & ANTI-AUTHORITARIANISM

Content: Oppression, social justice, armed conflict, neurodiversity, anarchism

There’s been quite a shift of the Overton window over the last few decades with regards to ADHD and how we collectively talk about it. Those of us who were diagnosed early, as kids, might remember trialling (or rather having trialled on us) several types of medication, as well as homespun theories that we were consuming too much sugar and watching too many cartoons. At the time I was diagnosed, ADHD (then called ADD) was, in a nutshell, being a hyper kid with trouble focusing and the tendency to fidget.

By writing this article, I would like to explore the correlation between anti-authoritarianism and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. Although this is written in solidarity with all divergents worldwide, I will primarily be writing through my experience as an American immigrant with ADHD living in the UK.

It wasn’t until a year or two ago that I searched social media for content on ADHD and found a plethora of new information. Many of the same kids who experienced early diagnosis of ADHD in the early 2000s have become fully grown adults with well-rounded thoughts and opinions on the matter. Quite a few of these adults have even entered the medical field and are becoming specialists themselves.

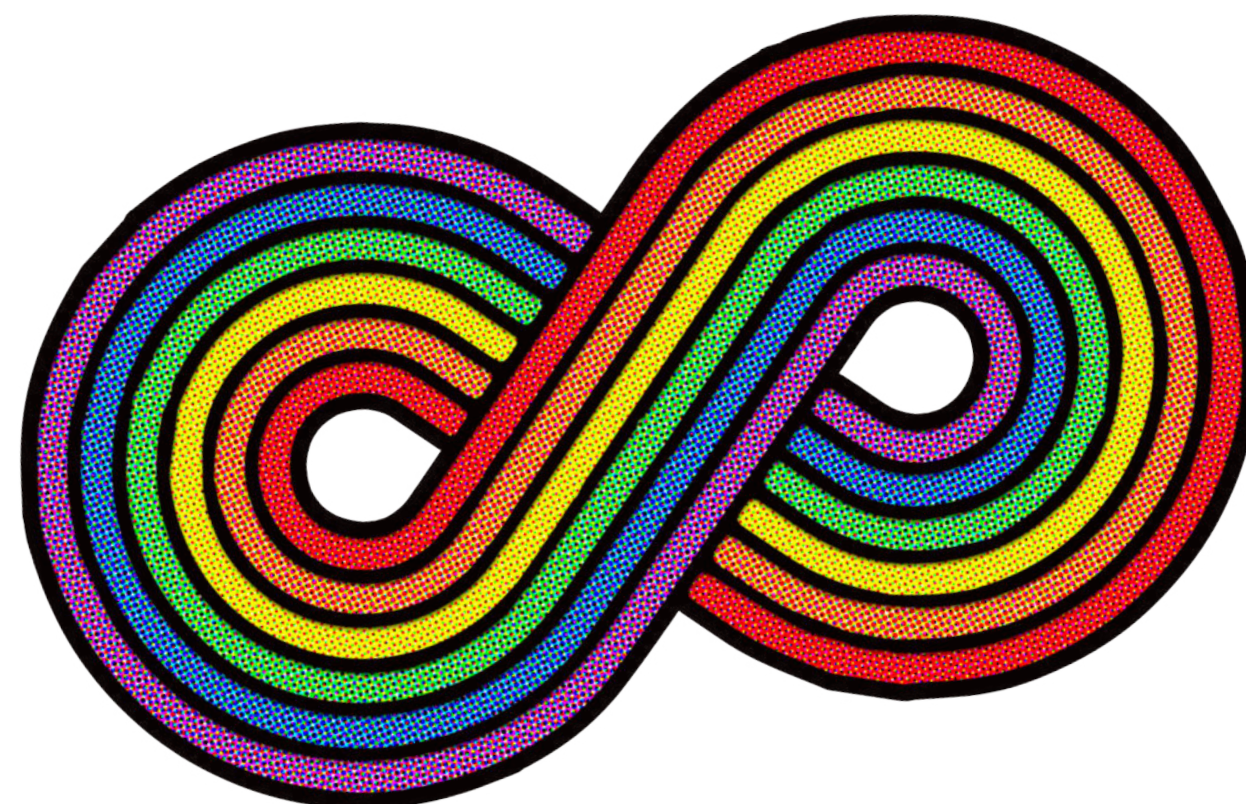
Concepts like stimming, masking, time-blindness and rejection-sensitive dysphoria have all put a face to the collective experience that fill up the daily lives of young students and even adult workers with ADHD, but, for several years, these aspects were unknown to me, and I assumed I was simply not trying hard enough - or, even worse, inherently not clever enough at life in general.

One of the most liberatory concepts that I learned about after stumbling upon this renaissance of ADHD knowledge was that of neurodiversity, a concept coined in 1998 by sociologist Judy Singer, who, with the help of journalist Harvey Blume, brought the idea into mainstream discussion. The basis is simple: people with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, etc., do not think incorrectly; rather, we just think differently. Though this was initially focused on Autistics, the sentiment resonated and became applicable to further kinds of stigmatised groups.

The world hasn’t only changed with regards to ADHD. Since I was diagnosed as a child all the way to today, movements such as Occupy Wall St., Black Lives Matter, MeToo and School’s Strike for Climate have challenged the status quo, critiqued capitalism as a whole, raged against patriarchy and made us question the western world’s current neoliberal trajectory. Whilst the early 2000s focused largely on reforms, inclusion and helping those who have been oppressed have the best path possible to success, the current climate seems to focus on questioning if that path is even a legitimate one to pursue.

This is, of course, not the first time alternative political thought has come to the surface. Look, for example, within the popular music scene - both the late ‘70s, and again in the early ‘90s, saw an abandoning of corporate, polished, agreeable dance music in exchange for loud, messy, aggressive DIY punk rock and grunge. Suddenly, imperfection was not only acceptable, but it was even desirable to the average listener.

History has shown us time and time again that there is more than one way to peel a fruit (I’m using the less speciesist version of this popular expression), and yet, as much as we keep saying this, binaries such as “right vs. wrong” and



“imperfect vs. perfect” continue to harm countless amounts of people, especially those in the LGBTQ+ community. There’s even a “right vs. wrong way” to challenge/protest the status quo (according to its defenders).

As bureaucracy and paperwork continues to flood society more and more, the burden of proof now seems to have been shifted towards us. Our lived experience as divergents must fit into proper boxes to be checked off before taken seriously. It’s worth mentioning that not everyone was diagnosed as a child like myself - many have only recently received a diagnosis, and some haven’t received one at all, either through lack of healthcare (USA) or incredibly long NHS waiting periods (UK).

On top of the stigma and challenges that come with being neurodivergent in a neoliberal world, we must first jump through several administrative hoops to achieve state recognition of our neurodiversity. Even with regards to the controversial topic of pharmaceutical medications, there lies a binary of “good vs. bad”, with very little nuance or autonomy granted to personal choice.

So what do you do when you are gaslit, patronised and stigmatised by the powers that be? You of course begin to question those powers all together.

As the years have gone by, more and more children and adults have been diagnosed with ADHD. Simultaneously, we are seeing a significant rise in this generation’s radical rejection of the state apparatus and status quo. I believe these two phenomenons are directly correlated. It’s as if, after two recessions, armed conflicts/invasions, and a global pandemic, many of us don’t want to change ourselves anymore to fit a system that continues to be, at most, actively harmful and, at the least, arbitrary and unnecessary.

To have ADHD is to inherently be at odds with the very institutions that keep promising us security and success. It’s to witness from a young age that authority figures are imperfect and that tyrants are chaotically scared individuals - they know that the way things are currently done can just as easily be done differently, and that’s what scares them.

Would ADHD still exist in a stateless/utopian society free from the domination we see today? Yes, I believe it still would. But the amount of care, solutions and discussions produced from that kind of world would be unlike anything we see today. ■

ANDREW J. BOYER

ARE YOU IN EAST ANGLIA AND LOOKING TO ORGANISE?

We are a relatively new organization for the furthering of anarchist struggle in this region. We're autonomous from any of the national organizations and we oppose sectarianism as we are a multi-tendency organization. Below is our aims & principles, if this sounds like you. Feel free to get in touch.

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

WHO ARE WE?

1. We are a autonomous federation of Anarchists based in what is known as; "East Anglia" [Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire]
2. We are anarchists and thus are opposed to Capitalism & The State, we also recognize there are many other forms of domination prevalent in our lives. For example; Sexism, Racism and Homophobia.
3. We do not fight for tiny reforms on behalf of the political parties, we fight for the social revolution which will culminate in the destruction of the state and capitalism.
4. We oppose electoralism and vanguardism.
5. We do not seek to merely replace one evil with another, installing ourselves as the new dictatorship after the social revolution & we oppose anyone who attempts to do so.
6. Our concept of liberation and social revolution is not based on nationalism or spiritualism.
7. We oppose sectarianism and seek to struggle alongside other libertarian-socialist organizations, whether they be mutualist, syndicalist or social-ecologist etc. However we do not work with political parties.

WWW.EASTANGLIAAFED.NOBLOGS.ORG



WHAT DO WE WANT?

1. The Abolition of the State & capitalism.
2. Direct Democracy in our communities & workers self management in the workplace.
3. An end to the police state & the prison island we're becoming, instead we want to build a culture of restorative justice, solidarity and mutual respect.
4. A Social Ecological solution to our current production and consumption problems.
5. An end to militarism & male chauvinism, an end to gendered violence in all its forms.
6. Mutual Aid, freedom and equality of opportunity, to enable us all to reach our potentials as individuals and as a species.

HOW ARE WE GONNA GET IT?

1. Direct Action
2. Working in solidarity with other organizations specific to what we're fighting, whether it's trade unions, tenants unions or networks to support unhoused people.
3. Producing propaganda to argue for our ideal of anarchist-communism and for our goal of classlessness.
4. Helping to foster a culture of resistance within the working class.
5. Opposing any movement that seeks to divide the working class, for example; Fascists who seek to pit the white working class and ruling class against working class people from all other ethnic backgrounds.

INTERNALEAAF@INVENTATI.ORG

THE RIGHT TO BE LEFT ALONE

AN ANARCHIST TREATISE ON WHEN LARGER SOCIETY MAY INTERACT WITH THE INDIVIDUAL IN A POST-REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY.

In my experience, the right to be left alone is the primary desire of most people. To live their lives free of the harassment of banks, bosses and bigots. Truly it is the goal we should aspire to, to live in a world where each is free to live their lives in accordance with their own personal dreams. A dream not possible under our current economic system but one genuinely within the reach of humanity.

I am not the person to dictate the method of how we reach an anarchy for each instance will likely require it's own specialised method but I offer this a suggestion for a post revolutionary society.

There are only two occasions to which I see the disruption of this right to be necessary:

1. When someone needs something
2. When someone is causing harm to others

Let us start in numerical order. "When someone needs something" is a simple yet incredibly broad concept and can be split into two meanings: when the individual in question needs something and when an individual in their community needs something.

Starting with the first and the obvious. A person throughout their life will need many things: food, water, shelter, healthcare, etc. All should be provided to them as is a society's responsibility to their fellows. These things, so cruelly denied to many, are the right of all peoples and to deny them is of the cruellest and most common transgressions of our world.

The idea is not without complications however, especially when talking about the main idea of this piece, the right to

be left alone. Some do not want help even when they truly need it. This can be for many reasons. Some examples such as pride or stubbornness, however infuriating it may be for an outside observer, must be respected for it is not our place to interfere (of course if it qualifies for the second item and their actions harm others it is a different story). What is more complex is when someone is not capable of forming the appropriate mental state to make such decisions.

Obviously this should be something that is incredibly rare and certainly rarer than it is now, as actions like drug use, self-harm and suicide can be legitimate expressions of bodily autonomy. Any actions that take away a persons right to be left alone for the purposes of health should not be the decision of either an individual or a small group and furthermore should be as narrowly restricted to the issues as possible and terminable at anytime. There must be a system in place to help those who are unable to help themselves without contributing to the history of ableism we are familiar with.

The second part of this first point is concerned with how we produce the things people will need. With the destruction of capitalism and the state bringing an end to consumerism, overproduction and bureaucracy, the amount of work taking place in society will thankfully decrease. However we are not currently yet in a position to implement complete automation so some work will have to be done to fulfil the right of each to the necessities of life. The motivation to do this work should not come from the threat of force nor the coercion of currency but from communal obligation. You do the work that needs to be done because your fellows require it and because they do the same for you. »



This will be dependent on, and illustrates the importance of, community building before, during and after the revolution. We must help people internalise the ideas of mutual aid if we are to rid ourselves of coercive authority.

“When someone is causing harm to others” is a similarly broad concept which I will divide into three segments: physical harm, mental harm, and deprivation.

Physical harm is the simplest and an already well understood concept so requires no further explanation.

Mental harm is an umbrella term for things such as verbal abuse, harassment, manipulation, etc. basically any action that would cause one’s mental health to suffer.

The third and final is *Deprivation* which I define as either the hoarding or simple withholding or chattel of which you have more than you require and is needed by someone else.

Take for example the billionaires of today, having more money that they could ever need and as such deprive the poor of access to the things they need. If we are to throw off the bonds of capital and state we must also shed the greed and competition of the systems that blight us. We must be willing to give up our extra for our fellows for, as was said above, they would do the same for us and for us all to succeed we must cooperate.

For the second part of this second point we come to the question of scale and at what threshold larger society may interfere. Smaller transgressions should be handled as locally as possible both for more efficient practice and for increasing communal cohesion. For example, neighbours could help explain how an individual’s actions are harming them or they may convince someone suffering to get help of their own accord. All steps should be taken to help maintain the health and happiness of your fellows without violating the right to be left alone if possible.

It has been said that one of the best ways to convince someone is to first show how a proposal would benefit them and although I have spent the bulk of this essay on situations where it may not apply, I feel like the right to be left alone is an appealing prospect that could help open people’s eyes to what anarchism can do for them and hopefully soon after, what they can do for the cause. ■

ANONYMOUS - EAAF

THE TROUBLE WITH SLOGANS

I find myself coming back to Umberto Eco’s *Ur-Fascism* a lot these days. I don’t exaggerate when I say it is one of the best essays I’ve ever read, not just about fascism but in general. It’s certainly one of the most comprehensive analyses of fascism’s ideological underpinnings, with Eco’s 14 points being widely cited as how one can best spot a fascist.

There is one part in particular that has stuck with me ever since I first read it. As a child, Eco witnessed the liberation of his hometown by anti-fascist partisans. When the partisan leader gave a speech about their victory, it was rather short, understated and to-the-point, completely unlike anything Eco had heard from Mussolini’s flashy performances. He quickly understood the meaning of this at a deep level: “freedom of speech means freedom from rhetoric”.

This was an idea I spent a lot of time mulling over, one I struggled to get to grips with after a life of being taught that the best speakers were the best rhetoricians.

I began to understand it much better during the fallout from the Brexit referendum. During those hectic years I and the rest of the nation were bombarded with short, snappy catchphrases: “Take Back Control”, “Brexit Means Brexit”, “Will of the People”, etc. I was reminded of Eco’s statement on *Newspeak*, that fascism “made use of an impoverished vocabulary, and an elementary syntax, in order to limit the instruments for complex and critical reasoning.”

Indeed that was clearly what these slogans were designed to do. They elicited an incredibly emotional response from people and were used almost exclusively as a way to shut down any opposition, criticism or inquiry into the actions of the Conservative government. When I spoke to family and friends that voted Leave, I soon stopped being able to engage in anything that resembled a conversation, as

they began responding to anything I said by repeating these catchphrases. It quickly began to seem that the Brexit movement, to paraphrase Eco, did not have any philosophy: it had only rhetoric.

It was this that brought me to understand Eco’s idea that freedom of speech is incompatible with rhetoric, as rhetoric is fundamentally designed to shut down free speech, to curtail critical thinking, to force everyone into line behind a simple slogan. It becomes impossible to truly practice free speech when anything you say gets drowned out by a simplistic soundbite.

Sadly, this is not something that is limited to reactionary forces. It is a problem that has also embedded itself within the minds of people that consider themselves progressive. Rhetoric provides an easy route to ideology, without any need for deep thought. Instead of arriving at our positions through reason, we default to simplistic slogans and repeat them until any opposition to our ideas is thoroughly silenced.

In a tragic state of affairs, people have even allowed slogans to take the wheel and drive their ideology. The first time I observed this in anarchist spaces was with the slogan “No Gods, No Masters”. When a religious anarchist raised objections to expressions of dogmatic anti-theism, people simply started repeating that slogan, without rhyme or reason. Today I see similar behavior in response to the invasion of Ukraine: rather than form a nuanced position to the issue at hand, driven by both our principles and the situational conditions, people have started to treat the slogan “No War But The Class War” as dogma.

If we are supposed to be working towards freedom, then why do we constrain ourselves with mind-killing creeds? How have we become servants to rhetoric?

Rhetoric is an almost inherently authoritarian practice, designed to turn its subjects into bleating sheep, incapable of behaving rationally or thinking about things at a more complex level. Rhetoric transforms a complicated issue into a black-and-white binary, turning us into partisans of the catchphrase rather than the idea. Rhetoric incapacitates our minds, dulls our senses and restrains our actions, tying a noose around anything that might lead one to freely think and speak.

Can we free our minds to the possibilities of complexity? Or are we forever doomed to see the world in less than 240 characters? ■

EMMA HAYES

HOW MANY TRANS KIDS SHOULD THERE BE?

Of course, the straightforward answer is, “as many as want to be trans”. However I’m going to delve into how many we would expect if we were trying to guess based on what we know.

There’s an often quoted statistic that there was a “4000% increase” in patient referrals to the Tavistock GIDS child and adolescent gender service in the decade from 2009 to 2019. This service consists of a network of clinics which serves the trans youth population in England and Wales. The statistic is often given itself (leaning heavily on innuendo) as reason enough to suspect that there are problems with social contagion causing kids to transition who are likely to later regret it.

Of course a 4000% increase for a service where previous iterations of the service were not nearly as available or widely known to the public (or to doctors who might provide referrals to the service), and which had radically increased capacity starting at the time when this increase is measured from does not tell us much. It’s hard to tell whether it would be possible to distinguish between the purported “social contagion” happening spreading through schools and Tumblr on the one hand, or if this is just what an improvement in access to an obscure and particularly underfunded corner of the NHS looks like. After all, if you start off dealing with a handful of patients with an experimental service and then roll it out nationwide, you would absolutely reasonably expect the number of patients to double, quadruple and more after your first handful until your service either reaches its own limits in terms of capacity or demand in terms of the number of patients in need of the service. This period of growth in the service corresponds directly with a period of the NHS commissioning information resources to inform and educate GPs, videos with young trans people talking about their experiences with the service and other awareness raising activities. So there’s plenty of historical reasons to expect more patients to successfully be accessing the service. The question is really whether the amount of demand we are seeing seems reasonable.

One rough way we can estimate this is by asking whether there is any way to estimate the number of new trans

children we can expect to be brought into the world each year. And the answer is, “yes”. We have multiple estimates of the population of self identified trans adults over the last few years and these have oscillated between 0.2% and 1% at the most generous estimate. A recent census outcome in Canada gives us our best data yet:

0.33% of the population there identifies as trans or non-binary. Of these, 59% identify as transgender, and the other 41% identify as non binary, or as percentages of the whole population, 0.19% identify as transgender, and 0.14% as non-binary.

Now, while we cannot account for when young trans people are likely to discover they are trans, all trans people were born at some point and it seems reasonable to assume that the proportion of these births per year at least sets a reasonable “cap” to our expectation values for new trans youth discovering they need support from gender identity services. The majority of young people accessing GIDS do not get prescribed any sort of medical intervention and this service exists to offer access to therapeutic support as well as referral for medical transition support.

In England and Wales, the live birth rate for 2020 was 613,936. This was a particularly low year, and fell for the 5th year running. In 2010 the number of live births was 807,271.

So the proportion of young people who are likely to be reached within that, if the rates are similar to other developed countries like Canada, would be

$0.33\% \times 613936 = 2026$ children and adolescents (low estimate)

Or

$0.33\% \times 807271 = 2688$ children and adolescents (higher estimate based on young people who would now be 12 years old)

Coincidentally, the current rate of referrals to GIDS, roughly stable for the last 4 years, is between 2000–2600. The vaunted “4000% increase” is the referral caseload reaching and stabilising at the number of trans children we would roughly expect to see. Certainly at least in the same order of magnitude.

ISSUES TO BE AWARE OF

Only about 6% of young people referred to GIDS even get referred on for any degree of medically supported transition each year, let alone other forms of medical support. Rather unlike the media driven stereotype of

young people being rushed onto drugs, GIDS appears to be cherry picking a very narrow sample of what they consider to be lowest risk patients, in part driven by risk aversion due to high profile legal cases featuring detransitioners. Anti trans activists are so insistent on the dangers of regret that young people who might want to be on and benefit from medication to delay puberty and give them time to improve their certainty about transition are very likely being withheld that treatment. This is not an unreasonable thing to surmise from the numbers of patients being prescribed being so much lower than the expectation rate for adolescent trans people predicted by the known rate of trans people in the wider population.

It’s also likely that there are kids who will think they are trans who desist at a later date. It’s important not to play this down — desisters and detransitioners have been calling out to be listened to and not brushed aside for years now, (although much research so far on detransition suggests that most detransitioners don’t necessarily regret transition as such, even among those who cease to identify as trans). Because of the existence of desisters and detransitioners it would be reasonable to expect rather more referrals to GIDS than simply the average number in the population. Maybe they are balanced out by those young people destined to discover they are trans later in life. It’s impossible to say.

In short, if the number of referrals to GIDS corresponds roughly to the rate of trans people we observe in the adult population, even though we would expect to see a surplus of young people referred who ultimately decide they’re not trans. And we would expect there to be many more diagnosed and provided with medical transition support than currently are in practice.

It’s also worth bearing in mind, that the number of adults who currently identify as trans is almost certainly negatively impacted by the degree to which our society suppresses trans identity. These numbers will likely grow as transphobia reduces and people feel safer to come to terms with themselves. I’ve used them as an indicator here because the Canadian census gives us an absolutely clear (and high quality) benchmark for the degree to which people feel safe to identify as trans in Anglo-Commonwealth cultures at this point in time.

MALLORY MOORE

Mallory is a lawless unregistered transsexual, sometime activist and researcher of cis studies.

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PASTRIES,
FREEDOM,
AND LOVE:
AN INTERVIEW WITH
THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

The Artist Airidescence is a multimedia anarchist creator whose work has picked up significant attention on social media. Their ongoing anarchist raccoon art series has been popular enough to warrant sold out print runs on Etsy. Recently, in collaboration with scholar Zoe Baker, they have produced an animated short film entitled Pastries, Freedom, Love: A Malatesta Story based on text by the Italian anarchist Luigi Fabbri. (Ed. Available on Baker’s Youtube channel)

Soren Hough of The Commoner (an independent, anarchist publication) sat down with Airidescence to discuss the inspirations for their art, how Pastries, Freedom, Love came to be, and what projects are on the horizon for 2022.

SOREN HOUGH

How did you end up making radical art? Is it your main job, or what you do for fun? That’s super broad — take it however you want.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

In broad strokes — so appropriate. Let’s paint another picture, shall we? I guess it sort of is entwined with how I became an anarchist. My practice is now kind of inextricable from the fact that I want liberation. The way I make things is now centered around a lot of these concepts and things I think about. Not that I don’t make art about other experiences, but those experiences unfolded into that firm belief of liberation.

So I guess it starts off with baby me — a little socdem [social democrat]. When you first enter into politics, everyone, you know, shits on socdem. They’re like the toddlers who just started out. You don’t want to be a liberal because of how ineffective they are. But you don’t want to be a Marxist-Leninist tweeting some abhorrent ‘we should kill everyone’ memes. And so, you think maybe this is a good start. Right? We start there.

And actually, that’s what initially turned me off from radical politics: the authoritarian leftists’ extreme, very visceral, hateful reactions. I mean, I’m just a fine arts student trying my best. Also my own personal situation, my own traumas, inform me. Once I ran into anarchism, it was like, ‘Oh.’ All the pieces suddenly clicked. ‘Oh, this was what I was looking for. I want to like the idea of communism, but I don’t want to achieve it through authoritarian and oppressive rulers. I want to liberate in the way that I can actually see happen; history has very clearly demonstrated that this state apparatus is not the goal of liberation. Bam.’

Running in those circles, I came across anarchists on the internet, online. I started Discord collaborating, and then I got really invested in making community and making the world better. And suddenly, I wasn’t doomerpilled anymore. As a socdem where there was a deep doomer mindset and then anarchism pulled me out of that. It was like, you’re gonna have to work hard for it, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. So yeah, I guess that’s how I became an anarchist.

I’ve always been an artist. I’ve always been creating things; that has been a part of me. So it was natural that my art would follow a progression of my self development. Zoe [Baker] would quote Marx and say, ‘to your development of your powers,’ ‘class consciousness.’ If you want to get into the specifics of how I met Zoe, it’s kind of embarrassing.

SOREN HOUGH

Sure — how did you come to work with Zoe Baker on this project?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

How Zoe and I collided was kind of hilarious. It’s just beautifully absurd. Let’s just say I posted a query about

the character Rilakkuma, a little Japanese character, a bear creature thing. And they make a giant six foot plush of him, as one does. And I asked Zoe, not thinking she would respond, how Kropotkin would measure up on a mega jumbo Rilakkuma plushie. She responded and then we started our friendship from that unintentionally ridiculous meme posting.

From there, we started talking more and more about Fabbri and what Zoe’s reading. And I started reading Fabbri, too, and then we got to that passage. And she actually said to me, ‘I love this.’ And I read it and just fell in love. When I started reading Malatesta’s theory, I was like, ‘Oh, yes, this is good stuff.’ But then seeing like the person behind the theory, ‘Here’s the human, here’s the bit where this theory connects. This makes sense.’

I was like, this is what we need more of. We don’t need to keep on screaming incessantly about streamers and their proclivities or whatever. This is what we should be looking at. Not saying everyone has to read inaccessible theory or that type of thing, but we need to make the past accessible, and class consciousness accessible. What better way than human stories, because I think that’s what it really comes down to.

SOREN HOUGH

Earlier you mentioned the person behind the theory. Malatesta was, on one hand, the kind of person who would give away all of his pastries (or ice cream). And on the other hand, he’s also the guy who travelled around the mountains in the 1870s with a bunch of Italian, Russian, and other assorted

revolutionaries liberating towns at gunpoint. And then he would write this impressively clear theory, as well.

In my own primary research about the anarchist Marie Goldsmith, I came across a parallel anecdote — except in her version, Malatesta gave away ice cream instead of pastries. It’s almost a parable or a legend in some ways. To what degree do you think these stories are important in capturing the fullness of a character like Malatesta?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

I have my own Malatesta story of sorts. My parents tell it from their point of view.

I had a birthday party at the infamous robotic Chuck E. Cheese’s — you know, the weird mouse, the arcade, all that jazz. My dad gave me a huge bucket of coins and told me, ‘Go have fun.’ And then other kids that did not come to my birthday party reportedly ran out of coins and asked me for mine. So I simply gave all the other children my coins and then in a matter of moments, my coins were gone. But I was happy watching the other kids play games.

I went back to my dad and was like, ‘Okay, I ran out of coins.’

He’s like, ‘You could not have used a whole bucket of coins in 10 minutes. What did you do?’

‘Well, I gave the coins to them.’ »



‘Who?’

‘The other kids.’

‘Why?’

‘Because they didn’t have any.’

When he told me the story back to me, he said, ‘I wanted to preserve that. But at the same time, I wanted to tell you not to do that, because I felt like you were going to get taken advantage of.’

So apparently, there are a bunch of stories like that from my childhood. Maybe we all have a little Malatesta in us. We just have to reach back and pull it out.

I have a theory, I guess I could go into this whole tangent, but I don’t know — are you keeping up?

SOREN HOUGH

I’m happy to listen.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Okay. Politics is about love. I make this audacious claim. But really, truly. Why do we do what we do? Why do we organize at all? Why do we want to reconfigure society in X way? Because we fundamentally care somewhat about other humans and the human condition.

Obviously in politics, how people see humanity is reflected in how they respond with love about their politics, right? Because, you know, abhorrent fascism is this very skewed, rigid view of humanity that wants to constrain and dictate and take on an authoritarian structure because hierarchy is the way to police people, and they think it’s justified. In their way, this is ‘love’ for humanity because they think the better version of humanity requires that. So that’s a really fucked up version of love.

On the other hand, there’s the anarchist conception: that compassion, that mutualism, that recognition of the other and of sentience — and respect for it, too. So we want liberation because we think that humans, at their best, love each other, and we want to have the maximum amount of freedom and potential.

Some people scoff at it. They’re like, ‘Love and politics? What are you talking about? This is absurd.’ Is it, though? Think about it.



SOREN HOUGH

It’s funny you say that, because I heard a talk about this very subject at a recent conference. Apparently, Kropotkin was quite resistant to the idea of love being a part of his theory of mutual aid. But the anarchist Zhu Xi (1900–1962), who translated and elaborated on Kropotkin for a Chinese audience, disputed this point and was big on love being a major part of anarchist thought. In other words, you’re not alone. And that’s certainly not the only example. There’s the free love movement, which was a major part of early anarchist thought, as well — particularly among women, but also among men, although not always practiced in quite the same way. Getting back to pastries, do you think you’ll return to Malatesta to explore more of his life in future work?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

My ambitions outrun my mouth and my sense of time, unfortunately. Hard to be ambitious under these conditions, but here we are. I just brought it up with Zoe: ‘Wouldn’t it be fabulous to work together on an animated documentary?’ I would love to do a Malatesta documentary, because I personally like watching documentaries. I am a nerd. Noam Chomsky lectures and documentaries. What else is a girl supposed to do to try to find some peace in this world, right?

SOREN HOUGH

Have you seen Manufacturing Consent? It’s really good for something that could be very dry. Perhaps animation could do the same for a documentary on Malatesta.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Yeah, it is really good. I’d love to do a documentary. I would love to do a full-scale unhinged long-form film, just go hard artist mode, but ‘artist researcher mode’ is just not there yet. Zoe always says she has enough to support herself, but not enough surplus. So I guess I’m saying, ‘Give Zoe your surplus so she can start paying me.’ [Laughs.] Just kidding.

I would love to animate historical figures and historical anarchists and theories and concepts, and also contemporary stuff, too. I would just love to do that. Full time. Unfortunately, I do have to actually get back to wage slavery soon. So I guess that answers your question, ‘Is this your full job?’ I eke out this in the wee hours when I am not losing myself to mental illness or the capitalist system which grinds and breaks you.

