

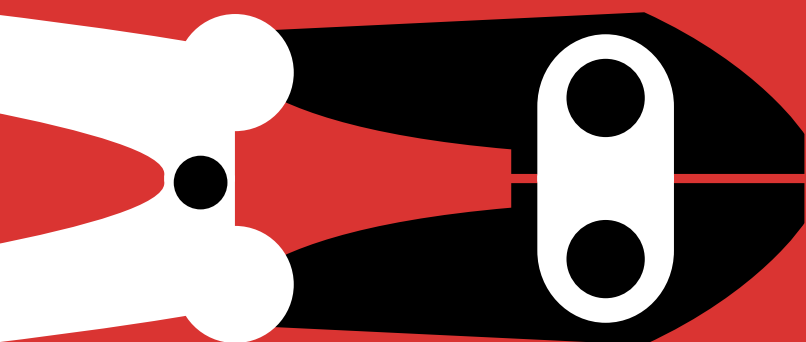
# ROAR

Reflections on a Revolution

ISSUE #8 - AUTUMN 2018

Forman ★ King ★ Dirik ★ Miley ★ Samudzi ★ Roth & Russell  
Buxton & Alkerman ★ Internationalist Commune ★ Delclós





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Issue #8

# Beyond the Border

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*“I don’t believe in borders, I don’t like flags,  
I have no boundaries. My only homeland:  
friendship, love and justice for all.”*

*Dedicated to the memory of*  
**MYRA LANDAU (1926–2018)**

FOUNDER AND EDITOR

Jerome Roos

MANAGING EDITOR

Joris Leverink

ART DIRECTOR

Bojan Kanižaj

ILLUSTRATORS

Luís Alves, Kaan Bağcı, Istvan David,  
Hannah Kirmes-Daly, Mirko Rastić,  
Zoran Svilar

CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Akkerman, Nick Buxton, Carlos  
Delclós, Dilar Dirik, Erik Forman,  
Internationalist Commune of Rojava,  
Natasha King, Thomas Jeffrey Miley,  
Laura Roth, Bertie Russell, Zoé Samudzi

# The Vanity of Nations

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“**A**rise, ye wretched of the Earth. Arise, ye prisoners of want. For reason thunders in its volcano. This is the eruption of the end.” Thus wrote Eugène Pottier, veteran of the Paris Commune, in his legendary poem *L’Internationale*. An anarchist transport worker and lifelong revolutionary internationalist, the 54-year-old Pottier had been elected to the Parisian municipal government following the popular revolt of March 1871. He wrote his historic words, which would go on to serve as the official anthem of the International Workingmen’s Association and a hymn of the emerging socialist movement, following the suppression of the Commune in June. Nevertheless, despite this defeat, Pottier ended his poem on a decidedly optimistic note: “The world is about to change its foundation. We are nothing, let us be all.”

Today, Pottier’s solemn call to arms registers discordantly against the increasingly vocal cries for a reassertion of national borders. While the isolationist charge has so far been led by the xenophobic far-right, the so-called “progressive” parties of the advanced capitalist countries have by no means proven themselves immune to this siren song of the nation, whose treacherous refrain appears to be growing stronger by the day. Indeed, the left’s long-standing commitment to solidarity across borders — once so central to its historic mission and collective identity — now increasingly plays second fiddle to social-chauvinistic concerns about immigration and the plight of the “white working class.” From Mélenchon’s left patriotism to Sanders’ economic nationalism, it is the electoral opportunism of social democracy, much more than anti-imperialism or the internationalist ideal, that calls the tune on the left.

And yet, if you keep your ear to the ground and listen closely to the thunders of reason, you will find a very different sound emerging from

the rumbling volcano below. It is the sound of people on the move, of borders under strain, of movements on the rise. This eighth issue of *ROAR Magazine*, our last one to appear in print, sets out to map the contours of these movements as they challenge, subvert and transform the international border regime from within.

In a way, the essays collected on these pages help bring our limited print run full circle. In March 2016, we marked the 145th anniversary of the Paris Commune by releasing our first issue on the revival of the commune as a revolutionary political form. As we noted then, “the Commune’s commitment to a radical working-class internationalism,” which included the granting of universal citizenship rights to immigrants, “was powerfully expressed in the celebrated slogan that ‘the flag of the Commune is the flag of the World Republic.’” Today, we conclude our series with a reaffirmation of that internationalist horizon as a foundational principle for the emerging anti-capitalist politics of the twenty-first century.

Against the overpowering hypermobility of global capital and the impotent vanity of nations, the left urgently needs to develop a new revolutionary internationalism in the spirit of Eugène Pottier and the Parisian communards. Faced with a catastrophic convergence of thoroughly *global* challenges, from de-territorialized financial markets to planetary climate change, it should be clear that there can be no resort to the false prophets of parochialism. In these tumultuous times, it is our historic responsibility to demonstrate through a combination of political education, direct action and transnational mobilization that the only hope for the wretched of the Earth lies right here, beyond the border.

**Jerome Roos**

FOUNDING EDITOR

**Joris Leverink**

MANAGING EDITOR



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Illustration by Zoran Svilar



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# WORKERS

*of the world*

REIMAGINED COMMUNITIES



**A**ll we want is collective bargaining rights. We are not taking a stance on the elections.” I was somewhat surprised. It was 2012. I was sitting across the table from a leader of a new federation of independent trade unions in Egypt. The words seemed out of place. They echoed what I had heard from US labor officialdom as the right wing gutted the legal framework of public sector unions in 2011.

I had been part of an effort to organize a general strike amidst a protest movement of over 100,000 workers in Wisconsin. We had been inspired by the role of workers in a contemporaneous revolution in Egypt. As government snipers gunned down over 800 protesters in the streets, workers had broken the back of the Mubarak dictatorship by organizing a general strike and in some cases occupying their workplaces. Our effort failed, while theirs had succeeded. Western-style collective bargaining seemed like an anticlimax for Egypt’s revolutionary labor movement.

**TO AVERT  
A DESCENT INTO  
BARBARISM,  
THE LABOR  
MOVEMENT MUST  
DEVELOP AN  
EFFECTIVE AND  
INNOVATIVE  
INTERNATIONALIST  
PRAXIS UNITING  
WORKERS ACROSS  
BORDERS.**

I wondered where this idea that “collective bargaining rights” were the proper end destination for the movement had come from. It turns out that I was not the first visitor to Egypt’s new class of labor leaders. Soon after the revolution, representatives of the US Solidarity Center (the State Department-funded international arm of the AFL-CIO) as well as representatives of Europe’s trade unions and social democratic parties came bearing gifts. With advice and funding from US- and EU-aligned trade union bodies, the emergent bureaucratic leadership of Egypt’s newly-formed trade unions sought to emulate Western-style business unionism. If they had anything to say about it, the revolution was already in Egypt’s past.

My visit coincided with a runoff election for the new government between the conservative Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak’s second-in-command. The labor movement and left in Egypt failed to field a viable candidate. The Muslim Brotherhood won, the old boss was replaced by a new boss. There would be neither meaningful collective bargaining rights nor workers’ councils. The movements that had toppled Mubarak faced a wave of arrests and assassinations. Revolution gave way to reaction.

Of course, you do not need to look to Egypt to see the failure of internationalism in the labor movement. All across the world, workers see workers from other countries as enemies rather than allies. Workers support and carry out deportations, support and fight in wars that kill the working class and poor of other nations, and elect quasi- or neo-fascist politicians to office. From the perspective of worker solidarity, it is a disaster.

It cannot stay this way. The labor movement must develop an effective internationalist praxis if we are to avert a descent into barbarism.

## IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

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While the need for at least some form of global organization has become accepted in the labor movement mainstream, many labor activists would be surprised to discover that the idea of internationalism can be traced to the urtext of labor radicalism: the *Communist Manifesto*.

When most people read the *Manifesto* today, they are surprised to find that the bourgeoisie, not the working class, seems to be the star of the show. Reflecting on the world of 1848, Marx and Engels write that it is the *bourgeoisie* that has “put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations” and the *bourgeoisie* that “has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.” Similarly, it is the *bourgeoisie* that “has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals,” the *bourgeoisie* that “has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together,” the *bourgeoisie* that “has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country.” The *bourgeoisie* colonized the world. Where it was

unable to colonize, it forced all those who opposed it to emulate it. The bourgeoisie remade the world in its own image.

But the *Communist Manifesto* is not an ode to the power of bourgeoisie. For Marx, capitalism was not the end of history, but rather a new beginning. Capitalism carried with it the seeds of its own *Aufhebung*. The basic concept is captured by the lines of *Solidarity Forever*, the pop version of the Marxist metanarrative. As the song goes, the working class stands “outcast and starving midst the wonders we have made,” but “we can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn that the union makes us strong.”

The bourgeoisie had created a new historical subject — the international working class. But this subject was riddled with contradictions, and known not even to itself. It would be the task of the communists to awaken this sleeping giant. As the vernacular Marxism of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) put it, the “army of production” must be organized not just to win day-to-day class struggles against the capitalists, but to take control of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and inaugurate the cooperative commonwealth.

It was a global vision, not for idealist reasons, but because global capitalism created the material basis for global communism, and called forth global revolt to topple its rule. For Marx, it was the destiny of the proletariat to conquer the world in the footsteps of capital.

It has not worked out that way, so far. The onward march of history seems to have taken a detour through an extra century or so of capitalism. The structures built by

the bourgeoisie have proven far more formidable obstacles than the teleology of the *Manifesto* implied. Looming large amongst obstacles to proletarian internationalism is the capitalist state. In Marx's analysis, the bourgeoisie developed the "modern representative state" as its "executive committee," guiding big-picture strategic planning and meting out repression to shore up its rule.

“

## The vision of the early workers' movement was a global one

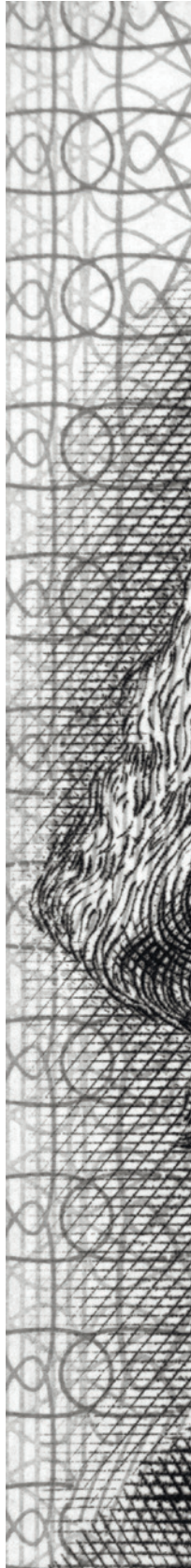
But the state created by the bourgeoisie was not only a repressive apparatus and tool for coordination. The growth of the administrative structures of the capitalist state was accompanied by what Benedict Anderson called an "imagined community" of the nation. Through literature, school systems, religious institutions — all of what Althusser dubbed the Ideological State Apparatus — the bourgeoisie cultivated a sense of shared cultural identity around competing blocs of capitalists in Western Europe. "Germany," "France," "Great Britain," "Italy" and other signifiers congealed as imagined communi-

ties shared by inhabitants across class lines. The working class was supposed to submit to exploitation, to kill and die for its mythic identity with the bourgeoisie's nation.

Against the nationalist imagined communities of the bourgeoisie, communists proposed a broader, internationalist imagined community. Rather than line up behind the bourgeoisie who exploited them in their own language, the workers of each nation should unite across made-up international boundaries to overthrow their oppressors. It did not go as hoped.

### FAILED INTERNATIONALS

The path of the left in the past 150 years is littered with the ruins of Internationals, attempts to unite the workers of the world for communist revolution. Members of the First International played an important role in launching the Paris Commune in 1871, what Marx described as the "first dictatorship of the proletariat." But after two months of radical government of the city of Paris, the forces of the French bourgeoisie retook the city and drowned the Commune







in blood. The international labor movement was unable to effectively intervene.

A year later, the First International famously split between followers of Marx and followers of Bakunin over the question of state power. Bakunin became representative of a tendency favoring more immediate insurrection, while Marx's followers were more open to engaging in electoral activity as the franchise was slowly extended by the bourgeoisie. Both of the rival Internationals collapsed within a few years, but the underlying divergence in strategic orientation became a lasting feature of left ideological debates.

Revolutionary syndicalism emerged as a tendency focused on organizing workers at the point of production for direct action battles with capitalists building up to a millenarian general strike. From the late 1800s to early 1900s, revolutionary syndicalists built unions of hundreds of thousands of workers into organizations that waged daily class struggle while maintaining a revolutionary horizon.

The most well-known exemplars of revolutionary syndicalism are the Spanish CNT and the IWW. As Peter Cole writes in *Wobblies of the World*, the IWW “was founded as a self-consciously global union ... the organization enrolled members and established branches in literally dozens of countries, and its organizers and sympathizers traveled to many more to work, agitate, educate, and organize.” It was perhaps the purest expression of the *Communist Manifesto*'s spirit of world-wide worker solidarity.

Another wing of the movement saw taking state power through building mass socialist labor parties as the road to revolution — or at least to reform that would curtail the worst abuses of capitalism. Socialists preferring electoralism to direct action cohered around the

“Second International” in 1889. Its affiliates notched impressive success at the ballot box in the first decades of the twentieth century. But the outcome of this success leaves one wondering if socialists had taken over the state, or if the state had taken over the socialists.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) provides the starkest example. The SPD was the largest political party in Germany on the eve of World War I, marshaling over four million votes. But in 1914 the party broke with the internationalist line of the Second International and voted for war. The Second International soon collapsed as party after party lined up behind the national bourgeoisie of its host state in support of the war effort. When the chips were down, electoral socialism was too invested in its footholds in the capitalist state to wage all-out resistance to a world war that would slaughter millions of workers.