I don’t know, I have mixed feelings about working like this because on one hand, god, I hate this. I hate being a wage slave. I hate doing this. Of course. But on the other hand, because I do a job that’s not related to my creative side, I can take all my creative powers and truly utilize them for revolution and for prefiguration and propaganda, things that I actively want. I can put my heart and soul into that versus if I was working for a business or a corporation and I was using all my beautiful creative skills for that... So it’s a mixed thing. But also not wanting to necessarily be paid... ‘Oh, I’m doing this out of my heart.’ I don’t want to get tainted by money. But at the same time, oh god, what I would give to just do this and not have to be relentlessly ground down.

SOREN HOUGH

I often feel that tension myself. You sort of alluded just now to the role your animation, or animation in general, plays in anarchism. How does the medium fit in? You mentioned prefigurative politics — do you think things like animation, because they’re so freeform and allow total control over the mise-en-scène, are a better fit for prefiguration versus something like a photo collage or live action work?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

I’m going to bring up Cowboy Bebop, if you know what that is, so bear with me. Netflix said let’s make Cowboy Bebop live action, and suddenly the magic was gone. What happened? Let’s take that apart.

Using a medium to its maximum is part of its magic. And there’s something very, very special — especially to me, obviously — about animation that can transcend reality. I mean, in some ways my animation has some very cinematic qualities — still frame and stuff — but there’s something I want to add, a sense of wonder and whimsical feeling to the everyday. That’s also just the magic of art in general but especially of animation. It has the ability to take the beauty of images, stringing them together and suddenly you’re moving. You’re alive. Your breath is in the work.

It’s just like what David Lynch did: He discovered painting, but then he discovered making movies, and movies are just ‘moving paintings.’ And I always liked that, because that’s kind of how I approached things, too.

There’s something about animation that matches on to this. Part of anarchism is having the audacity and daring to dream to think completely differently about the world around you. It’s very brave to try to be a visionary in a world that says, ‘Actually, vision is only good if it serves the interests of capital.’ There’s a heart to it. And I think that animation illuminates that sort of thing.

Not to mention that in terms of how media is today, people’s attention spans are shorter than ever. We need the modern day pamphlet, essentially. In order to propagate anarchism, I don’t think booklets are going to cut it anymore. I’m sorry. Don’t get me wrong, I have my zines, I have my pamphlets. I’m a fan, too. I like them. But I recognize that format is not necessarily going to be 1. as accessible, and 2. as enchanting as something that’s flashing images on the screen. So if I can contribute any flashing images to the screen and get anarchism and anarchism into people’s hearts and minds, then that’s fantastic. That’s everything. I’m a modern day pamphlet girl



SOREN HOUGH

It’s a medium not really explored by classical anarchism. Early animation existed while Kropotkin was still alive, for example, but most of the early propagandistic animation I’m aware of was used by people like Henry Ford to talk about how we need to kick all of the communist IWW ‘rats’ out of America.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

They really took the moving picture and were like, ‘This works for capitalism. Do that.’

SOREN HOUGH

And for racism, and hardcore imperialism. When you talk about stringing images together and bringing things to life, you may be interested in a take from Sergei Eisenstein, who was a Soviet filmmaker you’re probably familiar with. He wrote about how animation reveals the ‘plasmaticness’ — or inner life — of inanimate objects. »

For example, in the early Ub Iwerks animated shorts, everything is moving all the time. Everything’s bouncing to some sort of rhythm; chairs are moving, flames are personified. And they’re all alive because of animation, not because they have any intrinsic life to them. In the past, you’ve cited Lynn Tomlinson as an influence. As soon as I saw her work, I immediately saw how your styles overlap. How do you achieve your aesthetic? It seems like you hand draw and then compile it?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

I actually still have my camera just over here set up. There she is. She’s beautiful. It’s a very DIY rig.

SOREN HOUGH

So it’s more like stop motion in that way.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Yes. I use hand drawn things, materials, and then I do post[-production]. And obviously, sometimes I do sound effects, sometimes I’ll grab them from free libraries. And then, somewhere in the middle of the process, I’ll usually try scoring.

Oh god, I sound so chaotic. People are like, ‘Look at her work, so professional.’ I scramble. And it works for me. No, I do plan a little bit. It’s a mix. So yeah, stop motion-esque experimental. That’s why I call myself ‘experimental’ because I have a bunch of my own processes. But I draw the way I paint, I paint the way I draw, and I don’t typically like complete cleanness in terms of lines and texture. And then that just lends itself in some way to the animation. Whereas I find that a lot of animators, because they’re using a lot of digital stuff... My animations, I want them to look like drawings and paintings really come to life. I want the material to come through. That’s one thing about my process.

Actually, the funny thing was I started off just drawing. I considered myself as an artist: I draw and I paint. I don’t animate, I don’t know what that is. I wasn’t actually involved in film for the first year of learning, being in art school. But then I had this fantastic, fantastic mentor and friend. And that door was opened. And that irrevocably changed my path forever. So now we’re here, I guess.

SOREN HOUGH

In terms of paintings, your approach kind of reminds me of Loving Vincent. I don’t know if you ever saw that.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Yes. I was like, ‘This is what I’d like to do.’

SOREN HOUGH

I thought it was just amazing, and the amount of work that

went into it is kind of stunning. You have some of these artistic influences that you talked about earlier. Is the primary impact they had on the aesthetic of their final product? Or do you also try and emulate the processes of these artists, as well?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

It depends on the person, I think. Lynn I met once and it was kind of a starstruck moment because you usually don’t get to meet like the people who influence your whole process and on you becoming an artist. Obviously, I admire her process and the materials she brings to the technical and visual qualities of her work.

But the other part of [Tomlinson’s] work that I find compelling is the storytelling, the human-ness of it. Drawing back on connection and narrative, that’s really what pulls things together. Like The Elephant’s Song and The [Ballad of Holland Island] House. These heart rending things of time and loss, and even through the passage of all that loss, still finding beauty. I cry a little bit.

On that note, also Hayao Miyazaki. The storytelling, more in his themes of evolving characters and nature being very central and how capitalism is degrading nature. Some intrinsic part of us knows that ecology is an aspect of our theory and praxis that we shouldn’t disregard. That’s also, again, part of love for the ecology, love for humanity, and how they fall back into each other.

I would be ill-advised to not mention, outside of animation, David Lynch.

SOREN HOUGH

You’ve discussed how you want to communicate ideas about love and prefiguration through your work. Is that your main goal in producing animation and other media?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

My work is kind of expansive. I mentioned the anarchic propaganda aspect, but I also use it as a mode to process and work through my own trauma, what I’ve gone through, and how I’ve ended up here.

Hierarchy has really impacted my life in a very grotesque and obvious and straightforward way. China has the one child policy, or had, and now it’s a three child policy and, whew. The one child policy was this form of supposed population control by the state apparatus to supposedly make life better. But it did not extricate patriarchal norms from that society, so it was just two forces of hierarchy coalescing. And in the end, you had a lot of AFAB [Assigned Female at Birth] people and babies who were either given away, killed even, or sent



to orphanages, and I was one of the ones that got sent to an orphanage. I don’t remember any of this, obviously. I was literally an infant. But I was taken from China to the United States and became a citizen here.

And then one of my parents being an abuser — politics is not some abstract sort of thing that some people like to pretend it is. It completely changed the trajectory of my life. I don’t know my biological parents. And the alienation. Being in a suburban, white-centric neighborhood was an incredibly alienating experience that profoundly shaped how I see things. And then also being queer on top of that — this is my life.

‘The personal is political.’ It really came down and bopped me in the head.

SOREN HOUGH

Indeed. One of the major projects of anarchists is convincing people of just that: politics extends well beyond voting. Do you have any particular anarchist idea or figure, like Louise Michel or He-Yin Zhen, that you would want to animate but haven’t had the chance yet?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

He-Yin Zhen? Yeah! Louise Michel? All of them. Emma Goldman. I told you, my ambitions are too much for this little form to handle. If I had the capability, the capacity, the resources — I’d love to. I’m hungry, I’m starving. There’s so much I want to know about where we were and where we came from, how these things interconnect.

I’m trying to reconnect and learn about Chinese anarchists. I’ll forever botch their names — but that’s not my fault; I was kicked out of my homeland for state and patriarchal reasons. But yeah, I’d love to reconnect with that. Maybe at some point. I’m trying to do that, maybe for my own history, my own path in life. Where did I come from?

And as always, we’re working on so many other projects. We’ve been throwing ideas back and forth. Zoe got me this book: Free Women of Spain. I started that, really having a good time. Now we’re working on a thing about how Kropotkin became an anarchist.

SOREN HOUGH

Kropotkin in the Jura mountains?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Yeah. You got it. We’re really looking forward to it because it’s going to have a different style than the Malatesta animation. So, I get to switch it up a bit. I mean, obviously, you can still tell it’s my work; I have an intense — what one of my professors said was that I have a distinct method and style of mark making. ‘I can tell one of your pieces from far away.’

SOREN HOUGH

That can only be a good thing. The last thing you want is for someone to say they’ve seen it before.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Yeah, I mean, I did get awards and stuff. So that’s the complex nature of anarchists — becoming an anarchist »

and then being in the fine art world. Now I have to reckon with the inherent way that the fine art world is institutionalized. It's bad because of the hierarchy, classism, ableism, weird hierarchical things in the place where it's supposed to be the most free. It's like, 'Oh, this is an art institution.'

Nope, this is like its own little prison. Foucault, Foucault, Foucault.

SOREN HOUGH

The 'freedom' of academic science is the same way. You mentioned that you've got the Kropotkin animation coming up. And I won't ask when that's coming out, because I know it's completely variable as it is with most projects.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

This year. Other than the Kropotkin, I have a little video promoting this year's productions. There's Love, Work Performance, How Kropotkin Became an Anarchist. And then I have an animated poem that I'm doing with Saint Andrew. And then also maybe my next poetry book, because I published one previously, but it's before I was radicalized. (Don't read it.)

SOREN HOUGH

Are the raccoons just going to continue forever? Because people seem to enjoy them.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE Oh, my god, it's hilarious. I was like, 'I want to make some cute anarchist propaganda. And I also just want to get the creative juices flowing. I want

to see if I can make one small drawing a day. I'll spend five to 10 minutes on this. No big deal. I'll get a little bit of engagement or whatever. It'll be fine. I'm not thinking too hard about this.' Meanwhile, Twitter, social media really embraced it... I hope that people show up for when I have an exhibition, and it's portraits of my queer friends that I spend hours and hours on: gold leaf and all the rest.

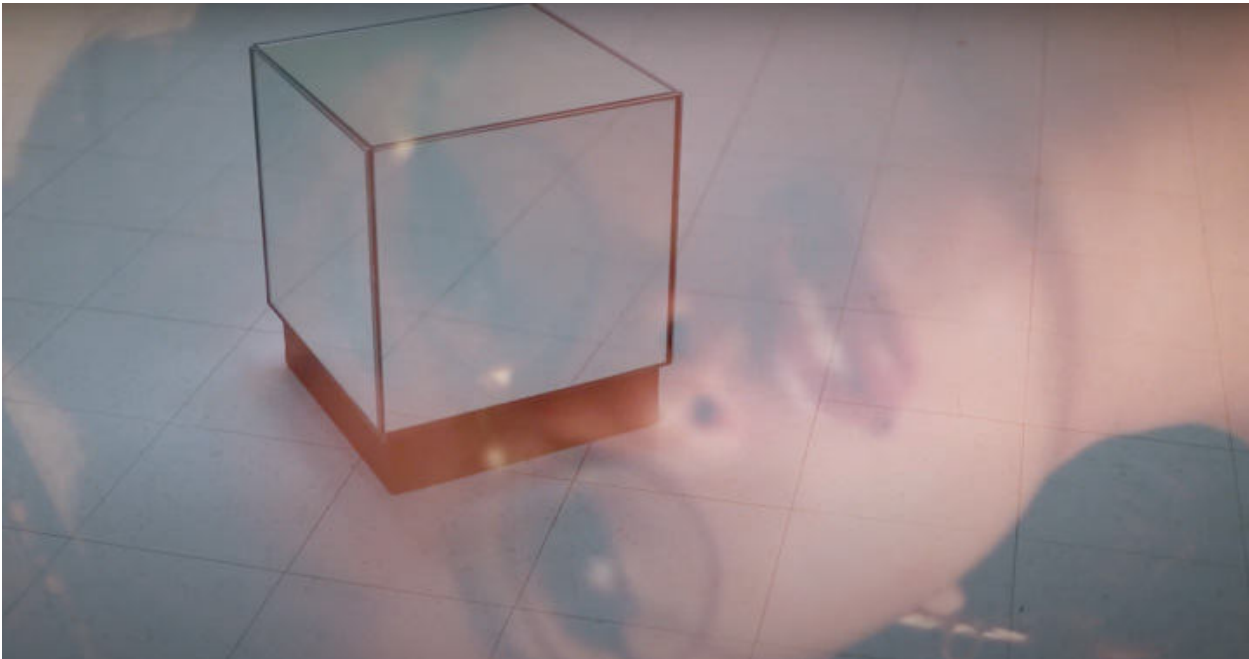
But thank you for showing up for my raccoon drawings that I spent five minutes on. Thank you.

SOREN HOUGH

Well, in fairness, I think there's something generalizable about a raccoon over a portrait. Why does Disney often focus on nonhuman figures in their movies? Because everyone can relate to a sad bear. It's harder when it's a specific person of a specific background. Perhaps that's what it is: raccoons are just abstracted to the point where they're more relatable.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

That's the other part. Raccoons are human-like, but not in very specific ways. Where they have little paws, hold things, and they're very mischievous and very smart. When humans get into mischief they're like, 'No, no, don't do that. Follow the rules.' But when we see a slightly human-like little critter scurry around and get into mischief and get into things it's not supposed to, we're like, 'Yeah, that's great.' Because in some ways, I think people wish they could get away with that. The secret is: you can. Embrace the raccoon. Embrace the little critter inside of you that says, 'I want to rebel, and create mischief.'



SOREN HOUGH

I think that's broadly why anarchists have adopted the raccoon as a symbol. I know you've talked about your influences, but do you have a favorite animation, short film, TV show, movie?

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Twin Peaks, but people don't usually.... I feel like my art has two very extreme sides: pure wholesome love and hope, and then despairing, deeply traumatized art. People sometimes can't put that together; these two simultaneously coexist inside me. I like David Lynch in that sense. He appeals to me, where it's the façade of suburbia and the deep trenches of trauma that we all tried to hide under pretense. That's the American consciousness. David Lynch touches on that. That's me too. I personally identify as Audrey Horne's prodigy. Any of Hayao Miyazaki's movies. Protect him. Love him, cherish him. Look at his works all the time. If he dies, I'm going to cry forever.

Before you go: A General Theory of Love. Highly recommended. I'm yelling at people to read this. It's a good book. I mean, yes, the neuroscience in terms of the triune brain model is outdated. But nonetheless, it really gets to the heart of things.

SOREN HOUGH

Awesome, I will definitely check that out.

THE ARTIST AIRIDESCENCE

Thank you. It's been lovely. ■

This interview has been edited for clarity. This article is co-published with Movie Fail.

You can find more about The Artist Airdecence on their Twitter (@airidescence) and buy prints from their Etsy (AiridescenceArt)

Soren Hough can be found on Twitter (@SorenHough).

The Commoner is an independent, anarchist publication written by commoners and for commoners. It is a springboard for common voices, ideas, and hopes. They want to see the dawn of a common world, where every individual, anywhere, may enjoy autonomy, peace and security.

They can be found on www.thecommoner.org.uk and on Twitter (@thecommoner_)



BEYOND PROTEST

It's all a bit fucked.

Late last night (*Tuesday 26 April 2022*), more than half of the Labour Party's Lords decided that they preferred to catch dinner rather than defend human rights, clearing the way for the House of Lords to approve the government's authoritarian "Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill". This means that after the Queen gives it her stamp of approval, the police will have the power to ban any public gatherings that cause "disruption" or even just "noise", under penalty of 10 years in prison.

The language used, frighteningly vague for such a vast power grab, means this could be applied to almost anyone. Not only could this be used against environmentalist protesters blocking roads, but it could also be used against any assembly that the cops consider loud, disruptive or annoying. Anyone from striking workers to traveler communities now risk jail time just for coming together.

Even simply walking down the street will be brought closer to criminalisation, as the extension of blanket stop-and-search powers to the police has given them a blank cheque to terrorise individuals and their communities. There's no doubt that the country's disgracefully racist police force will gleefully adopt this, intensifying their ongoing campaign of profiling, targeting and brutalising black people.

There is no mild way of saying it: what we have just witnessed trundling through that geriatric chamber was nothing less than the end of Freedom of Assembly in Britain. This Bill, soon to be made law, breaks both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 20) and the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 11), as well as our own Human Rights Act (Article 11). But then, rolling back human rights has been on the government's docket for years. Dictatorship

"WHAT WE FEAR MOST IS THAT THE BRITISH PEOPLE WILL REACT TO THIS WITH COMPLACENCE, ACCEPTING THE NEW STATE OF THINGS WITHOUT THE WILL TO REBEL."

was always the aim of the Tory project.

While this alone is one of the most authoritarian acts that the government has pulled in recent years, it is only one of many. The autocratic slide will only get worse with the other bills the government wants to push through... Are you tired of everyone being able to painlessly vote in free and fair elections? Try the Elections Bill! Are you sick of having an independent judiciary that can hold the powerful to account? Why not check out the Judicial Review and Courts Bill! Have you ever wondered why it's still legal or even safe to be a citizen of a foreign country? Well the Nationality and Borders Bill is here for you!

This government has already driven millions into poverty, starvation and death, it has attacked racialised communities and LGBT people with increasing levels of barbarity, and it has overseen the shocking rise of the very ideology which they themselves claim to have defeated almost 80 years ago. And this series of legislative coups now amount to a declaration of war on our rights and freedoms. With each passing day, it becomes more of a necessity to remove them from power, by any means necessary. The Tory government should now be considered Public Enemy No. 1.

While this bill passing is certainly a defeat for liberty, we will not cede further ground to the forces of despotism. When one door shuts, we simply break a window.

It is now necessary to transform Kill the Bill, from a pressure movement against parliamentary legislation, to a resistance

movement against its implementation in our society. We will need to form a network between communities targeted by state repression, organizing together with the existing Black Lives Matter, Refugee Action and Traveller Movements, in order to better protect ourselves and each other. We will need to actively monitor police activities, so we ensure that we will hold them accountable when they do not account for themselves. We will need to train ourselves in self-defense and organize collective-defense detachments to actively guard against police brutality, whether that be in our communities or at a public demonstration.

We should also be considering how we will be able to continue to express our discontent, if protesting safely is now off the table. Gone are the days of blue-vested coppers facilitating a legal, legitimate and peaceful outlet for dissent. We may well be moving forward to a new, more criminal, radical and combative period for the opposition movement.

If they want to make speaking up for ourselves a crime, then we will be their criminals. If we can't write snarky, pun-laden phrases on cardboard placards, then we will paint them on

walls and nail them to doors. If we can't chant our slogans in public, then we will whisper them to each other in private as we plot our next moves. If we can't peacefully march through our streets in broad daylight, then we will retake them by force in the shadow of night, sowing seeds of chaos in the dirt of order. Democracy may die in darkness, but anarchy thrives in it.

As anarchists, we do not fear going underground. Clandestinity has been the only way our movement has flourished in so many places and for so many years. What we fear is not the heel of a cop's boot, nor the bars of a state prison. We know these things quite well already. What we fear most is that the British people will react to this with complacency, accepting the new state of things without the will to rebel.

It is an old democratic saying that "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good people to do nothing." Well it is not our intention to sit by and do nothing.

How about you? ■



AN INTERVIEW WITH BRISTOL DEFENDANT SOLIDARITY

Bristol has hit the headlines for a number of political actions throughout the 2010s and 2020s: The Stokes Croft Riots, Youth-Led Climate Strikes, Kill The Bill actions, and, most famously, the toppling of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston, during a protest for Black Lives Matter.

For the last 11 years, one group has been doing essential, yet often overlooked, work. They provide, in their words, ‘effective, lasting, unconditional support and solidarity to anyone arrested or imprisoned as a result of demos, riots, direct action, and escalating class war.’

We spoke to Sam and Jack, two members of Bristol Defendant Solidarity (BDS), about their views on the work the group does, and the wider political situation we all find ourselves in.

SO I FIGURED I’D START WITH ASKING YOU, AS INDIVIDUALS, WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH BRISTOL DEFENDANT SOLIDARITY?

SAM: I was involved from the start of BDS – before the start, really. I recall getting involved in defendant solidarity campaigns from the 80s, during the miners’ strike, in fact, and also during the Wapping dispute. Later on, I remember the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign, and a group that grew out of it: The Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (LDMG). The first time I formally legally observed was in the late 90s at J18, and I continued doing this with LDMG.

When I moved to Bristol, BDS hadn’t yet formed, but there was already quite a bit of legal support and solidarity in Bristol. For example, we took 17 legal observers to the G8 in Scotland. So you could see that, like, that sort of work in Bristol was ongoing from the noughties, on quite a regular basis. It just wasn’t formalised. Most affinity groups would have

one person responsible for arrestee support, or checking out legal issues before taking action. Bigger events, like the West Side Climate Camps, also put a lot of legal support in place.

Then the Bristol ABC (Anarchist Black Cross, prisoner support group) reformed around 2007. ABC started to informally provide legal support and monitoring, which was the beginning of BDS. BDS itself emerged in the midst of the two Stokes Croft disturbances, in late April 2011. I was involved in ABC at that point, and have dropped in and out of BDS ever since. Most recently, getting back involved in June 2020, in the week before the Black Lives Matter demo, to support All Black Lives Bristol (ABLB), who were planning it.

No one could anticipate the statue coming down at that protest, but one did anticipate a relatively large protest that could potentially be quite feisty. So there was a call out for legal support. On the day, there was a small team of independent legal observers, and then another half a dozen of us handing out bust cards (small leaflets with basic legal info and contact details). And obviously, after the events of that day, then it was a case of staying involved. And eventually I was one of a small group that was consistently in the place.

JACK: I got involved after the third Kill The Bill (KTB) demonstration in April, last year. I was vaguely aware of BDS before, and then there was a sudden rush of requests for more support in the group. I had handed out legal advice, fliers, and stuff like that, but not in any official capacity. I have the experience in other anti-repression work, like supporting returning internationalists from Rojava. That involved helping people individually with cases, and working against state repression, but on a much smaller scale.

KTB was just a massive explosion of repression, right? It became apparent that many, many people were wanted by the state. Arrests started being made, as well. Suddenly, there was a massive need for more capacity, because dozens of people were being searched for by the state. People knew that there would be large casework requirements. But also there’s been quite a lot of things not about individual cases. For example, injury support people. I wasn’t personally involved in that, but other comrades were trying to collate what injuries people sustained at the different protests, and quantify them. There was quite a lot more behind the scenes, things happening suddenly, specifically in relation to the Kill the Bill protests, because it was such a huge wave of protest.

DOES BDS JUST FOCUS ON LEGAL SUPPORT AND CASEWORK, OR DOES IT HAVE ITS OWN POLITICS OR POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING?

SAM: I think that it has a strategic perspective. It’s definitely got a political one. BDS is a Multi Tendency Group. So not everyone has the exact same politics, but they are pretty closely aligned. We don’t really tend to make statements or things like that. We stay focused on behind-the-scenes practical work, rather than being a media outlet. It is very much focused on legal work, on the ground at demonstrations, in the back office when people are getting arrested, and then through all the repression after that.

BDS has strategic political perspective, which is to try and block the state when it’s attacking people in the terrain of the courts, right? Because it’s part of the terrain of the class struggle.

JACK: Not everyone who gets involved in BDS is necessarily an anarchist. In fact, we took the ‘circle A’ out of the logo not long ago. But anyone who does get involved tends to be ‘on the Revolutionary Road’, so to speak. A lot of it comes down to capacity. We have to prioritise supporting defendants, and ensuring their well-being.

A lot of people involved in BDS do more overt political campaigning in other places. In BDS, we have to be a little careful. We don’t want to worsen the situation of anyone we support because of some outlandish political statement we’ve made. At the end of the day, we want to see them found not guilty.

JACK: Let’s take the Colston Four, for example. There were four people from BDS, who started to work on that immediately after the statue came down. That reduced to two after the first Kill the Bill demos stretched our resources. Those people were just focused on the four defendants and their cases, supporting them with things like legal demands, their statements, and helping them understand and get through the process. Later on, both of us became an integral part of Glad Colston’s Gone, which was a coalition of those supporting the Colston Four. I don’t think it would be unfair to say that without our involvement, it would not have managed to achieve what it did.

SAM: So then equally with the Kill the Bill case. BDS has obviously supported individual defendants. But we also encouraged defendants and their friends and family to come together. We very much supported the coming together of the Bristol Anti-Repression Campaign, which grew from that. It is fully independent though. We don’t lead it, because we want campaigns to be defendant-led. At present, we’re so busy with cases there isn’t a chance to do much more.

HOW DID BDS GET INVOLVED WITH THE DEFENCE OF THE COLSTON FOUR?

SAM: We approached the organisers (ABLB) and offered them legal support on the day, and provision of legal information, which they gratefully accepted. We continued to meet with them after, »



and made it clear legal support was available, especially after the police released their ‘wanted gallery’. Consequently, we’re in touch with most of the 10 people who were arrested.

WHAT SORT OF GENERAL STEPS DO YOU GO THROUGH WHEN OFFERING LEGAL SUPPORT TO DEMONSTRATORS?

JACK: We start by handing out bust cards at protests, so that people have information to hand. That includes phone numbers for ourselves and recommended solicitors. So it’s possible they contact us while still at a police station. If arrests are made, we arrange rotas of people to wait outside police stations. At times during KTB, we were providing support to people leaving the stations almost 24/7.

After that, it is a case of maintaining contact with an individual arrestee. Most of them are released under investigation. I mean, there are still people released under investigation from the 21st March 2021 protest, who don’t know if and when they will be charged. Plus another 30 the police are still looking for. It takes a long time for a case to be charged, and even longer to come to court.

Once in contact, we advise people to gather their thoughts and remembrances from that day, and make their own written notes. We encourage them to engage a solicitor, and we help them with any legal aid processes. We also support them in finding witnesses and gathering footage of incidents. Our support continues all the way through the trial, if there is one. We can be present at court and provide them with emotional support, as well as practical support.

SAM: Finding the people who’ve been arrested is actually part of the struggle. It is really amazing when people get in contact with us, and we can arrange to meet up. Usually just, like, over a cup of tea, or something like that. It often isn’t so easy though. Sometimes, we just go to court on a day that we know that people are going en mass, like when the court is doing pre-trial preparation. We’ll actually stand outside the court and talk to anyone going in.

JACK: It feels a little bit like being an evangelical. People look at you like, ‘what the fuck?’ But sometimes it is the only way to actually get in contact with people.

It’s an ideological and visionary process, as well. People can go from isolated individuals, facing the entire force of the state alone, to being joined up with other defendants and with BDS. It’s about connecting people up with a wider network of support. Not just defendants, but people’s friends and family, as well. We love being in contact with friends and family!

IS IT NORMALLY POSSIBLE TO MEET THE CAPACITY THAT IS REQUIRED OR IS IT A STRUGGLE TO GET ENOUGH PEOPLE, TIME, AND ENERGY?

JACK: Well, you can have a dozen people working on it, as if it was their full time job, and that could cover it. But, like, nobody has that amount of time. That would just be the minimum of what we should be doing; there’s always more that we could do. We feel very pressured sometimes, because everything is time-limited. It’s emotive work as well. Watching somebody get dragged through the court system is really shit. We have had people drop out, but also more people join the last year.

SAM: Yeah, but to be blunt, there aren’t enough people involved. Too many people don’t fully understand the importance of defendant and prisoner solidarity. It is extremely important if you’re going to build movements. That, or they don’t fancy the hard work, ‘cause it is hard work. It’s slow work, that goes on weeks, months, in some cases years. We need people to be up for being involved long term, or at least to be part a revolving door, so that when one person needs to take a break, which is perfectly understandable, someone else is ready to step in.

WITH WORK THAT IS SO EMOTIVE, HARD, AND LONG-TERM, HOW DO YOU KEEP EACH OTHER GOING AND AVOID BURNING OUT?

SAM: More attention is being given to that over the last year, because the intensity of the work has been at a level that BDS has not previously experienced. Clearly, some people have been worn out, maybe not burnt out, but it is very tiring. I worked on the Colston case for 18 months, and at times you’re at it every day, in some shape or form. It is mentally and physically exhausting. When we need people at court all day, especially at short notice, that might mean people pulling a sicky, or cancelling paid work. There is also a constant need to maintain records. You could’ve been in court all day and then spent several hours with a defendant who is clearly quite distraught at the situation. Then you go home at night and you spend a couple of hours making notes. It’s pretty full on, which is why it really does need more people to step up.

JACK: I smiled when you asked this question, because it is a challenging one! To be honest, we don’t have a great answer. I don’t think that we have proper structures of mutual care and support. People are also juggling other things; paid work, having kids, having their own interpersonal stuff, their own health issues, or other organising responsibilities. During all

this, we are accountable to ourselves and to the people we support. There’s also a strong feeling of being accountable to the people we’re working with, as well.

The element of comradeship is really important. I remember feeling quite alienated when we just had meetings online. It definitely helped when we began meeting in person. Sharing a struggle is actually deeply meaningful, and I feel much more connected to the people that I’m working with in BDS and ABC than in a lot of other groups. Because what we’re doing is actually material, as well as being very ideological. Which isn’t exactly a perfect answer for ‘how do you avoid burnout?’: ‘Oh, well, I just really enjoy the work that we’re doing’.

Having structures of care is really important, in terms of an anti-patriarchal approach to organising. We have actively discussed this within the group, and with a new group ‘BASE Mutual Care’. They’ve been trying to find ways to emotionally support defendants and people doing BDS work. There were a couple of small sessions, but we haven’t maintained them enough. We’ve also had more informal things, like sharing meals before a meeting.

SAM: There’s definitely a greater recognition and attempt to put things in place. Each meeting, we have a ‘check in’ and a ‘check out’. People are encouraged to be brutally honest about how they’re hanging. Sometimes, three-quarters of us literally are worn out, and say so. There may be a bit of a chat about it, and some mutual support outside of group meetings. We’ve lacked the time for social activity, like a day out in the country, or some such.

Some people have stepped back completely, others will take short breaks. There is an understanding that it isn’t failing if you need to take a break. There’s much more acceptance of the need for support now. Twenty years ago, it was often seen as a bit of a cop-out, as if someone just can’t be arsed any more. This work is much less male-dominated now, there is much less of a macho attitude about it.

HOW DID THE GROUP ADAPT TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF THE AMOUNT OF ARRESTS IN THE LAST YEAR?

JACK: ‘Necessity is the mother of invention’ is the phrase that fits most. Since I joined, I think BDS underwent a lot of different transformations, trying out different things. New types of data entry! That sounds so boring, but it is really important. We really tried several different ways to make sure everything we needed was secure, yet accessible. It was more challenging to work out how to do that than other stuff people have been doing for decades.

I feel we’ve adapted, and have an internal structure that works, and can be fluid when it needs to be. Now, people can join something that has a clear way of working. When I first joined, it was much more chaotic.

JACK: No one could have predicted beforehand that, within the course of a week, you would have substantial demonstrations, which were both attacked by the cops, and actively defended by protesters. There were a hundred arrests. BDS was not set up to cope with something of that enormity. So it’s been an interesting time. Ideally, one day, someone will have the ability to sit down and write about it, so that others can learn.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER GROUPS YOU’VE BEEN WORKING WITH, OR GETTING HELP FROM?

JACK: We’ve been working with London Sisters Uncut recently, who were supporting Jasmine specifically. We ask NetPol (The Network for Police Monitoring) legal questions occasionally. We’re also in contact with similar groups in other countries, who we hope to learn from.



JACK: We’ve also had some help with the day-to-day practical work. Extra legal observers and court support folk came from London, largely due to personal contacts with groups like the Green and Black Cross and the Activist Court Aid Brigade (ACAB). ACAB also wrote some good articles, including looking at the laws around riots. Other groups in Bristol have been supportive, and some of their members have been involved at times. In that initial time period around KTB, there was a wider support network put in place, but it did drop off over time.

JACK: A lot of this came from the Bristol having a large interwoven radical community. There’s been a lot of ad hoc and individual support, mostly things that grew organically rather than were put in place formally. BASE (anarchist social centre) has helped a lot, and BASE and Roses (mutual aid food program) has provided food at demos and events. »

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We have also been in contact with TUHAD-FED, a predominantly Kurdish group, that supports political prisoners detained by the Turkish state. We asked them ‘how many?’, and they said ‘ten thousand’! It’s a completely different scale of work, with a different political context and history. We spoke for hours though. There was a very two-way interaction and experience of solidarity and comradeship when we met.

SAM: Got to give a shout-out to local gig organisers, like Scum Collective, who put out a benefit album and put on several gigs. It is impressive how much support there has been to provide funds and solidarity, from bands, collectives, and individuals. But we still like to have more people to do the core work.

OTHER THAN IN LONDON, ARE ANY GROUPS SIMILAR TO BDS OPERATING ELSEWHERE IN THE UK?

SAM: There is a group in Scotland, SCALP (Scottish Community & Activist Legal Project), and a Green and Black Cross group in Manchester, and similar work done in Brighton. I think there was a small group active in Newcastle, where some people were arrested for KTB charges and have won their case.

Generally, there is a shortage of defendant solidarity groups and work being done. That needs to change. People need to wise up, get themselves organised. This shit ain’t gonna go away, and it’s not going to get better in the short term.

HOW WOULD YOU SUGGEST SOMEONE GO ABOUT STARTING A GROUP?

SAM: Lots of people are aware of groups that have online resources, which are a useful starting point. Groups like Green and Black Cross, NetPol, and the Black Protest Legal Support Group, who have been really important, as they are able to reach out to communities we sometimes struggle to contact. Until shit happens, it can be hard to appreciate why you need to go beyond just having the information, to actually having people on the ground. You need that local knowledge, you need people to go to police stations, to court cases, to spend time with defendants. You never know when it’s going to happen, but it’s probably going to happen regularly from now on. People need to prepare themselves and get more organised.

Many places already have individuals who take on legal and arrestee support roles. Maybe they need to formalise more. It would be great if other groups are better prepared in the future. So, speak to other existing groups, or people already doing the work, gather new like-minded people. Then start

small, basic legal support and getting information out. Then start to learn and prepare yourself for when you do support arrestees.

ANY CLOSING WORDS?

JACK: We all need to be able to keep carrying our politics in the work we do, and make sure it isn’t lost in the organising. We also need to battle the state’s narrative around protests like KTB. I think BDS has been doing this pretty well. Although it is very reactive in many ways, it’s also quite prefigurative. We’re building at the same time, taking on things like transformative justice. I think that is a really beautiful aspect of the work, because actually we are building something as well. And yeah, we need more of that. ■

If you want to support those arrested during Kill The Bill protests, BDS suggests donating to Bristol ABC via www.gofundme.com/f/ktb-prisoner-support-fund.

You can also write to Kill The Bill Prisoners, a list is available on www.bristolabc.wordpress.com/2021/12/16/ktbprisonerinfo

If you would like to get in touch with BDS, you can do so via bristoldefendantsolidarity@riseup.net or their social media www.twitter.com/BristolDefenda1



TRANSGENDER ACTION BLOCK

Hi there! We are Transgender Action Block fighting for trans liberation in the UK. Times are tough for trans people in the UK right now, as well as other places around the globe. Trans rights are under attack from almost every angle. TERFism has made it into the mainstream and their destructive ideology has begun to creep into government policy. Meanwhile, access to the healthcare we need is barred from us with excessive waiting lists and uninformed GP’s.

TAB believe it is time to fight back.

We are bringing trans people from around the country together to organise around issues such as access to healthcare and counter demonstrating TERF events. Primarily, we have organised protests in London but are looking to widen our scope. We believe in the tenets of direct action, mutual aid, and solidarity. Please do get in touch if you would like to help out, otherwise, see you on the streets!

[TransgenderActionBlock@riseup.net](https://www.twitter.com/TransActionBloc)
[www.Twitter.com/TransActionBloc](https://www.twitter.com/TransActionBloc)
[www.Instagram.com/TransActionBloc](https://www.instagram.com/TransActionBloc)
[www.Facebook.com/TransActionBloc](https://www.facebook.com/TransActionBloc)

HOW TO PAINT A CROSSWALK

Over the last few months the Crosswalk Collective have been taking to the streets of LA and fixing a simple problem. It’s lack of crosswalks. so they decided to act. In their words “The city of Los Angeles doesn’t keep us safe so we keep us safe.” This is their guide, American centric, but easily convertible and applicable to a UK and international context. - Ed.

The instructions below are about making a crosswalk that looks as legitimate as possible, to create as safe an environment for pedestrians as possible, ensure that the crosswalk lasts as long as possible, and reduce the likelihood that it is removed by local authorities. This guide also aims to ensure that painting is done while prioritizing the safety of the participants and that of passing drivers and bystanders.

Cost

INITIAL COST:
\$300 (\$150 for the stencil, \$150 for the remaining items)

COST PER CROSSWALK:
about \$50 (for the paint and paint roller cover)

TIME:
One regular crosswalk (eight bars across) will take 90 minutes to 2 hours, including drying time.

PERSONNEL:
At least four people, but preferably five or six: two or three to measure, hold the stencil, and paint; and two or three to do traffic control.

MEASUREMENTS:
These vary but many standard crosswalks are 2 feet x 15 feet, with 3 feet between crosswalk bars. Due to stencil availability and our capacity as a small team, our crosswalk bars are 2 feet x 7.5 feet. Shorter crosswalk bars are fine for small streets

and require less time and paint. But for a bigger road, you’ll likely want a longer crosswalk bar.

- MATERIALS:**
- Paint: You want a quick-drying white traffic marking latex paint suitable for asphalt; read the paint’s specifications and look for one that dries in 15 minutes; budget 1 to 1 1/2 gallon per eight-bar crosswalk; note that crosswalks may be a different color depending on the location and may require a different paint color; so check the guidelines in your area. For example in Los Angeles, crosswalks near schools are usually yellow
 - Paint can opener: Should match your paint can size, 1 gallon or 5 gallon
 - Paint tray: Should match or exceed your paint roller frame size
 - Crosswalk stencil: Buy one from a traffic safety supply store (if you have trouble finding where to purchase one, feel free to message us) or make your own; we do not recommend free-handing if you want your crosswalk to look legitimate.
 - Paint roller frame: 9-inch; you may want a wider roller to match the stencil width but keep in mind that paint roller covers of 12 inches are harder to source; 9-inch rollers and covers are the easiest to find
 - Paint roller covers: same width as your roller frame; you want a minimum ¾ inch nap, suitable for rough surfaces; 1 inch nap is even better but not always as easy to obtain; buy a bunch of these as the more used they get, the less smooth your paint job and the longer each crosswalk bar will take to paint
 - Paint roller extension pole
 - Stop/Slow paddles for traffic management
 - Traffic cones, barricades, and caution tape

- Safety vests: high-visibility and yellow
- White or yellow hard hats
- Chalk
- String: at least as long as the width of the street where you’re painting the crosswalk
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Tape measure or wooden ruler
- Gloves and appropriate clothes and shoes
- Garbage bags
- Push broom for clearing debris and leaves
- Small paintbrush for polishing corners and edges
- Water, sunscreen, and snacks: Painting a crosswalk is physical work and, if done in sunny weather, can lead to dehydration; bring plenty of water and apply sunscreen

HOW TO SELECT AN INTERSECTION
Other than ensuring a need for a crosswalk, there are several factors to consider when selecting an intersection for your crosswalk:

How much traffic is going through the intersection:
As explained below, traffic control is a major part of the work of painting a crosswalk. If you select an intersection that is too high-traffic or where cars drive fast, you may endanger yourself and others in the vicinity, and attract the attention of authorities. Large or busy intersections may be doable but require more preparation and many more participants for traffic control.

How wide is the street:
Wide streets require more time and more paint.

What is the quality of the asphalt:
Cracked, uneven, or very old asphalt is hard to paint on. It may be doable but would require much more paint (up to double the usual amount) and many more rollers, for a result likely to be suboptimal.

Are there stop signs or limit lines:
If there are none, painting a crosswalk could put pedestrians at risk, giving them a false sense of security. Crosswalks are most effective when there is already some level of infrastructure in place.

Take note of curb cuts:
Hopefully, they exist and are properly positioned so as to accommodate wheelchair users and strollers. A crosswalk at an intersection without curb cuts is still better than nothing but the ideal scenario is an ADA-compliant curb cut to ensure that the crosswalk is accessible to all.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
Observe and measure crosswalks in the target area so yours can match the style in use.

Visit the area of the planned crosswalk to assess condition of the asphalt and decide what times have lowest traffic.

Check the weather and make sure it will not rain or be too windy and that it will be hot enough for the paint to dry quickly. Temperature should be a minimum of 50 degrees and a maximum of 90 degrees. (Read your paint’s specifications for its temperature requirements.)

We strongly suggest you do a practice session in an empty lot to familiarize yourself with the materials and method.

Notes on interactions with the public
More than likely, you will have only positive interactions with members of the community. The vast majority of people are happy to see a crosswalk going in. Be friendly, polite, and respectful.

STEPS TO PAINT THE CROSSWALK

1. SET UP THE STREET FOR SAFETY

Block off half the street using traffic cones or barricades and caution tape. You will paint half the crosswalk, let it dry, then reopen that half of the street and block off the next half. At least two people, preferably three, should carefully manage traffic.



2. SET THE STENCIL
Many streets have what are called stop or limit lines, white painted lines indicating where cars should stop. These serve as helpful guides for lining up your crosswalk stencil. Set your stencil against the line a little way from the curb. Make sure it is straight and hold the corners and sides down using paint cans, other heavy objects, or a participant’s feet.

If there are no stop or limit lines, refer to step 9 below and use string instead. »



3. PAINT

Open, stir, and pour your paint into your paint tray. Put newspaper or cardboard beneath the tray in case of spills. Use your push broom to clear debris if needed. Using your paint roller extension, paint the crosswalk.



4. GET CRISP EDGES

Make sure to get into the edges and corners. As you paint edges and corners, ask another participant to step on the stencil as close to the edge as possible to avoid painting under the stencil.



5. MEASURE THE SPACING TO THE NEXT BAR

Without moving the stencil, use a ruler and chalk to measure the location of the next crosswalk bar (if you have enough participants, this can be done while the previous bar is being painted). We measure 15 inches — this starts from the outside of the stencil and goes to where the outside of the stencil will



next be placed, giving you about 2.5 feet between crosswalk bars.

6. MOVE THE STENCIL

Remove the heavy objects holding the stencil. Using two people, lift the stencil from each end and place it in the next spot. (Be careful when moving the stencil and paint cans that you place the cans out of the way to avoid spills.) Replace the heavy objects, making sure the stencil is properly aligned.



7. REPEAT

Paint and repeat until you have half the street done.

8. LET THE PAINT DRY

Stop for 15 minutes to let the crosswalk bars fully dry (note: drying time will depend on the type of paint you are using; we recommend the quickest-drying you can find).



9. PAINT THE OTHER HALF OF THE STREET

Move your traffic barricades to the other side. The stop line you used as a guide extends only halfway across the street. Use a piece of string to create a temporary line extension; tape it down with masking tape. Continue to measure and place your stencil as before. Paint the remaining bars, then wait 15 minutes for them to dry.



10. PACK UP

While the last bars are drying, pack up all materials, making sure you take any trash with you including the string you taped down. Continue to manage traffic until paint is dry.

The first vehicles that will drive over your new crosswalks will leave visible tire marks. Do not worry! This is normal, even if the paint is fully dry. ■



THE CHAIN FACTORY

ŌSUGI SAKAE

IT WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN KINDAI SHISŌ (MODERN THOUGHT), VOL. 1, NO. 12 (SEPT. 1913): 2-5. IT HAS BEEN TRANSLATED BY ADAM GOODWIN^[1] [2]

Late one night I awoke with a start and found myself in a strange place.

As far as I could see there were countless people busily working away at something. They are fashioning chains.

The fellow beside me wrapped a rather long length of chain around himself and passed one end of it to the chap beside him. The second fellow lengthened the chain further, wrapped it around himself and, once again, passed it to another chap sitting diagonally from him. While this is happening,[2] the first chap takes the end of another chain from the fellow beside him, and, as before, lengthens it and wraps it once around himself, and then passes the end to the chap sitting diagonally from him. This goes on and on, with everyone doing the same thing, and at a dizzying pace.

All of them have chains wrapped around their midsections ten to twenty times, and at first glance it seems that they are completely immobilized, but their hands and feet are free enough to forge the chain and wrap it around their bodies. They work so intently. There isn't a sign of bother on any of their faces. They actually look happy as they work.

But all is not what it seems. Ten places from me a chap shouted something as he tossed away the end of a chain. But then, another fellow, who was standing near, but also with chains wrapped around his body, gruffly approached him and clubbed him three or four times with the large truncheon he was carrying. Everyone near the clubbed chap cried out in glee. The clubbed chap, crying, picks up the end of the chain, fashions a small link and joins it, forges another link, and joins that one. And after a while, the tears on his face had all dried away.

In places there are slightly more refined men -- standing,



once again, with chains wrapped around their midsections -- talking incessantly in shrill voices, like what one would hear from a phonograph. They speak at length with difficult words and complicated reasoning, saying something to the effect of ‘the chains protect us; the chains are a sacred object that frees us.’ Everyone listens intently.

And in the middle of this expansive factory are a group splendid-looking fellows—perhaps the family that owns this factory—lounging on sofas, smoking what seem to be cigars. Their smoke rings sometimes gently waft past the faces of the workers, making them choke uncomfortably. As I dwelt upon how strange this place was, I felt my own joints begin to ache. I look down to find my own body wrapped ten to twenty times in chains. I busily attend to linking the chains. I was also, as is to be expected, another worker at this factory.

I cursed myself; I grew saddened, and then angry. I remembered the words of Hegel: “The real is the rational, and the rational is the real.”

Wilhelm I and his loyal subjects interpreted these words as granting philosophy’s sanction to all the political realities of the day, including the despotic government, the police state, the arbitrary courts and the suppression of free speech.

Not just the political realities, but everything. For the dim-witted Prussian people, all of those realities were, without a doubt, necessary and just.

As I cast the chains and bind myself with them, their reality is unavoidable; it is just, and it is my own fate.

I must cease the casting of my own chains. I must cease the binding of my body. I must break the chains that bind me. I must also create a new self, a new reality,a new sense of

justice, a new fate. The chains that bound my mind were rather much easier to break than I had believed. Yet the chains around my feet and hands dig tenaciously into my flesh, and, with time, down to my bones; even the slightest touch left me in agony. Yet as I endured, the chains relented somewhat. And as time passed, that pain was accompanied by a slight sense of satisfaction. I even began to tolerate the three to four truncheon blows from the fellow on watch. I eventually got to the point that I gladly accepted the taunting and abuse from the lounging men.

However, there were many chains that, try as I might, I could not break alone. Everyone’s chain is cleverly linked with mine. There is nothing I can do. If I at all grew idle, the chains that I had taken great pains to loosen subtly worked their way around my body again. Before I knew it, I found my hands mending the links of my own chain.

The master of the factory holds the keys to our bellies, and by wielding them, he moves our feet and hands. I had always thought that it was my own mind that controlled my feet and hands; how mistaken I was. As far as I look, no one controls their feet and hands with their own mind. Everyone is under the complete control of the master holding the keys to our bellies. It sounds so foolish, but the fact is there is nothing we can do.

I then thought I would try to get back the key to my belly from the man holding it. But it was an impossible task to snatch it away from him by myself. It turns out that he holds my key in such a clever way that it is interlocked with everyone else’s keys, and I cannot possibly snatch my own key away from him without the others’.

He is also surrounded by many guards. They all have chains wrapped around their torsos, as they stand holding their spears and bows. They are a frightening bunch and I dare not approach them. I had lost almost all hope. Then I shifted my gaze to the fellows around me.

There are so many who do not realize that they are bound by chains. There are many more still who, were they to realize it, would only be grateful for their chains. There are also many who, while not grateful, have resigned themselves to working industriously to forge their chains. And there are the many who, seeing the chain-making as ridiculous, frequently find openings in the watch of the guards to rest their bodies while harbouring selfish delusions in their heads and passionately spouting nonsense about actually being free and not bound by chains at all. It is more foolish than I can bear to watch.

I then suddenly cast my gaze about. I found others around me

that seemed to be aligned with me. They are few, and they are scattered all around. But they all desire the key to their bellies in the clutches of the master. And like me, they seem to be aware of being unable to take back their keys alone, so they whisper frequently to their neighbours to forge alliances.

“They are few; we are many. They are outnumbered. If we act together, we can take back our keys in one fell swoop.”

“However, since we make pronouncements about justice and peace, we must not permit violence. We must proceed through peaceful means. There is a simple way to do this.”

“Once a year, we send a representative to the master to decide every aspect of our lives. All of those chaps in that meeting are representatives of the master, and if we muster up our own true representatives now, we can be the majority in the meeting, and that’s how we can pass the resolutions that we want.”

“All we need to do is shut up and forge the chains. Just continue to wrap the chains around ourselves. Then, when the day comes every few years that we choose our representative, we simply vote for our own representative.”

“Our representative will gradually loosen our chains, and will, ultimately, take back the key to our bellies from the master. We will then find ourselves in a factory under a new organization and a new system of our own ideals, with our chains in the hands of our representative.”

For a time, I thought this to be the soundest argument. But the idea of relying simply on numbers, or relying on someone else over myself, did not sit right with me somehow. And when they declared their philosophy to be scientific, I then realized that they were not my comrades.

They are dreadful Panlogists.^[3] Dreaded mechanical fatalists. In their ideal of the new organization of the factory, they believe themselves to be the natural inheritors of the current factory organization, the result of an inevitable economic process. Thus, their belief is vested in simply changing the factory system and organization according to economic processes.

When pushed to decide, I, myself, am also a Panlogist. I am a mechanical fatalist. But there are a great many unknowns in my thinking, in my mechanical fatalism. As long as I do not discern these unknowns, the achievement of my ideals will not be inevitable. They will remain probabilities with a degree of potential. I cannot look optimistically to the future like these men. In fact, my pessimism about the future is what nourishes my efforts in the present. »

The larger part of what I refer to as unknown is located in humans themselves. It is with the development of life itself. It is with the power of life itself. More specifically, it lies with the efforts to realize one’s potential, to realize one’s autonomy, to struggle tirelessly for that development, and all of the effort put into that struggle.

I have no doubt that economic processes are a major force in determining the future of our factory. Yet those unknowns—more specifically, our power and efforts—shape what kind of organization and system should be brought about as a result of those processes. Whether it be an organization or a system, these are merely phenomena manifested from the interactions of human beings. The interaction of nothing with nothing—the relationship between nothing and nothing—will, ultimately, be nothing.

And yet, I cannot help but shudder in fear at what might rightly be called the omnipotence of the organizations and systems that already exist today. Those fellows in the factory, steeped in a dream within a dream, consider themselves to be complete individuals and give not a moment’s thought to the destruction of those systems.

Sloth has no ambition. Sloth makes no history.

I looked around myself once again.

I am surrounded almost entirely by sloth. They work dutifully fashioning chains and wrapping them around their own bodies, under the full control of the mind of another; almost not a single one moves of his own mental faculties. It matters not how many of these fellows are brought together, for they have no ambition, no creative power.

I have given up on this vulgar group.

My hopes rested on myself alone. They rested only on the scant minority that come to realize their own power and autonomy, go through their own revolutions to some extent, and put forth all they can to achieve their own betterment.

We must face the men who hold the keys to our bellies, look upon the organization and system of the factory they have created to subjugate us, and turn on it like wild beasts.

We will likely be a scant minority until the bitter end. Yet we will have the initiative and we will make the effort. And we will also have the experience of actions born of this effort. Our aspirations will be born from this experience. We will fight to the last.

This struggle is a demonstration of our power. It is the touchstone of our personal autonomy. We are the magnets who draw the slothful within our sphere of influence and transform them into warriors.

This struggle yields new meaning and new power within our lives, and germinates the seed of the new factory we are trying to construct.

Well, I’ve relied too much on argument alone. Arguments don’t break chains. Arguments don’t snatch back the keys to our bellies.

The chains draw ever tighter around us now. The keys to our bellies are ever more difficult to turn. Even the slothful among this vulgar group begin to grow restless. The time for the efforts of the conscious, combative minority is now. I threw off the chains wrapped around my hands and feet, and stood up.

I awoke. The night had passed, and the mid-August morning sun shines on my half-asleep countenance. ■

ŌSUGI SAKAE

[1] The translator wishes to thank Jesse Cohn for his helpful suggestions and research to improve this translation.

[2] The abrupt shifts from past to present tense and back again are Ōsugi’s, not the translator’s -- perhaps reflecting the dreamlike quality of the narration.

[3] English in the original. The term appears to be associated with the writing of Inoue Enryō (1858-1919), who attempted to reconcile Hegel’s philosophy with Buddhism on the grounds that both were forms of “pan-rationalism” or “panlogism.” See Masaaki Kosaka, *Japanese Thought in the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Pan-Pacific Press, 1979) 244-45 and James M. Shields, *Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).



THE WISE DICATATOR

Once upon a time, there was a wise and terrible king. People were always rising up against him, and he was always finding new and more subtle ways to exploit them. Tired of crushing rebellions that risked his rule, he hatched a cunning plan.

When the people seemed most angry, he had tried making small changes like easing up on taxes to calm people down. It worked when it was done at just the right time. But that was a difficult thing - how could he know? What if he was being too lenient and making concessions he did not have to make? His advisers were no good; often right, it’s true, but also out to grow their own power and prestige. They would take money from any rogue who thought he could profit from a man who had the king’s ear.

But if he could just know the mood of the people reliably, he could stave off riots and rebellions with clever governance. Not forever, naturally, but it was much easier to get rid of ringleaders and rebels when the heat had died down, bringing back the old ways in due course.

So, he tried two things: first, he sent out emissaries to persuade people that his rule was just. That seemed a sensible step to calm the populace. Second, he commissioned a census - not of people, but of ideas. Every five years, he decided, everyone in the land would be asked their thoughts on his rule. That way, he could pre-empt rebellion without firing a shot.

The scheme had some success at first. Indeed it did! But many concerns still worried the king: while he was more popular than ever before, making the changes people had asked for left him looking weak. Other kingdoms began to look at his own with a glint of greed in their eyes. He had to resort to that old trick of blaming policies on a “bad advisor” who would be fired and paraded unceremoniously through the streets. But it was so tiresome always to be looking for new advisors!



Worse still was the cost. Thousands and thousands of pounds from his treasury was poured into this, more even that he had spent on his army and secret police! And all the while, there was no way to be sure anyone was really doing their job. Were his emissaries really doing their best to persuade people? Were his surveyors really taking honest answers in his census? Doubt gnawed at the heart of the king.

And then, one night, an idea came to him. He was ruminating in his chamber, building a house of cards. One card on its own will fall over quickly, just as all his advisors, emissaries and surveyors would fall back on their basest instincts at the drop of a hat unless constantly watched. But what if, like the cards, they could be held up by being made to fall on one another? »

Held in place... by competition with each other? Arranged just right by a wise king, a system could be set up just-so to support itself on its own weight. He got to work right away, drawing up edicts and proclamations.

First, he would divide his advisors into two groups: one that would try to keep things as they are, the other to advise small, token changes. Instead of the great census asking for people’s thoughts, they would simply choose between advisors to the king. That would simplify the sacking of advisors whenever he needed to change his policy.

Every advisor wanted the ear of the king; all the better to take bribes from merchants and lords in other lands. As such, he entrusted the two groups to run themselves and to choose from amongst them whichever advisor as leader had the best chance of winning the confidence of the people. Bribes would now fund the kingdom indirectly, instead of just lining a few pockets for no purpose!

That just left the job of the king’s emissaries. Since the advisors would need to convince people to support them, he reasoned, both sides would want the people to believe the system worked, that they had real power. He could be sure they would convince people not to change things themselves through riots and insurrection, but by supporting the right advisors in the great census. And so he abolished his emissaries, and handed their job over to the two groups of advisors as well. They could fund the great persuasion themselves. Perhaps they would do a worse job of it, but at least it would save the king from going bankrupt.

All this took many years of planning and careful work to set up. As the day of the first Great Census approached, and his great bureaucratic edifice neared completion (called “erection day” by his more subversive courtiers), many foreign lords and princes would visit his kingdom. Just a social call, they said, but it was obvious they were investigating his new system. Most of them laughed at him, and none really believed it would work. Behind his back they called him “The Half-Mad King”, and “Demi-Crazy”. “Do you really think”, they said, “that the people are so foolish as to put into your hands the tools you need to oppress them? We all know might and power is the only way to do that! And only spies can gather the kind of information that you believe they will hand over to you openly and free of charge”. They scoffed and they laughed, but the king kept silent, showing no reaction whatsoever.

Needless to say, the laughing lords and princes were wrong! Not only that, even the king was taken aback in the end. When “erection day” arrived, it wasn’t just the advisors and a few

of their toadies knocking on doors and calling on people to come out; people were volunteering! His spies even reported several former rebels had volunteered for the Progressive Party of Advisors, telling people earnestly, “This is our chance to make things a little better”. He didn’t believe it at first. But then he laughed, long and loud and hard, and went off to the treasury to count his money.

In time, as the advisors became more confident, he was concerned to see them making promises he had no intention of allowing them to keep. The Progressive Party in particular was rather too eager to commit to changes for his liking. But he needn’t have worried; people became so used to broken promises that they no longer batted an eyelid. They still came back, year after year, just to keep the “other side” from getting in! In the end, his party of progressives was far more conservative than he first intended, pacifying people with hot air and broken promises far more than real reforms. After all, that’s what their sponsors - formerly known as “bribers” - wanted. All well and good.

The king became, in time, the richest king who ever lived. His treasury overflowed with taxes, and still more because, without constant rebellions, the cost of his armies and spies had dwindled to almost nothing. The few remaining rebels could be rooted out secretly in the dead of night. And during the day, his parties of advisors would go around from house to house convincing the people that, despite what they knew in their heart of hearts, they were truly happy, prosperous and free. ■



BOOK BLOC SHIELD



1

Plexiglas
Foam rubber
Cardboard
Foam rubber
Plexiglas

Layer the five sheets of material as shown above. Drill three holes on each long side of the block and two holes for each of the rope handles.

2

Secure the side holes tightly with cable ties. Cut off the ends that are sticking out.

3

Insert a single length of rope into the holes to form the arm handles.

4

Place your arm in the rope handles to make sure it fits well, then tie the ends of the rope from the front.

5

RIGHTS OF MAN
Thomas Paine

Cut off the ends of the rope from the front. Think carefully about which book will represent you. Use paint or spray paint to draw the cover artwork.

6

Hold your ground! Place your arms in the rope handles and use the shield to non-violently push back against police containment lines. Practice using the shields in group formations for display and protection. Remember you are turning the media's 'story of the battle' into a battle over the story.

WHAT THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC CAN TEACH US ABOUT SECURITY CULTURE.



Security culture is fundamentally about collective action to identify and mitigate risks. Police can read SMS messages, so your crew uses an encrypted chat app. Local fascists might learn your identity and show up at your home or place of employment, so you use a fake name and pseudonymous online accounts. Counter-protesters at a nazi march might get arrested, but the risk of rising fascism is greater, so you accept the risk of arrest and put your body on the line.

We've picked up many of these OpSec¹ tips in a piecemeal fashion as we joined activist circles. Maybe your first experience with security was being asked to leave your mobile phone in a box outside the room where a meeting was taking place. Or maybe it was being told to hide your face from right-wing press at a demonstration. Many people feel that their involvement in liberatory movements does not necessitate much security, so they've never developed holistic security practices. Of the many who do recognize the need for security, these practices have become so habitual that they happen without conscious thought.

It is rare that there are paradigm shifts in our security practices either because of changing circumstances or new technologies. These things often happen slowly and in ways we don't notice until we retrospect over long periods of time. We don't have the opportunity to see a drastic change and compare how things were before and after.

In our daily lives we have at least an inkling of a concern about our protecting our health from disease. We wash our hands after we go to the loo or take our shoes off in the entryway of our flats. Many such practices can be cultural, and they are often habits we picked up one at a time but hardly think about. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a shock to many people who previously were rather lax about protecting themselves from diseases like the flu or common cold. In a short period

of time, the majority of us went from having no real threat model of how we might get sick or what the consequences were, to being acutely aware of a threat that was all around us. Most were unaware of how many died yearly from the cold, if they even knew it was killing people at all. The new threat to our health from the corona virus forced us to make massive changes to our perception of the world and our behavior as we navigated it.