Some socialists did oppose World War I, but faced repression that rapidly overwhelmed their ability to organize resistance. The revolutionary elements within the Second International convened the Zimmerwald Conference, launching a new coordinating body to oppose the war and fight for revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks played a central role in uniting the left — and in ending Russian participation in the war by organizing a revolution that overthrew the Czar and established a Soviet Socialist Republic in Russia.

With the breakthrough of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, the revolutionary elements in the socialist movement formed a Third International that decided at its second Congress to “struggle by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of

the state.” A new phase in the international socialist movement had begun.

## TWO INTERNATIONALISMS

---

The Third International became a global hub for the Communist Parties of the world with the priority of expanding the communist victory in Russia. But the question of the way forward for the socialist movement was far from settled. Another International was formed in Berlin in 1922, grouping together revolutionary unions that opposed seizing control of the state in the revolutionary process, instead orienting toward creating of forms of direct democracy and linking workers in a worldwide labor federation.

The Spanish Revolution put the new Internationals and their members to the test. International volunteers from across the world streamed into Spain to join the workers’ and peasants’ militias fighting Franco’s fascism. Under the stress of the war, tensions flared between factions aligned with the now Stalin-controlled Third International and its orientation toward state socialism, and the anarchist-oriented partisans of the CNT and many international volunteers. The eurocentrism of the left blinded partisans to the possibility of an alliance with anti-colonial rebellions against the fascists in North Africa. The revolution was defeated, a harbinger of what was to come for the revolutionary left across Europe on the eve of World War II.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Communist Parties aligned with the Soviet Union painted Western liberalism and fascism with the same brush, denouncing New Dealers and social democrats as “social fascists.” The order of the day was to fight for immediate communist revolution worldwide. But for Stalin, the com-

unist ideal of worldwide worker solidarity was rapidly outweighed by geopolitical considerations.

The Soviet Union was weakened by the Great Purge, Stalin's bid to cement his personal dictatorship by ordering the incarceration or murder of hundreds of thousands of people. With the capitalist West remaining hostile and the world inching closer to war, in 1939 Stalin sought a security guarantee for his weakened state by entering into the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with Hitler, pledging mutual non-aggression for ten years, and secretly agreeing to divide Eastern Europe with the Nazis.

# “ **The Spanish Revolution put the new Internationals to the test**”

The Soviet Union continued a brisk export business to Germany, even while Nazi forces invaded the surrounding states, rounded up and murdered trade unionists, communists, Jews, people identifying as LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and other others. Ironically, even while Stalin cut deals with Hitler, Communist Parties across the world were under orders to forswear compromise with liberals and social democrats.

In 1941, Nazi Germany broke the terms of the pact and invaded the Soviet Union. With the Soviet Union under attack, Stalinists made an abrupt about-face, seeking alliance between the liberal capitalist West against Nazi Germany. As a sign of goodwill toward the West, Stalin dissolved the Third International in 1943. The Soviet Union shifted from an orientation to world revolution to a policy of socialism in one country. Stalin-aligned Communists in the Allied nations were supposed to acquiesce to capitalist discipline and defer plans for revolution until after fascism was defeated.

Virtually the entire leadership of the US labor movement supported a no-strike agreement during WWII in exchange for a no-lockout agreement from the employers, with arbitration of disputes by a tripartite War Labor Board. There were price controls for companies, and wage controls for workers. It was the most developed system ever attempted in the United States to unite labor and capital under the tutelage of the state.

It did not work. After a brief dip in 1941, strikes skyrocketed. According to Martin Glaberman's *Wartime Strikes*:

“ *Despite the opposition of the top union leadership and, often enough, local union leaders; despite the pressure of government through uniformed officers present in the plants; despite the pressure of draft boards to get rid of militants; despite the loss of militants, including stewards and committeemen, through company dismissals; despite the fantastic pressure of the daily papers which bitterly and viciously attacked striking workers; wildcats continued to increase in number as the war went on.* ”

By 1944, there were 4,956 strikes per year, more than in 1937, a previous high point in class struggle. Because the unions had agreed to no-strike pledges as a condition of their participation in the War Labor Board, all strikes were wildcats. Most were about local concerns like safety, unfair firings and abusive supervisors, but some challenged the system of wage and price controls, noting that wages were not keeping pace with inflation.

The highest priority for Stalinists was supporting the US war effort to defeat the Nazis. This meant opposing the workers' movement at its origins — resistance to exploitation at the point of production. Stalinists went so far as to cast strikers even in non-critical industries during the war as “scabs,” pledging virtually unconditional loyalty to Roosevelt. The internationalism of Stalinism became a form of gun-in-hand nationalism, divorced from the internationalism of worker solidarity expressed by the *Communist Manifesto*. Left currents that opposed World War II as an imperialist war were brutally repressed.

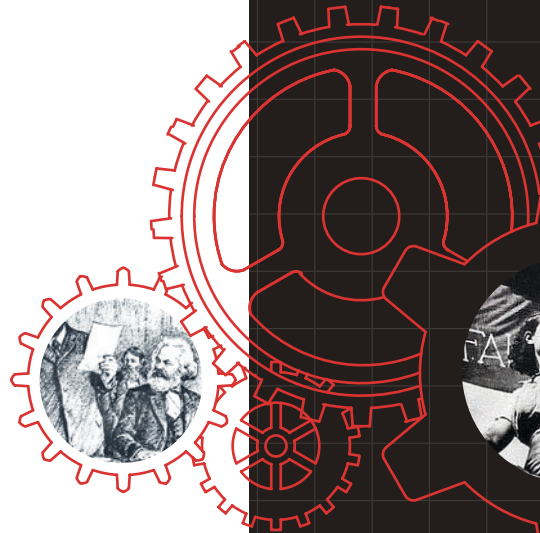
In the end, it was the workers and peasants of the Red Army who dealt fascism its death blow. The defeat of the Nazi regime was paid

PUBLICATION  
COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

1848

1864

INTERNATIONAL  
WORKINGMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION (FIRST  
INTERNATIONAL)  
FOUNDED



CONFEDERACIÓN NACIONAL  
DEL TRABAJO (CNT) FOUNDED

1910

1915

ZIMMERWALD  
CONFERENCE

HAYMARKET AFFAIR  
IN CHICAGO

1886

SPLIT FIRST  
INTERNATIONALE

1872

SECOND INTERNATIONAL

1889

1871

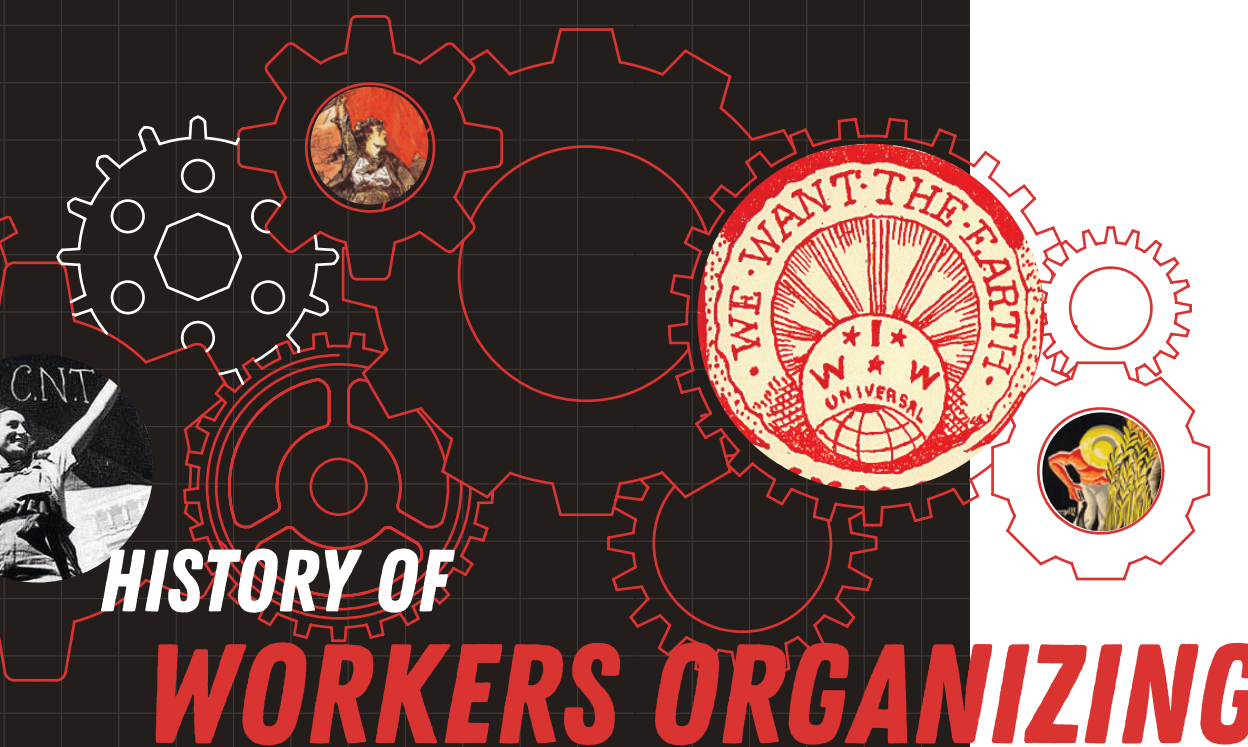
PARIS COMMUNE

1876

FIRST  
INTERNATIONAL  
DISSOLVED

1905

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS  
OF THE WORLD (IWW)  
FOUNDED



# HISTORY OF WORKERS ORGANIZING

SECOND INTERNATIONAL  
DISSOLVED

1916

THIRD INTERNATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL LABOR  
ORGANIZATION (ILO) FOUNDED

1919

SPANISH  
REVOLUTION

1936

1917  
RUSSIAN  
REVOLUTION

1922  
INTERNATIONAL  
WORKERS' ASSOCIATION  
(IWA/AIT) FOUNDED

1943  
THIRD  
INTERNATIONAL  
DISSOLVED

for with the lives of over 20 million soldiers and civilians of the Soviet Union, far more casualties than any other state. No one on the left today would argue that there was any alternative to waging armed struggle to eradicate fascism. But it remains true that the US bourgeoisie used the war to expand its own global hegemony, and as a result, the challenge of building worldwide workers' solidarity became even more complex.

## CAPITALIST INTERNATIONALISM

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As the Cold War dawned, the transmutation of internationalism into a type of nationalism for various Communist states became a permanent fixture of left discourse. Alignment with one Communist state or another became a litmus test for many factional splits on the left. The project of building class consciousness for world revolution became secondary to building support for specific socialist states.

The fronts of the Cold War extended into the labor movement. In the pre-war years in the United States, a fragile alliance between the heads of the union bureaucracies and communist organizers had led to victory after victory for workers and an enormous spike in the level of unionization. As hostilities resumed between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world, the labor bureaucracy came under pressure to distance itself from the revolutionary aspirations of the organizers who had built the upsurge of the 1930s.

In 1947, the US government passed the Taft-Hartley Act, which contained a raft of provisions limiting union power. Perhaps most damaging was a requirement for union leaders to sign affidavits that they were not affiliated with the Communist Party. Unions that did not comply with Taft-Hartley would be barred from using most provisions of US labor law. This provided a reason, or perhaps a pretense, for labor liberals to purge radicals from staff and officer positions. By the end of the 1940s, radicals stood outcast and starving amidst the unions they had built. The CIO re-merged with the AFL in 1955, cementing the hegemony of liberalism in US labor's leadership.

“

**Now is the  
time for the  
re-emergence  
of an effective  
internationalist  
praxis.**

Unions that accepted the parameters of US capitalism were given a seat at the table. The organizing model of US unions cohered as “business unionism.” It meant a narrow focus on collective bargaining for a contract at individual enterprises, accepting management prerogative over the production process, and forswearing visions of radical social transformation. Union mobilizations focused mostly on narrow, bread-and-butter demands, occasionally garnished with endorsement of liberal causes.

Acquiescence to US imperialism was part of the deal. Even before World War II, the AFL had not affiliated with the International Confederation of Trade Unions — the largest global association of unions — because of its endorsement of socialism. After WWII, it split from the re-founded ICTU because it included affiliates from the Soviet Bloc. As a result, Communist-aligned unions formed the World Confederation of Trade Unions, and US-aligned unions formed the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the name itself a polemic against state socialism. Even this was not sufficiently anti-communist for the AFL-CIO, which quit the ICFTU from 1969–1982 because many affiliates wanted to maintain relations with unions across the iron curtain.

US capital tasked the AFL-CIO with exporting its brand of business unionism, and the AFL-CIO obliged. In 1944, the AFL created the Free Trade Union Committee to support “free unions founded on collective bargaining in an open marketplace, and opposition to state-run unions on the Soviet model” in other countries. Where no business unions existed, US labor helped create them. In 1948, the FTUC created an entirely new union in France called Force Ouvrière to compete with Communist-affiliated unions. Beginning that year, the CIA began funneling funds to the FTUC. Its successor organizations, the

American Institute for Free Labor Development, and today the Solidarity Center are all funded almost entirely by grants from the US government. They provide support to unions that follow the pro-capitalist business unionism model in order to undermine communist influence in the global labor movement. The investments seem to have paid off. The AIFLD played a major role in supporting the Solidarnosc movement in Poland, and steering it toward liberal or even neoliberal goals.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the US government has sought to replicate the Solidarnosc movement in China and other states that resist US hegemony by providing grants and training to activists. In one particularly notable example, in 2002, the Solidarity Center received funds from the National Endowment for Democracy to assist the anti-Chávez Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV). A year later, the CTV played a major role in an attempted coup against Chávez’s socialist government.

With the aid of US labor’s institutions, the bourgeois project of world domination was successful. The Soviet Union is no more; remaining “socialist” states have accommodated themselves to the global capitalist system. But ironically, the world resembles the conditions outlined by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* now more than ever. Supply chains bind the workers of the world across the borders of nation-states. Misery forces resistance in many forms — from strikes and occupations to migration across the imaginary lines the bourgeoisie has drawn on the globe.

Although some cling to the imagined communities of the bourgeoisie, even turning toward the blood-and-soil ideology of fascism that claims natural bonds between ethnic groups and particular parts of the Earth’s surface,

the mythology of nation-states seems more obsolete than ever before. Now is the time for the re-emergence of an effective internationalist praxis. We do not have to invent one — it is already being invented by the working class in struggle.

labor, and have opened up a one-sided class war against workers. As this becomes unavoidably apparent, workers and unions are fighting back. The conditions that allowed business unionism to thrive no longer exist, forcing a perestroika moment in US labor. There is an openness to



## THE NEXT INTERNATIONAL

Fragments of a future internationalism are all around us. The most crucial ingredient is the slowly-dawning realization in the working class and even in labor's institutions of the need to fight.

Conditions are worsening in the capitalist core. Ironically, US labor's active role in destroying militant unionism in the Third World has incentivized outsourcing, undermining the very foundation of US unions and accelerating the immiseration of US workers. With the demise of any systemic alternative to capitalism, US elites have no reason to need to strike a deal with

different models in US labor. Cold War paranoia over challenging control of the means of production has faded. Unions and workers are experimenting with cooperative development and takeovers. Ideas once radical within the labor movement are entering the mainstream.

The class war now takes on an inherently global scope. As capital seeks to whipsaw one working class against another with threats of outsourcing, the One Big Union envisioned by the IWW capable of enforcing one set of global standards is not a pie-in-the-sky dream, it is the only logical strategic response. For the first time, international solidarity can become concrete in workplace-based strug-

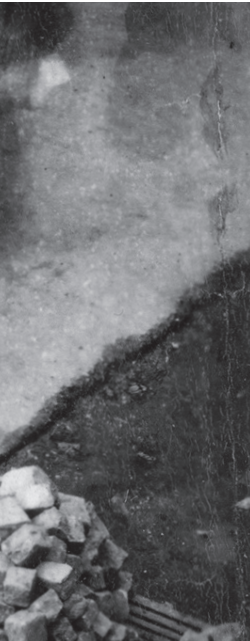


gle. Workers in the capitalist core and periphery are exploited by the same boss. Instead of abstract calls to support this or that socialist state, labor organizers now can — in fact *must* — build solidarity down the supply chains of multinational corporations.

The decline of US hegemony has opened up new geopolitical opportunities. It is possible to begin forging a new development pathway out of capitalism one rebel region at a time. From Venezuela's communes to the revolutionary cantons of Rojava, economic experiments are underway to break with the capitalist world system. As regional antagonism become unfrozen in the thaw of US hegemony, armed conflicts similar to the Syrian civil war are sure to engulf these experiments. Fascist and pro-capitalist forces will support their side. As the labor left, we need to support our side too — as the hundreds of internationalist volunteers who have aided the People's Defense Forces in Rojava have bravely modeled.

The greatest possibility — and necessity — for building a new imagined community of the global working class is not in a far-off land. The task of building international solidarity has become urgently local. Through poverty and war, capitalism is forcing a historically unprecedented number of people to leave their homes and seek refuge in the relatively calm areas of Europe and North America. Right-wing politicians attempt to trade on this refugee crisis by turning immigrants into scapegoats for the accelerating decline of the working-class standard of living in the capitalist core. The struggle for rights for refugees and migrants cuts to the core of the question facing the global working class.

Do we live in a world of scarcity, where one group must fight another group for rights to limited resources, where what we have is based on what we can take from other imagined “nations”? Or are we one interdependent human community that can easily create abundance for all the Earth's people through cooperation? Our answer must be to reimagine labor's imagined community to include all workers. Our task is to unite the workers of the world. We have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a world to win. ★



ERIK FORMAN

*Erik Forman has spent over a decade as a rank-and-file organizer in the fast food and education sectors. He works as a labor educator in New York City.*

**H**umans — as long as we have walked, we have moved and explored. We spread to cover the whole world, and then mixed among each other. We continue to do that. Our movement expresses so many elements of our being: our curiosity, our vulnerability, our arrogance. We have generally been the main limit to our own movements in all that time. As humans, we have mobility in common. It is a core part of who we are. And yet it is perhaps precisely that mobility that has often made us afraid of others and controlling over them.

# BEYOND THE BORDERS KALEIDOSCOPE

**Natasha King**

At a demonstration during the COP21 protests in Paris a few years ago, somebody carried a banner that read “migration is a force of nature.” The message was striking. In its simplicity, it neatly expressed the inevitability of human mobility. But it also said something about the inevitability of human struggles to be free to move. Those struggles have always been there too — and they continue today, ultimately, because borders inhibiting our freedom of movement persist. Would those struggles even exist, after all, if there were no borders to cross?

Borders, of course, are more than just lines marking territories on a map. They are ultimately an apparatus of the state, functioning

**AS BORDERS CHANGE, THEY  
POSE NEW CHALLENGES FOR  
MIGRANT MOVEMENTS — YET  
THOSE SAME MOVEMENTS  
ALSO CONTINUE TO  
RADICALLY TRANSFORM THE  
BORDERS THEY OPPOSE.**

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Illustration by Mirkko Rastić



to define the outer limits of state power. The extent and intensity of this state power is rapidly changing today — as is the nature of the border regime itself. The involvement of transnational institutions like the European Union, or non-state agencies like Frontex, and the extension in some cases of existing state powers beyond their own borders (as in the case of Australia locating its refugee camps in Papua New Guinea, or the UK placing border guards in French ports) are fundamentally changing the way borders work and the way different groups of people relate to them.

As a result, borders have proliferated, shattering into a kaleidoscope of effects, distributed unevenly over space and people. For some, borders are fortresses. For others, they almost do not exist. Borders, in short, are increasingly asymmetrical: sieves and solid walls simultaneously. What does this shattering kaleidoscope of the border regime look like, and what challenges does it pose for struggles for the freedom of movement?

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**For some, borders  
are fortresses.**

**For others, they  
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## THE EFFECTS OF THE BORDER KALEIDOSCOPE

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On the one hand, we have seen the strengthening of certain borders as fixed lines in recent years. The militarization of the borders between the US and Mexico, Morocco and Spain, or France and the UK all serve to maintain huge asymmetries in wealth and privilege. And militarization here is not meant as an analogy. It means the deployment of military personnel, the use of military equipment — drones, razor wire, helicopters, heartbeat and carbon dioxide detectors, tear gas and rubber bullets — and extensive funding to secure its place in the military-industrial complex.

Militarized borders block people's free movement and can create bottlenecks of and for people. Often, makeshift camps build up in these bottlenecks, where people must then live and meet their basic needs while seeking ways to continue their journeys. These camps, which are sometimes referred to as jungles, both by the people who live in them and by the people who seek to control and destroy them, are an effect of the struggle for mobility. They emerge wherever the forced immobilization of unwanted travellers blocks their freedom of movement.

The Jungle that existed in Calais on the northern coast of France from the summer of 2015 until the autumn of 2016 became something of a leitmotif of what was called the “European refugee crisis.” But at that time jungles existed across Europe: from Patras and Igoumentisa in Greece, to the Greek islands of Lesvos and Samos, at the Serbian-Hungarian border, and in Ventimiglia on the Italian side of the border with France.

Although there was a mushrooming of jungles at that time, many of them were long-standing — the camps in places like Calais, Mellieha and Patras having been around (on and off) since the mid-1990s. Jungles are an effect of the border, but they are also a problem for it, and a crucial organizing tool and resource for the people living there. When the numbers of people stuck in one place is so big as to make them visible and vulnerable, they are, ultimately, the safest and most efficient ways that those people can meet their needs in resource-limited situations.

On the other hand, we have seen the deployment of border practices within and beyond the physical borderlines of states, and an overall fuzziness in where their effects start and end. There are a number of ways in which this has taken place.

## THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF UNCERTAINTY

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To begin with, there is the introduction of biometrics that use, store and update human data on various transnational databases, meaning that people who move are increasingly traceable, predictable and accountable. The use of biometrics makes it easier for certain people to move (citizens of rich states, highly

skilled workers), while filtering out “undesirables.” What is different about biometrics compared to older forms of identification is that it rests on the efficiency of algorithms to be (supposedly) 100 percent accurate, unreplicable and eternal. It makes it harder to move without permission, and crucially, for plans to be enacted successfully, when “data doubles” of us already exist that can predict those plans and then control them.

There is also the increased use of “soft” internal border controls. This includes things like ID checks in public spaces carried out by domestic security agencies such as the police. It means that anyone fitting the profile of an “illegal immigrant” risks arrest — turning parks, public squares, train stations and motorway rests stops into places of potential interrogation for some.

The way that access to the means of daily life is increasingly index-linked to immigration status is another form of soft border control. For example, teachers in UK universities are obliged to inform on foreign national students who are absent for long periods. Landlords are obliged to check the immigration status of potential tenants before renting to them. This means that the border increasingly infests other areas of life. Within these limited options, people face an ever-stricter and more rigid immigration system itself, where unless you are wealthy or invited, your options are probably limited to claiming asylum — the category of “refugee” also excluding all those who do not fit within the strict (and state-defined) bounds of state persecution.

Then there are those borders that begin before the borderline is even reached. Visas, safe country concepts, external processing zones, virtual maritime borders and return and re-admission agreements all externalize

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**People who  
move without  
permission  
actively resist  
the border  
regime.**

AT THE BORDER BETWEEN  
FRANCE AND ENGLAND,  
NO BORDER ACTIVISTS  
TIED 200 BLACK RIBBONS  
TO THE FENCE TO MARK  
THOSE WHO HAVE DIED AT  
THE BORDER.





border control into those countries that are often the origins or transit destinations of many would-be travellers. And so, if those who travel without permission manage to reach Europe (and for many this is not even the aim, the majority of people moving to countries closer to home), the result of these fuzzy controls, as Bridget Anderson describes it, is to “institutionalize uncertainty.”

This is not an accident. Uncertainty creates a highly flexible and disposable workforce that, denied access to labor and social rights, can fill the gaps at times of need and be disposed of at times of abundance. As Sandro Mezzadra suggests, “the goal ... is not that of hermetically sealing off the borders of ‘rich countries’, but that of stabilizing a *system of dams*.” In that sense, “illegal migration” is not necessarily a bad thing for the capitalist state.

The everyday effects of this institutional uncertainty for the people who are its subject can be extreme precarity: destitution, lack of control, ever-shifting plans, and anxiety. For many, there is a sense of being suspended in a permanent present, where life has yet to actually start. This condition can last for years.

The precarity caused by the border regime largely affects those who move without permission. Struggles for the freedom of movement, after all, largely concern and are made up of such people. But these struggles also involve many people *with* papers, in solidarity with them — people who are often citizens of rich countries and who benefit from the border regime. A minority of such people have also become the abject subjects of the border regime and faced its controlling effects.

One of the side effects of the recent European “refugee crisis”, for example, was that numerous border activists with papers, involved in struggles in places like Calais and Ventimiglia, were banned from certain European countries. With their names added to databases of “known trouble-makers”, such bans made future travel across Europe difficult, facing interrogation when crossing borders, and even possible fines or prison time. The legality of such bans is vague at best, the length and breadth of them unclear, the ongoing effects of a “black mark” on a database often lasting. A number of people in situations like this are currently challenging the legality of these bans in the first place.

ACTUAL TESTIMONIES COLLECTED BY THE AUTHOR  
FROM MIGRANTS IN **CALAIS' JUNGLE**, NAMES AND  
GENDERS HAVE BEEN CHANGED.

# Yusuf

## Agnez

After a few weeks of trying to cross to [REDACTED] from [REDACTED], Agnez traveled to [REDACTED] to seek asylum. There she passed the first six months in an underground detention facility in the [REDACTED], before being released. She has been waiting two and a half years for the result of her asylum claim.

While traveling from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] he spent several years in [REDACTED] working as a cleaner in order to pay the cost of his journey. Upon arrival in [REDACTED] he was arrested in [REDACTED] and claimed asylum there. With his asylum application unresolved and no way to support himself, he continued to [REDACTED]. After several months of trying to cross to [REDACTED] he eventually succeeded and claimed asylum.



PHOTO BY EDWARD CRAWFORD / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



# Sven

On his way from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], Sven traveled through eastern [REDACTED] and was arrested in [REDACTED]. He claimed asylum and was held for several months in prison. He was released after his claim was refused. He then left [REDACTED] and continued to [REDACTED] from where, after a year, he crossed to [REDACTED]. He received asylum in [REDACTED] but experienced racial abuse in the neighborhood where he was living.

# Maria

While still a minor, Maria traveled from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] where she was allowed to stay until she turned 18. At that point she was told she had to leave or risk deportation to [REDACTED]. She then continued to [REDACTED] where she successfully claimed asylum. She spent several weeks living on the streets before she was given accommodation during the course of her claim.



## BEYOND AND DESPITE THE BORDER

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Focusing on the operations of the border can paint a picture that is devoid of struggle. This is clearly not an adequate representation of reality. As much as contemporary borders are sophisticated and multi-faceted weapons against free movement for all, the border regime is a product of resistance to and subversion of it at every step.