Security is often taught via analogy. Encryption is explained by describing two parties sending letters to each other via some special kind of post. When we talk about the security of the individuals in a group who live in disparate locations, we use metaphors about the physical security of a building. The aphorism "all models are wrong, some are useful" comes from the statistician George Box who nearly a decade before more eloquently said:

For such a model there is no need to ask the question "Is the model true?". If "truth" is to be the "whole truth" the answer must be "No". The only question of interest is "Is the model illuminating and useful?"

Using the pandemic as an analogy, this text explores how protecting oneself and others from disease is remarkably similar to developing a security culture to protect against repression. The descriptions of the pandemic focus on how it was experienced in Europe. Some of the experiences that will be described are rather generalizable. Others may be less so as they are the experiences of my particular radical circles.

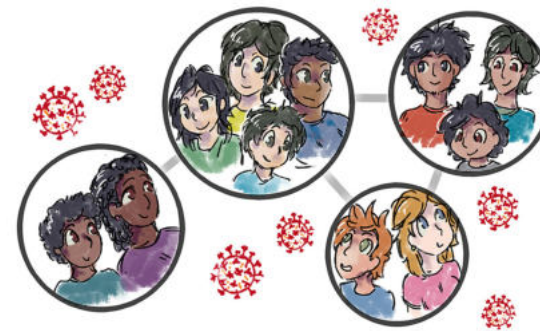
There are many definitions for security culture and OpSec, so to provide clarity I'm using the two definitions here as this is generally how they are used by activists

Security culture is the set of norms with a social group or movement designed to counter surveillance and disruption either from the State or private entities such as militias, far-right gangs, or corporations.

Operational security is the set of specific practices an individual can take that reduce surveillance and disruption.

Leaving your phone at home for an action is OpSec. Your affinity group normalizing the practice that everyone leaves their phone at home is security culture.

PANDEMIC PODS AND AFFINITY GROUPS



Early in the pandemic, we were encouraged to form pandemic pods, or rather closed social groups. The idea behind these closed groups rather than the naturally forming webs of human connection was to limit the spread of the disease. If one person in a pod got infected, the whole pod might get infected too, but it would be limited to just the few people within that pod. While this practice complicated by living situations (those with roommates) and working situations (those who couldn't work from home), it still provided one way of limiting the spread.

Goals of security culture are to reduce information leaks, prosecutions, and violence faced by its practitioners. Affinity groups (AGs) are closed groups of trusted individuals that form in part to carry out political actions together.² The closed nature is in part due to the threat of informants or infiltrators. AGs can plan political actions without worrying that their plans will be overheard, and if they agree to silence, they can carry out these actions knowing that no one but the members of the AG will know who did it.

Affinity groups are robust against infiltration and State-led disruption in much the way pandemic pods—when employed correctly—are robust against viral transmission. Loosely networked AGs exist in opposition to classic organization structures like political parties or NGOs. Leadership in classical structures often has an overview of all members

including what they are doing, and members may shuffle between working groups or task forces within these structures. Infiltrators and informants can rise in the ranks to see everything or float through the working groups collecting information on everyone because they are granted implicit trust by merely being a member of the organization. Vanguardist political groups and so-called "big tent" organizations are the equivalent of superspreader events in terms of infiltration and information leakage. If the "disease" is having your details gathered by the police, "infection" spreads rapidly in these groups. Organizing via AGs helps prevent infiltration and information leaks.

DEFENSE IN DEPTH



Health measures that have been emphasized over the pandemic include avoiding in-person social contact, maintaining distance when around others, ventilating indoor spaces, wearing masks, frequent hand-washing, and the sanitization of surfaces. There was not just one panacea, but many steps we were told to take. Each of these on their own contributes to decreased viral transmission, though some more than others. If an individual enters a shared space with only a surgical mask, they may still be significantly protected by everyone else wearing FFP2 masks. If everyone wears only surgical masks, they are once again protected by ventilation and air filters in the building.

Defense in depth means using more than just one control against a single threat. Sometimes these controls are additive such as when two individuals wear masks, the first has a lower chance of being infected by the second than if only the first or second alone wore a mask. Sometimes these controls are simply redundant such as disinfecting surfaces, frequent hand-washing, and avoiding touching one's face while out in public. These controls protect against the same vector, namely infection via transmitting the virus to mucous membranes after touching surfaces that are infectious. If someone doesn't wash their hands, keeping surfaces clean still protects them. If someone breaks the habit of frequently touching their face, the risk of infection from going long periods of time without hand-washing is also reduced. »

Likewise, good OpSec and security culture use defense in depth to prevent information leaks or disruption. To implement this, one can ask themselves: if this control fails, is there another that prevents my adversary from achieving their goals either partially or completely? Because your phone might be seized and searched, you might have device encryption and a strong passphrase, but moreover you might enable disappearing messages to reduce the amount of recoverable material on your device if it is compromised. Maybe all these layers of defense will eventually fail, but often it's better if they fail after 1 year than 1 day. If your AG agrees to a code of silence about secrets, you can further prevent accidental information leaks by not telling them about your past hijinks. One layer of protection is their silence; the second layer is yours. When making a plan for your and your AGs' security, plan for many layers of defense.

OVERREACTING



Another part of the early pandemic was the attempts to counter the skepticism people showed toward the effectiveness of countermeasures like masking and avoiding in-person contact. There were trends on social media and statements from public health officials saying things like “if you feel like you’re overreacting, you’re doing it right.” Others said things like “if there ends up being no pandemic, you might feel like you made sacrifices for no reason, but that’s proof it worked.” Many people pointed at the Y2K bug³ as an example where disaster was averted due to what felt like an overreaction.

Messaging that tried to normalize the idea of overreacting was not just about motivating people to put in the effort themselves, but also to help them overcome the feeling of foolishness for taking action others might not. Maybe you felt ridiculous for wearing a mask before anyone else at your local market was, and maybe your friends told you that you were being paranoid by avoiding cafes and restaurants when there were only a handful of reported cases. Maybe you told off your friends for stocking up on non-perishable goods in case they got quarantined or there were neighborhood lockdowns like in Bergamo.⁴ Avoiding action is often done to avoid being shamed by others, and these criticisms are often justifications

to oneself. Telling someone off for taking action makes you feel better about not taking action you suspect you should. With activism, you don’t notice the arrests you prevented or the doxxes that didn’t happen because of good security culture. Maintaining a sustained high-level of security can feel overly paranoid or like wearing a tin-foil hat, and of course there are many genuine cases of overreaction (“No one should ever use mobile phones!”), but often in radical circles, security practices are dismissed as going too far. A virus can only infect you at the time of your exposure to it, but data lives forever. An email you sent or security footage can come back to haunt you years later, and governments can retroactively criminalize previously legal activity as part of a campaign of repression. The pandemic aside, masking all the time may be unnecessary, but practicing security culture is always prudent.

MISINFORMATION



When we think of misinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we often first think of the strong misinformation machine that gave rise to people eating horse dewormer or claiming that the various vaccines were part of an NWO plot to put microchips in our brains. Many other beliefs based on various “alternative facts” also waxed as the pandemic went along like naturopaths pushing urine therapy. More subtle were the lies that were pushed early on like the claim that novel corona virus was just “the common cold.” Late in the pandemic, even more liberal sources and radicals themselves were claiming that the omicron variant “wasn’t that bad.” Misinformation based on uncertainty is no stranger either. Early in the pandemic, people decried masking as they weren’t sure it was effective despite corroborating evidence from other regions for other disease outbreaks. When the vaccines rolled out, there were claims that they were rushed through safety checks and that they weren’t safe because we didn’t yet know the long-term effects, something most prominently seen in the panic following a miniscule number of cases of blood clots. It was true we didn’t know the long-term effect because of the linear nature of time, but extrapolating from the billions of other vaccinated humans for dozens of diseases, it was safe to say that the long-term effects were negligible to non-existent.

While we were able to point at many of these things coming from the establishment, there was significant misinformation that came from radical spaces. Like many conspiracy theories, they stood to benefit the person spreading them and weren’t accidental misinformation. Tankies made claims of China’s flawless response forgetting the initial reaction was to arrest the doctors who reported on what appeared to be a SARS⁵ outbreak. Pundits and influencers spread anti-vaxx conspiracies because being vaguely contrarian is part of their brand, and stirring controversy gains them attention and the associated clout and donations. Some BLM-adjacent⁶ cult-like groups and egotistical influencers said that “white medicine” or “imperialist vaccines” couldn’t be trusted and that the vaccine was just Tuskegee 2.0, thus implying that said groups or individuals were the only ones uniquely able to spot these abuses and therefore protect their members or followers.

These corona virus and vaxx conspiracies are difficult to debunk because they contain grains of truth. The CDC and WHO has made contradictory statements, so there is reason to doubt what they say. The Tuskegee Syphilis experiment was real, and medical racism has not gone away. Healthcare is run for profit, and there are dangerous medical products that haven’t received enough scrutiny. Starting from a position of skepticism or even uncertainty is valid, but failing to analyze further from this position is harmful.

If we ignore the atrocious security practices of conservative and fascist groups, we can still see that security is a discipline within activist milieus where misinformation runs rampant. Some poor security practices are furthered because of what individuals or orgs are trying to peddle. Live-streamers are defended as being necessary for the cause (“Good propaganda!”) despite only dubious claims of the benefit of riot-porn and the obvious harm to those arrested because of the evidence the streamers generate. Large organizations downplay State infiltration efforts because they rely on the strongman illusion of infallibility or the belief that absolute numbers is the primary goal of movement building. People who call themselves organizers will elevate themselves as doing radical praxis the “right” way by chiding and shaming those who hide their names and faces, and they take this stance because their “importance” to the movement is dependent solely on them being a loud voice with a name and a face. Some of the misinformation is—like medical misinformation—many people simultaneously reaching the same wrong conclusions without malice as we often see in the smart phone vs. dumb phone debate.

Like how we looked to virologists and epidemiologists to inform our response to the pandemic, we need to look to security experts to inform our security culture. Experts may be individuals who work in cybersecurity to teach us about encrypted chat apps, but just as well this can be seasoned members of the movement who have lived through occupations, police raids, and repressive legal cases. We need to agree on the basic facts of the world if we are to analyze it. Misunderstanding the internet and encryption will lead to poor IT security. Inaccurate models of how the police and legal system enact State repression will lead to inadequate countermeasures. To avoid repression, one needs an accurate threat model, and accurate threat model necessarily requires an accurate model of the world. Do not let yourself become clouded by dogmatic adherence to your ideology or the words of your heroes. Beware people who claim “I do this, therefore it is correct.” Seek facts and strongly supported theories.



AT-RISK GROUPS

The corona virus did not affect us all equally. Some individuals were at greater risk because of factors like their age or medical history. Others were placed at increased risk due to their working conditions. Those who could work from home had particularly low rates of infection compared to those forced to work service jobs. Affluence afforded additional layers of protection like better access to preventative measures, testing, and treatment.

The threat individuals and orgs face from the State or other malicious parties is not equally distributed. Some of us have traits we are born with that massively change how we are surveilled and treated by the State such as our skin color or what passports we hold. Others develop traits over time—like blossoming queerness or a radical political position—that attract scrutiny from the State or conservatives at large. Like with preventing infection, money plays a roll in preventing repression. More expensive electronics often provide better security, and being able to throw clothes in the bin after a risky action is a luxury.

The early pandemic placed a strong emphasis on doing one’s part to protect at-risk groups. »

It leaned in to the sense of altruism many of us have to help a neighbor. We all masked up and stay home to save our nans and the immunocompromised. It worked, and almost too well as many people who weren't in at-risk groups believed they had no risk.

Security functions in much the same way. If only the most active radicals hid their activity, they would stand out from the crowd. Good security also functions by obfuscation. Poor insight into groups means surveillance needs to be deployed against more targets and infiltrators need to target more groups. You may feel that you're not personally at-risk, and you may think—wrongly—that no one in your circles is at-risk, but adopting stronger security practices helps provide cover for those who most critically need to avoid disruption, and furthermore it helps protect you.

CRISIS FATIGUE



Many people who took the pandemic seriously from the onset found themselves unable to maintain their precautions as time went on. The routine of hand-washing upon returning home may have become hand-washing “only if I think I touched something gross.” Consciously avoiding indoor gatherings may have slipped into justifying going out to a friend's no-mask birthday party.

This phenomenon has been called “pandemic fatigue.” Sometimes people stop following preventative measures because they simply don't want to or find them fucking annoying. Other times it's the belief that they earned a cheat day by being so good for so long. Some people see the pandemic as never-ending and can no longer rationalize giving up so much for so little perceived benefit.

I'm not claiming that our FOMO⁷ is baseless. We've all given up on attending weddings or funerals, hosting birthday parties, or traveling to see friends and family. How many regular social activities like hanging out at home, going to a favorite pub, or spontaneously catching a movie have we missed in the last two years? It's not

even just the voluntary measures we've taken, but seeing that others aren't taking them, so why should we suffer while they go out and party? Maybe it's even seeing the intentionally poor response of the ruling class that makes so many of our individual efforts seem worthless.

But just because we're tired and burned out doesn't mean the pandemic is over. This winter has been particularly harsh for many of us: a second winter into the pandemic after the summer that wasn't, all with the backdrop of pandemic-related scandals, soaring infections, and sustained fatalities.

OpSec fatigue is just as real. Nearly every security measure we take has some cost. Abandoning WhatsApp after they changed their privacy policy meant losing out on communication with those who hadn't switched to Signal. Leaving phones at home for actions complicates coordination. Using multiple devices for multiple aliases means more shit to constantly lug around with you. Refusing to organize direct actions with people who have poor security practices leads to conflict in meetings or solitudinous actions.

Because of these costs—either material or “merely” mental—people often relax their security standards, but the threat of surveillance and disruption do not disappear because we lose interest. The longer one is in radical movements, the more they tend to feel the pressure of external threats. This stress can make it hard to maintain the desired level of security. There's also the mistaken belief that actions taken during periods of relaxed security not leading to arrest is proof that the reduced security is still secure enough. With the corona virus, many people have been burned out and resigned saying “we're all gonna get it” before giving up many of their precautions. Many activists develop a view known as security nihilism which amounts to believing that no amount of security can prevent repression, so why bother with any of its encumbrance?

Crisis fatigue is a hard problem both for the pandemic and for security, and I cannot pretend to have a clean solution. My own experiences and those of others suggest that at least OpSec fatigue is countered by a stronger security culture. If all your friends wear masks and only make plans outside, it's easy to go along with them. Likewise, if we have each others' backs with our security, the small slips we make are more easily corrected. It's also easier to be secure when everyone around you is too instead of constantly fighting to just barely attain a low baseline of security.

PREVENTION, NOT CURES



Even where there is widespread deployment of the corona virus vaccine including 3rd booster shots, there are no specific and effective treatments for COVID-19. Care is supportive. Individuals can keep themselves fed, hydrated, and rested to help improve their ability to fight the disease and recover. Even when receiving intensive care, much of the treatments patients receive is not to eradicate the virus but to fight its effects on the body. Recovery from “mild” COVID-19 can take weeks, and the individual may develop temporary or permanent disabilities as a result. Moderate and severe cases require costly treatment at specialized facilities with limited capacity.

On the other hand, prevention is simple, cheap, and does not require specialists to be effective. Even the cheapest surgical masks have a marked effect on reducing viral transmission, and skipping the pub to take a walk through the city is free. There is always some cost to prevention. Masks, even reusable cloth ones that are washed daily, cost money. Bulk hand sanitizer also has some cost. Much of the cost is psychological. Avoiding gatherings takes a mental toll, and isolation can lead to depression. One can get fatigued by always asking “is this safe?” or foregoing desired activities. Even if the chances of getting the disease is low, people may weigh these preventative measures as being too costly and accept what they see as tiny a risk of life-altering outcomes.

Security is also a case where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The bother of getting all your contacts to switch to an end-to-end encrypted chat app might have some upfront and upkeep costs, but this effort is drastically lower than the response necessary after being prosecuted. Dressing in Black Bloc at actions and having clothing to change in to when traveling to and from the action can be bothersome—especially in summer's heat—but this is a small price to pay compared to the damages of being arrested or doxxed with possible subsequent stalking and harassment. Every arrest that is prevented means more time legal aid can spend on other cases. Every comrade who doesn't have to move flats because of fascist harassment is funds that can be redirect

to the community. Every imprisonment that is avoided means a healthier community that isn't mourning the abduction of a comrade and exerting effort for appeals or prison support. Like we saw early in the pandemic, one of the goals was to “flatten the curve.” If it was assumed that some fixed cumulative number of people would require hospitalization, it would be better for that number to be stretched out over 1 year rather than 1 month. If there was even some Universal Truth that all activists had some fixed chance of imprisonment, it would be best to spread this over a longer time thus giving them more time to act before being taken off the board and more time to gather resources to support them. This certainly isn't the case, but the goal should be to prevent and delay consequences of repression as long as possible.

Even when looking at the State level, many of the justifications for avoiding the upfront costs were to avoid economic downturn from lockdowns and missed work. The result of poor containment was that these consequences happened anyway. A lack of security culture may have a short term benefit of alleged increased effectiveness (“Better recruitment and more reach!”), but the downside can be disruptors ravaging a scene in ways that require great expenditures to rebuild. The benefit of a strong security culture outweighs the near-term costs of developing it in the first place.

SECURITY THEATER, EXPECTATIONS, AND NONADHERENCE



Some initial measures taken to slow the spread of the virus were ineffective because they were based on poor or missing information. Individuals who cared about managing the spread of the virus wanted to quick solutions, and often this was in the form of superficial measures that gave feeling of effort rather than tangible results. Policy makers wanted to show strength and that were were doing something, so they did anything at all. Ineffective countermeasures that give merely a feeling of security or action taken are called security theater. In the case of the pandemic, we saw this with use of chin-strap sneeze guards rather than masks, or the use of disposable nitrile gloves when out in public yet the wearer still constantly touched their face. »

Other larger instances of security theater were spraying disinfectants into the air from vehicles or requiring masks while walking through sparsely populated public parks.

Security theater in its original sense is often present as a significant influence on security culture. Often this is done by either intentional or accidental conflation of “feeling unsafe” and “being in danger.” Safe spaces—in the sense that they feel safe regardless of risk—are often needed for healing, and this is not decrying them, but inaccurately naming threats for many spaces is security theater. Queer spaces that don’t allow “straight” partners as a means to keep out the abusive cis-hets is security theater (because queer people can be abusers too, obviously). Radical spaces that shun people who “look like cops” (i.e., middle-aged white men) likely have a very high false positive rate, and the fact that there is enough “diversity” in local and federal police means that infiltrators could be of nearly any demographic. Security theater also happens through misunderstanding such as telling someone to use a VPN to avoid being tracked on the internet⁸ or to use a dumb phone to prevent location tracking.

As corona measures became normalized, those who cared about minimizing their risk would look for clear signals of the measures. This might be the presence of signs requiring masks before entering a building, or conversely avoiding establishments that forbid masks. In this sense, declarations of adherence were not just invitations for other risk-avoidant individuals, but were deterrents for risky individuals. However, as time went on, these posted signs and online announcements became less meaningful as they were not always voluntarily enforced. Events might loudly claim to require masks plus proof of vaccination plus a test, but then totally fail to check those or even if one was showing up at their booked times.

Security culture often suffers from a similar lack of enforcement. Posted bans on photography in a radical space are meaningless unless people actually stop others from recording. Actions that are declared as phoneless still occur if some participants bring phones because “fuck it, they’re already here.” People loudmouthing on social media are not ostracized when they endanger others. It’s not enough to declare an ideal. The ideals need to be enforced by some means or another.

The social cost of nonadherence to corona measures can be rather high. It can mean exclusion from a group activity such as requiring everyone to be tested before attending. Many vaxx-“skeptics” or anti-vaxxers admitted to feeling shamed about their position, so they started lying about it. When dating—or more generally, when meeting new people—the threshold for expected adherence tends to be higher. In much the way that partners lie about their condom use or STI testing

frequency, telling a new person “yeah, I’m safe with corona” and listing a few key phrases has become a very noisy signal as many people know what they’re expected to say even if don’t actually do these things. Moreover, what two people consider safe can greatly vary. Making someone name what they do exactly including specific activities is considered invasive and awkward. Clear communication would allow two people to have accurate knowledge of each other’s measures which might mean that the person being lax about theirs has to face immediate consequences for them. Lying or deflecting is manipulative and violates consent, and it endangers the other party who is trying to minimize risk.

When groups practice security culture, there are too few conversations about the exact nature of the security model they are operating on. There is not a shared language, and simply saying things like “we practice anti-repression” or “we’re secure” can be meaningless unless the specifics are discussed. Individuals who have poor security practices or have risks often don’t declare them. Addiction is one such case that can lead to sloppy practices or exploitation by the State,⁹ and its presence is often hidden for complex social reasons. Other behaviors that have been security risks are relationships (sexual-romantic, platonic, etc.) with people on the right, and while this is unconscionable for many reasons, I’m flagging it as it specifically is a massive security risk to one’s comrades that is kept hidden for personal gain.

To avoid the harms—both accidental and manipulative—from poorly communicated security practices, we need to normalize explicit discussions of security models. Abusers and the selfish will always lie, but this at least gives a starting point, and as it’s said: trust but verify. As the need for security increases, often as a result of the activities one’s group carries out, these discussions need to become more frequent. The level of detail needs to increase, and the claims need to be more strongly verified. Being a loudmouth on social media with a hot temper may be fine from a security perspective for a local Food Not Bombs chapter, but it may be unacceptable for a tightly knit affinity group that carries out direct actions. Groups that carry out high-risk activities may want to recede from the scene at large and implement a ban on individuals taking other actions because of the possibility of an arrest for tagging a building could draw far too much attention to the other more secret actions. Clear and explicit communication, and the trust it is built on, are necessary for effective security. Like with the pandemic, we’ve had to (temporarily) cut people out of lives for poor adherence, and our affinity groups may have to do the same for those who lie about or fail to practice security culture.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen that we have shifting models of what constitutes risk, and we have seen the threat landscape rapidly change. First there was the virus, then the vaccines, and next the viral variants (and there will be further changes too). Some people may have had kids start school which created a new vector for infection, and others have had life changes that caused a shift in their individual threat model while others saw no change. These shifts require us to re-model our risk to counter it.

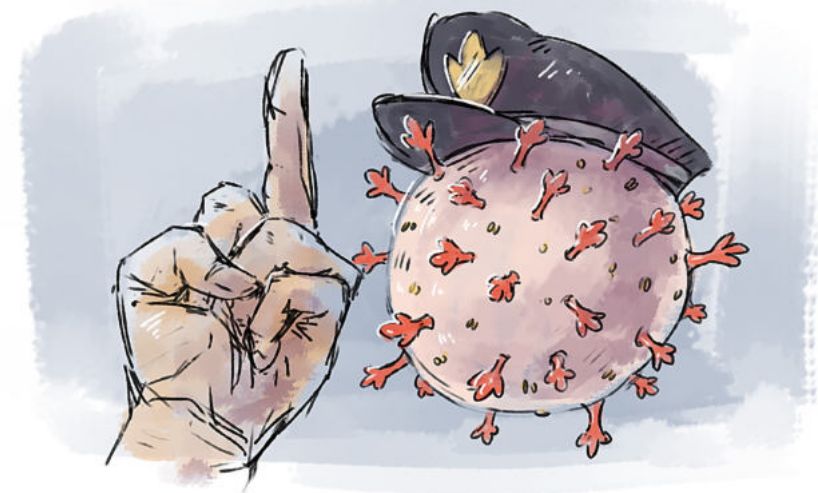
By looking at how we reacted and created safety for ourselves and others—or at the very least reduced risk—we can see patterns in group behavior that mirror group behavior with respect to security culture. Learnings from the pandemic are more concrete despite the somewhat abstract nature of the virus (one can’t see it, and maybe one’s friends all remained uninfected, but the threat is there). These observations and lessons about modeling and reducing risk can be applied to security culture. Many of the poor responses to the pandemic have analogues to poor responses to repression.

Like how viruses spread through populations, so too spread the harms of repression. The pandemic has rising and falling waves of infection that affect the population unevenly, and we see the same with waves of repression. Zero-risk of infection by the corona virus is near impossible as is zero-risk of disruption by State and non-State actors. Using many tools, such as studies or analogies, one builds a threat model for themselves and their crew, and through this model informs a security culture that counters surveillance and disruption. “We keep us safe” applies to our health and our liberty. This mutual regard for one another’s well-being is fundamental to security culture and is the base for effective and enduring radical movements. ■

WRITTEN BY HÅKAN GEIJER WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ZERO COIL

1. *Operational security.*
2. *Sometimes these are called cells, but that term is used somewhat derogatorily and has connotations of terrorism or militancy. Affinity groups can form for many reasons.*
3. *A problem where computers used two digits to represent the year so that 00 made 1900 and 2000 indistinguishable. There was minimal damage from this bug because of the large amount of effort experts put in to correcting it.*
4. *An city in the Lombardy region of Italy. It was the first wildfire corona outbreak in Europe back in February of 2020.*
5. *Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.*
6. *If BLM is the loose coalition of anti-racist activists, then like all movements there will be wingnuts. I mean this as no denigration of the movement at large because of course all black lives matter.*
7. *Fear of Missing Out.*
8. *VPNs do not in a general sense stop tracking or provide anonymity. In limited cases, such as simply hiding your IP address from a website’s operator, they provide some protections.*
9. *I have no problem with substance users or enjoyers, and I do not think all users or people with addictions are inherently dangerous. It is just that the presence of addiction is a complicating factor that increases the risk of repression.*

All Coronas Are Bastards





READY OR NOT A RBG REVIEW

Ready or Not is a tactical shooter where you take on the role of a member of a S.W.A.T (Special Weapons And Tactics) team and you play through scenarios from hostage rescue to counterterrorism using equipment and tactics that the real American pigs use! Woo!.. Despite still being in it’s beta it really has taken milsim nerds hostage. (pun intended)

STORY

The game, just like Insurgency: Sandstorm, has no specific plot. It’s set in a fictionalised American city called Los Suenos. From the in game description; “Life in Los Suenos is unforgiving. The sidewalks are littered with the tents of the homeless, people clamour for money to keep themselves off the streets. Criminal activity is at an all time high” Bleak, but very real.

GRAPHICS

I hope you like the dark! Almost every map in the game is in low-light settings (dingy apartments, underground wine cellars, hotel backrooms) and the missions seem to take place at night / dawn most of the time so you’ll be squinting. Adjusting your brightness might be cheating but I thought it was the only way to see a single thing on some of the maps. There’s also night vision goggles which are essential on some maps.



AUDIO

The sound design is impressive, all the weapons sound different and suppressors don’t make your gun sound like it’s a NERF gun so there’s that. Due to it being in beta, the voice lines are limited, sometimes a bit clunky. I.e. when breaking using explosives, the member your team placing them will say “need C2 up front” rather than something like “explosives planted” or something also when checking under a door in a room you’ve already cleared, your guys will tell you “contact in sight” if it’s someone who’s already been arrested or killed which is confusing at times...

Civies and “Suspects’ ‘ alike have many voice lines both just when they’re chatting or threatening one another and during combat/surrendering.

There is some light soundtrack ambience to the game which most times is hardly noticeable yet very fitting.

GAMEPLAY

The game has an immersive menu which is a sort of police station where you can customise your weapons, equipment, character and their uniform. You also select missions from this screen and can practice live firing in a range or in an assault course with dummy targets.

There’s actually a really impressive amount of firearms to pick and a good few actually useful bits of tactical equipment. Not to mention very decent customization including being able to fold the stocks on some of the SMGs so you’re more mobile and flexible.

You select which mission to play by going over to a desk and picking from a map-menu. There are 5 game modes which increase in difficulty.

Barricaded Suspects: “Suspects” and Civilians are scattered throughout an area, arrest them all but you’re allowed to shoot at them if you’re threatened.

Raid: “Suspects” are more dangerous (aka, less handguns, more ARs and less likely to throw their hands up when the door opens) and your rules of engagement have been relaxed. You can essentially fire on sight without consequences. Their number is often higher also which adds a new challenge since you’re only given 4 magazines for your SMG or AR so you’ve gotta be precise... Otherwise you’ll be breaching with your handgun (which you also get 4 magazines for) the game has an immersive reload function in which the bullets leftover don’t magically re-sort. Your character drops empty mags on the floor or pockets magazines with spare rounds.

Active Shooter: A gunman is killing unarmed people, kill them before they kille everyone. This one can be really difficult based only on where you are in proximity to the shooter(s) sometimes the shooter is in the next room, sometimes they’re two floors down and killing someone every 40 seconds.

Bomb Threat: There’s a bomb in a building, defuse it first then kill/detain everyone in the building. As you can imagine this one is a pain in the ass as you’ve got to both rush to find the bomb and not trip on a tripwire in the process.

Hostage Rescue: There’s hostages somewhere in a building. Find them and save them by being quiet and taking

out/arresting the hostage takers before they pull the trigger. This is almost what I imagined the game would be like. They take action on hearing loud things pretty quickly, breaching doors with a shotgun or even your boot if you’re not sure how close you are is a big no-no.