The border regime does not change of its own accord, but is forced to adapt to the ever-changing strategies of people who seek to reclaim or defend their freedom of movement. Control is there because people have continued to move despite already-existing, incomplete controls designed to stop them. In every case, people have gone on to enact new strategies that subvert those new control measures. People without papers find different ways to evade controls. Control responds with new strategies of capture. People respond. And so the process continues.

People who move without permission therefore actively resist the existing border regime and are not just passive victims swept up in its wake. It is worth remembering, for example, that the vast majority of those people who were the subject of the spectacle of the European “refugee crisis” have, by and large, blended into Europe’s social space somehow. Borders don’t have a monopoly over people’s movement.

The border regime, in short, is forced to adapt because of the actions of people. This includes organized and visible, expressly “political” acts by people with and without papers (the numerous demonstrations, protests, hunger strikes, vigils and marches). But more often it includes daily strategies of invisible non-subordination

and quiet evasion carried out by people who refuse to allow borders to stop them from moving. It is the people maintaining safe houses in towns and cities on travel routes across the continent; the WhatsApp groups that share information on the best routes for travel; the routines of sharing resources and information that take places across the jungles of Europe, that make such places crucial resources for the people living there, and a problem for the border regime.

Such actions often create moments or spaces of autonomy from a system designed to stop them. Whether created by force or by choice, these spaces or moments are a problem for that system — because they are subversive. They enable people’s continued “inappropriate” or unauthorized movement. They facilitate peoples’ “escape” from control. In that, they amount to a creative force that continually reshapes a border regime that seeks to capture and discipline it. They are strategies, not of getting by within the system, but getting by outside of it.

## THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY SUBVERSION

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In the necessary invisibility of these actions, the people carrying out these quiet evasions do not constitute themselves as a social movement in the traditional sense. There is nothing to see, no audience to address. Often this part of the struggle for free movement is not even seen as a practice of politics. Generally, people think of politics as an intentional and collective power-play in the public realm, and these actions are neither (or rarely) collective or public.

Even the intent to bring about political change is missing. People do not come to Calais or Athens to make a political statement, after all — they come to keep moving. Any political change is, to a large degree unintended. All

this makes it hard to think of migrants' mobility as inherently political, if what we think of as political is intentional activity. And yet, these actions make demands, and are the driving force behind structural change in the border regime.

What this means is that there is an additional challenge for — and an additional border within — the social movement for free mobility. It is the way we perceive what is political and important about this struggle. These everyday acts of escape are often less valued than the more expressly “political” parts of this movement. They often go unrecognized as resistance by the movement itself, and by those who view and comment on it. This weakens the movement.

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# The struggle for the freedom of movement is happening right now

Behind all the headline-grabbing actions are all those numerous micro-resistances and everyday, even mundane, subversions. We need to better recognize that struggles for the freedom of movement take place at the everyday level of life-making, as well as in the “big-P” political actions of demonstrations and press statements.

Borders are changing, shattering into a kaleidoscope of different effects, and posing numerous challenges for struggles for the freedom of movement. But these struggle are taking place all around us, not just in places like Calais, but right on our front door. The struggle for the freedom of movement is not planned for the future. It is happening right now. ★

NATASHA KING

*Natasha King is an author and activist who has been involved in autonomy and freedom of movement struggles for the last decade. She received her PhD from the University of Nottingham in 2014. Her latest book, No Borders: The Politics of Immigration Control and Resistance (Zed, 2016) was included in the Verso top-five essential reading list on the changing role of borders.*



8/7/2018 - 22 ASYLUM SEEKERS

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PEOPLE

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## CALAIS DETENTION CENTRE

10/7/2018

THE TRIAL OF 2 OF THE DETAINED MEN.

ONE MAN RETURNED TO BELGIUM, WHERE HE WAS FINGERPRINTED, THE OTHER FACES DEPORTATION TO MALI.

S/MIGRANTS DETAINED IN CALAIS.  
PROTEST 'MARCHE SOLIDAIRE POUR  
RANTES' WHICH SAW OVER A THOUSAND  
LE WALK FROM VINTIMILLE, ITALY TO  
ON, UK. THE DETAINEES WERE PART  
HE 'COLLECTIF DES SANS-PAPIERS DE  
' WHO HAVE PREVIOUSLY TAKEN PART  
ROSS BORDER DEMONSTRATIONS.



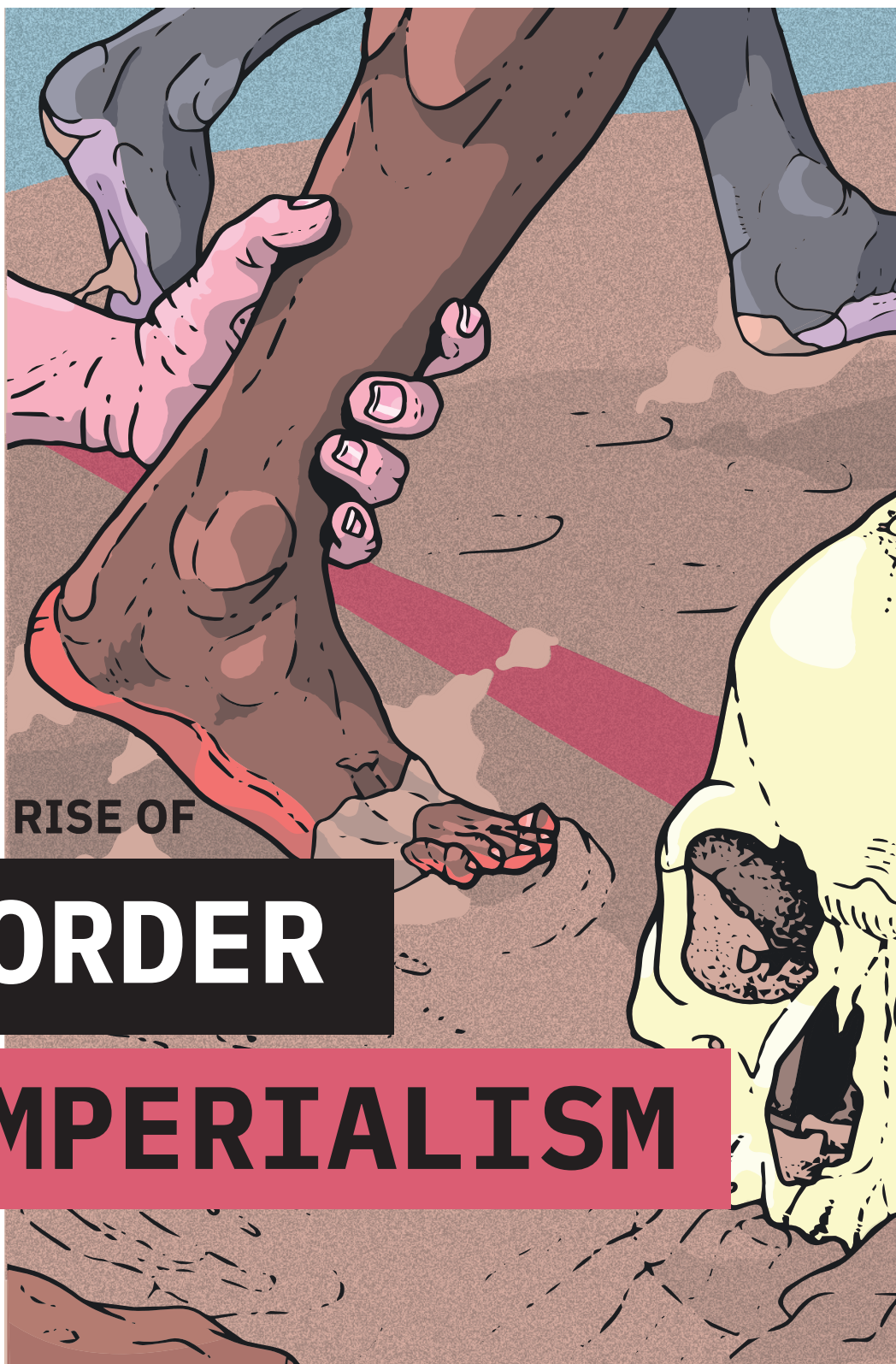
Nick Buxton and Mark Akkerman

Illustration by Zoran Svilar

THE RISE OF

**BORDER**

**IMPERIALISM**





OVER A CENTURY AFTER THE ORIGINAL SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA, EUROPEAN LEADERS ARE TODAY IMPOSING NEW FORMS OF COLONIALISM ON THE CONTINENT IN THE SHAPE OF MILITARIZED BORDER CONTROLS.

**I**n 1891, the French economist Paul Leroy Beaulieu fiercely defended European colonialism in Africa, saying: “This state of the world implies for the civilized people a right of intervention ... in the affairs of [barbarian tribes or savages].” Beaulieu’s defense came in the midst of the European carve-up of Africa cemented in the 1885 Berlin agreement. As it has now been five decades since most African liberation movements won independence, it might therefore seem a surprise to read a European ambassador in May 2018 declaring that “Niger is now the southern border of Europe.” Two thousand miles to the east, the ambassador’s comments were echoed by a Sudanese border patrol agent, Lieutenant Salih Omar, interviewed by the *New York Times*, who referred to the Sudan-Eritrean border as “Europe’s southern border.”

There has long been an argument, prominently articulated by Ghanaian freedom-fighter Kwame Nkrumah, that European control of Africa’s destiny never ended with colonialism. These cogent arguments largely focused on the way debt, trade and aid have been used to structure the continued dependence of Africa’s newly independent states on Europe. The consensus, however, by both a European ambassador and a Sudanese border patrol guard that Europe’s border is not in the Mediterranean but lies as far away as Sudan and Niger, suggests that European territorial control of Africa has not really ended either.

## MIGRATION CONTROL AT HEART OF EU FOREIGN POLICY

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The reason for this European re-engagement with African territory — and not just political and economic dominance — has been largely due to one factor: a desire to control migration. The rise in the number of refugees fleeing to

Europe, particularly after the Syrian civil war, pushed migration high up the political agenda, releasing significant resources for border control. Europe’s Coastguard and Border Agency Frontex has seen an incredible 5,233 percent rise in funding since 2005 (from €6 million to €320 million in 2018). Borders have been militarized in Eastern Europe and border guards deployed across Europe from Calais to Lesvos.

Less well known is that it has also led the EU to put migration control at the heart of its international policies and its relations with third countries, insisting on border control agreements with more than 35 neighboring nations to control migration, labelled in Commission-speak as “border externalization”. These agreements require signatory nations to accept deported migrants from Europe, to increase border controls and staff on borders, introduce new biometric identity and passport systems to monitor migrants, as well as to build detention camps to detain refugees.

The rationale given by the EU is that this will prevent the deaths of refugees, but a more likely reason is that it wants to make sure that refugees are stopped long before they get to European shores. This satisfies both the hostile racist politicians in Europe as well as those seemingly more liberal politicians unwilling to confront whipped-up anti-immigrant sentiment, who want the crisis out of sight, out of mind. Germany, for example, with a relatively progressive record of welcoming refugees (at least in the summer of 2015), is also one of the main funders of border externalization, happily signing agreements with dictators like Sisi in Egypt to prevent refugees heading to Europe.

The evidence suggests these agreements may have served the EU’s ultimate purpose of decreasing numbers entering Europe, but it certainly has not increased refugees’ safety and



security. Most studies show that it has forced refugees to seek more dangerous routes and rely on ever more unscrupulous traffickers. The proportion of recorded deaths to arrivals on Mediterranean routes to Europe in 2017 was over five times as high in 2017 as it was in 2015. Many more deaths at sea and in deserts in North Africa are never recorded.

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**The EU has put  
immigration  
control at the  
heart of its  
international  
policies.**

As a new report by the Transnational Institute and Stop Wapenhandel reveals, it has also led the European Union to embrace authoritarian regimes — and worse, provide equipment and funding to repressive police and security forces — while diverting necessary resources from investments in health, education and jobs.

### **DIRTY DEALS WITH DICTATORS**

Niger, a major transit country for refugees, has become the biggest per capita recipient of EU aid in the world. This is partly because it is one of the world's poorest countries, but it is also prioritized because it is a gateway for many refugees heading to Europe. There seem to be no limits to resources available for border infrastructure, yet the World Food Program,

which supports almost a tenth of Niger's population, has received only 34 percent of the funding it needs for 2018. Meanwhile, under European pressure, the strengthening of border security has destroyed the migration-based economy in the Agadez region, threatening the fragile internal stability in the country.

The EU's dependence on cooperation with the Nigerien government has also emboldened the country's autocratic leaders. A protest against increased food prices by Nigeriens in March 2018, for example, led to the arrests of its main organizers. Refugees travelling through Niger report increased human rights abuses and are forced to take greater risks to migrate. In one horrifying case in June 2016, the bodies of 34 refugees, including 20 children, were found in the Sahara desert, apparently left to die from thirst by smugglers.

Similarly in Sudan, the European Union maintains that it upholds international sanctions on the notorious Al-Bashir regime for its war crimes and repression, yet it has not faltered in signing border control agreements with Sudanese government agencies. This has included

training and equipment for border police officers, even though Sudan's borders are patrolled primarily by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which consist of former Janjaweed militia fighters used to fight internal dissent under the operational command of Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS). Human Rights Watch has "found that the RSF committed a wide range of horrific abuses, including ... torture, extrajudicial killings and mass rapes." The German government agency GIZ says it is aware of the risks of cooperation, but nevertheless considers it "necessary" to include them in capacity development measures.

Europe's involvement in Sudan and Niger underscores author and activist Harsha Walia's argument in her book, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, that border control measures are a form of imperialism because they include displacement, criminalization, racialized hierarchies and the exploitation of people.

It is noticeable in terms of historical echoes for EU border imperialism that while the Scramble for Africa was largely defended by its colonial apologists for its potential to civilize the "barbarians" at Europe's gates, the focus this time seems to be only about keeping the "barbarians" from passing through Europe's gates.