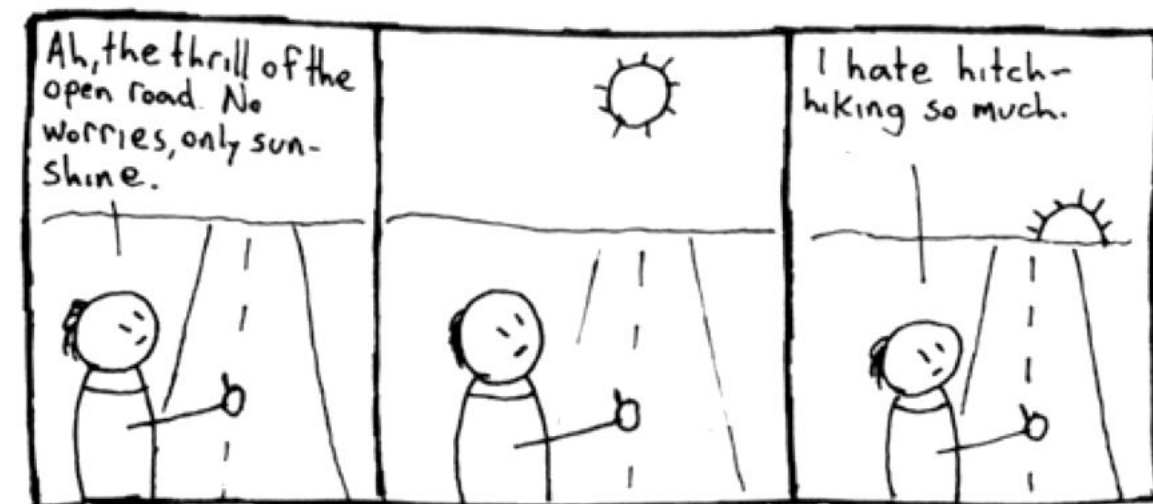
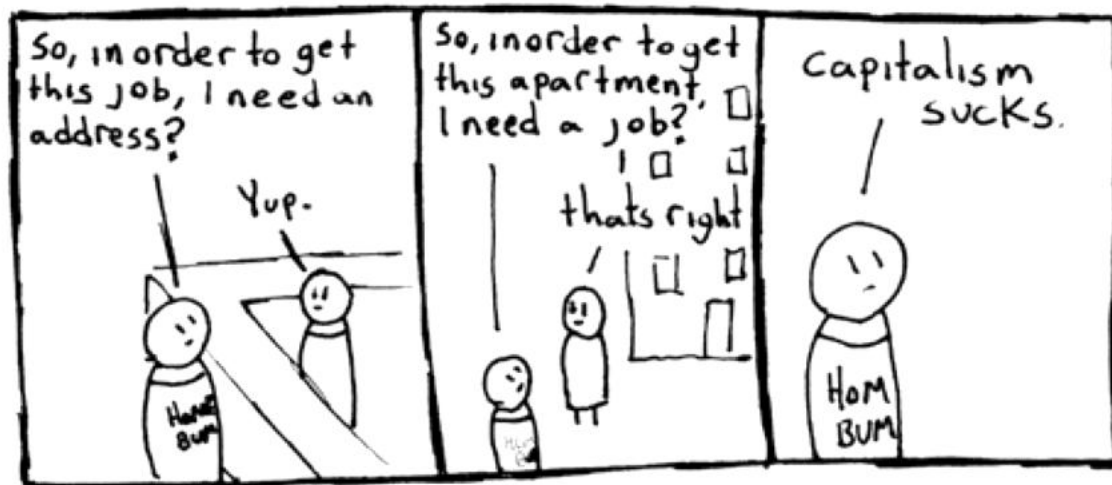
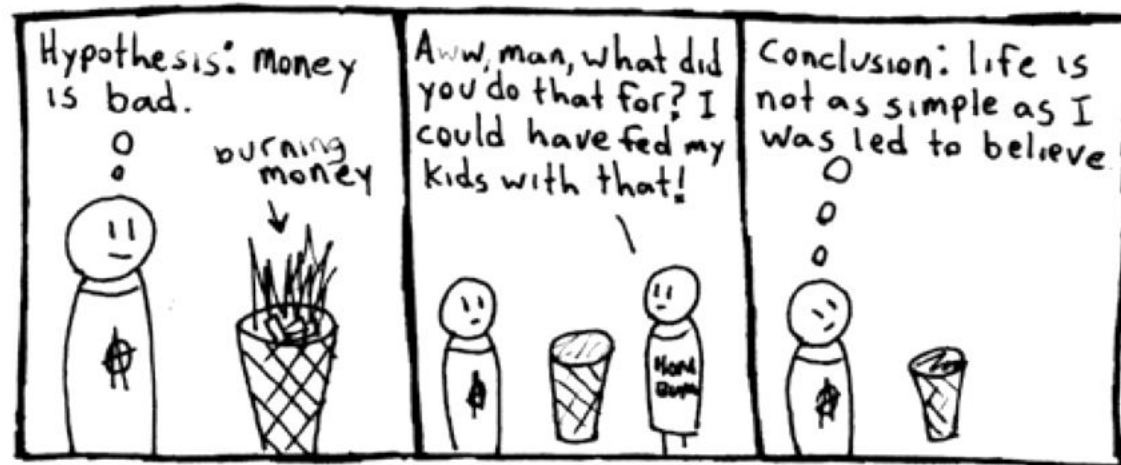
Each one of these can be surprisingly difficult until you learn to take it slow and steady. Mirroring for suspects and traps under every door. The gameplay being mechanical and boring can be thrown off massively by a civilian pulling a knife and trying to stab you as you approach to arrest.

The feel of actually going room-to-room is surprisingly smooth. At various times I had to perform complex tasks like splitting my team in half and breaching a room using different equipment and tactics but I never lost track of which buttons to press to make it all happen. Even though you move very slowly and your opponents often sprint while mag-dumping a 20 round mag from a 7.62 battle rifle at your squad who seldom take cover. It is challenging but not impossible to win most firefights. Especially because your opponents often bottle it when shot at and call it a day..

Unfortunately none of my anarchist mates fancies roleplaying as cops so I completed this one using AI teammates rather than with humans. I can imagine that it would be far more fun with your friends botching entries rather than bots. ■

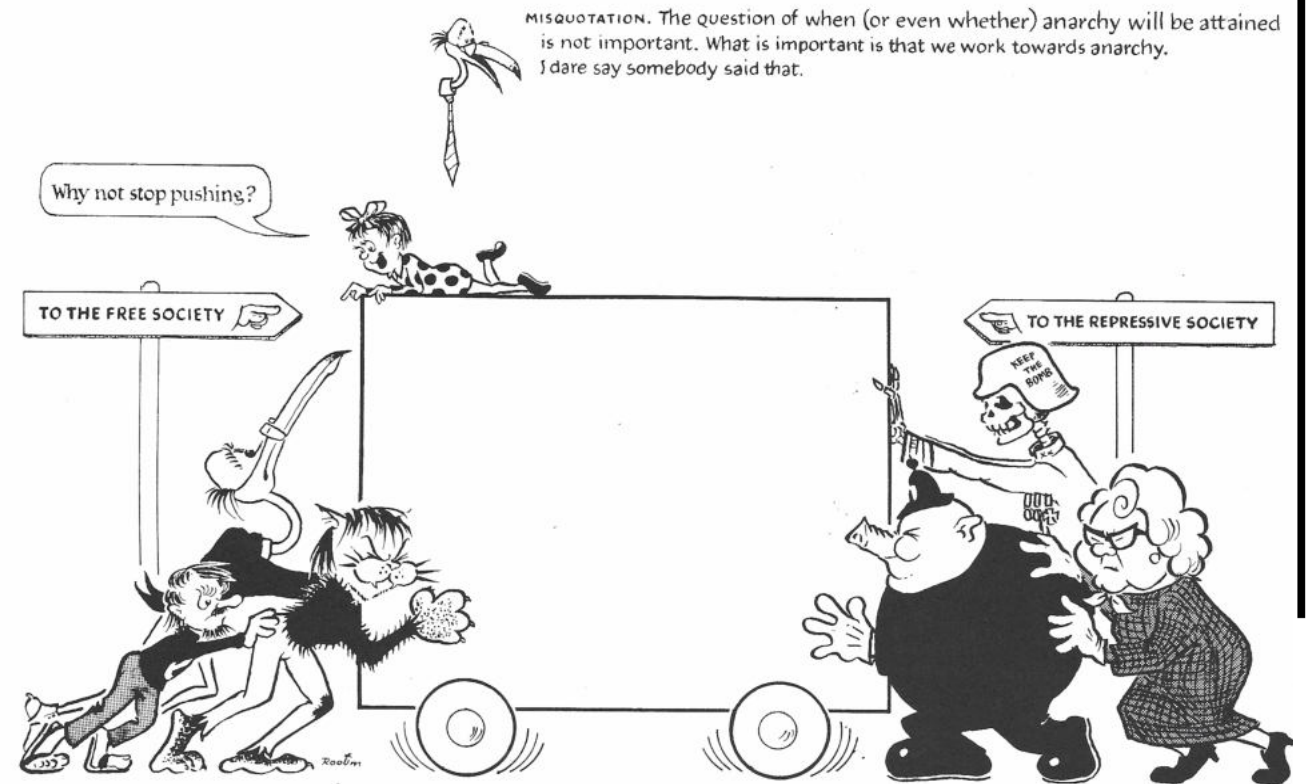
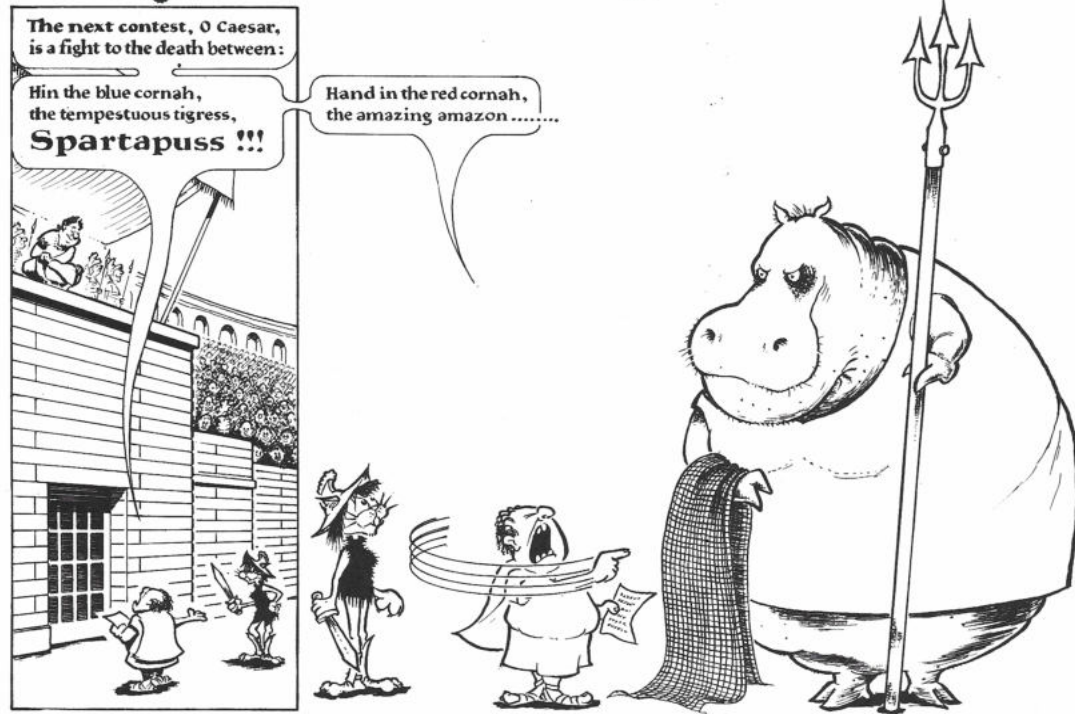
KUWASI MAROON





WILDCAT

Cartoons by Donald Room
Collected editions available
from Freedom Bookshop



WHO ARE THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION?

We are class struggle Anarchists.

We fight with revolutionary theory and praxis for a world without leaders, where power is shared equally amongst all and people are free to reach their full potential within an classless society. We do not seek power or control for our organisation but to work as part of a united international revolutionary movement which is diverse in character and founded in the principles of mutual aid, compassion and solidarity.

Capitalism and the state are systems of oppression that exploit the working class and destroy the environment for the benefit of the ruling class. The dynamic between master and worker, the oppressor and oppressed, infects every aspect of our society. Genuine liberation will not come with a process of concessions or reforms it will come with the complete dissolution of the master, and the complete the building of a fair and just society for the working class.

We fight systems of oppression that divide the working class and feel that this is essential to class struggle. The revolutionary call has no place for bigotry of any form and solidarity needs to be complete and overt, not granted on it's convenience. Where the working class oppresses each other the ruling class benefit as they do from cross-class movements which appeal to factors of our identity to obfuscate real class differences and achieve little results for the downtrodden.

It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without first building a culture of resistance. An self empowered working class will achieve this better world through political unity and the development of a wide network of autonomous organisations working together in a federative manner, freely associating as individuals unified by our collective aims and principles.

We forward this social revolution as an organisation and as individuals, in the workplace, on the street, in the home and on-line through the creation of media, the organisation of book fairs, facilitating the creation of autonomous collectives as equals and providing vital

resources, skill sets and support to an array of groups and individuals both domestically and world-wide as part of the International Federation of Anarchists.

AFed has a number of vital roles to perform in order to reach these goals:

- Support resistance against capitalism, state, and other oppression where it exists, and attempt to spark it where it does not.
- Produce information and analysis against capitalist society and argue the case for anarchist communism.
- Be the memory of the working class by making the lessons of past gains and defeats widely known.
- Be a forum for debate and discussion between all elements of the revolutionary working class.
- Work to understand the developments in our society and deliver a coherent communist response to them.
- Seek to win the leadership of ideas within the working class.
- Intervene and co-ordinate our actions in the workplace and the community.
- Work to build a global anarchist movement as part of the International of Anarchist Federations.

We do not shirk the responsibilities of building a better world, we endeavour to take on the difficult conversations that face us and develop our ideas alongside the rich and diverse community of activists, organisers and revolutionaries always learning from the struggles of others to build together and ignite the flames of change.

**JOIN THE REVOLUTION
ANARCHIST FEDERATION
AFED.ORG.UK**

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting systems of oppression that divide the working class, such as racism and sexism, is essential to class struggle. Anarchist communism cannot be achieved while these inequalities still exist. In order to be effective in our various struggles against oppression, both within society and within the working class, we at times need to organise independently as people who are oppressed according to gender, sexuality, ethnicity or ability. We do this as working class people, as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for us. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We have a materialist analysis of capitalist society. The working class can only change society through our own efforts. We reject arguments for either a unity between classes or for liberation that is based upon religious or spiritual beliefs or a supernatural or divine force. We work towards a world where religion holds no attraction.



The International of Anarchist Federations (IAF or IFA) was founded during an international anarchist conference in Carrara in 1968 by the three existing european federations of France, Italy and Spain as well as the Bulgarian federation in french exile. To counter the internationalisation of state and capitalist powers that are developing their influences ever rapidly on a global scale, the IFA has since aimed to build and improve strong and active international anarchist structures.

The federations associated with IFA believe that such an organisation is necessary to co-ordinate their international work and efficiently co-operate towards their mutual aims.

To further improve the quality of exchange and co-operation, IFA also keeps close contact with other anarchist organisations, such as the IWA.

The principles of work within IFA are that of federalism, free arrangement and mutual aid. To improve co-ordination and communication within IFA, as well as to provide an open contact address for the public and other anarchist groups and organisations, an International Secretariat was set up. The Secretariat irregularly rotates among the IFA federations. Most of the federations produce regular publications.

For further information contact us:-

Website / i-f-a.org

Twitter / IntFedAnarchist

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Federación Libertaria Argentina (FLA)
federacionlibertaria.org

Iniciativa Federalista Anarquista (IFABrasil)
anarkio.net

Anarchist Federation (AF)
afed.org.uk

Федерация на анархистите в България (ФАБ)
anarchy.bg

Anarchistická federace (AF)
afed.cz

Fédération Anarchiste (FA)
federation-anarchiste.org

Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchistinnen (FdA)
fda-ifa.org

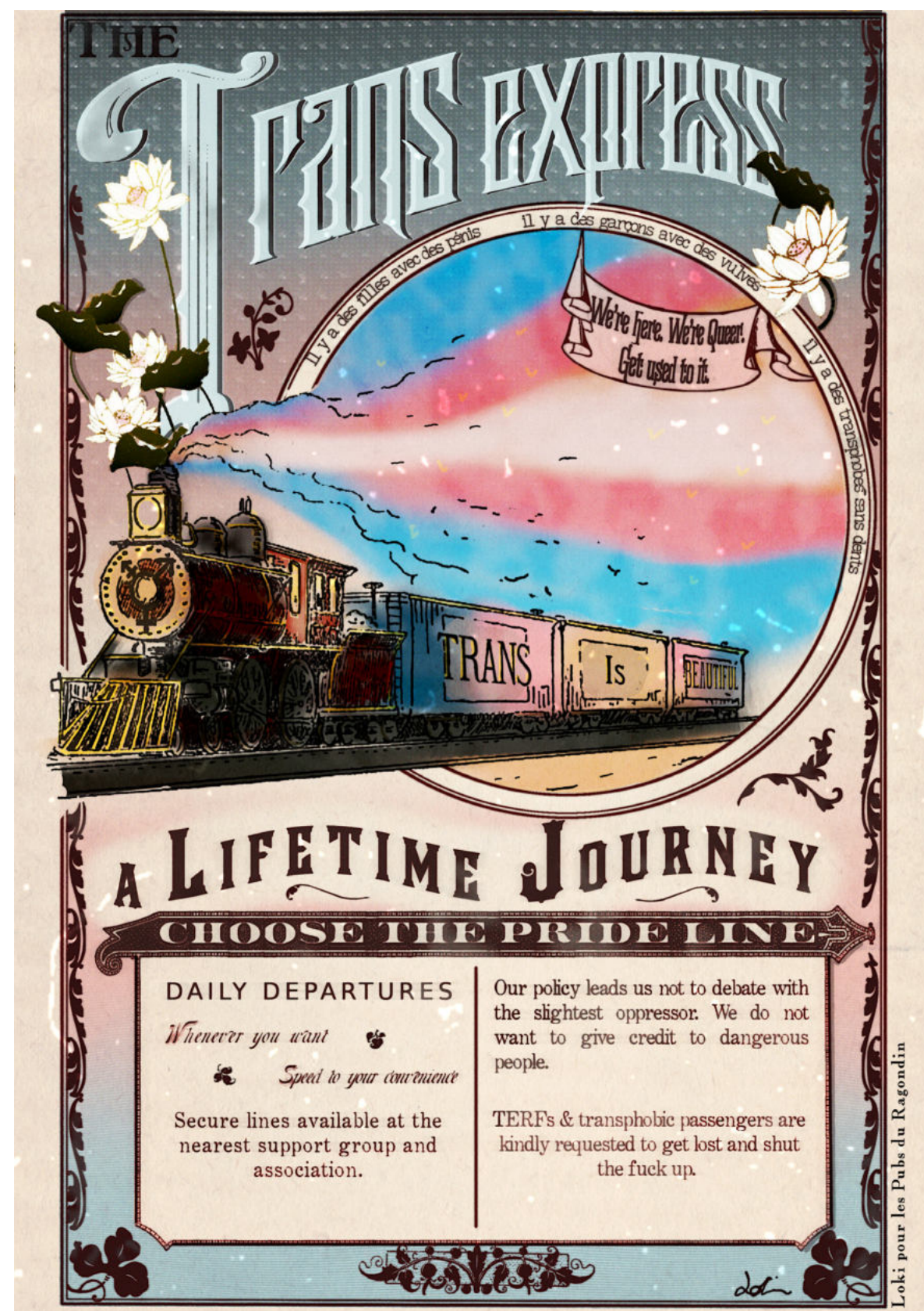
Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI)
federazioneanarchica.org

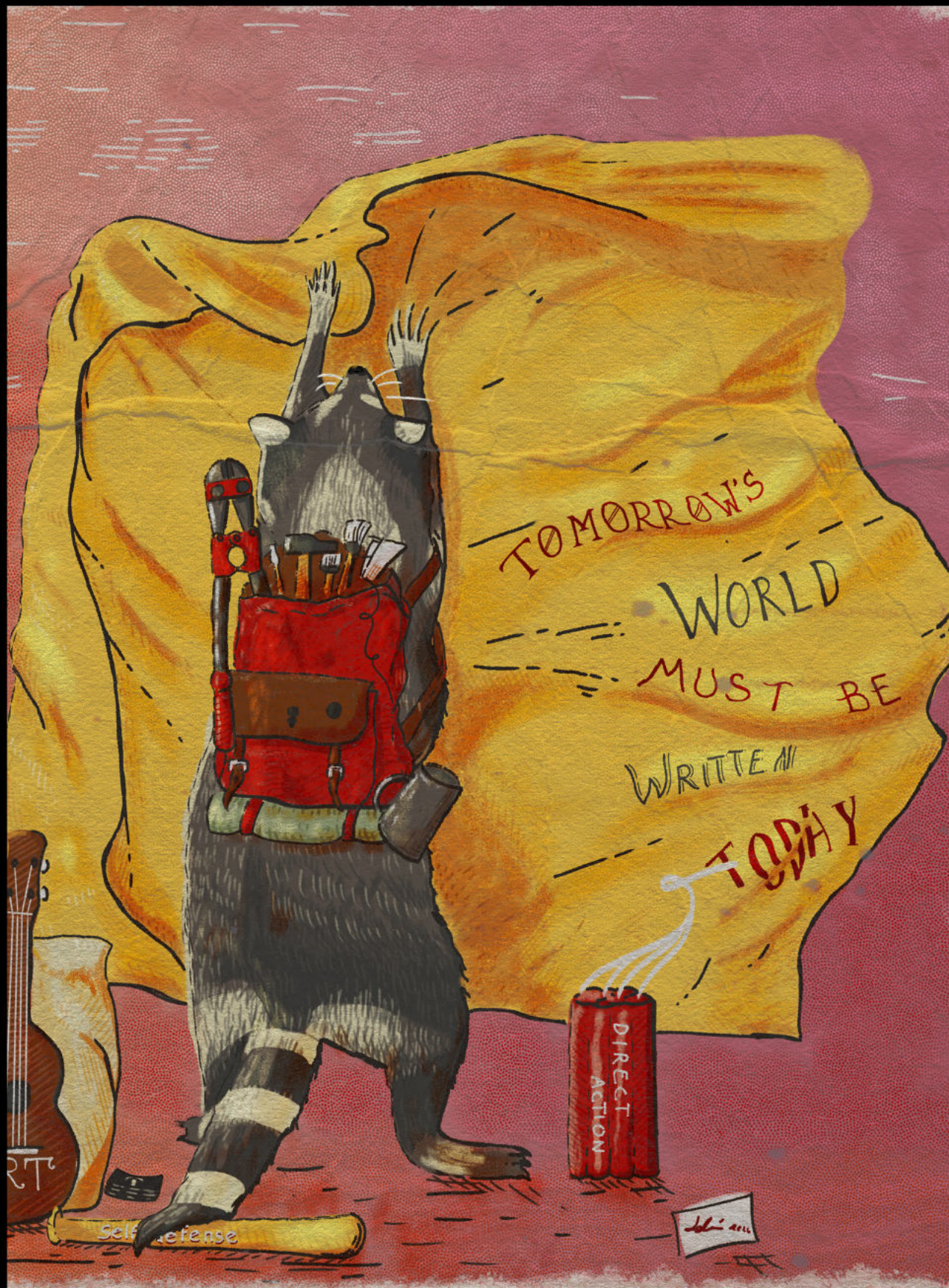
Federación Anarquista de México (FAM)
federacionanarquistademexico.org

Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI)
federacionanarquistaiberica.wordpress.com

Federacija za anarhistično organiziranje (FAO)
a-federacija.org

Federazione Anarchica Siciliana (FAS)
fasiciliana.noblogs.org (membership pending)





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ORGANISE 96 POSTER
LOKI GWYNBLEIDD

MUTUAL AID:
A SHORT PRIMER
JAY FRASER

RUSSIA
CRIMETHINC / VARIOUS

UKRAINE
CRIMETHINC / VARIOUS

ADG DESIGN

ORGANISE



MUTUAL AID: A SHORT PRIMER

Perhaps one of the most fundamental parts of anarchist practice, and certainly one of the most popular terms associated with the subject, mutual aid is also one of the most thoroughly misrepresented concepts in the radical lexicon. For anyone with any experience with the sociopolitical landscape of radicalism, the fact that this is true demonstrates the enormity of the problem: people manage to misunderstand or misinterpret so much that for something to take the top position it must truly be mired in serious trouble.

While much ink has been spilled on the subject and much time has been spent debating and discussing, for many people the basic concept of mutual aid itself is confusing. Despite popular claims, the internet is not always your friend and trying to educate oneself without knowing where to start has created a series of problems that can be difficult to escape. The purpose, then, of this primer is simple. Firstly, it shall discuss where the term mutual aid comes from and its original usage. Then, some examples will be discussed both in the historical and contemporary contexts. This will be followed by a short discussion of what mutual aid is not, as well as an exegesis of the liberal misrepresentations and the muddling the online discourse has had on the term. Far from a complete analysis of the topic – which could take hundreds of pages at the least – this short primer should clear up a number of issues and give a basic set of definitions and concepts that anyone interested in learning more can use.

SO WHAT IS IT?

Simply put, mutual aid is the method of organising – often spontaneous and informal – in which people or collectives provide aid to one another without transactional elements, and often outside of the world of formal economics. The term itself was popularised by that most famous of anarchist names, Peter Kropotkin, and is mostly associated with his 1902 work Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution, one of several works that grounded Kropotkin’s reputation not only as a political figure but also an individual of some scientific renown.

Recommended with glowing praise from names as mainstream as Stephen Jay Gould, Kropotkin’s writing outlines the existence of naturally occurring cooperation between groups and species. This came in stark opposition to the competitive portrait of evolution that had been drawn by most prior. Far from a ‘pitiless inner war for life within each species’, Kropotkin observed that many animals relied upon support – for which there was no remuneration – between themselves in order to resist the dangers of the world and provide for themselves. Nor was this, for Kropotkin, a case of some sentimental emotional attachment between animals; ‘it is not out of love, and not even sympathy, which induces a herd of ruminants or of horses to form a ring in order to resist an attack of wolves’ – rather, it is an instinct of cooperation without which the animals simply would not have survived.

Humans, too, Kropotkin asserts, engage in such behaviour. Without it, he claims, an animal as physically unimpressive as the human being would never have found its way to all regions of the Earth; not only surviving, but thriving and growing in number and in a diversity of cultural manifestations. In between falling into some horrifically dated and offensive language, Kropotkin describes the natural inclination towards sharing shown in most tribal societies, as well as the almost universal levels of social responsibility shown across vast distances; whether in Africa, America, or Australia, people simply tend towards caring for one another. This is not to diminish conflicts between indigenous peoples or to dream of prelapsarian utopia, but simply to acknowledge that there are certain fundamental behaviours without which community cannot form. These behaviours of care, support, are the anthropological basis for mutual aid as a concept.

This is all very well, one might say, but how does this go beyond the vague concepts of care and consideration and become a politically actionable project? How does mutual aid become Mutual Aid; how does a descriptive anthropological concept morph into a prescriptive outline for actions and behaviours?

Kropotkin, again, gives examples. Dated as they are now, it is not hard to see from Kropotkin’s descriptions of these instances that mutual aid does not have to be complex or elevated from everyday experience. It can on the interpersonal level or the societal level; between friends or strangers, from one group to another, without difficulty. The power of mutual aid, beyond its ease of understanding, is the flexibility it provides. Not all projects must involve a million people or vast infrastructure – sometimes it is enough to help someone.

Evidently, from these descriptions, it is clear that mutual aid is not a concept which was invented, in the traditional sense of the word, nor is it an idea with origins in Europe and spread out to the rest of the world. The proliferation of mutual aid as a practice and concept is powerful precisely because it is not colonial, it is not imposed, and it is not enforced with threat of punishment if disobeyed. It is powerful because it is something to which people find themselves inclined, either by inner urges or practicality, and it is infinitely plastic in manifestation; that is to say, there’s almost always something that somebody can do which might meet the definition of mutual aid. This is particularly vital in an atomised and alienated society of the kind which flourish under hierarchical modes of organisation; mutual aid, by virtue of being mutual and unexpecting of recompense, abhors a hierarchy.

CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES

Diluted as it may be – and this will be discussed later in this piece – mutual aid still finds its way into the lives of many, radical or not. Some of these things a reader may already know about and just not realise that they are, in fact, examples of mutual aid. Others might be unknown but clarify the concept. In either case, here are a few examples of mutual aid in the modern world and why they meet this definition.

Detailed in the text ‘In the Navajo Nation, Anarchism has Indigenous Roots’ by Cecilia Howell, the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a wave of modern mutual aid activity. While in many areas such as the United Kingdom this proliferation may come as something as a surprise in both breadth and number, the spreading of community organising to fill a need is far less surprising among indigenous peoples. Based in the Navajo lands around what is referred to as the U.S. government as the New Mexico-Arizona border, the K’é infoshop provides medicine and food to those in need simply by virtue of care and the desire to help others. As Brandon Benallie, a Navajo/Hopi anarchist whose words constitute the core of Howell’s writing, says ‘every time capitalism fails, we land on socialism, we land on anarchism, to take care of us.’ To this, Benallie adds the point; at the time ‘we didn’t know it as mutual aid, that was just k’é’ – k’é being often described in anthropological literature as the Navajo kinship system, though this is a reductionist description for reasons too detailed for the limits of this text.

As mentioned prior, these mutual aid groups also arose outside of indigenous communities. In the United Kingdom, thousands of mutual aid groups were born out of the ashes of a largely torched social structure. Atomised, individualised, Britain today is often represented by a huge number of culturally dominant people who can be most politely described as loathsome. Their unique flavour of arch noble superiority mixed with the kind of fatuous idiocy that can only be obtained through British public schooling, a kind of dribbling venom that permeates their every word, it would be easy to look at these people and their continued success in public life and conclude that the United Kingdom has been totally consumed by a kind of self-hating wrath. After all, how could any population see someone like Boris Johnson or Jacob Rees-Mogg elected to popular power year on year without clearly being the victim of some sort of spiritual malnourishment?

Yet, despite the concession of the point that there are rather a large number of unpleasant individuals in the United Kingdom, the reality is that most average people are simply that – average. It is therefore less surprising than you may think that, when lockdowns were introduced and activity monitoring installed, fines for gatherings and limits to leaving the house, mutual aid groups rose in number to fill the gaps. The sick, the elderly, or the simply

inconvenienced, suddenly found groups – often small groups, a dozen people or fewer, all from their local area – which were willing to do small jobs, to deliver and distribute food, to transport those in need, to deliver COVID-19 tests, et cetera. All of this was done without the expectation of payment in anything but thanks, and while certainly apocryphal, there are a number of stories to support the idea of strong bonds being built in this manner.

As the pandemic marched on with indefatigable legs, many of the people involved in this mutual aid found themselves either exhausted by the pace or required to give up their activity in order to return to work; here we find some of the primary dangers of mutual aid in modern society. We simply do not live in a world which facilitates it, and to engage in it is often a challenge. People must be aware of this before jumping into any endeavour, and the vibrant mutual aid societies that raced across the country in the wake of the pandemic are all the brighter for their emergence under this circumstance, even if many of them were short lived. This is not a reason to reject the model – it is a reason to reject the world.