In even more disturbing historical parallels, it is shocking to note that while the 1885 Berlin Agreement stipulated that Africa "may not serve as a market or means of transit for the trade in slaves, of whatever race they may be," the EU's collaboration with Libyan militia has actually led to a revival of the slave trade, with refugees being sold as slaves captured on CNN in late 2017.

## **BORDERS EQUAL VIOLENCE**

We should not ultimately be surprised. As journalist Dawn Paley has noted, "far from preventing violence, the border is in fact the reason it occurs." Borders are walls that seek to

**Border control  
measures  
are a form of  
imperialism.**





Amberg & Co. N.Y.

block out a gross inequality between Africa and Europe constructed during colonialism and perpetuated by European economic and political policies today. Ultimately this violence is felt on the body, the border marking its scars across the flesh of people. It is felt in the torn skin of those who daily try to cross the fortified fences of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco. It is felt in the violated bodies of women raped and abused by smugglers and border guards. It is there in the many undiscovered skeletons in North African deserts and the Mediterranean Sea.

This border imperialism is not an exclusive European phenomenon. It can be found in Mexico's Programa Frontera Sur, started in 2014 under pressure from the United States, to strengthen border security on its border with Guatemala. Like its European equivalents, it has also resulted in more repression and violence against refugees, increased detention and deportations and the forcing of refugees towards more dangerous migration routes and into the hands of criminal smuggle networks.

Perhaps the most well-known example of border externalization are Australia's offshore detention centers on the islands of Nauru and, until ruled illegal last year, in Manus (Papua New Guinea). All migrants trying to go to Australia by sea are transported to these centers, which are run by private contractors, and kept there for long periods. If the detained refugees are granted asylum status, they are resettled in third countries. This policy is accompanied by "Operation Sovereign Borders", a military maritime operation to force or tow refugee boats back to international waters.

There have been many cases of human rights violations in Australia's offshore detention centers. Yet many European leaders have embraced the Australian model, increasingly arguing for the EU to put refugees in "process-

ing camps" in North African countries, building on the current policy of turning Europe's neighbors into its new border guards. Europe enthusiastically embraces the Australian approach of building camps in remote places, which, as human rights lawyer Daniel Webb notes, serve "to hide from view what they don't want the public to see — deliberate cruelty to innocent human beings."

## CORPORATE WINNERS

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While the similarities between these examples of border externalization are undeniable, only in Europe do they explicitly connect the policies to old colonial relations. At the launch of the Partnership Framework on Migration, the overall framework for cooperation on migration with third countries, in June 2016, the European Commission noted that "the special relationships that member states may have with third countries, reflecting political, historic and cultural ties fostered through decades of contacts, should also be exploited to the full for the benefit of the EU." It also unequivocally praised the opportunity the agreement provided for European business, arguing that "private investors looking for new investment opportunities in emerging markets" must play a much greater role instead of "traditional development co-operation models."

This points us towards the private interests benefiting from these border externalization policies: the military and security industries providing the equipment and services to implement strengthened and militarized border security and control in third countries. A plethora of firms have thrived in this expanding market, but prominent among them are European arms giants such as Airbus (Pan-European), Thales (France) and Leonardo (Italy — formerly named Finmeccanica).

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**Ultimately this violence is felt on the body, the border marking its scars across the flesh of people.**

These are not just the casual winners of EU policies; they are also the driving forces behind them. They have both set the general discourse — framing migration as a security threat, to be combated by military means — as well as put forward concrete proposals, such as the creation of the EU surveillance “system of systems” EUROSUR and the expansion of Frontex, which through successful lobbying have been turned into official EU policies and new institutions.

These firms then can reap the rewards by promoting their own services and products, helped along by their constant interaction with EU policymakers. This encompasses regular meetings with officials at the European Commission and Frontex, participation in official advisory bodies, the issuing of influential advisory papers, participation in security fairs and conferences, and more. While the main focus has been on militarizing the EU external borders, companies increasingly eye the African border security market as well. Hence they are also lobbying for EU funding for border security purchases of third countries.

This strategy has paid off handsomely. Strengthening the global competitiveness of the European military and security industry has now become a stated objective of the EU. The Commission plans for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the EU budget for 2021-2027, propose to almost triple spending on migration control. Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, EU member states and third countries will all get more money to spend on strengthening border security, including the purchase of military and security equipment and services.

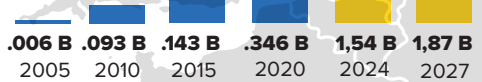
## RENDERING RESISTANCE VISIBLE

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While specific horrific situations, such as the migrant slave markets in Libya or a particular drowning incident in the Mediterranean, sometimes cause outrage and opposition, it is hard to see a change in the general European emphasis on “bringing down the numbers” of people willing to make the crossing. This is even more challenging when EU border militarization is outsourced to and hence rendered largely invisible in countries far from Europe.

## FRONTEX BUDGET

IN 2016 FRONTEX WAS EXPANDED TO BE A EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY (EBCG). WITH THIS CAME A SHARP INCREASE IN BUDGET, COUNTED IN **BILLIONS OF EUROS**



PROPOSED BUDGET

**MIGRATION TO EU** €15.3 B

SPENT ON STOPPING REFUGEES COMING TO EUROPE BETWEEN 2014-'16

516,115

NON-EU CITIZENS ORDERED TO LEAVE THE EU IN 2017

# EUROPE'S

## NEO-IMPERIALIST

## BORDER REGIME

**PRIORITIES FIRST**

THE EU HAS PRIORITIZED **35 COUNTRIES FOR BORDER EXTERNALIZATION EFFORTS.** OF THESE:

**48%** HAVE AN AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT

**51%** HAVE A "LOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT"

**WHO'S CASHING IN?**

COMPANIES PROFITING FROM GROWTH IN BORDER SECURITY

**AIRBUS**

BASED ON INFORMATION PRESENTED IN **EXPANDING THE FORTRESS: THE POLICIES, THE PROFITEERS AND THE PEOPLE SHAPED BY EU'S BORDER EXTERNALIZATION PROGRAMME** (2018), BY STOP WAPENHANDEL AND THE TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE (TNI).

## FOUR KEY PILLARS OF EU BORDER CONTROL POLICIES:

EXTERNALIZATION OF BORDER SECURITY AND BORDER CONTROL TO NON-EU COUNTRIES

DETENTION AND DEPORTATION

BOOSTING AND MILITRIZATION OF BORDER SECURITY

DEVELOPING "SMART" BORDERS

**440K**

RECORD NUMBER OF NON-EU CITIZENS REFUSED ENTRY INTO THE EU IN 2017

**93,425**

RETURNS OF NON-EU CITIZENS IN 2017

56.9% VOLUNTARILY

42.3% ENFORCED RETURNS

## NUMBER OF DEATHS OF PEOPLE CROSSING THE MEDITERRANEAN:

BOOSTING AND MILITARIZATION OF BORDER SECURITY HAS LED TO A HIGHER DEATH TOLL FOR FORCIBLY DISPLACED PERSONS.



**1 OUT OF 267**

2015



**1 OUT OF 57**

2017

THE TOTAL VALUE OF LICENSES ISSUED BY EU MEMBER STATES FOR ARMS EXPORTS TO THESE 35 COUNTRIES IN THE DECADE 2007-2016 IS **OVER €122 BILLION**, DESPITE THE FACT THE 20% OF THESE COUNTRIES HAVE EU AND/OR UN ARMS EMBARGO IN FORCE.

**48%**

LISTED AS "NOT FREE". ALL HAVE EITHER HIGH OR EXTREME HUMAN RIGHTS RISKS

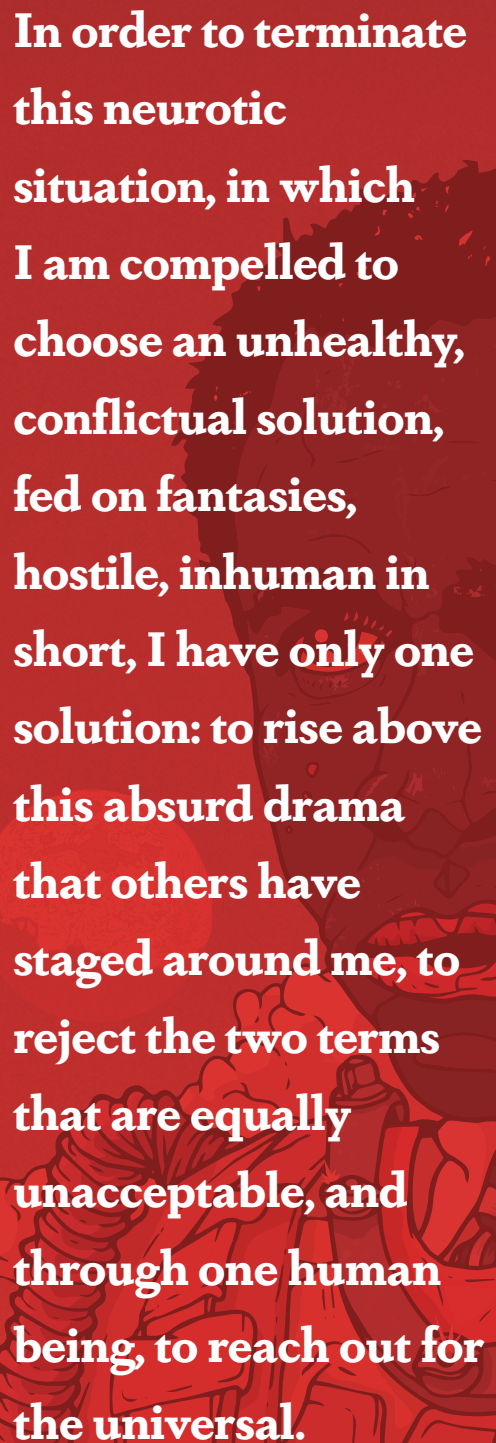
**71%**

IN BOTTOM TERCILE WORLDWIDE IN TERMS OF WOMEN'S WELLBEING

EU policies need to be fought at a number of levels, both inside the EU and in third countries. This means that we do not only need to act against the most obvious manifestations of these policies — in terms of border control and the detention and deportations of refugees — but also against the private interests behind these policies. We have to unmask the commercial, industrial forces that are currently profiting from Europe's border imperialism, as well as the media outlets and political parties that have manipulated public opinion by targeting refugees as scapegoats for the consequences of austerity policies.

More systemically, confronting border colonialism requires addressing Western responsibility at large, eliminating the reasons people are forced to flee in the first place, and resisting those policies and stakeholders in Western countries that are causing them: EU support for authoritarian rulers, the companies causing climate change, unjust trade relations, corporate impunity, reckless military interventions and the arms trade. And it means true decolonization, ending the continued European grip on its former colonies, and working towards a fundamental shift in the international order. This will become even more important in the context of worsening climate change, when migration, even if largely internal, will be a necessary form of adaptation.

It will also require increased solidarity and cooperation with movements and organizations in the third countries affected, in horizontal



**In order to terminate  
this neurotic  
situation, in which  
I am compelled to  
choose an unhealthy,  
conflictual solution,  
fed on fantasies,  
hostile, inhuman in  
short, I have only one  
solution: to rise above  
this absurd drama  
that others have  
staged around me, to  
reject the two terms  
that are equally  
unacceptable, and  
through one human  
being, to reach out for  
the universal.**

— FRANZ FANON



forms of collaboration. This could include support for migrant-led movements emerging in many countries, for communities that host large numbers of (stranded) refugees, direct humanitarian efforts such as the search-and-rescue missions in the Mediterranean, as well as for organizations advocating for human rights for migrants. But it could also include groups and movements fighting for democratization, against authoritarian regimes, against extractive industries, and those seeking a livelihood for everyone, against violence and Western domination.

Unravelling the legacy of colonialist violence will not be easy. While the European Union is divided on many issues, the consensus around border security is strong. The great decolonial thinker Frantz Fanon realized how colonialism colonized not just territory and the body but also the mind. As he wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “in order to terminate this neurotic situation, in which I am compelled to choose an unhealthy, conflictual solution, fed on fantasies, hostile, inhuman in short, I have only one solution: to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged around me, to reject the two terms that are equally unacceptable, and through one human being, to reach out for the universal.” It is a yearning for a universal humanity reflected in slogans that “no human is illegal” — the only true basis for an end to the violence of border imperialism. ★

NICK BUXTON



*Nick Buxton is co-editor of The Secure and the Dispossessed: How the Military and Corporations are Shaping a Climate-Changed World (Pluto Press, 2015) and coordinator of the Transnational Institute's work with scholar-activists (www.climatesecurityagenda.org)*

MARK AKKERMAN

*Mark Akkerman is a researcher at Stop Wapenhandel (Dutch Campaign Against Arms Trade). He has written and campaigned on topics like arms exports to the Middle East, the private military and security sector, greenwashing arms trade and the militarization of border security.*



Zoé Samudzi

**OUR INTERNATIONALIST  
CONCERNS FOR AFRICA MUST  
NECESSARILY TRANSCEND  
THE FLATTENED TALKING  
POINTS TO WHICH THE  
CONTINENT IS FREQUENTLY  
REDUCED IN OUR  
DISCOURSES.**

Illustration by Luís Alves



AFRICA'S PLACE

IN THE RADICAL  
IMAGINATION

RE  
0%



WHICH  
AFRICA?

**H**ow does a geographic area occupy both a physical existence and a figment of our imagination, now even further tangled in Wakanda fantasies? What is the cultural, political, affective, discursive space in which impression or illusion (or desire) takes primacy over materiality?

Our leftist politics are as much an act of generating new futurities as they are destroying and remaking new structures and/or repurposing existing ones. But often, in the process of dreaming that constitutes our radicalisms, we retreat into ahistorical and erasing revisionisms as opposed to situating our political visions within some concrete foundation. Within radical politics, Africa often exists far more comfortably as an abstracted symbol, a site of the ultimate myth-making within political imaginaries — a phenomenon to which those in the African diaspora are not immune — than it does as a geographically bounded plexus of messy and sometimes contradictory material realities.

## GROUND ZERO OF EUROPEAN EMPIRE-BUILDING

Though bloody colonial violations have been perpetrated across the globe, the African continent was, in many ways, a ground zero for the European state- and fortress-making project. It was a place of plunder from first contact in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to the 1884 Berlin Conference's "diplomatic" distribution of land that precipitated Europe's ongoing scramble for the continent, to coercive liberalization policies that adjusted relatively newly independent states' infant economies in response to what for many were inescapable debts.

King Leopold II infamously ran a slave colony in his ironically named Congo Free State, which he

was able to administer under the guise of philanthropic work and the promise of abolishing the Arab slave trade in eastern Africa. Congo has not been free since. He forced the native Congolese to extract rubber to meet growing Western industrial demand. He deployed his private army, the Force Publique, to enforce resource collection quotas with chicotte whippings, kidnapping and torture, village burnings and collectivized punishment, and, perhaps most gruesomely, sadistically collecting hands and feet of Congolese people so as not to waste bullets.

Africa, too, was something of a drawing board for the Western world's most identity-making genocide (this is not a reference to the slaughter of the Native American, First Nations, and Arawak and other peoples of the Caribbean, whose murders facilitated the settlement of North America). Prior to the Nazis' slaughter of 10 million so-called *Untermenschen* (Jews, Roma, Blacks, Slavs, ethnic Poles, physically and mentally disabled people, gays, and other "lesser" or "asocial" peoples that offended so-called pure Aryan sensibilities) during World War II, imperial Germany decimated the Herero and Nam peoples during the 1904-1908 Herero Wars.

What began as "classic" settler colonial migration and competition over resources and land quickly evolved into genocide after Kaiser Wilhelm II instructed replacement colonial administrator Lt. General Lothar von Trotha to suppress indigenous insurgency "*mit allen Mitteln*" ("by all means"). Through forced labor systems, starvation and dehydration in the Kalahari and Namib Deserts, prison camps and summary execution of all enemy combatants (which included every Herero man, woman and child), Germany's first race war was waged.

At the Shark Island Concentration Camp, Dr. Eugen Fischer conducted extensive experiments on the living bodies and corpses of in-

digenous prisoners. He studied the Bastards, the mixed-race offspring of European settler men and indigenous women, concluding that genetically muddled people like those should not reproduce. Adolf Hitler praised Fischer's racial hygiene work, which influenced the ideas of Aryan racial purities in his own infamous manifesto *Mein Kampf*. Fischer's 1913 work *The Rehoboth Bastards and the Problem of Miscegenation Among Humans* supported German anti-miscegenation policy and provided a scientific legitimization of and justification for the 1935 Nuremberg Laws.

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In 1933, Fischer signed a loyalty oath to the Nazi government, and was appointed most senior official of the Frederick William University (now Humboldt University of Berlin). In 1937 and 1938, Fischer extensively experimented on and sterilized mixed-race children and Roma people, continuing the study he had begun in Namibia. In 1940, he officially joined the Nazi Party. Just as Frantz Fanon wrote that “the anti-semitic is inevitably a negrophobe,” we, too, can practically understand how so much structural violence in modern capitalist society is derived from anti-Black, or specifically anti-African, “science” and other logics.

#### **RACIALIZATION AS A DISCIPLINARY STRUCTURE**

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As Alexander Weheliye noted, race and racialization comprise a disciplinary structure that govern a hierarchy of humanity into “full humans, not-quite-humans, and non-humans,” where blackness (and a proximity to it) clearly distinguishes those able to claim “full human status” from those who cannot.

The afterlife of slavery that we can see in the “post”-emancipation and “post”-Jim Crow United States, too, can be understood and analyzed on and through the continent; Saidiya Hartman's précis that “emancipation instituted indebtedness” is applicable to the postcolonial continental condition. British slave-owners were compensated for their forfeited property after the abolishment of the trade and institution of slavery, and Haiti's legacy of indebtedness began after the island's slaves audaciously freed themselves from France through their 1804 revolution. The African continent has similarly been in arrears to their

# SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA

## Y'EN A MARRE

**Y'EN A MARRE** ("FED UP") WAS FOUNDED IN 2011 BY A GROUP OF SENEGALESE RAPPERS AND JOURNALISTS WHO WERE FED UP WITH THE STATE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE COUNTRY. BY MOBILIZING AND ENGAGING THE YOUTH WITH POLITICS, THEY PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE OUSTING OF PRESIDENT ABDOULAYE WADE IN 2012. THE MOVEMENT CONTINUES TO ORGANIZE AND PROTEST FOR JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY IN SENEGAL.

## LA BALAI CITOYEN

**LE BALAI CITOYEN** ("THE CIVIC BROOM") IS A GRASSROOTS POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN BURKINA FASO THAT GAINED PROMINENCE DURING THE 2014 ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS WHICH BROUGHT DOWN PRESIDENT BLAISE COMPAORÉ. FOUNDED BY REGGAE ARTIST SAMS'K LE JAH AND RAPPER SERGE BAMBARA, BALAI CITOYEN FOLLOWS IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BURKINABÉ REVOLUTIONARY THOMAS SANKARA BY STRUGGLING FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF THE PEOPLE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY WITH A HUMAN FACE.

**LUCHA** (*LUTTE POUR LE CHANGEMENT* / STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE) IS A NON-VIOLENT POPULAR MOVEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, FOUNDED IN 2012 BY A GROUP OF STUDENTS FROM GOMA. ORGANIZED HORIZONTALLY, THEY HAVE ENGAGED IN ACTS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, DIRECT ACTION AND ORGANIZED PROTESTS WITH THE AIM OF MOBILIZING THE CONGO'S YOUTH TO PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND POLITICAL CHANGE.

## ABAHLALI BASEMJONDOLO

**ABAHLALI BASEMJONDOLO** IS A SOUTH AFRICAN, SELF-ORGANIZED SHACK DWELLERS MOVEMENT WHOSE RANKS ARE MADE UP OF MILITANT POOR CAMPAIGNING AGAINST EVICTIONS AND FOR PUBLIC HOUSING. FOUNDED IN DURBAN, IN EARLY 2005, THE MOVEMENT HAS NOW TENS OF THOUSANDS SUPPORTERS IN SEVERAL DOZEN SETTLEMENTS. ITS LEADERS AND RANK-AND-FILE MEMBERS ARE REGULARLY TARGETED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE AND SEVERAL KEY FIGURES OF THE MOVEMENT HAVE BEEN ASSASSINATED.

“former” European masters since the release of continental colonies following these states’ successful struggles for independence.

Today, economists discourage debt abolition as it might motivate developing countries, including many African ones, to continue defaulting on their loans or refuse to make timely payments or over-borrow funds. It may even lead to industrialized nations altogether ceasing financial assistance to these countries because of a poor return on their investments. So where debt abolition is understood as moral hazard per orthodox economics, we might then understand the maintenance of indebtedness as moral (as well as social, political and economic) necessity.

Through the colonial process, the continent has been relegated to a laboratory-like zone of non-being within which bio-/necropolitical technologies could be refined — Africa has been a site of pharmaceutical testing, military exercise and expansion, a dumping ground for both waste and the charitable donations of the team merchandise of Super Bowl losers (a fitting metaphor). It is a continent, too, of managerial imposition, with borders sketched atop long-existing nations and super-sovereign administrations (whether League of Nations/ United Nations mandate or “separate but equal” apartheid administration or proxy governance by Western nation-states) simultaneously eroding continental governance and projecting narration of an incapacity for self-governance.

Our racialized seeing, our very capability to see and humanize, is contoured by anti-blackness, and so Black African suffering is not legible as a human suffering that must be alleviated for humanity’s sake. Rather, it becomes a canvas upon which Western moralizations can be articulated and acted and political values can be assessed. Suffering is not alleviated so that

the continent might suffer less in earnest. Aid “solutions” are offered so as to further necessitate their existence, a continued management and domination of space and people through a continuous provision of resources that justify continued conquest through “development” and “charity.”

The struggles of African people(s), both within nation-states and beyond/between them, are deeply interconnected with other global struggles for autonomy and self-determination. The liberation of Africa is also the liberation of its diaspora: the freedom of the continent and the collection of peoples first burdened with the non-human designation “Black” is the freedom of the diaspora that also endures that non-human subjection, whose social death is foundational to the social contracts of their respective nation-states.

An epoch marked by a true continental self-sufficiency is one also marked by a considerably weakened Western world, as the prosperity of Western capitalism is presently and has historically predicated upon a weakened Africa; an Africa whose collective economic growth and self-sufficiency is hamstrung by (the exacerbation of) conflict, corrupt governance, and market politics that devalue agricultural exports and stunt the expansion of manufacturing and industrial and other formal economic sectors.

## BEYOND FLATTENED TALKING POINTS

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For all of these reasons, for reasons also not mentioned, our internationalist concerns for the continent and the one billion people living there must necessarily transcend the flattened talking points to which Africa is frequently reduced in our discourses. The open-air slave

markets in Libya cannot simply become a feature in our rapid-fire news cycle or ammunition in a set of taking points about Hillary Clinton's imperial track record. The relatively recent abrupt end to former President Robert Mugabe's nearly forty-year tenure, for example, is not the opportunity to flex political muscles sculpted through painstaking participation in dogmatic purity politics.

In the formulation of anti-imperialist projects, there exists the idea that a leader or party's politics begin and end with an articulated relationship to the West: that anti-Westernness (which is somehow metonymic with anti-imperialism) is a politics in itself. These difficulties seem to come to a particular head when we seek to understand the Chinese government's interactions with the different states with which it has commercial and economic and political and social interaction. We revert to the politics of the Little Red Book that contoured contemporary Chinese relationships with the continent through provision of support for independence struggles. But even as we might celebrate a source of economic support that contests the West's hegemonic sphere of influence, we can also earnestly acknowledge the nurturing of a political co-dependency and other happenings in agriculture, petropolitics, construction, and other sectors that might call the intentions of the relationship into question.

A number of leaders on the continent are publicly skeptical of or hostile to the West — we may remember the former president's histrionic anti-Western flourishes in his United Nations General Assembly addresses. But despite these bold pronouncements, Mugabe's governance and economic management lacked deeply, and scores of Zimbabwean people suffered under his rule (not even to mention the ethnic violence in Matabeleland for which he and the new leader, President Emerson Mnangagwa, along others, were responsible).



MARCH, 2017.

RESIDENTS OF HOUT BAY, CAPE TOWN PROTEST THE CITY GOVERNMENT'S SLOW RESPONSE AFTER A FIRE LEFT 15,000 PEOPLE HOMELESS.



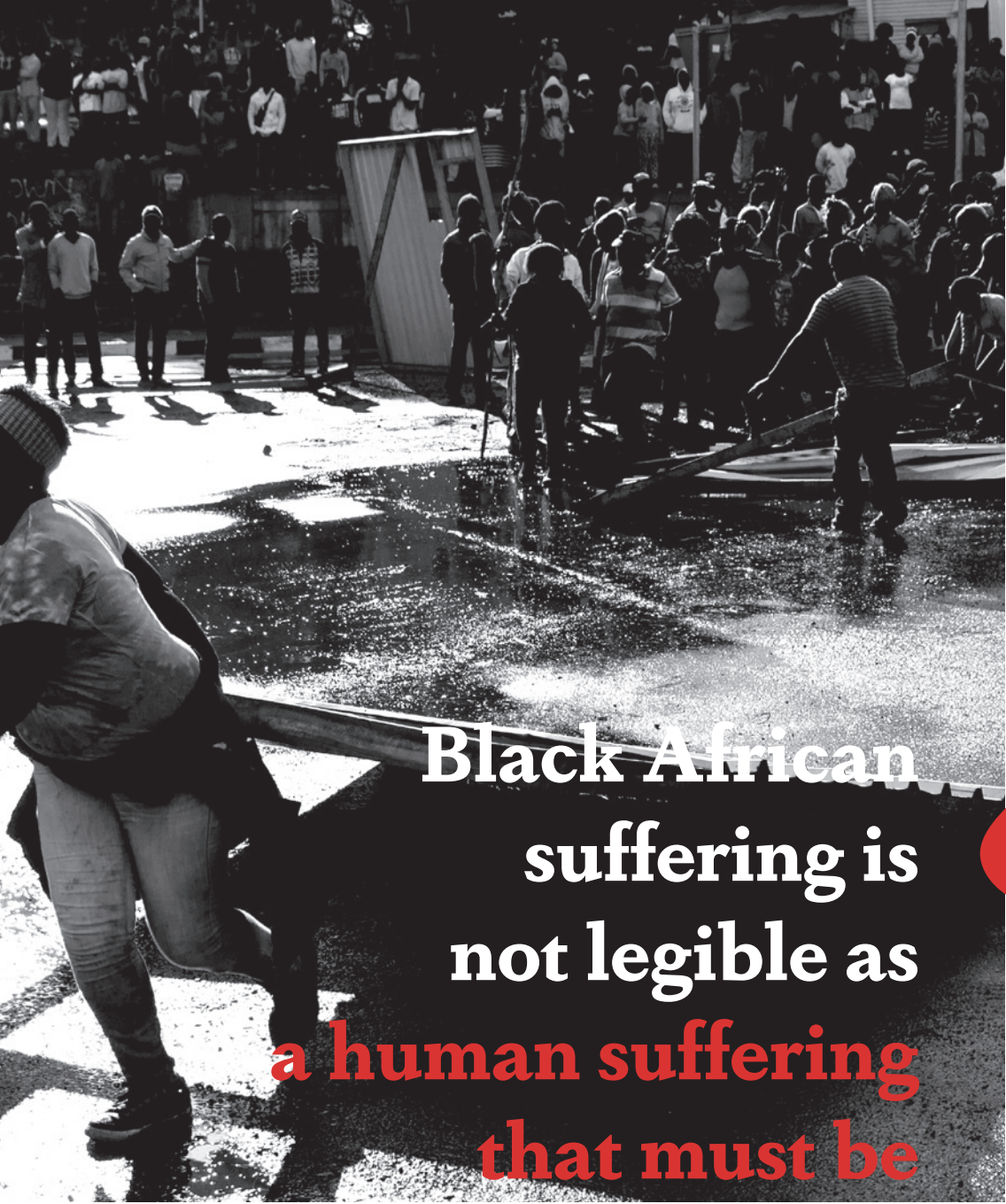


PHOTO BY CHARLES HB MERCER / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

**Black African  
suffering is  
not legible as  
a human suffering  
that must be  
alleviated for  
humanity's sake.**

# Our imaginations have arrested the development of the continent.

Our imaginations have arrested the development of the continent, it seems. Some of our imaginings of the continent have halted its development at the point of extraction in a way that a freed Africa would necessarily return to a romanticized (sometimes bordering on ahistorical) pre-colonial/pre-transatlantic slave trade state. Others of us know the continent solely through the wave of liberation and independence movements of the 1960s and

1970s, wherein a freed Africa would, once again, return to those moments of trans-diasporic and transcontinental revolutionary politics.