Other examples of mutual aid, less immediate and less dramatic in scale, exist the world over. Communal libraries – a personal favourite of mine – represent both the definancialised aspect of mutual aid while also creating hubs of potential community and support for those in need. Organised around a central principle which is at once enriching to a community and often liberatory, the existence of such things allows for the growth of other support structures. In many ways, mutual aid emerges from shared time and interests, rendering the initial form that introduced the people little more than an intriguing vestigial limb. This is not a sign of the weakening of the original principle, but instead a sign of its strength; to give rise to a group engaging in mutual support is a benefit rather than a detraction, even if it subsumes the primacy of the original concept.

WHAT ISN’T MUTUAL AID?

Given all of the previous writing, it may seem somewhat unnecessary to tell a reader what does not qualify as mutual aid. Yet, any time spent listening to online discourse – something I strongly advise against – reveals that even among so-called anarchists, the most inane or frankly ridiculous statements can be found. Anything, if you are willing to spend the time, can be called mutual aid these days by someone. So many things, in fact, that it would be impossible to refute them all. However, there is time to provide a few general guidelines that can easily be used by a discerning reader as a shorthand when deciding whether to investigate a given mutual aid claim or dismiss it out of hand.

With that said, here goes.

It has become somewhat popular among anarcho-adjacent socialists and social democrats to claim that if mutual is just support without a profit motive, then surely the welfare state itself is just mutual aid writ large! This could not be more absurd. Simply put, something cannot be mutual aid if, in order for it to exist, it requires the existence of an oppressive apparatus which makes life fundamentally worse for everyone. Therefore anything which requires the state as a prerequisite to its execution cannot be mutual aid. It is neither mutual nor truly aid, and it demands suffering as a condition of its possibility.

Another popular concept, again bandied by the same groups, is that charity is perhaps preferable to mutual aid in at least some circumstances. If a reader attempts to humour this idea, they will quickly find that the word ‘some’ in this phrase is purely decorative, and far from suggesting a balance between charity in ‘some’ circumstances and mutual aid in others, the proponent of this idea will slide very rapidly into suggesting charity as sufficient in all circumstances. However, charity cannot be mutual aid for a number of reasons – not least that it is not, by definition, mutual. Charity is the act of one group or individual, usually in possession of greater material resources than another, doling out some of that resource at their discretion. This is not a mutual process so much as it is a process of benefaction at most and – as

anarchists and Marxists have long pointed out – insidious bribery at worst. As Oscar Wilde once wrote, charity is often accompanied by an attempt by the giver to insert themselves into the private lives of the recipient as supervisor; and, as Engels wrote, it is also an excuse from an individual in a position of power they should not have to remove themselves from scrutiny. ‘How dare you demand social change which may harm me,’ cries the charity’s leading donor – ‘have you not seen how much I have done for you? I gave you the money, now go away!’.

In summary, while it is clear that mutual aid is a topic surrounded by much confusion, there are a few rules of thumb which can be applied to decide whether any given thing is at least likely to qualify as mutual aid or not. Firstly, is it mutual? Secondly, does it rely on the existence of something inherently harmful for its existence? Thirdly, does it come with the imposition of behavioural restrictions or the expectation of financial reward? When confronted with any claims of mutual aid, simply running through these basic questions should be enough in all cases to decide whether or not something can even truly begin to meet the definition. ■

JAY FRASER

Jay is an anarchist and writer from Lincolnshire. He has written for Organise! Magazine several times in the past, and has poetry and critical writing published in Lumpen, Strukturiss, SINK, and many other journals. His most recent work includes a chapter in Bodies, Power, and Noise, an essay collection on industrial music via Palgrave MacMillan. You can find him on Twitter @ JayFraser1 if you want.

Artwork by **LOKI GWYNBLEIDD**

Loki is a self-taught artist who likes cute animals, lame puns and revolution. I make digital posters and linocuts in French and English inspired by late 19th century art styles. I like to mess with advertising messages and communication codes to make anarchist, antifa, neuroatypical, pro-LGBTQI+ propaganda. You can find more of their work via www.linktr.ee/LokiGwynbleidd



“As a practical matter, Anarchist-Communists believe that we should start to build the new society now, as well as fight to crush the old Capitalist am. They wish to create non-authoritarian mutual aid organizations (for food, clothing, housing, funding for community projects and others), neighborhood assemblies and cooperatives not affiliated with either government or business corporations, and not run for profit, but for social need Such organizations, if built now, will provide their members with a practical experience in self-management and self-sufficiency, and will decrease the dependency of people on welfare agencies and employers. In short, we can begin now to build the infrastructure for the communal society so that people can see what they are fighting for, not just the ideas in someone’s head. That is the real way to freedom.”

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (Anarchism and the Black Revolution - 1993)

WWW.ORGANISEMAGAZINE.ORG.UK
WWW.AFED.ORG.UK

RUSSIA

ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE INVASION OF UKRAINE

INTRODUCTION

On February 23, immediately after the Russian military invaded Ukraine, photographs reached us of two lone Russian anarchists standing by themselves in downtown Moscow, holding signs. One sign read “No troops to Donbas.” They were swiftly arrested by riot police.

By the next day, thousands of Russians had followed their example, coming into the streets of dozens of Russian cities to protest the war at great risk to themselves. Many of them were arrested. In Moscow, one group of anarchists marched repeatedly with a banner reading “Peace for Ukraine—Freedom for Russia” on the night of February 24. Even after police dispersed the main demonstration, making a large number of arrests, this group of anarchists regrouped and marched again until the police charged and arrested them as well.

The courage that protesters have shown in Russia is humbling. Let no one reduce this to “Russians versus Ukrainians.” We all have cause to stand together against Putin’s warmongering and the imperialism of every state, east or west.

Whether the Russian people as a whole decide to support this invasion at great cost to themselves—or to oppose Putin’s agenda at great risk to themselves—may well determine what happens in Ukraine in the long run. In the meantime, we owe it to the Russians who are risking their freedom to learn how they see this invasion and what it means for their lives in Russia.

“Peace is a privilege reserved for those who can afford not to fight in the wars they create—in the eyes of madmen, we are just figures on a chart, we are just barriers in their path towards world domination.”

—Tragedy, “Eyes of Madness”

AGAINST ANNEXATIONS AND IMPERIAL AGGRESSION

This statement appeared in Russian on avtonom.org, a media project that grew out of the libertarian communist network Autonomous Action.

Yesterday, on February 21, an extraordinary meeting of the Russian Security Council was held. As part of this theatrical act, Putin forced his closest servants to publicly “ask” him to recognize the independence of the so-called “people’s republics” of the Luhansk People’s Republic [LPR] and Donetsk People’s Republic [DPR] in eastern Ukraine.

It is quite obvious that this is a step towards the further annexation of these territories by Russia—no matter how it is formalized (or not formalized) legally. In fact, the Kremlin ceases to consider the LPR and DPR part of Ukraine and finally makes them its protectorate. “First the recognition of independence, then annexation”: this sequence was already worked out in 2014 in Crimea. This is also clear from Naryshkin’s stupid reservations at the meeting of the Security Council (“Yes, I support the entry of these territories into the Russian Federation”).¹

Since the meeting, as it turned out, was broadcast on tape [rather than live], and these “reservations” were not cut out, but left in—the hint is clear.

In an “appeal to the people” that same evening, Putin seemed to “agree” with these requests and announced the recognition of the LPR and DPR as independent states. In fact, he said the following: “We are taking a piece of the Donbass, and if Ukraine rocks the boat, then let it blame itself, we don’t consider it a state at all, so we’ll take even more.” According to Putin’s decree, Russian troops are already entering the territory of the LPR and DPR. This is a clear gesture of threat towards the rest of Ukraine and especially towards the parts of the Lugansk and Donetsk regions still controlled by Ukraine. This is the

¹ Sergey Naryshkin, head of Russian foreign intelligence, stumbled in response to a question from Putin, accidentally proposing to absorb the DPR and LPR into Russia when he was not supposed to say that part aloud yet.

actual occupation [in the sense that until now, Luhansk and Donetsk were only occupied by proxy].

We do not want to stand up for any states. We are anarchists and we are against any borders between nations. But we are against this annexation, because it only establishes new borders, and the decision on this is made solely by the authoritarian leader—Vladimir Putin. **This is an act of imperialist aggression by Russia.** We have no illusions about the Ukrainian state, but it is clear to us that it is not the main aggressor in this story—this is not a confrontation between two equal evils. First of all, this is an attempt by the Russian authoritarian government to solve its internal problems through a “small victorious war and the accumulation of lands” [a reference to Ivan III].

It is quite probable that the Kremlin regime will stage some kind of spectacle of a “referendum” on the annexed lands. Such performances already took place in the DPR and LPR in 2014, but not even Moscow recognized their results. Now, apparently, Putin has decided to change that. Of course, there can be no talk of any “free and secret voting” in these territories—they are under the control of militarized gangs completely dependent on Moscow. Those who were opposed to these gangs and against integration with Russia were either killed or forced to emigrate. Thus, any “referendum on the return of Donbass like a lost ship to its native harbor” will be a propaganda lie. The residents of Donbass will be able to formulate their decision only when the troops of all states—and first of all the Russian Federation—leave these territories.

The recognition and annexation of the DPR and LPR will not bring anything good to the inhabitants of Russia itself.

First, in any case, this will lead to the militarization of all spheres of life, even greater international isolation of Russia, sanctions and a decline in general well-being. Restoring the destroyed infrastructure and taking the “people’s republics” into the state budget will not be free, either—both will cost billions of rubles that could otherwise be spent on education and medicine. Have no doubt: the yachts of the Russian oligarchs will not become smaller, but everyone else will begin to live worse.

Second, the likely aggravation of the armed confrontation with Ukraine will mean more dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, more destroyed cities and villages, more blood. Even if this conflict does not escalate into a world war, Putin’s imperial fantasies are not worth a single life.

Third, this will mean the further spread of the so-called “Russian world”: a crazy combination of neoliberal oligarchy, rigid centralized power, and

patriarchal imperial propaganda. This consequence is not as obvious as the rise in the price of sausages and the sanctions on smartphones—but in the long run, it is even more dangerous.

We urge you to counter the Kremlin’s aggression by any means you see fit. Against the seizure of territories under any pretext, against sending the Russian army to the Donbas, against militarization. And ultimately, against the war. Take to the streets, spread the word, talk to the people around you—you know what to do. Do not be silent. Take action. Even a small screw can jam the gears of a death machine.

Against all borders, against all empires, against all wars!

—Autonomous Action

MOSCOW FOOD NOT BOMBS STATEMENT

A hasty translation of a statement from Food Not Bombs Moscow, which appeared on their Telegram channel on February 24. Three days later, footage circulated widely of riot police brutally arresting the members of this group as they marched with an anti-war banner in Moscow in defiance of the totalitarian ban on demonstrations of more than one person. The Russian police had already been arresting even lone demonstrators, in any case.

We will never take the side of this or that state, our flag is black, we are against borders and freeloader presidents. We are against wars and killings of civilians.

Palaces, yachts, and prison sentences and torture for dissenting Russians are not enough for Putin’s imperial gang, they should be given war and the seizure of new territories. And so, “defenders of the fatherland” invade Ukraine, bombing residential areas. Huge sums are being invested in murder weapons while the people are impoverished more and more.

There are those who have nothing to eat and nowhere to live, not because there are not enough resources for everyone, but because they are distributed unfairly: someone has a lot of palaces, while others did not even get a hut.



In order to keep and increase the benefits in their hands, the government declares wars. Who will collect their intestines with their hands, who will have their arms and legs torn off by explosions, whose families will bury their children? Of course, all this does not apply to the ruling minority.

We must resist the militaristic regime and the war it is waging with all our might. Spread information among your comrades, fight as best you can. No war but the class war. Solidarity instead of bombs.

ANARCHIST MILITANT’S POSITION ON RUSSIA’S ATTACK ON UKRAINE

The following statement appeared yesterday on the Telegram channel of Militant Anarchist [Боец Анархист], a collective in Russia whose name we have previously translated as “Anarchist Fighter.”

Our position on the events taking place in Ukraine is clearly evident in our previous posts. However, we felt it necessary to express it explicitly, so that something would not be left unsaid.

We, the collective of Anarchist Fighter, are by no means fans of the Ukrainian

state. We have repeatedly criticized it and supported opposition to it in the past, and we have also been the cause of large-scale repression against the VirtualSim operator, done by the Ukrainian security services in an attempt to fight us.

And we will definitely return to this policy in the future, when the threat of Russian conquest has receded. **All states are concentration camps.**

But what is happening now in Ukraine goes beyond this simple formula, and the principle that every anarchist should fight for the defeat of their country in war.

Because this is not simply a war between two roughly equal powers over the redistribution of capital's spheres of influence, in which one could apply Eskobar's axiom.²

What is happening in Ukraine now is an act of imperialist aggression: an aggression that, if successful, will lead to a decline in freedom everywhere—in Ukraine, in Russia, and possibly in other countries as well. And it will also increase the likelihood that the war will continue and escalate into a global war.

Why this is the case in Ukraine is obvious, as far as we are concerned. But in Russia, a small victorious war (as well as external sanctions) will give the regime what it currently lacks. It will give them carte blanche for any action, due to the patriotic upsurge that will take place among part of the population. And they will be able to blame any economic problems on sanctions and war.

The defeat of Russia, in the current situation, will increase the likelihood of people waking up, the same way that occurred in 1905 [when Russia's military defeat by Japan led to an uprising in Russia], or in 1917 [when Russia's problems in the First World War led to the Russian Revolution]—opening their eyes to what is happening in the country.

As for Ukraine, its victory will also pave the way for the strengthening of grassroots democracy—after all, if it is achieved, it will be only through popular self-organization, mutual assistance, and collective resistance. **These should be the answer to the challenges that war throws at society.**

Furthermore, the structures created for this grassroots self-organization will not go anywhere once the war is over.

Of course, victory will not solve the problems of Ukrainian society—they

² Eskobar was the vocalist of a Ukrainian rock band called Bredor. Long ago, in an interview, he said a famous phrase, which became a meme: “Шо то хуйня, шо это хуйня”—a succinct way to articulate something to the effect of, “When you are forced to choose between two undesirable options while lacking any alternative whatsoever.”

will have to be solved by taking advantage of the opportunities that will open for the consolidation of society in the instability of the regime that comes after such upheavals. However, defeat will not only fail to solve them—it will exacerbate them many times over.

Though all these are all important reasons for our decision to support Ukraine in this conflict—let's call them geopolitical reasons. But they are not even the primary reasons. The most important reasons are internal moral ones: because the simple truth is that Russia is the aggressor, that it pursues an openly fascist policy. It calls war peace. Russia lies and kills.

Because of its aggressive actions, people are dying and suffering on both sides of the conflict. Yes, even those soldiers who are now being driven into the meat grinder of war (not counting those bastards for whom “war is mother nature,” who, in our opinion, are hardly people at all). And this will continue until it is stopped.

Therefore, we urge everyone who reads this, who is not unfeeling—to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people (not the state!!!) and support their struggle for freedom against Putin's tyranny.

It falls to us to live in historic times. Let's make this page of history not a shameful one, but one we can be proud of.

Freedom to the peoples of the world! Peace to the people of Ukraine! No to Putin's aggression! No to war!

THE DUSK BEFORE DAWN

The following text appeared on February 26, 2022 as a podcast in Russian on the Autonomous Action website.

WAR

On Thursday morning, Putin launched the biggest war in Europe since World War II. He hides behind the alleged interests of the separatist part of Donbas. Although the DPR and LPR were absolutely satisfied with the recognition of their statehood, the official entry of the Russian army and the promised one and a half trillion rubles. Recall that for many months, the cost of rent and food prices in Russia itself have been growing day by day.

The Kremlin has made absurd demands of the Kiev authorities—let’s start with “denazification.” It is true that, thanks to their active participation in the Maidan protests of 2014, the Ukrainian ultra-right has secured an outsize position in politics and law enforcement agencies. But in all the elections in Ukraine since 2014, they have won no more than a few percent points of the vote. The President of Ukraine is Jewish. The problem of the Ukrainian ultra-right must be solved, but it cannot be solved with Russian tanks. The Kremlin’s other

charges against Ukraine—about corruption, election manipulation, and dishonest courts—would be far more appropriate for the Kremlin to press against itself. Now, Russian troops are, in the full sense of the word, occupiers in a foreign land—no matter how this contradicts the expectations of everyone who grew up on stories about the Great Patriotic War.

Russia has found itself in international isolation. [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan, [General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party] Xi Jinping, and even the Taliban are asking Putin to stop hostilities. Europe and the United States impose new sanctions against Russia every day.

As we prepare this text, the third day of the war is coming. The Russian army has a clear superiority over the Ukrainian one, but the war does not seem to be going exactly according to Putin’s plan. Apparently, he counted on victory in one or two days with little or no resistance, but there has been serious fighting throughout the territory of Ukraine.

Russians and the whole world are now watching videos showing shells hitting residential buildings, an armored car running over a senior citizen, corpses and shooting.

Roskomnadzor [the Russian government’s Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology, and Mass Media] is still trying to threaten the entire Internet, demanding “Don’t call this a war, but a special operation.” But few people take them seriously anymore. As long as the Internet in Russia is not turned off completely, there will be enough sources of information. Just in case, once again, we recommend setting up Tor with bridges, VPN, and Psiphon in advance.

The effects of the sanctions and the war are just beginning to be felt by Russians: Most of Moscow’s ATMs were out of paper money on Friday. Why? Because the day before, people took 111 billion rubles from banks: in fact, all their savings. The real estate market collapsed, and the construction of residential buildings is the most important branch of the Russian economy. The foreign automotive industry is gradually ceasing to ship cars to Russia. The exchange rates of the dollar and the euro are artificially constrained by the Central Bank. Shares of all Russian companies fell severely. Everyone understands that it will only get worse.



ONLY PUTIN NEEDS THIS

The Russian reaction to the war in Ukraine is completely different from what happened here in 2014 [when Russia seized Crimea after the Ukrainian revolution]. Many people, including celebrities who worked for the government, are demanding an immediate end to the war. The removal of Ivan Urgant, the leading Russian TV star, from the air is noteworthy.

The vast majority of those who still support Putin are also against the war. The average Putin supporter just now thinks that everything has been calculated, the war will not drag on for long, the Russian economy will survive. Because yes, it's not easy to live with the understanding that your country is ruled by a deranged person—by Don Quixote with a million-strong army, one of the strongest in the world, Don Quixote with a nuclear weapon capable of destroying all of humanity. It is difficult to realize that, having read second-rate political scientists and philosophers, one can bomb a neighboring fraternal country and destroy one's own economy.

Reveling in unlimited power, Putin has gradually moved away from reality: there are the stories about two-week quarantines for ordinary mortals who need to meet with the Russian president for some reason, and tables of gigantic length at which Putin receives both his ministers and heads of other states.

Putin has always been a politician who balances the interests of security forces and oligarchs. Now the president has stepped out of this role, having gone on an independent voyage through the boundless sea of senility. We are ready to bet a bottle of the best whiskey that in the near future, Mr. President might experience a coup from his own inner circle.

Russia may meet the year 2023 with some other system of power and a different character in the Kremlin. What it will be is unknown. But for now, it is the dusk before dawn.

In the meantime, protests against the war are taking place in Russia. Anarchists participate in them in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Perm, Irkutsk, Yekaterinburg and other cities. In Russia, it is extremely difficult to organize street protests; this is fraught with administrative and criminal terms, not to mention good old-fashioned police violence. But people are coming out all the same. Thousands have already been detained, but the protests continue. Russia is against this war and against Putin! Come out—when and where you see fit. Team up with friends and like-minded people. Social networks are suggesting Sunday at 4 p.m. as the time for a general protest action. This day and hour is

no worse than any other. You can download anti-war leaflets for distribution and posting from our website and social networks.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian anarchists are joining in the territorial defense of their cities. It is now harder for them than for people in Russia, but this is one and the same defense. This is the defense of freedom against dictatorship, of will against bondage, of normal people against deranged presidents.

TO YOUR SHEEP

If Putin suddenly comes to his senses by some miracle, and the war ends one of these days, are we ready to “return to our sheep,” as the French say? It is likely that we will be kicked out of the Council of Europe. Thus, Russians will lose the opportunity to apply to the European Court of Human Rights, and soon the Kremlin will restore the death penalty.

For now, we will return to the news in the spirit of all recent years: right now, the State Duma [a legislative body in the ruling assembly of Russia] is adopting a law according to which a military conscript must himself come to the military enlistment office rather than waiting for a summons. Putin also recently raised the salaries of the police. And the prosecutor's office, in an appeal, demands to increase the term of an anarchist from Kansk, Nikita Uvarov [who was arrested at age 14 for posting fliers around his town], convicted in the famous “Minecraft terrorism case,” from five years to nine years.

You yourself know what to do with all this.

Freedom for the peoples! Death to empires!

WE ARE BACK IN UKRAINE

Background on the Russian Invasion

INTRODUCTION

The Russian invasion poses thorny questions for anarchists. How do we oppose Russian military aggression without simply playing into the agenda of the United States and other governments? How do we continue to oppose Ukrainian capitalists and fascists without helping the Russian government to craft a narrative to justify direct or indirect intervention? How do we prioritize both the lives and the freedom of ordinary people in Ukraine and the neighboring countries?

And what if war is not the only danger here? How do we avoid reducing our movements to subsidiaries of statist forces without winding up irrelevant in a time of escalating conflict? How do we continue to organize against all forms of oppression even in the midst of war, without adopting the same logic as state militaries?

If anarchists are going to work alongside statist groups—as has already occurred in Rojava and elsewhere—that makes it all the more important to articulate a critique of state power and to develop a nuanced framework by which to evaluate the results of such experiments.

The best alternative to militarism would be to build an international movement that could incapacitate the military forces of all nations. We have seen understandable expressions of cynicism from Ukrainian radicals regarding the likelihood that ordinary Russians will do anything to hinder Putin’s war efforts. This calls to mind the 2019 revolt in Hong Kong, which some participants also framed in ethnic terms. In fact, the only thing that could preserve Hong Kong from the domination of the Chinese government would be powerful revolutionary movements inside China proper.

Considering that Russia was able to establish a foothold for its agenda within the Donbas region in Ukraine in part because of tensions between Ukrainian and Russian identity, anti-Russian sentiment will only play into Putin’s hands. Anything that polarizes against Russian people, language, or culture will facilitate the Russian state’s efforts to create a little breakaway republic. Likewise, looking at the history of nationalism, we can see that any resistance to Russian military aggression that deepens the power of Ukrainian nationalism will only pave the way for future bloodshed.

Just as the uprising in Kazakhstan was ultimately crushed by brute force, nearly all of the uprisings around the world since 2019 have failed to overthrow the governments they challenged. We are in a time of interlinked worldwide repression and we have yet to solve the fundamental problems it poses. The bloody

civil war that drew out in Syria—partly as a consequence of Putin’s support for Assad—offers an example of what many parts of the world may look like if revolutions continue to fail and civil wars emerge in their place. We may not be able to forestall the wars ahead, but it is still up to us to figure out how to continue to pursue revolutionary change amidst them.

INTERVIEW: “ANARCHISTS AND WAR IN UKRAINE”

This interview was conducted in January 2022 by a Belarusian anarchist currently living abroad with an anarchist activist involved in different struggles in Ukraine. The audio version can be found at Elephant in the Room podcast.

ALREADY, FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, RUSSIAN FORCES HAVE BEEN GATHERING AT THE UKRAINIAN BORDER, WITH A POSSIBILITY OF INVASION. WE GOT IN TOUCH WITH A COMRADE WHO CAN EXPLAIN TO US A LITTLE BIT MORE WHAT IS HAPPENING THERE AND WHAT TO EXPECT. TODAY, WE HAVE A COMRADE AND A FRIEND, ILYA, AN ANARCHIST ACTIVIST WHO’S CURRENTLY STAYING IN UKRAINE. HEY, ILYA.

Hello, hello.

Thanks a lot for actually agreeing to this interview. Today, we’ll be talking a lot about different things. I think for a lot of people what is happening in Ukraine is really confusing, and there’s a lot of misunderstanding and a lot of propaganda going on from both sides, I believe. But before we jump to the story of the current possibility of an invasion, I would like to talk about the position of Ukraine in post-Soviet times. Where was it politically after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and why was it so important for Russian elites to maintain influence and exercise control over the political processes in Ukraine?

First of all, thanks a lot for having me here.

About the position of Ukraine after the Soviet Union collapsed, I would say that it was quite turbulent. It passed through several different phases. Under President [Leonid] Kuchma and through most of the 1990s, it was a loose state of different oligarchical groups competing for different spheres of power. (To some extent, it exists like this through today.) But also, it’s important to note

that in this period, in the 1990s, the Russian state’s policy was very different from how it is now. Under the Yeltsin presidency, it was not a particularly imperialist policy, as far as I can estimate at least. Of course, there was very close interaction between the two governments, both business and state authorities between Russia and Ukraine. But it was not as though Ukraine was expected to be subordinate to Russia, even though a lot of economic ties and dependencies had already existed already between Russia and Ukraine within the Soviet Union, ties which continued to exist after it collapsed.

The situation changed when Kuchma left the presidency and a competition between the [Ukrainian] Presidents [Viktor] Yanukovych and [Viktor] Yushchenko emerged. Viktor Yushchenko represented this more Western- and national-oriented perspective. This conflict came to its peak during the first Maidan protests¹ in 2004, I would say. Yushchenko won, and because of this, this more Western course of politics and this course of distancing from Russia was the prevailing political current for a while in Ukraine. In 2008, when the war in Georgia (over southern Ossetia) happened, Ukraine definitely took sides—just politically, not militarily—more with the Georgian side of that conflict.

But it’s important to understand that within Ukraine, there are many different cultural groups, groups of business and political interests, and groups of different ideological tendencies. They are not all equal to each other. It’s a really complex and multi-layered mosaic, which creates a lot of confusion and a lot of different political currents and developments. These are not easy to follow and understand even from inside of Ukraine, sometimes.

So even though Yushchenko won for a while, conflict existed between—for example—more Western and more anti-Russian oriented groups of the population, on one side, and on the other side, more pro-Russian groups, or, I might say, groups with a post-Soviet or Soviet mentality. And this conflict was also taking place between political groups that promoted a more Western course and those, like some oligarchical clans and mafia clans, who were more open to interacting with Russia and with the Russian authorities. It’s important to understand that in Ukraine, there is a lot of corruption; a lot of shady politics are going on behind closed doors all the time. Much more than in Europe, for

¹ Maidan Nezalezhnosti (“Independence Square”) is the central square of Kyiv, the capital city of Ukraine. It was the site of massive protests in 2004, during the so-called “Orange Revolution,” and again in 2013 through 2014 during the events that led to the Ukrainian Revolution of 2014.

example—even though we all know that in Europe these also exist—the official declarations of the local authorities don't necessarily correspond with their actual activities.

So after the presidency of Yushchenko, Yanukovych returned to running for the presidency and finally won elections [in 2010]. After this, the situation became very unclear, because he took a very sly approach, I would say—constantly trying to pretend to deal both with the West and with Russian authorities. Because of this, he created a lot of confusion within the population. After first making some agreements with the European Union, he unexpectedly tried to cancel them and to move more officially into the sphere of Russian influence. This created a lot of disagreement and unrest, which gave rise to the [second] Maidan protests, which started in the late autumn of 2013.

TALKING ABOUT THE MAIDAN PROTESTS: CAN YOU SUM UP A LITTLE BIT WHAT HAPPENED THERE (BUT IN A REALLY SHORT VERSION, BECAUSE THE STORY IS REALLY LONG), WITH THE KEY POINTS THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTING ABOUT WHO WAS PARTICIPATING, WHY WAS IT PROVOKED, AND WHAT WERE THE RESULTS OF THE MAIDAN?

Yeah, sure. Of course, it's very hard really to describe it briefly, but I will try the best I can. At first, it began with mainly student protests. These appeared after the [aforementioned] political steps by Yanukovych, which were very unpopular among the population, and among the youth especially. Many people were very supportive of becoming closer to the European Union: of having the possibility to go to the EU without visas and other forms of collaboration. So when Yanukovych stepped back from this line that he had previously declared, it was the trigger for the large protests involving youth, mainly student youth, in November 2013.

But it was not only the youth who were unhappy with the politics of Yanukovych. So, after the youth were beaten badly by riot police, this provoked an intense retaliation from broader parts of Ukrainian society. Starting from that point, the protests became multi-layered, multi-class protests, which drew in different strata from society to participate. Many people from different regions of Ukraine came into the streets of Kiev and also to many other cities, in both eastern and western parts of the country. People came to the streets and also, after a while, started to occupy administrative buildings. The most intense protests took place in Kiev and also in several western cities, which are believed

to be more pro-Western, more distant from Russia, more Ukrainian speaking, and the like.

The conflict went through several stages of worsening confrontations, then a temporary pacification. But then, in February [2014], it came to its peak. The final conflict started as protesters tried to occupy the parliamentary building in Kiev, and also to come to the presidential office demanding the immediate resignation of President Yanukovych due to his repression, corruption, and pro-Russian politics. The retaliation from the riot police and special forces was super harsh; about one hundred people were killed. Then it came to a stage of open confrontation, even armed confrontation we could say, between the side of the protesters and the side of the government. That was the moment when some shady stuff started to develop. Yanukovych just disappeared after several days in mid-February and then appeared in Russia.

When he fled, that was the moment of the collapse of the more pro-Russian regime in Ukraine. This was the turning point from which current situation started to develop.

A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE WEST, INFLUENCED BY RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AND THE DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN, STARTED TO BELIEVE THE NARRATIVE THAT WHAT HAPPENED IN UKRAINE BACK IN 2014 WAS A FASCIST COUP SUPPORTED BY NATO. SOME JOURNALISTS—ALSO LIBERALS, BUT BESIDES LIBERALS, THERE WERE ALSO ANARCHISTS AND LEFTISTS WHO REPRODUCED THAT NARRATIVE—ARGUED THAT IT WAS A NATO COUP AND THAT A FASCIST GOVERNMENT WAS ESTABLISHED AFTERWARDS.

CAN YOU EVALUATE THAT NARRATIVE? WAS IT LIKE THAT, OR WAS THERE SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENING AT THAT POINT?

Yes, I think I can speak about it confidently, because I participated in the events myself. I was in Kiev for nine days in the very hot phase of the conflict in February. So what I witnessed personally was the really popular movement in which hundreds of thousands of people [participated]. When I discussed it later with some Western comrades, I heard these speculations about what NATO did behind the scenes and a Nazi coup and stuff like this. Other people answered that, OK, if there were hundreds of thousands of people on the streets, it could not be just an orchestrated coup or something like that.