The continent often fails to exist as a dynamic and constantly changing, widely varied collection of peoples, parties, interests and realities. While we might criticize the colonial treatments it continually receives in media portrayals or political discourse, it still remains a political and historical *terra nullius* upon which yearnings and desires of diasporans and non-Afro descendant leftists alike can be projected.

African politics neither need to be the sole focus of our internationalism, nor should they displace passion for other causes — but they cannot be relegated to an afterthought after we have exhausted our solidarities with other struggles. There is, for example, no understanding of American border imperialism without linking African extraction to a contemporary regime of biological citizenship that duly precludes foreign-born Africans and Afro-Caribbeans from ever being fully understood or embraced as citizens.

Similarly, there is no robust understanding of imperial military strategy without the Department of Defense’s AFRICOM, an American government-coordinated combatant command whose mandate purports to “promote regional security, stability and prosperity” despite actively militarizing the continent in service of American security interests (ones often at odds with the material needs of large swaths of the communities within the countries in which they operate).

The flattened dark continent is comprised of fifty-four countries and over one billion people, thousands of ethnic groups and languages and countless cultural expressions and material engagements with economic mobility and poverty and industrialization and agriculture and fashion and poaching and urbanism and higher education and corruption and entrepreneurship and service economies and military conflict and so many other realities.

Our politics must accordingly be oriented around the myriad social, historical, political, economic and discursive ways that the continent has been subjugated — including the question of how our tax dollars continue to facilitate its ongoing marginalization. These considerations demand far more thoughtful consideration than the limits and impositions of our Western political imaginations. ★



ZOÉ SAMUDZI

*Zoé Samudzi is a Black feminist writer and PhD student in Medical Sociology at the University of California, San Francisco. Her current research is focused on critical race theory and biomedicalization. Her book As Black As Resistance, co-authored with William C. Anderson, was published with AK Press in 2018.*

Illustration by Luís Alves



**WOMEN'S**

**INTERNATIONALISM**

**AGAINST GLOBALIZATION**



DIRECT ACTION

**WOMEN'S  
LIBERATION  
IS AT ITS HEART  
A STRUGGLE FOR  
THE LIBERATION  
OF ALL HUMANITY  
FROM THE MOST  
TREACHEROUS AND  
INSIDIOUS FORMS  
OF OPPRESSION  
AND DOMINATION.**

Dilar Dirik

**AL PATRIARCHY**

**T**he struggle against patriarchy — whether organic and spontaneous, or militant and organized — constitutes one of the oldest forms of resistance. As such, it carries some of the most diverse arrays of experience and knowledge within it, embodying the fight against oppression in its most ancient and universal forms.

From the earliest rebellions in history to the first organized women's strikes, protests and movements, struggling women have always acted in the consciousness that their resistance is linked to wider issues of injustice and oppression in society. Whether in the fight against colonialism, religious dogma, militarism, industrialism, state authority or capitalist modernity, historically women's movements have mobilized the experience of different aspects of oppression and the need for a fight on multiple fronts.

## THE STATE AND THE ERASURE OF WOMEN

The division of society into strict hierarchies — particularly through the centralization of ideological, economic and political power — has meant a historic loss for the woman's place within the community. As solidarity and subsistence-based ways of life were replaced with systems of discipline and control, women were pushed to the margins of society and made to live sub-human lives on the terms of ruling men. But unlike what patriarchal history-writing would have us believe, this subjugation never took place without fearless resistance and rebellion emerging from below.

Colonial violence, in particular, has focused on the establishment or further consolidation of patriarchal control over the communities it wanted to dominate. Establishing a “governable” society

means to normalize violence and subjugation within the most intimate interpersonal relationships. In the colonial context, or more generally within oppressed communities and classes, the household constituted the only sphere of control for the subjected male, who seemed to be able to assert his dignity and authority only in his family — a miniature version of the state or colony.

Over the centuries, an understanding of familial love and affection developed that split from its roots in communal solidarity and mutuality, further institutionalizing the idea that violence and domination is simply part of human nature. As authors like Silvia Federici and Maria Mies have argued, capitalist imperialism — with its inherently patriarchal core — has led to the destruction of entire universes of women's lifeways, solidarities, economies and contributions to history, art and public life, whether in the European witch hunts, through colonial ventures abroad, or through the destruction of nature everywhere.

In modern times, many feminist activists and researchers have critiqued the relationship between oppressive gender norms and the rise of nationalism. Relying fundamentally on patriarchal notions of production, governance, kinship and conceptions of life and death, nationalism resorts to the domestication of women for its own purposes. This pattern is recurring in today's global swing to the right, with fascists and far-right nationalists often claiming to act in the interests of women. Protecting women from the unknown, after all, remains one of the oldest conservative tropes to justify psychological, cultural and physical warfare against women. As a result, women's bodies and behaviors are being instrumentalized for the interests of an increasingly reactionary capitalist world system.

Colonialism yesterday and capitalist militarism today immediately target the spheres of communal economy and the autonomy of women

within them. As a result, epidemic waves of violence against women destroy whatever was left of life before capitalist social relations and modes of production took hold. No surprise then, that women, feeling capitalist domination and violence most intensively and from all sides, are often at the forefront in the Global South to fight against the capitalist destruction of their lands, waters and forests.

## **IMPERIALIST FEMINISM AND PATRIARCHAL SOCIALISM**

Let us identify two further issues that radical women's struggles need to engage with today. Perhaps the older of the two is the sidelining of women's liberation by progressive, socialist, anti-colonialist or other leftist groups and movements. Historically, although women have participated in liberation movements in various capacities, their demands were often pushed aside in favor of what was identified by (usually male) leaders as the priority objective. This, however, is not an occurrence inherent to struggles for socialism or other alternatives to capitalism. It is, in fact, rather a demonstration of how deep the fight against oppression and exploitation needs to reach if real change is to be brought about.

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**The subjugation  
of women never  
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and rebellion  
emerging from  
below.**

The authoritarian traits of past historic experiences, based on their high-modernist and statist obsessions bordering on social engineering, are very much in line with patriarchal conceptualizations of life. As many feminist historians have pointed out, class has always meant different things to women and to men, particularly as women's bodies and unpaid labor were appropriated and commodified by dominant systems in ways that naturalized their subjugated status profoundly.

As an outcome of millennia-old feminicidal systems, many of which do not feature in history classes even today, combined with the everyday reproduction of patriarchal domination in hegemonic culture, intimate relationships or in the seemingly loving sphere of the family, deep psychological traumas and internalized behaviors produce a need to radically break with societal and cultural expectations of passive femininity and womanhood through consciousness-raising, political action and autonomous organizing.

As the experience in our own movement — the women’s struggle in the Kurdish freedom movement — has shown, without a total divorce from patriarchy, without a war on our internalized self-enslavement, we cannot play our historic role in the general struggle for liberation. Neither can we find shelter in autonomous women’s spheres without running the danger of separating ourselves from the real concerns and problems of the society — and with that, the world — that we seek to revolutionize. In this sense, our autonomous women’s struggle has become our people’s guarantee to democratize and liberate our society and the world beyond.

The flipside of this negative experience of women’s movements within broader struggles for liberation is related to the second and more recent issue that women’s struggles face today: the de-radicalization of feminism through liberal ideologies and systems of capitalist modernity. Increasingly so, progressive movements and struggles that have the potential to fight power are confronted with what Arundhati Roy refers to as the “NGO-ization of resistance.” One of the primary tools to enclose and tame women’s rebellion and rage is the delegation of social struggles to the realm of civil society organizations and elite institutions that are often necessarily detached from the people on the ground.

It is no coincidence that every country that has been invaded and occupied by Western states claiming to import “freedom and democracy” is now home to an abundance of NGOs for women’s rights. The fact that violence against women is on the rise in the same aggressor countries should raise questions about the function and purpose that such organizations play in the justification of empire. Issues that require a radical restructuring of an oppressive international system are now reduced to marginal phenomena that can be resolved through corporate diversity policy

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**Alina came to  
Rojava to take  
part in the  
foundation of  
a democratic  
confederal  
system and the  
building of  
a democratic  
society**

— PKK EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE





Illustration by **Luís Alves**

THE ARGENTINIAN  
REVOLUTIONARY ALINA  
FIRST TRAVELLED TO THE  
MOUNTAINS OF KURDISTAN  
IN 2011, WHERE SHE JOINED  
THE PKK.

SHE HAD BEEN STUDYING  
MEDICINE IN CUBA, AND  
BECAUSE SHE HAD ONLY  
ONE YEAR LEFT, THE PKK  
SENT HER BACK IN ORDER  
TO FINISH HER STUDIES AND  
SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF  
THE KURDISH STRUGGLE IN  
LATIN AMERICA.

UPON HER RETURN TO  
KURDISTAN, SHE JOINED  
THE REVOLUTION IN  
ROJAVA, WHERE SHE  
HELPED SET UP THE LOCAL  
HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE.  
SHE WAS MARTYRED AFTER  
A TRAGIC CAR ACCIDENT IN  
HESEKE, CEZIRE CANTON ON  
MARCH 17, 2018.



# Lêgerîn Çiya

ALINA SANCHEZ

Illustration by Luís Alves

THE BRITISH ANTI-FASCIST, ANARCHIST AND FEMINIST ACTIVIST ANNA TRAVELED TO ROJAVA IN EARLY 2017, WHERE SHE JOINED THE WOMEN'S PROTECTION UNITS (YPJ).

ATTRACTED BY THE SOCIAL AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES EMBEDDED IN THE REVOLUTION IN ROJAVA — ESPECIALLY THOSE CONCERNED WITH WOMEN'S LIBERATION — SHE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS THERE THAT SHE COULD BEST PUT HER SKILLS TO USE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR A MORE JUST AND DEMOCRATIC WORLD.

IN MARCH 2018, SHE WAS MARTYRED IN AFRIN WHEN THE CONVOY SHE WAS TRAVELLING IN WAS ATTACKED BY TURKISH ARMY FORCES.

ANNA CAMPBELL

# Helin Qerecox



and individual behavior, thus normalizing women's acceptance of cosmetic changes at the expense of radical transformation.

Today, women are expected to cheerlead self-congratulatory manifestations of the most overt forms of imperialism and neoliberalism for their "gender inclusivity" or "female friendliness." This grotesque appropriation of women's struggles and gender equality was demon-

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**It was almost as if  
she was searching  
for the perfect way  
of expressing all the  
values she held closest  
– humanitarian,  
ecological, feminist  
and equal political  
representation**

— DIRK CAMPBELL, ANNA'S FATHER

strated in a recent joint article in *The Guardian*, co-authored by Hollywood star and UN ambassador Angelina Jolie and NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg, in which the two made public their collaboration to ensure that NATO fulfils "the responsibility and opportunity to be a leading protector of women's rights."

The imperialist mentality underlying the logic that NATO, one of the main culprits of global violence, genocide, unreported rape, femicide and ecological catastrophe, will lead the feminist struggle by training its staff to be more "sensitive" to women's rights is a summary of the tragedy of liberal feminism today. Diversifying oppressive institutions by supplementing their ranks with people of different ages, races, genders, sexual orientations and beliefs is an attempt to render invisible their tyrannical pillars and is one of the most devastating

ideological attacks on alternative imaginaries for a just life in freedom.

Both right-wing conservatives and misogynist, authoritarian leftists, particularly in the West, are quick to blame "identity politics" and their supposed fragility for today's social problems. The term "identity politics", however, was coined in the 1970s by the Combahee River Collective, a radical Black lesbian feminist group that emphasized the importance of autonomous political action, self-realization, consciousness-raising

for the ability to liberate oneself and society on the terms of the oppressed themselves. This was not a call for a self-centered preoccupation with identity detached from wider issues of class and society, but rather a formulation of experience-based action plans to fight multiple layers of oppression.