The far right participated in this, of course. They participated actively, made

effective political developments in this, and were very aggressive, very dominant, and successful to a certain point. But they were still a minority in these protests, of course. And even though their ideological influence—it did really exist, it's true, but they were not the ones who were legislating the protests, or who really designed the demands and the ideological face of these events.

I saw a lot of very spontaneous popular self-organization. I saw a lot of very sincere popular unrest and anger against the state establishment, which really made this country poor and humiliated. So to the biggest extent, it was absolutely an authentic popular uprising. Even though, of course, all of the political powers who could benefit from it tried to influence it as hard as they could. And they were partly successful.

But I take this mostly as the question to us—to libertarians, anarchists, the radical left if you want—why weren't we organized enough to compete effectively with fascists? This is not a question to the Maidan movement or to the people of Ukraine, but to us. And once again, to summarize, Maidan was first of all a popular uprising.

AFTER MAIDAN, WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT PUTIN WAS DISAPPOINTED, THERE WERE A LOT OF POLITICAL SPECULATIONS AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES, AND EVENTUALLY THE [RUSSIAN] OCCUPATION OR TAKEOVER OF CRIMEA, AND THEN THE MOVE [TOWARDS THE RUSSIA-BACKED SEPARATIST WAR] IN DONBAS. CAN YOU SUMMARIZE A BIT OF WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED BETWEEN 2014-2015 AND NOW? HOW MUCH OF A CONFLICT WAS BREWING THERE, OR DID THE THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING THERE JUST POP UP OUT OF NOWHERE?

When the Ukrainian regime of Yanukovych started to crash, it was the moment of truth, the point when all stability and all clear things were somehow broken. Then the Russian authorities started to react very harshly—and also impulsively. They wanted to take counter-measures against the Maidan movement, which had the tendency to move Ukraine away from Russian state influence. After this, they occupied the Crimean peninsula. They also took a stand in the local population to a large extent, because the local population there is not that much—of course, we cannot generalize, but many people there do not identify with Ukraine, do not associate themselves with Ukraine. That was the basis that gave Russia the opportunity to successfully take it from Ukraine.

They [the Russian authorities] also influenced the events in Donbas a lot, because the new Ukrainian authorities, the provisional government, made some very stupid

moves against the Russian language. This gave Russian propagandists the opportunity to portray the Maidan events as “anti-Russian,” in the national sense of these words. This was not true to a larger extent, but to the people of Donbas—which is a very Russian-speaking and very psychologically close to Russia, as far as I can estimate, even though a lot of different people are living there—it created the opportunity for the Russian authorities to extend [their influence] there, to send forces there² and to support local secessionist groups to fight effectively, or at least to survive against the Ukrainian army which tried to assure the integrity of the Ukrainian state. At this point, some dramatic military events happened in Donbas, where some portion of the population declared they did not want to be a part of Ukraine any more. But without Russian state support, it would not have been possible for that movement to grow to such a great extent. And we need to recall that millions of refugees from Donbas then came both to Russia and to Ukraine.

A lot of people from Donbas still feel themselves close to Ukraine. But this is not a question that can really be solved within this state logic of two national states, or rather, the Russian imperialist state and Ukrainian nation-state. It's a question that really needs a confederal solution. But as usual, both state sides used this conflict for their own benefit, and this was the point that started to increase nationalistic opinion, both in Russia and in Ukraine, I would say.

RIGHT. THERE WERE THESE MINSK AGREEMENTS [IN 2015] THAT WERE KIND OF A SETTLEMENT BETWEEN PUTIN, MERKEL, AND THE WEST/EAST PRETTY MUCH. BUT JUST TO GIVE AN IMPRESSION IN DONBAS: WAS THERE SOMETHING HAPPENING THERE OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, OR WAS IT TRUE THAT NO MILITARY ACTIONS WERE HAPPENING AND NO VIOLENCE OF ANY KIND WAS HAPPENING?

Of course, it's important to know that up to today, those Minsk agreements were never really implemented. And even though the active phase of conflict—during which the front line went up and down and significant movements of armies took place—is really finished, this is still a zone of constant conflict, of constant smaller clashes, with deaths every week definitely and sometimes even every day. Shellfire from both sides still takes place a lot. This is a wound that never healed. This is still something going on constantly, even at low intensity.

² The Russian government denies sending troops into the Donbas region of Ukraine.

SO WITH THESE EVENTS HAPPENING, WHAT WAS ACTUALLY THE REACTION OF THE LOCAL ANARCHIST MOVEMENT, OR THE ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENT? AS I REMEMBER, THE “ANTI-FASCIST” PART OF THE ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENT JOINED THE FIGHT AGAINST RUSSIANS AND WENT TO WAR IN DONBAS... BUT WHAT’S UP WITH THE ANARCHISTS AND THE REST OF THE ANTI-FASCISTS WHO WERE NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE WAR?

At this point, I need to say first of all that in periods we are discussing, I was not living in Ukraine yet, in 2015, 2016, 2017 and so on. But still even today, I can evaluate somehow and of course I had my fingers on the pulse of this movement even before.

Yes, some part of the anarchist movement really got this “patriotic” sentiment, or, if you want, this “anti-imperialist” sentiment, and they took this defensive side—that is, some people joined the voluntary units and also the army, the regular army, motivated by the necessity to confront the bigger evil of the Putin imperialist state. Some people took maybe a more moderate and more internationalist position, trying to stress that both sides are in no way good, that both sides represent oppressive and bad politics—both the Russian state side and the Ukrainian state side.



But at the moment, I think the absolute majority of the local anarchist community are super hostile to any Russian invasion, and do not believe all the speculations of the Putin side that this is somehow an anti-fascist action confronting the Ukrainian far-right politics and so on. No way. It is just an imperialist move. This is clear to all the local comrades.

THIS YEAR STARTED AS A HUGE SHITSTORM. RUSSIANS INVADED KAZAKHSTAN WITH THEIR PARTNERS AND HELPED TO STABILIZE THE TOKAYEV REGIME. NOW THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF A WAR IN UKRAINE. CAN YOU GIVE YOUR THOUGHTS ON WHY PUTIN STARTED THESE REALLY AGGRESSIVE MOVES SO QUICKLY? IT'S BEEN SEVERAL MONTHS, I THINK, SINCE THEY STARTED MOVING THE ARMY TO THE UKRAINIAN BORDER, AND THE KAZAKH CRISIS, AND SO ON. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE REASONS WHY THIS IS HAPPENING?

Speaking very generally and overall, the Putin regime is in a desperate situation. On the one hand, it is still very powerful, having a lot of resources and a lot of control over its own territory. But at the same time, their power is slipping away like sand between their fingers. In different places, there are clear cracks in this Putin-designed system of border states that are supposed to be satellites of his regime, like Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. Very big social currents, major social uprisings and protests, are taking place in every country I just mentioned. Geopolitically, there is a serious threat that his control over these neighboring territories will decrease.

Also, internally, the economic situation in Russia started to degrade since 2014, actually since these Maidan events, the Crimean takeover, and the big sanctions from the Western powers against Russia. It triggered a constant economic decrease, and now a lot of the popularity that Putin gained after the Crimean takeover is already gone. Also, this was galvanized under the COVID-19 pandemic, which didn't contribute at all to his popularity among the population. Now, to a big extent, he is not that popular of a leader even inside Russia.

So this is the situation, if you are Putin: you are still very powerful, but at the same time, you see situations playing out that are not in your favor. I think all these aggressions are desperate attempts to prevent his power from slipping away, to somehow still preserve his authoritarian rule.

I THINK ALL THE BULLSHIT PUTIN HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN DOING IN ALL THESE OTHER COUNTRIES WAS NORMALLY AN EFFORT TO TAKE ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS, AS YOU WERE MENTIONING. HOW POPULAR IS THE CURRENT CONFLICT WITH UKRAINE IN RUSSIAN SOCIETY, ACTUALLY? IS IT A PATRIOTIC EUPHORIA, LIKE, “YEAH, LET’S FUCKING TAKE IT”? OR IS THERE A RESISTANCE, DOES NOBODY SUPPORT THAT? WHAT IS BREWING INSIDE OF THE BIG RUSSIAN COMMUNITY?

For me, this is a bit hard to estimate correctly, because I haven’t been in Russia for almost three years. But at the same time, I can say that of the people who I’ve stayed in contact with, they are super pessimistic with this war perspective. Of course, the people I am in contact with represent a specific ideological frame. Normal people, as far as I can guess and assume and as far as I can see in the examples of the ordinary people with whom I’m familiar... I would say they are still not very optimistic about the prospects of a big war with anybody, because they understand that it will result in deaths, and in even further economic downturn. Even the television propaganda, which is becoming more and more terrible in Russia year after year—it’s kind of a constant tide of shit going directly into the brains of the people—even this is not actually capable of really turning the people in favor of war.

So no, there is no patriotic euphoria as far as I can see at all in Russia, This is actually a kind of depressive time after all these waves of the pandemic, after all these battles about QR codes and vaccination, and also some other unpopular steps from the authorities, like the obvious electoral fraud that we witnessed this autumn in Russia: all of these are a very bad foundation for people to become really hysterical[ly pro-war].

Of course, if a war is started, I assume that initially it could provoke some increase in patriotism, as almost always happens. But I think it will not be stable or really significant. And if Russia faces any determined resistance, any big problems in Ukraine, I think all this pro-state patriotism will fade away very soon and turn into its opposite.

ON THE OTHER SIDE, RIGHT NOW, THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO USE THE SITUATION AS WELL—FOR EXAMPLE, MOVING REALLY FAST WITH THE WESTERN ALLIES, GETTING WEAPONS, AND SO ON. BUT CAN YOU SUMMARIZE THE REACTION INSIDE OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY TO ACTIONS OF THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT? WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO DO APART FROM ALL THESE MOBILIZATION EFFORTS?

Actually, the situation is not very clear to me now. Since 2004, as I mentioned already, before this conflict in the east of Ukraine, [the conflict benefitted] both the Putin regime and the local authorities, because when you have this defensive nationalist patriotic hysteria, it is really easier to protect yourself from any questions from below, from the grassroots level. Questions like, what’s going on in our country? Why is it so poor? Why is it so deep in shit? There was a clear, fast answer to those questions: this is all because of the external enemy.

That was the tool used a lot by local authorities, this attitude of, “We will take measures on all the internal problems after the external threat goes away.” This line is actually not very popular in Ukraine, but it exists, and it is expressed vocally in some parts of the society.

It is clear that the Zelensky government is fighting in many different ways with its political opponents—both with former president Poroshenko, who is now facing criminal prosecution, and also more pro-Russian forces like Medvedchuk, who is also facing criminal prosecution now and his party is experiencing repression. Somehow, the far right also came under repression, since their beloved patron, Interior Minister Avakov, resigned several months ago. After this, some people from the Azov movement—from this national corps, which is the largest far-right party in Ukraine at the moment—they were put under arrest as well.

So the Ukrainian state has consolidated itself, somehow. This much is visible. As for how that affects internal politics around this threat, that is not very clear to me as of now. But we can see some really alarming tendencies threatening to concentrate executive power in the hands of the president and his crew.

SPEAKING OF THE POLITICS OF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THEM? I REMEMBER ZELENSKY BEING A POPULIST—LIKE SAYING, YEAH, WE WILL FIGHT CORRUPTION, WE WILL MAKE EVERYBODY HAPPY, AND SO ON. WHAT ARE HIS POLITICS RIGHT NOW? THERE IS ALSO A NARRATIVE THAT I HEAR IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE THAT THE WAR DOESN’T MATTER SO MUCH BECAUSE IT’S BASICALLY REPLACING ONE FASCIST REGIME WITH ANOTHER FASCIST REGIME. HOW MUCH DO THE POLITICS AND “LIBERAL FREEDOMS” IN UKRAINE DIFFER FROM RUSSIA RIGHT NOW?

First of all, the Zelensky regime is definitely not fascist, at least not right now—if only because it still does not have that much control. This is because in Ukraine, the state’s power is not as consolidated as it is in Russia or in Belarus. But this regime is still in no way “good,” of course. They are still corrupt liars who are

IN AN EMPTY STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT] “WE CONDEMN THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS,” BLAH BLAH BLAH. LIKE THE SITUATION IN KAZAKHSTAN, FOR EXAMPLE—THE MOST RECENT ONE, DIDN’T ACTUALLY CAUSE ANY POLITICAL OR SOCIAL BACKLASH FROM OTHER PLAYERS IN THE POLITICAL ARENA. FOR ME, IT’S INTERESTING TO ASK WHAT THE REACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MIGHT BE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THE INVASION OF UKRAINE? IS IT LIKE, OK, WE’RE GOING TO GO INTO THE WAR AND WE’RE ALL GOING TO FUCK UP RUSSIA? OR IS IT MORE LIKE, WE WILL BE “CONCERNED” IF RUSSIA TAKES OVER UKRAINE, BLAH BLAH BLAH?

Well, I’m not sure if my picture is really correct from here, but of course, every day in the news we hear and see that, for example, the American [i.e., US] president and American government are threatening Russia with huge economic sanctions in the case of military aggression. And also, we learned recently that some military support has come to Ukraine as well—not military personnel, but some weapons. So I think there is some reaction from the so-called international community.

But from here, it always looks like the West is constantly promising but never actually taking the crucial steps that could actually prevent Putin’s aggression. So the people of Ukraine, I think even those who had some sympathy with Western countries, feel themselves more and more abandoned by the powers that they once believed in.

TALKING ABOUT THE ANARCHISTS IN UKRAINE—I KNOW THAT THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN UKRAINE IS NOT THE STRONGEST IN THE REGION, AND IT SUFFERED FROM THE RECENT CONFLICTS IN DONBAS AND SO ON. WHAT IS THE CURRENT REACTION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION? WHAT ARE ANARCHISTS TALKING ABOUT? WHAT ARE ANARCHISTS THINKING ABOUT, OR MOBILIZING TO DO IN CASE THE RUSSIAN FORCES MARCH IN?

Well, I would say that there are two different modes within the anarchist community here. Of course, we discuss it a lot, almost every day, and in every meeting, and some people are really interested in participating in resistance. Some in military terms, and some also in terms of peaceful volunteering, some logistics volunteering, and so on. Of course, some other people are thinking more about fleeing and taking refuge somewhere. I am more in sympathy (and this is my personal position, but also political) with the first idea. If you flee, you are out

of any political and social protest. We as revolutionaries, we need to take some active stand, not a passive stand of just observing or fleeing. We need to intervene in these events. This is for sure.

The biggest challenge, and the biggest question, is: in what way should we intervene in them? Because if, as it happened in 2014-15, we just individually go and join some Ukrainian troops to confront the aggression, that is not actually a political activity. It is just an act of self-assimilation into state politics, into the politics of the nation-state.

Fortunately, this is not only my opinion. Many people are thinking here about making some organized structure... which may be in some collaboration with the state structures of self-defense, but will still be autonomous and under our influence, and will be composed of comrades. So this will be organized participation with our own agenda and our own political message, for our own organizational benefit. Not just taking sides with some state player in this conflict.

RIGHT, BUT SOME PEOPLE WOULD BE SAYING FOR SURE THAT, “HEY, YOU’RE ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE STATE, AND NOW YOU’RE PROTECTING THE STATE.” I’M PRETTY SURE THAT SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT ANARCHISTS SHOULD BE OUT OF THOSE CONFLICTS ALTOGETHER. WHAT WOULD YOU ANSWER TO THEM?

First of all, I would answer them—thanks, this is a valuable critique. We really need to evaluate how to intervene so as not to just become a tool in some state’s hands. But definitely, if we apply some smart politics—if we apply the art of politics, I would say—we have a chance to do this. If we stay away from the state conflicts, then we stay away from actual politics, as I said before. This is now one of the most significant social conflicts that is going on in our region. If we isolate ourselves from it, we isolate ourselves from the actual social process. So we need somehow to participate.

Of course, it is beyond question that we need to confront Putinist imperialism. If we need any kind of collaboration in this way, then we need it. Of course, we have to evaluate very carefully, very cautiously, how not to become dependent on some very reactionary and negative powers. This is really a question and a challenge, but this is the difficult path that we can go on. Running from those challenges just equals surrender in terms of promoting anarchy and promoting social liberation and revolution in our region. And this is not an acceptable position for me and for many other comrades.

I THINK FOR ME IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT HERE TO POINT OUT THAT ALL IN ALL, UKRAINE IS KIND OF LIKE A LAST STAND AMONG THE FORMER SOVIET COUNTRIES. CURRENTLY, THE EXPANSION OF PUTIN'S EMPIRE IS TAKING MORE AND MORE AGGRESSIVE STEPS—AGAIN, THE KAZAKHSTAN STORY, THE BELARUS STORY, THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE LUKASHENKO REGIME UNDER CERTAIN TERMS OF REINTEGRATION OF BELARUS INTO RUSSIA—ALL OF THESE STEPS ARE AIMING TO BRING THE WHOLE REGION BACK UNDER PUTIN'S AUTHORITARIANISM. FOR US AS ANARCHISTS, IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO THAT AND NOT JUST SIT ON OUR THRONES AND SAY, "OH THAT'S SO GREAT, WE ARE ANARCHISTS; WE ARE AGAINST THE STATE, AND ALL THOSE SIMPLE, STUPID POLITICS OF THE STATE DO NOT TOUCH US."

That's correct, of course. But at the same time, I want to stress that we also should not take sides with the local nationalist circles and local nation-states. Because these are by no means progressive political entities or progressive political voices. They also really produce a lot of oppression and exploitation, and this also really needs to be confronted, both vocally and by means of our activities.

EXACTLY. I TOTALLY AGREE WITH THAT. TO [READERS] WHO ARE NOT IN THE REGION, HOW CAN PEOPLE SUPPORT YOU? OR HOW CAN PEOPLE ACTUALLY GET MORE INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION?

Well, first of all, support could be informational; if you follow what is going on here attentively and spread information, spread the word, this would already be a really big thing. Also, I think if you have an opportunity to come in contact with local anarchist comrades, it is possible to request some kind of support: maybe solidarity actions, maybe preparing some conditions for people who need to flee, for example, to escape the region. Also, some financial support may be required at some time. If we will have some organizational presence in this conflict, that will require a lot of material things and finances.

Unfortunately, at the moment I cannot recommend some unified website or Telegram channel or something like that, which you could follow in order to know everything. There is still a multitude of different smaller media projects and smaller groups, not some really big unified union or unified organization. But definitely, if you make some effort, you will easily come into contact with this or that faction of the local anarchist movement, so you can keep an eye on the situation and be ready to react somehow. This will be already extremely appreciated.

COOL. THANKS A LOT FOR THE CONVERSATION. TAKE CARE, AND HOPEFULLY THE WAR WON'T HAPPEN AND THE RUSSIANS WILL FUCK OFF, AND THERE WILL BE OTHER THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF IN THE STRUGGLE RATHER THAN ACTUALLY ORGANIZING RESISTANCE TO THE RUSSIAN INVASION.

Yes, hopefully.

A VIEW FROM KIEV

This text was composed at the very beginning of February 2022 by a Ukrainian from Luhansk, living in exile in Kiev.

Ukraine has been at war with Russia and its proxies for eight years now. The death toll has already exceeded 14,000. Yet as Russian troops gather along our northern and eastern borders, it's the first time in the history of this war—or even in the entire history of Ukraine as I recall it—that I am regularly receiving messages from my foreign friends, some of whom I haven't heard from in years, all eager to learn whether I am safe and if the threat is as significant as they have been told. These friends vary in their political views, ages, occupations, life experiences, and backgrounds. The one thing they all have in common is that they're all from the United States.

The rest of my comrades around the world seem to have less anxiety about this. Last week, I hosted one friend from Greece and another from Germany, both of whom seemed surprised to learn that they had landed in a country that is supposed to become the epicenter of the Third World War any minute now (which is probably why their plane tickets only cost eight euros). I would have been surprised, too, if it weren't for the fact that I also happen to watch US television myself. Over the past few weeks, I noticed a surge of references to Ukraine's situation on all sorts of talk shows I see online. It almost feels as if there's more talk about Ukraine in the United States now than there was during Joe Biden's son's corruption scandal.

For a Ukrainian, what this sudden rise in interest in our endless fight against our abusive imperialist neighbor makes you feel will depend on your political

stance. When we agreed to give up our nuclear weapons in 1994, joining the Budapest memorandum, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the USA promised to respect and protect the independence, sovereignty, and existing borders of Ukraine and to refrain from any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. When all of those promises were proven to be completely worthless just twenty years later, many people here couldn't help but feel betrayed. Many of these people now feel like it's right about time for the US to step up its game delivering on its promises. Without this context, it would be extremely challenging to understand why some people in Ukraine would applaud when an offshore empire that refers to Ukraine as "Russia's backyard" flies war planes filled with soldiers over this sovereign country.

However, there are some others in Ukraine who, like myself, don't limit their mistrust to the empire that we are unfortunate enough to share a border with, but extend this well-earned lack of confidence to the rest of them. Even for the people who truly believe that the enemy of their enemy is their friend, it's worth asking how many such friends that the US has made around the world—Vietnamese, Afghans, Kurds, and more—have not regretted acquiring such an ally.

This fairly low bar of critical thinking is unfortunately not nearly as common in Ukraine as short-sighted patriotism, nationalism, and militarism, all of which are gaining momentum here as war hysteria grows. In Ukraine, there is not much discussion about why we are finally being noticed by the US and UK now, after eight painful years of losing lives and territories—including my hometown of Lugansk. And this absence of curiosity about the motives of the empires works both ways: just as most of us couldn't care less what Biden's administration stands to gain from this power play, our understanding of why Putin would attempt to invade further now is limited to "This bloodthirsty maniac is simply mad." Hardly anyone entertains a possibility that there could be something more going on.

Even fewer question the claim that Russia has indeed increased its presence on the Ukrainian border in a way that makes our current situation more threatening than it was a year ago.

I am not saying that the threat of the invasion of the very real Russian troops amassing at our borders is insignificant. But I question whether the involvement of the US is truly aimed at de-escalating this conflict to benefit the people of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, being here on the ground doesn't really give me any particular expertise to rely on. Back in early 2014, seeing everything that was happening

around the country, I refused to believe that Ukraine was about to go to war until the very moment it happened. In retrospect, it seems like it was inevitable. Now, none of us truly know if the war will happen, and if it does, when it will escalate.

Some people have already fled the country. Most people can't afford even a brief short-distance trip abroad, so they are bound to keep calm and carry on. Beyond corruption and war, the reason why most people in Ukraine are so desperately poor may or may not coincide with the fact that Ukraine outlawed communism in 2015 and is currently the only country in Europe in which the parliament consists entirely of different shades of right-wing parties.

When events like this unfold almost 6000 miles away from you, it's natural for an overseas anti-authoritarian to seek to make sure that they're not rooting for the bad people. Not everyone standing up for themselves is Zapatistas, Kurds, or Catalonians. A wide spectrum of different groups around the world resist imperialist aggression. On this spectrum, many of the people claiming to guard Ukraine fall much closer to groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. Are many of them xenophobic, conservative, sexist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, racist, pro-capitalist, or even outright fascist? Yes. But are they fighting an uneven fight against an extremely powerful and violent neighboring state, in which they seem to be the only hope for any meaningful resistance whatsoever? Also yes.

And these aren't the hardest questions.

If an autocratic empire is trying to destroy another state that is defended, in part, by fascists, do we sit back and rejoice there are going to be a few less fascists in the world? What if the deaths will also include thousands of innocent people who are trying to defend themselves or are simply at the wrong place at the wrong time? Do we step in, understanding that these divisions between people only benefit those who are already powerful, never the people being divided?

This begs another question: what does "stepping in" mean? Is there a way to "step in" here that is both substantial and without negative consequences? Neither of the two strategies that the United States has employed so far have shown much success. Antagonizing Russia only makes things worse for everyone, while many people here believe that the alternative—expressing "deep concern" without standing in Putin's way—is what led to the war getting started in 2014 in the first place. This is why I doubt that any solution to the problem of the imperial appetite that doesn't involve the simultaneous abolition of both empires can be anything more than a bandaid for an issue of this scale. The truth is, Ukraine is not the first victim of the hunger for power, nor will it be the last. As long as we keep these monsters alive, it won't matter whether they are friends or foes, tamed or rabid, chained or free. They will always be hungry.

I do hope, however, that there is still a lot more that people in the US and the rest of the world can do. I hope we can all organize and create communities that transcend the superficial divisions imposed on us by the noxious ideologies of capitalism, conservatism, and individualism, striving to remember that it is only when we are separated, segregated, careless of one another, or at each other's throats that we are truly weak and helpless. With education and solidarity, we can try to create a world in which a senseless conflict like this would make even less sense. Until we can do that, we can do our very best to provide support to those around the world who fall victim to these cruel wars.

What does this mean, concretely, right now, here in Ukraine? And in the meantime, does the fact that many people fighting for Ukraine are indeed fascists mean that all the people who are hiding behind their backs—including me—are also liable for their politics? Here, we are getting into the harder questions.

But no one is addressing these questions here. The people of Ukraine are all busy taking first aid and gun handling classes—or learning where the city shelters are—or, mostly, just struggling to get by. There's no all-out panic here, just dull weariness. The threat of the big war remains very real; if it occurs, it is unlikely that it will result in anything other than an even weaker, worse, and smaller Ukraine than the one we already have. And I really can't recommend even the current version.

All that being said, it's also worth admitting that I will not risk my life fighting for this country against the Russian army. I will probably do my best to evacuate if Kiev becomes even more unlivable than it already is. This is admittedly the intention of a person with some privileges. Most of the people here have absolutely nowhere to go.

WAR AND ANARCHISTS: ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN PERSPECTIVES IN UKRAINE

This article was composed by anarchists in Ukraine in early February 2022.

This text was composed together by several active anti-authoritarian activists from Ukraine. We do not represent one organization, but we came together to

write this text and prepare for a possible war.

Besides us, the text was edited by more than ten people, including participants in the events described in the text, journalists who checked the accuracy of our claims, and anarchists from Russia, Belarus, and Europe. We received many corrections and clarifications in order to write the most objective text possible.

If war breaks out, we do not know if the anti-authoritarian movement will survive, but we will try to do so. In the meantime, this text is an attempt to leave the experience that we have accumulated online.

At the moment, the world is actively discussing a possible war between Russia and Ukraine. We need to clarify that the war between Russia and Ukraine has been going on since 2014.

But first things first.

THE MAIDAN PROTESTS IN KYIV

In 2013, mass protests began in Ukraine, triggered by Berkut (police special forces) beating up student protesters who were dissatisfied with the refusal of then-President Viktor Yanukovych to sign the association agreement with the European Union. This beating functioned as a call to action for many segments of society. It became clear to everyone that Yanukovych had crossed the line. The protests ultimately led to the president fleeing.

In Ukraine, these events are called “The Revolution of Dignity.” The Russian government presents it as a Nazi coup, a US State Department project, and so on. The protesters themselves were a motley crowd: far-right activists with their symbols, liberal leaders talking about European values and European integration, ordinary Ukrainians who went out against the government, a few leftists. Anti-oligarchic sentiments dominated among the protesters, while oligarchs who did not like Yanukovych financed the protest because he, along with his inner circle, tried to monopolize big business during his term. That is to say—for other oligarchs, the protest represented a chance to save their businesses. Also, many representatives of mid-size and small businesses participated in the protest because Yanukovych's people did not allow them to work freely, demanding money from them. Ordinary people were dissatisfied with the high level of corruption and arbitrary conduct of the police. The nationalists who opposed Yanukovych on the grounds that he was a pro-Russian politician reasserted themselves significantly. Belarusian and Russian expatriates joined protests,

perceiving Yanukovych as a friend of Belarusian and Russian dictators Alexander Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin.

If you have seen videos from the Maidan rally, you might have noticed that the degree of violence was high; the protesters had no place to pull back to, so they had to fight to the bitter end. The Berkut wrapped stun grenades with screw nuts that left splinter wounds after the explosion, hitting people in their eyes; that is why there were many injured people. In the final stages of the conflict, the security forces used military weapons—killing 106 protesters.

In response, the protesters produced DIY grenades and explosives and brought firearms to the Maidan. The manufacturing of Molotov cocktails resembled small divisions.

In the 2014 Maidan protests, the authorities used mercenaries (titushkas), gave them weapons, coordinated them, and tried to use them as an organized loyalist force. There were fights with them involving sticks, hammers, and knives.

Contrary to the opinion that the Maidan was a “manipulation by the EU and NATO,” supporters of European integration had called for a peaceful protest, deriding militant protesters as stooges. The EU and the United States criticized the seizures of government buildings. Of course, “pro-Western” forces and organizations participated in the protest, but they did not control the entire protest. Various political forces including the far right actively interfered in the movement and tried to dictate their agenda. They quickly got their bearings and became an organizing force, thanks to the fact that they created the first combat detachments and invited everyone to join them, training and directing them.

However, none of the forces was absolutely dominant. The main trend was that it was a spontaneous protest mobilization directed against the corrupt and unpopular Yanukovych regime. Perhaps the Maidan can be classified as one of the many “stolen revolutions.” The sacrifices and efforts of tens of thousands of ordinary people were usurped by a handful of politicians who made their way to power and control over the economy.

THE ROLE OF ANARCHISTS IN THE PROTESTS OF 2014

Despite the fact that anarchists in Ukraine have a long history, during the reign of Stalin, everyone who was connected with the anarchists in any way was repressed and the movement died out, and consequently, the transfer of revolutionary experience ceased. The movement began to recover in the 1980s thanks

to the efforts of historians, and in the 2000s it received a big boost due to the development of subcultures and anti-fascism. But in 2014, it was not yet ready for serious historical challenges.

Prior to the beginning of the protests, anarchists were individual activists or scattered in small groups. Few argued that the movement should be organized and revolutionary. Of the well-known organizations that were preparing for such events, there was Makhno Revolutionary Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (RCAS of Makhno), but at the beginning of the riots, it dissolved itself, as the participants could not develop a strategy for the new situation.

The events of the Maidan were like a situation in which the special forces break into your house and you need to take decisive actions, but your arsenal consists only of punk lyrics, veganism, 100-year-old books, and at best, the experience of participating in street anti-fascism and local social conflicts. Consequently, there was a lot of confusion, as people attempted to understand what was happening.

At the time, it was not possible to form a unified vision of the situation. The presence of the far-right in the streets discouraged many anarchists from supporting the protests, as they did not want to stand beside Nazis on the same side of the barricades. This brought a lot of controversy into the movement; some people accused those who did decide to join the protests of fascism.

The anarchists who participated in the protests were dissatisfied with the brutality of the police and with Yanukovych himself and his pro-Russian position. However, they could not have a significant impact on the protests, as they were essentially in the category of outsiders.

In the end, anarchists participated in the Maidan revolution individually and in small groups, mainly in volunteer/non-militant initiatives. After a while, they decided to cooperate and make their own “hundred” (a combat group of 60-100 people). But during the registration of the detachment (a mandatory procedure on the Maidan), the outnumbered anarchists were dispersed by the far-right participants with weapons. The anarchists remained, but no longer attempted to create large organized groups.

Among those killed on the Maidan was the anarchist Sergei Kemsy who was, ironically, ranked as postmortem Hero of Ukraine. He was shot by a sniper during the heated phase of the confrontation with the security forces. During the protests, Sergei put forward an appeal to the protesters entitled “Do you hear it, Maidan?” in which he outlined possible ways of developing the revolution, emphasizing the aspects of direct democracy and social transformation. The text is available in English [here](#).

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR: THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

The armed conflict with Russia began eight years ago on the night of February 26-27, 2014, when the Crimean Parliament building and the Council of Ministers were seized by unknown armed men. They used Russian weapons, uniforms, and equipment but did not have the symbols of the Russian army. Putin did not recognize the fact of the participation of the Russian military in this operation, although he later admitted it personally in the documentary propaganda film “Crimea: The way to the Homeland”.

Here, one needs to understand that during the time of Yanukovych, the Ukrainian army was in very poor condition. Knowing that there was a regular Russian army of 220,000 soldiers operating in Crimea, the provisional government of Ukraine did not dare to confront it.

After the occupation, many residents have faced repression that continues to this day. Our comrades are also among the repressed. We can briefly review some of the most high-profile cases. Anarchist Alexander Kolchenko was arrested along with pro-democratic activist Oleg Sentsov and transferred to Russia on May 16, 2014; five years later, they were released as a result of a prisoner exchange. Anarchist Alexei Shestakovich was tortured, suffocated with a plastic bag on his head, beaten, and threatened with reprisals; he managed to escape. Anarchist Evgeny Karakashev was arrested in 2018 for a re-post on Vkontakte (a social network); he remains in custody.

DISINFORMATION

Pro-Russian rallies were held in Russian-speaking cities close to the Russian border. The participants feared NATO, radical nationalists, and repression targeting the Russian-speaking population. After the collapse of the USSR, many households in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus had family ties, but the events of the Maidan caused a serious split in personal relations. Those who were outside Kyiv and watched Russian TV were convinced that Kyiv had been captured by a Nazi junta and that there were purges of the Russian-speaking population there.

Russia launched a propaganda campaign using the following messaging: “punishers,” i.e., Nazis, are coming from Kyiv to Donetsk, they want to destroy the Russian-speaking population (although Kyiv is also a predominantly Russian-speaking city). In their disinformation statements, the propagandists

used photos of the far right and spread all kinds of fake news. During the hostilities, one of the most notorious hoaxes appeared: the so-called crucifixion of a three-year-old boy who was allegedly attached to a tank and dragged along the road. In Russia, this story was broadcasted on federal channels and went viral on the Internet.

In 2014, in our opinion, disinformation played a key role in generating the armed conflict: some residents of Donetsk and Lugansk were scared that they would be killed, so they took up arms and called for Putin’s troops.

ARMED CONFLICT IN THE EAST OF UKRAINE

“The trigger of the war was pulled,” in his own words, by Igor Girkin, a colonel of the FSB (the state security agency, successors to the KGB) of the Russian Federation. Girkin, a supporter of Russian imperialism, decided to radicalize the pro-Russian protests. He crossed the border with an armed group of Russians and (on April 12, 2014) seized the Interior Ministry building in Slavyansk to take possession of weapons. Pro-Russian security forces began to join Girkin. When information about Girkin’s armed groups appeared, Ukraine announced an anti-terrorist operation.

A part of Ukrainian society determined to protect national sovereignty, realizing that the army had poor capacity, organized a large volunteer movement. Those who were somewhat competent in military affairs became instructors or formed volunteer battalions. Some people joined the regular army and volunteer battalions as humanitarian volunteers. They raised funds for weapons, food, ammunition, fuel, transport, renting civil cars, and the like. Often, the participants in the volunteer battalions were armed and equipped better than the soldiers of the state army. These detachments demonstrated a significant level of solidarity and self-organization and actually replaced the state functions of territorial defense, enabling the army (which was poorly equipped at that time) to successfully resist the enemy.

The territories controlled by pro-Russian forces began to shrink rapidly. Then the regular Russian army intervened.

We can highlight three key chronological points:

1. The Ukrainian military realized that weapons, volunteers, and military specialists were coming from Russia. Therefore, on July 12, 2014, they

began an operation on the Ukrainian-Russian border. However, during the military march, the Ukrainian military was attacked by Russian artillery and the operation failed. The armed forces sustained heavy losses.

2. The Ukrainian military attempted to occupy Donetsk. While they were advancing, they were surrounded by Russian regular troops near Ilovaïsk. People we know, who were part of one of the volunteer battalions, were also captured. They saw the Russian military firsthand. After three months, they managed to return as the result of an exchange of prisoners of war.
3. The Ukrainian army controlled the city of Debaltseve, which had a large railway junction. This disrupted the direct road linking Donetsk and Lugansk. On the eve of the negotiations between Poroshenko (the president of Ukraine at that time) and Putin, which were supposed to begin a long-term ceasefire, Ukrainian positions were attacked by units with the support of Russian troops. The Ukrainian army was again surrounded and sustained heavy losses.

For the time being (as of early February 2022), the parties have agreed on a ceasefire and a conditional “peace and quiet” order, which is maintained, though there are consistent violations. Several people die every month.

Russia denies the presence of regular Russian troops and the supply of weapons to territories uncontrolled by the Ukrainian authorities. The Russian military who were captured claim that they were put on alert for a drill, and only when they arrived at their destination did they realize that they were in the middle of the war in Ukraine. Before crossing the border, they removed the symbols of the Russian army, the way their colleagues did in Crimea. In Russia, journalists have found cemeteries of fallen soldiers, but all information about their deaths is unknown: the epitaphs on the headstones only indicate the dates of their deaths as the year 2014.

SUPPORTERS OF THE UNRECOGNIZED REPUBLICS

The ideological basis of the opponents of the Maidan was also diverse. The main unifying ideas were discontent with violence against the police and opposition to rioting in Kyiv. People who were brought up with Russian cultural narratives,

movies, and music were afraid of the destruction of the Russian language. Supporters of the USSR and admirers of its victory in World War II believed that Ukraine should be aligned with Russia and were unhappy with the rise of radical nationalists. Adherents of the Russian Empire perceived the Maidan protests as a threat to the territory of the Russian Empire. The ideas of these allies could be explained with this photo showing the flags of the USSR, the Russian Empire, and the St. George ribbon as a symbol of victory in the Second World War. We could portray them as authoritarian conservatives, supporters of the old order.

The pro-Russian side consisted of police, entrepreneurs, politicians, and the military who sympathized with Russia, ordinary citizens frightened by fake news, various ultra-right individuals including Russian patriots and various types of monarchists, pro-Russian imperialists, the Task Force group “Rusich,” the PMC [Private Military Company] group “Wagner,” including the notorious neo-Nazi Alexei Milchakov, the recently deceased Egor Prosvirnin, the founder of the chauvinistic Russian nationalist media project “Sputnik and Pogrom,” and many others. There were also authoritarian leftists, who celebrate the USSR and its victory in the Second World War.

THE RISE OF THE FAR RIGHT IN UKRAINE

As we described, the right wing managed to gain sympathy during the Maidan by organizing combat units and by being ready to physically confront the Berkut. The presence of military arms enabled them to maintain their independence and force others to reckon with them. In spite of their using overt fascist symbols such as swastikas, wolf hooks, Celtic crosses, and SS logos, it was difficult to discredit them, as the need to fight the forces of the Yanukovich government caused many Ukrainians to call for cooperation with them.

After the Maidan, the right wing actively suppressed the rallies of pro-Russian forces. At the beginning of the military operations, they started forming volunteer battalions. One of the most famous is the “Azov” battalion. At the beginning, it consisted of 70 fighters; now it is a regiment of 800 people with its own armored vehicles, artillery, tank company, and a separate project in accordance with NATO standards, the sergeant school. The Azov battalion is one of the most combat-effective units in the Ukrainian army. There were also other fascist military formations such as the Volunteer Ukrainian Unit

“Right Sector” and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, but they are less widely known.

As a consequence, the Ukrainian right wing accrued a bad reputation in the Russian media. But many in Ukraine considered what was hated in Russia to be a symbol of struggle in Ukraine. For example, the name of the nationalist Stepan Bandera, who is known chiefly as a Nazi collaborator in Russia, was actively used by the protesters as a form of mockery. Some called themselves Judeo-Banderans to troll supporters of Jewish/Masonic conspiracy theories.

Over time, the trolling contributed to a rise in far-right activity. Right-wingers openly wore Nazi symbols; ordinary supporters of the Maidan claimed that they were themselves Banderans who eat Russian babies and made memes to that effect. The far right made its way into the mainstream: they were invited to participate in television shows and other corporate media platforms, on which they were presented as patriots and nationalists. Liberal supporters of the Maidan took their side, believing that the Nazis were a hoax invented by Russian media. In 2014 to 2016, anyone who was ready to fight was embraced, whether it was a Nazi, an anarchist, a kingpin from an organized crime syndicate, or a politician who did not carry out any of his promises.

The rise of the far right is due to the fact that they were better organized in critical situations and were able to suggest effective methods of fighting to other rebels. Anarchists provided something similar in Belarus, where they also managed to gain the sympathy of the public, but not on as significant of a scale as the far right did in Ukraine.

By 2017, after the ceasefire started and the need for radical fighters decreased, the SBU (Security Service of Ukraine) and the state government co-opted the right-wing movement, jailing or neutralizing anyone who had an “anti-system” or independent perspective on how to develop the right-wing movement—including Oleksandr Muzychko, Oleg Muzhchil, Yaroslav Babich, and others.

Today, it is still a big movement, but their popularity is at a comparably low level and their leaders are affiliated with the Security service, police, and politicians; they do not represent a really independent political force. The discussions of the problem of the far-right are becoming more frequent within the democratic camp, where people are developing an understanding of the symbols and organizations they are dealing with, rather than silently dismissing concerns.

ANARCHISTS’ AND ANTI-FASCISTS’ ACTIVITY DURING THE WAR

With the outbreak of military operations, a division appeared between those who are pro-Ukrainian and those who support the so-called DNR/LNR (“Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic”).

There was a widespread “say no to war” sentiment within the punk scene during the first months of the war, but it did not last long. Let’s analyze the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian camps.

PRO-UKRAINIANS

Due to the lack of a massive organization, the first anarchist and anti-fascist volunteers went to war individually as single fighters, military medics, and volunteers. They tried to form their own squad, but due to lack of knowledge and resources, this attempt was unsuccessful. Some people even joined the Azov battalion and the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists). The reasons were mundane: they joined the most accessible troops. Consequently, some people converted to right-wing politics.

Anti-fascists receiving training at the Right Sector base in Desna. It is worth noting that this photo includes two Moscow anti-fascists who joined the armed conflict.

People who didn’t take part in the battles raised funds for the rehabilitation of people injured in the East and for the construction of a bomb shelter in a kindergarten located near the front line. There was also a squat named “Autonomy” in Kharkiv, an open anarchist social and cultural center; at that time, they concentrated on helping the refugees. They provided housing and a permanent really free market, consulting with new arrivals and directing them to resources and conducting educational activities. In addition, the center became a place for theoretical discussions. Unfortunately, in 2018, the project ceased to exist.

All these actions were the individual initiatives of particular people and groups. They did not happen within the framework of a single strategy.

One of the most significant phenomena of that period was a formerly large radical nationalist organization, “Autonomnyi Opir”(autonomous resistance). They started leaning left in 2012; by 2014, they had shifted so much to the left that individual members would even call themselves “anarchists.” They framed their nationalism as a struggle for “liberty” and a counterbalance to Russian

nationalism, using the Zapatista movement and the Kurds as role models. Compared to the other projects in Ukrainian society, they were seen as the closest allies, so some anarchists cooperated with them, while others criticized this cooperation and the organization itself. Members of the AO also actively participated in volunteer battalions and tried to develop the idea of “anti-imperialism” among the military. They also defended the right of women to participate in the war; female members of the AO participated in the combat operations. AO assisted training centers in training fighters and doctors, volunteered for the army, and organized the social center “Citadel” in Lviv where refugees were accommodated.

PRO-RUSSIANS

Modern Russian imperialism is built on the perception that Russia is the successor of the USSR—not in its political system, but on territorial grounds. The Putin regime sees the Soviet victory in World War II not as an ideological victory over Nazism, but as a victory over Europe that shows the strength of Russia. In Russia and the countries it controls, the population has less access to information, so Putin’s propaganda machine does not bother to create a complex political concept. The narrative is essentially as follows: The USA and Europe were afraid of the strong USSR, Russia is the successor of the USSR and the entire territory of the former USSR is Russian, Russian tanks entered Berlin, which means that “We can do it again” and we’ll show NATO who is the strongest here, the reason Europe is “rotting” is because all of the gays and emigrants are out of control there.

The ideological foundation maintaining a pro-Russian position among the left was the legacy of the USSR and its victory in World War II. Since Russia claims that the government in Kyiv was seized by Nazis and the junta, the opponents of the Maidan described themselves as fighters against fascism and the Kyiv junta. This branding induced sympathy among the authoritarian left—for example, in Ukraine, including the “Borotba” organization. During the most significant events of 2014, they first took a loyalist position and then later a pro-Russian position. In Odessa, on May 2, 2014, several of their activists were killed during street riots. Some people from this group also participated in the fighting in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and some of them died there.

“Borotba” described their motivation as wishing to fight against fascism. They urged the European left to stand in solidarity with the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic.” After the e-mail of Vladislav Surkov (Putin’s political strategist) was hacked, it was revealed that members of Borotba had received funding and were supervised by Surkov’s people.

Russia’s authoritarian communists embraced the breakaway republics for similar reasons.

The presence of far-right supporters in the Maidan also motivated apolitical anti-fascists to support the “DNR” and “LNR.” Again, some of them participated in the fighting in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and some of them died there.

Among Ukrainian anti-fascists, there were “apolitical” anti-fascists, subculturally-affiliated people who had a negative attitude towards fascism “because our grandfathers fought against it.” Their understanding of fascism was abstract: they themselves were often politically incoherent, sexist, homophobic, patriots of Russia, and the like.

The idea of supporting the so-called republics gained wide backing among the left in Europe. Most notable among its supporters were the Italian rock band “Banda Bassotti” and the German party Die Linke. In addition to fundraising, Banda Bassotti made a tour to “Novorossia.” Being in the European Parliament, Die Linke supported the pro-Russian narrative in every possible way and arranged video conferences with pro-Russian militants, going to Crimea and the unrecognized republics. The younger members of Die Linke, as well as the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation (the Die Linke party foundation), maintain that this position is not shared by every participant, but it is broadcasted by the most prominent members of the party, such as Sahra Wagenknecht and Sevim Dağdelen.

The pro-Russian position did not gain popularity among anarchists. Among individual statements, the most visible was the position of Jeff Monson, a mixed martial arts fighter from the USA who has tattoos with anarchist symbols. He previously considered himself an anarchist, but in Russia, he openly works for the ruling United Russia party and serves as a deputy in the Duma.

To summarize the pro-Russian “left” camp, we see the work of the Russian special services and the consequences of ideological incapacity. After the occupation of Crimea, employees of the Russian FSB approached local anti-fascists and anarchists in conversation, offering to permit them to continue their activities but suggesting that they should henceforward include the idea that

Crimea should be a part of Russia in their agitation. In Ukraine, there are small informational and activist groups that position themselves as anti-fascist while expressing an essentially pro-Russian position; many people suspect them of working for Russia. Their influence is minimal in Ukraine, but their members serve Russian propagandists as “whistleblowers.”

There are also offers of “cooperation” from the Russian embassy and pro-Russian members of Parliament like Ilya Kiva. They try to play on the negative attitude towards Nazis like the Azov battalion and offer to pay people to change their position. At the moment, only Rita Bondar has openly admitted to receiving money in this way. She used to write for left-wing and anarchist media outlets, but due to the need for money, she wrote under a pseudonym for media platforms affiliated with the Russian propagandist Dmitry Kiselev.

In Russia itself, we are witnessing the elimination of the anarchist movement and the rise of authoritarian communists who are ousting anarchists from the anti-fascist subculture. One of the most indicative recent moments is the organizing of an anti-fascist tournament in 2021 in memory of “the Soviet soldier.”

IS THERE A THREAT OF FULL-SCALE WAR WITH RUSSIA? AN ANARCHIST POSITION

About ten years ago, the idea of a full-scale war in Europe would have seemed crazy, since secular European states in the 21st century seek to play up their “humanism” and mask their crimes. When they do engage in military operations, they do so somewhere far away from Europe. But when it comes to Russia, we have witnessed the occupation of Crimea and subsequent fake referendums, the war in Donbas, and the MH17 plane crash. Ukraine constantly experiences hacker attacks and bomb threats, not only in state buildings but also inside the schools and kindergartens.

In Belarus in 2020, Lukashenka boldly declared himself the winner of the elections with a result of 80% of the vote. The uprising in Belarus even led to a strike of Belarusian propagandists. But after the landing of Russian FSB planes, the situation changed dramatically and the Belarusian government succeeded in violently suppressing the protests.

A similar scenario played out in Kazakhstan, but there, the regular armies of Russia, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan were brought in to help the regime suppress the revolt as part of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) cooperation.

Russian special services lured refugees from Syria to Belarus in order to create a conflict on the border with the European Union. A group of the Russian FSB was also uncovered that was engaged in political assassinations using chemical weapons—the already familiar “novichok.” In addition to the Skripals and Navalny, they have also killed other political figures in Russia. Putin’s regime responds to all accusations by saying “It’s not us, you all are lying.” Meanwhile, Putin himself wrote an article half a year ago in which he asserts that Russians and Ukrainians are one nation and should be together. Vladislav Surkov (a political strategist who builds Russian state policy, connected with the puppet governments in the so-called DNR and LNR) published an article declaring that “the empire must expand, otherwise it will perish.” In Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan over the past two years, the protest movement has been brutally suppressed and independent and opposition media are being destroyed. We recommend reading more about Russia’s activities here.

All things considered, the likelihood of a full-scale war is high—and somewhat higher this year than last year. Even the sharpest analysts are unlikely to be able to predict exactly when it will start. Perhaps a revolution in Russia would relieve tension in the region; however, as we wrote above, the protest movement there has been smothered.

Anarchists in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia mostly support Ukrainian independence directly or implicitly. This is because, even with all the national hysteria, corruption, and a large number of Nazis, compared to Russia and the countries controlled by it, Ukraine looks like an island of freedom. This country retains such “unique phenomena” in the post-Soviet region as the replaceability of the president, a parliament that has more than nominal power, and the right to peaceful assembly; in some cases, factoring in additional attention from society, the courts sometimes even function according to their professed protocol. To say that this is preferable to the situation in Russia is not to say anything new. As Bakunin wrote, “We are firmly convinced that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy.”

There are many problems inside Ukraine, but these problems are more likely to be solved without the intervention of Russia.

Is it worth it to fight the Russian troops in the case of an invasion? We believe that the answer is yes. The options that Ukrainian anarchists are considering at the present moment include joining the armed forces of Ukraine, engaging in territorial defense, partisanship, and volunteering.



Ukraine is now at the forefront of the struggle against Russian imperialism. Russia has long-term plans to destroy democracy in Europe. We know that little attention has yet been paid to this danger in Europe. But if you follow the statements of high-profile politicians, far-right organizations, and authoritarian communists, over time, you will notice that there is already a large spy network in Europe. For example, some top officials, after leaving office, are given a position in a Russian oil company (Gerhard Schröder, François Fillon).

We consider the slogans “Say No to War” or “The War of Empires” to be ineffectual and populist. The anarchist movement has no influence on the process, so such statements do not change anything at all.

Our position is based on the fact that we do not want to run away, we do not want to be hostages, and we do not want to be killed without a fight. You can look at Afghanistan and understand what “No to War” means: when the Taliban advances, people flee en masse, die in the chaos at the airports, and those who remain are purged. This describes what is happening in Crimea and you can imagine what will happen after the invasion of Russia in other regions of Ukraine.

As for the attitude towards NATO, the authors of this text are divided between two standpoints. Some of us have a positive approach towards this

situation. It is obvious that Ukraine cannot counter Russia on its own. Even taking into consideration the large volunteer movement, modern technologies and weapons are needed. Apart from NATO, Ukraine has no other allies who can help with this.

Here, we can recall the story of Syrian Kurdistan. The locals were forced to cooperate with NATO against ISIS—the only alternative was to flee or be killed. We are well aware that support from NATO can disappear very quickly if the West develops new interests or manages to negotiate some compromises with Putin. Even now, the Self-Administration is forced to cooperate with the Assad regime, understanding that they don’t have much of an alternative.

A possible Russian invasion forces the Ukrainian people to look for allies in the fight against Moscow. Not on social media, but in the real world. Anarchists do not have sufficient resources in Ukraine or elsewhere to respond effectively to the invasion of Putin’s regime. Therefore, one has to think about accepting support from NATO.

The other standpoint, which others in this writing group subscribe to, is that both NATO and the EU, in strengthening their influence in Ukraine, will cement the current system of “wild capitalism” in the country and make the potential for a social revolution even less feasible. In the system of global capitalism, the flagship of which is the USA as the leader of NATO, Ukraine is assigned the spot of a humble frontier: a supplier of cheap labor and resources. Therefore, it is important for Ukrainian society to realize the need for independence from all the imperialists. In the context of the country’s defense capability, the emphasis should not be on the importance of NATO technology and support for the regular army, but on the potential of society for grassroots guerrilla resistance.

We consider this war primarily against Putin and the regimes under his control. In addition to the mundane motivation not to live under a dictatorship, we see potential in Ukrainian society, which is one of the most active, independent, and rebellious in the region. The long history of resistance of the people over the past thirty years is a solid proof of this. This gives us hope that the concepts of direct democracy have a fertile ground here.

THE CURRENT SITUATION OF ANARCHISTS IN UKRAINE AND NEW CHALLENGES

The outsider position during the Maidan and the war had a demoralizing effect on the movement. Outreach was hampered as Russian propaganda

monopolized the word “anti-fascism.” Due to the presence of the symbols of the USSR among the pro-Russian militants, the attitude towards the word “communism” was extremely negative, so even the combination “anarcho-communism” was perceived negatively. The declarations against the pro-Ukrainian ultra-right cast a shadow of doubt on anarchists in the eyes of ordinary folks. There was an unspoken agreement that the ultra-right would not attack anarchists and anti-fascists if they did not display their symbols at rallies and the like. The right had a lot of weapons in their hands. This situation created a feeling of frustration; the police did not function well, so someone could easily be killed without consequences. For example, in 2015, the pro-Russian activist Oles Buzina was killed.

All this encouraged anarchists to approach the matter more seriously.

A radical underground began to develop starting from 2016; news about radical actions started to appear. Radical anarchist resources appeared that explained how to buy weapons and how to make caches, as opposed to the old ones, which were limited only to Molotov cocktails.

In the anarchist milieu, it has become acceptable to have legal weapons. Videos of anarchist training camps using firearms began to surface. Echoes of these changes reached Russia and Belarus. In Russia, the FSB liquidated a network of anarchist groups that had legal weapons and practiced airsoft. The arrestees were tortured with electric current in order to force them to confess to terrorism, and sentenced to terms ranging from 6 to 18 years. In Belarus, during the 2020 protests, a rebellious group of anarchists under the name “Black Flag” was detained while trying to cross the Belarusian-Ukrainian border. They had a firearm and a grenade with them; according to the testimony of Igor Olinevich, he bought the weapon in Kyiv.

The outdated approach of anarchists’ economic agenda has also changed: if before, the majority worked at low-paid jobs “closer to the oppressed,” now many are trying to find a job with a good salary, most often in the IT sector.

Street anti-fascist groups have resumed their activities, engaging in retaliatory actions in cases of Nazi attacks. Among other things, they held the “No Surrender” tournament among antifa fighters and released a documentary entitled “Hoods,” which tells about the birth of the Kyiv antifa group. (English subtitles are available.)

Anti-fascism in Ukraine is an important front, because in addition to a large number of local ultra-right activists, many notorious Nazis have relocated here from Russia (including Sergei Korotkikh and Alexei Levkin) and from Europe

(such as Denis “White Rex” Kapustin), and even from the USA (Robert Rando). Anarchists have been investigating the activities of the far right.

There are activist groups of various kinds (classical anarchists, queer anarchists, anarcho-feminists, Food Not Bombs, eco-initiatives, and the like), as well as small information platforms. Recently, a politically charged anti-fascist resource has appeared in the telegram @uantifa, duplicating its publications in English.

Today, the tensions between groups are gradually smoothing out, as recently there have been many joint actions and common participation in social conflicts. Among the biggest of these is the campaign against the deportation of the Belarusian anarchist Aleksey Bolenkov (who managed to win a trial against the Ukrainian special services and remain in Ukraine) and the defense of one of the districts in Kyiv (Podil) from police raids and attacks by the ultra-right.

We still have very little influence on society at large. This is largely because the very idea of a need for organization and anarchist structures was ignored or denied for a long time. (In his memoirs, Nestor Makhno also complained about this shortcoming after the defeat of the anarchists). Anarchist groups were very quickly dashed by the SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] or the far right.

Now we have come out of stagnation and are developing, and therefore we are anticipating new repression and new attempts by the SBU to take control of the movement.

At this stage, our role can be described as the most radical approaches and views in the democratic camp. If liberals prefer to complain to the police in the event of an attack by the police or the far right, anarchists offer to cooperate with other groups that suffer from a similar problem and come to the defense of institutions or events if there is a possibility of an attack.

Anarchists are now trying to create horizontal grassroots ties in society, based on common interests, so that communities can address their own needs, including self-defense. This differs significantly from ordinary Ukrainian political practice, in which it is often proposed to unite around organizations, representatives, or the police. Organizations and representatives are often bribed and the people who have gathered around them remain deceived. The police may, for example, defend LGBT events but get mad if these activists join a riot against police brutality. Actually, this is why we see potential in our ideas—but if a war breaks out, the main thing will again be the ability to participate in armed conflict.

INTERVIEW: THE COMMITTEE OF RESISTANCE, KYIV

We conducted an audio interview with a spokesperson from “The Committee of Resistance,” the newly formed anarchist coordinating group in Ukraine, on February 24, after the beginning of the Russian invasion. They will be fielding public inquiries about what anarchists are doing and experiencing in Ukraine here: <https://linktr.ee/Theblackheadquarter>

“The Committee of Resistance” is a coordination center connecting anarchists who are participating in resisting the invasion in a variety of ways. Some are currently on the front; some are engaged in media work about the conditions arising during this resistance, in hopes of clarifying the situation in Ukraine to those who have never been there and explaining to anarchists elsewhere why they believe that resisting Putin is connected with liberation. The project will also be engaging in some support projects in whatever remains of Ukrainian civil society as the invasion proceeds—for example, in Mariupol’, some participants brought material support to the center hosting children orphaned by the war—and will assist some comrades in escaping from the conflict zone, though “dozens and dozens” of anarchists and anti-fascists are participating in the resistance.

As of now, the participants are watching to see what mutual aid projects will emerge in Kyiv out of efforts on the part of the population as a whole, and which ones they can participate in most effectively as anarchists.

The person we spoke with is currently located in Kyiv; others have already departed to participate in territorial defense in the regions surrounding Kyiv. In Kyiv, many people are leaving the city, but there has not been aerial bombing since the morning, when the Russian air force attacked military targets around the city and also hit some civilian housing areas in outlying towns, including Brovary, killing dozens of people.

In Kyiv, the atmosphere is tense, but there is no fighting in the city yet, only the aircraft attacks of the morning. Thus far, anarchists have experienced no

known casualties, but they are facing serious dangers. It is a hard situation, but so far, the participants’ spirits are high.

The majority of the participants in this project were expecting the invasion to begin soon, generally speaking, but they were not expecting it today, and were not entirely mentally prepared for it. In fact, they planned and prepared for months, but now they are discovering everything that remained unfinished in their preparations. Still, in the course of hasty meetings, they have pulled together this coordination project.

The spokesperson described their immediate goal: it is not to protect the Ukrainian state, but to protect Ukrainian people and the form of Ukrainian society, which is still pluralistic, even though the Ukrainian state itself is neoliberal and a nationstate with nationalism and all the other terrible things that come with that. “Our idea is that we have to defend the spirit of this society against being smashed by Putin’s regime, which threatens the entire existence of the society.”

Panning back from that immediate goal, the spokesperson said that they hope to confront Russian military aggression while promoting anarchist perspectives both within Ukrainian society and throughout the world—to show that anarchists are involved in this struggle, that they have taken sides in it—not with the state, but with the people who are impacted by the invasion, with the society of the people who live in Ukraine.

“It is not an exaggeration to say that the whole population is confronting the invasion. Of course, some people are fleeing, but any force that has any investment in the political development of this place in the future has to be on the side of the people here right now. We want to make some inroads towards being connected with people here on a larger scale, towards getting organized with them. Our long-term task, our dream, is to become a visible political force within this society in order to secure a real opportunity to promote a message of social liberation for people.”

In response to the statement that the “whole population is confronting the invasion,” we inquired as to whether that included the people in the “republics,” the Luhansk People’s Republic [LPR] and Donetsk People’s Republic [DPR]—the regions in eastern Ukraine that have been occupied by Russian-armed and funded separatist forces since 2014, which Putin just recognized as “independent.”

“Honestly,” the spokesperson answered, “I have little perspective about the people in the so-called republics; I have only lived here for several years”—having

grown up in a neighboring country—”and have never been to the southeast. It’s true that there have been some conflicts about language, and local far-right people have exacerbated these conflicts needlessly and severely. For this reason, in the ‘republics,’ we saw some people waving Russian state flags to welcome the troops, even though this ‘independence’ will mean the opposite, it will mean being totally subservient to Putin. At the same time, nearby across the trenches, on the other side of the battle lines, we saw thousands of people waving Ukraine’s national flags. We don’t like this, either, as anarchists, but it does mean that people are ready to fight—that they are ready to defend their independence not only as a state but as a society.”





***The future
is already here:
It's just not evenly
distributed yet.***