The problem today is not identity-based politics, but liberalism's co-optation thereof to remove its radical intersectional and anti-capitalist roots. As a result, mostly white female heads of state, female CEOs and other female representatives of a bourgeois order based on sexism and racism are crowned as the icons of contemporary feminism by the liberal media — not the militancy of women in the streets who risk their lives in the struggle against police states, militarism and capitalism.

Focusing on identity as a value in itself, as liberal ideology would like to have us, runs the danger of falling into the abyss of liberal individualism, in which we may create sanctuaries of safe space, but ultimately become directly or indirectly complicit in the perpetuation of a global system of ecocide, racism, patriarchal violence and imperialist militarism.

## INTERNATIONALISM MEANS DIRECT ACTION

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One of the primary tragedies of alternative quests is therefore the delegation of one's individual or collective will to instances outside of the community-in-struggle: men, NGOs, the state, the nation, and so on. The crisis of representative liberal democracy is very much related to its inability to deliver its promise, namely to represent all sections of society. As oppressed groups, particularly women, have historically experienced, one's liberation cannot be surrendered to the same systems that reproduce unbearable violence and subjugation. In the face of these false binaries that

women's struggles are often confronted with, the urgency of internationalism emerges even more insistently.

At the heart of internationalism has historically been the realization that beyond any existing order, people must be conscious of each other's suffering and see the oppression of one as the misery of all. Internationalism is a revolutionary extension of one's self-awareness to the realm of humanity as a whole, based on the ability to see the connections of different expressions of oppression. In this sense, internationalism must necessarily reject any form of delegation to status quo institutions and must resort to concrete, direct action.

More than one hundred years ago, the month of March was chosen by socialist working women to be the international day of women and their militant struggles. A century on, March has become the month to commemorate and honor women internationalists in the revolution of Rojava. This past March, two remarkable militant women, Anna Campbell (Hêlîn Qerecox), a revolutionary anti-fascist from England, and Alina Sanchez (Lêgêrîn Ciya), a socialist internationalist and medical doctor from Argentina, lost their lives in Rojava during their quest for a life free from patriarchal fascism and its mercenaries under capitalist modernity.

Three years earlier, in March 2015, one of the first internationalist martyrs of the Rojava Revolution, the Black German communist Ivana Hoffmann, lost her life in the war on the feminicidal rapist fascists of ISIS. Together with thousands of Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, Syriac Christian, Armenian and other comrades, these three women, in the spirit of women's internationalism, insisted on being on the frontlines against the destruction of women's lifeworlds by patriarchal systems. At the time of writing these words, more than three months on, Anna's body still lies hidden under the rubble

in the midst of the colonial, patriarchal occupation of the Turkish state in Afrin, Rojava.

# Today's internationalism must be **radically democratic, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal.**

At the heart of these women's defense of humanity was a commitment to beautify life through permanent struggle against fascistic systems and mentalities. In the spirit of the revolution that they joined, they did not compromise their womanhood for the sake of a liberation that marginalizes the struggle against patriarchy.

Towards the end of last year, Kurdish, Arab, Syriac Christian and Turkmen women, together with internationalist comrades, announced the liberation of Raqqa and dedicated this historic moment to the freedom of all women in the world.

Among them were Ezidi women, who organized themselves autonomously to take revenge on the ISIS rapists that three years previously committed genocide against their community and enslaved thousands of women.

Revolutionary women's struggles — as opposed to contemporary liberal appropriations of feminist language — have always embodied the spirit of internationalism in their fights by taking the lead against fascism and nationalism. To stay true to the promise of solidarity, internationalist politics in the vein of women's struggles must understand that oppression can operate through a variety of modes, so that both the violence as well as the resistance against it do not have to resemble each other everywhere.

Today's internationalism needs to reclaim direct action for systemic change without reliance on external powers — party, government or state — and must be radically democratic, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal. ★

DILAR DIRIK

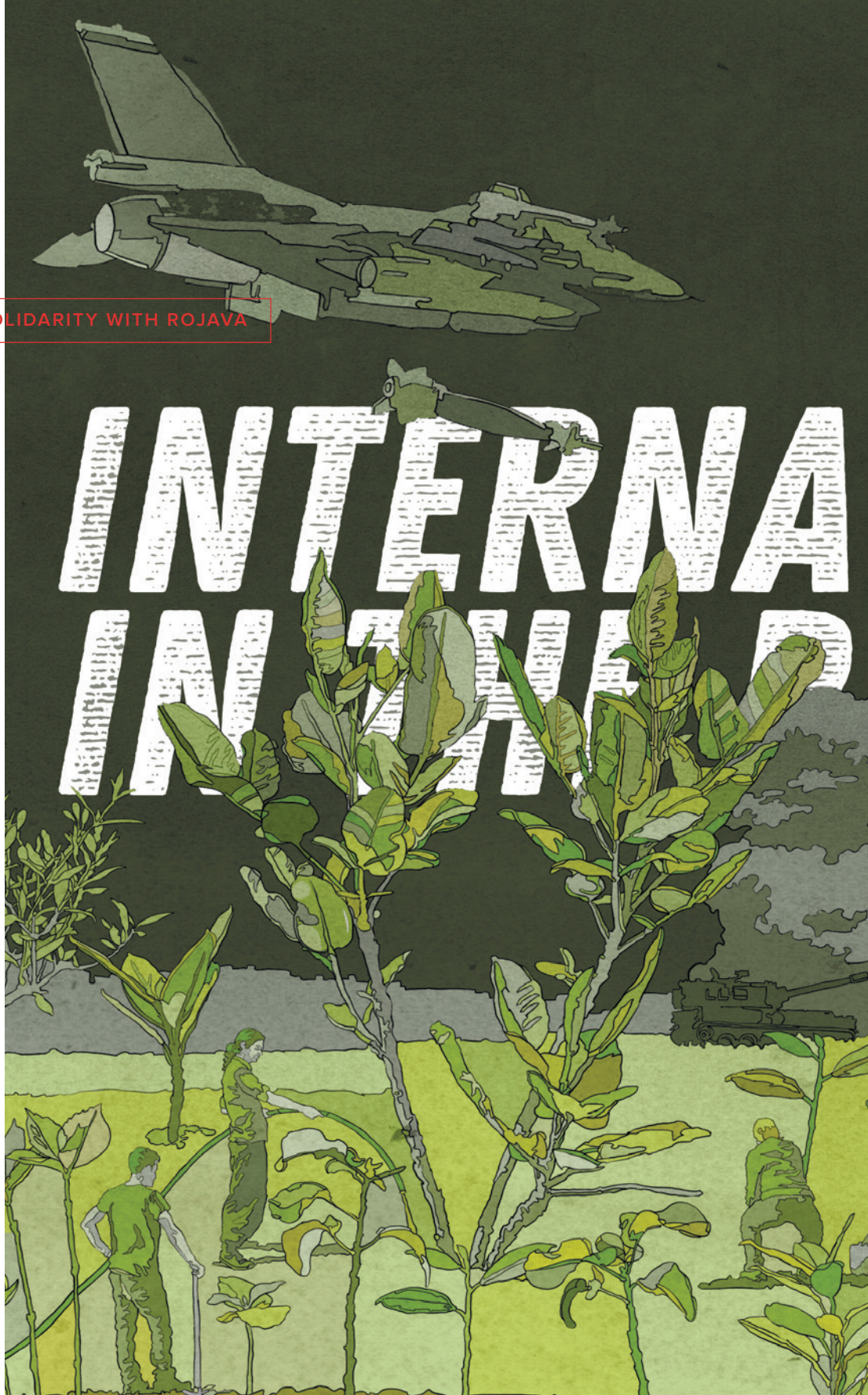
*Dilar Dirik is an activist of the Kurdish women's movement and regularly writes on the freedom struggles in Kurdistan for an international audience.*



SOLIDARITY WITH ROJAVA

# INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Illustration by Istvan David



**“OUR CALL IS AT ONCE REALLY  
SIMPLE AND INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT:  
LET US BUILD TOGETHER A GLOBAL  
MOVEMENT THAT IS ABLE TO  
CHALLENGE AND OVERCOME  
CAPITALIST MODERNITY.”**

# INTERNATIONALISTS EVOLUTION

## Internationalist Commune of Rojava

**D**espite being under attack from the Turkish state and its allied militias operating under the banner of the Free Syrian Army on the one hand, and the Islamic State (ISIS) on the other, behind the front lines of the Syrian civil war the revolution in Rojava continues to develop in exciting ways. Inspired and shaped by the ideas of Abdullah Öcalan and the struggle of the Kurdish freedom movement, Rojava is a revolutionary project with the aim of challenging capitalist modernity through women’s liberation, ecology and radical democracy.

For several years, internationalists from all over the world have travelled to Rojava to contribute to and participate in the revolutionary project. Foreign fighters who have joined the armed struggle have garnered significant attention in the international media, but much less is known

about the foreigners working behind the front lines. Inspired by the revolutionary perspective of the Kurdish freedom movement, they have come to learn and to support and help develop existing projects. Their aim is to organize a new generation of internationalists to challenge capitalist modernity.

Supported by the youth movement in Rojava (YCR/YJC), some of these activists established the Internationalist Commune of Rojava in early 2017. ROAR editor Joris Leverink spoke with two members of the Internationalist Commune about their motivations for joining the revolution, the different projects they have been involved in and the importance of solidarity beyond borders.



**ROAR:** *What were your motivations for going to Rojava, and how did you end up there?*

**Casper:** I was involved in social and ecological movements in Europe, but with time I saw the problems and shortcomings of this way of doing politics. In fact, that concept was an obstacle to my political understanding in itself. I “did politics”, but I did not ask how to live and fight in a revolutionary way. And when I asked myself this question, I could not find an answer. Thanks to the resistance against ISIS in Kobane, I got to know the Kurdish movement and I saw that the revolution here lays out a path towards overcoming the critical problems this world faces — in social, political, economic and ecological aspects. To begin to follow that path, I came to Rojava and joined the revolution.

**Clara:** I think that each one of us should be able to feel and be revolted by any injustice in any place in the world. In fact, I was up-

set by the hypocrisy of our governments, our officials, our newspapers — and even other leftists — who spoke about ISIS, the Syrian people and the Kurds without taking real or concrete action. Only a few of them ever thought of coming here, which is the most important way to challenge these injustices and ensure our actions follow our words.

**Casper:** To be here is my expression of internationalism — overcoming the borders of states that are implemented between people. I often asked myself: “what would I have done against fascism in the times of the Spanish Civil War?” And many times, I answered: “of course I would have joined the resistance.” Today the fascist power is Turkey, and like in the times of the Spanish War, we as internationalists have to fulfil our duty.

*Tell us a bit more about the Internationalist Commune: How was it set up? How many of you are there? What kind of projects have you initiated or been involved with?*

**Clara:** The Internationalist Commune was jointly created by some internationalists who decided to engage in long-term work here, and comrades from the youth movement in Rojava (YCR/YCJ). The Commune aims to bring internationalism to life again, but also to find a new way within internationalism itself. As such, the commune is a structure that helps internationalists to find their place in the revolution. We support the struggle here, learn from the revolution, and do so in an organized way. For example, we share our experiences as internationalists, and help to organize solidarity structures around the world.

**Casper:** Part of the Commune is the newly constructed Internationalist Academy, where we have space to live, work and study together until people move on to work with



different structures in the civil society of Rojava. It's important that internationalists who arrive in Kurdistan have the chance to learn about the philosophy the Kurdish freedom movement stands on — and also to study the language.

**Clara:** One of our main projects is the campaign “Make Rojava Green Again.” The aim is to contribute to the ecological work of the revolution. But of course, the ecological situation cannot be analyzed without considering the state politics of Syria, Turkey and others.

To take one example, the availability of water is a major issue. Besides general aspects of global climate change that heavily affect Rojava, the Turkish state uses water as a political weapon. Most of the rivers in Rojava have their source in the mountains of Bakur, the Kurdish areas within the formal Turkish state that are currently occupied by the Turkish army. Using mega-dams, the Turkish state controls the water supply and literally turns off the tap on the people here.

The Turkish state is also drilling deep wells along the border line to Rojava and using a lot of ground water for agriculture. The level of groundwater in Rojava is constantly decreasing as a result. This has an impact on water security and availability and impacts both nature and society. A severe lack of water means much wheat is lost or burned and Rojava has to import grain from abroad — if the states that impose the embargo on Rojava let it through.

**Casper:** As the campaign, we have collected a lot of information about the ecological situation in a brochure, which will be published within the next month. But we are also contributing on a practical level to find

# LEARN

“WITHOUT KNOWING THE HISTORY, CULTURE AND MENTALITY OF THE REGION, THE VIEW ON ROJAVA WILL ALWAYS REMAIN AN OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE. EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE.”

# SUPPORT

“WE ARE WORKING HAND IN HAND AND STEP BY STEP WITH THE LOCAL STRUCTURES TO DEVELOP A BETTER AND DIRECT WAY TO SUPPORT THE REVOLUTION.”

# ORGANIZE

“SUPPORTING THE REVOLUTION DOES NOT MEAN COMING OR SENDING MONEY ONCE, IT MEANS ORGANIZING THE REVOLUTION WHERE YOU ARE, AND BEING CONNECTED TO THE LOCAL STRUGGLES.”



solutions for the situation. At the beginning of the year we started developing a tree nursery at the Internationalist Academy. From this beginning, we will help reforest a nature reserve not far from us at the Sefan Lake. But we will need more than the trees we can grow in our nursery, and therefore we are also collecting international support for the ecological work here in Rojava.

*What does internationalism mean to you?*

**Casper:** From a really basic perspective, internationalism is exactly what Clara said: “to feel and be revolted by any injustice in any place in the world.” To see the connection between struggles, to see how they are related to each other, to see the necessity of learning from each other. To feel a connection to people who are struggling, to feel the beauty of the fight and the sadness of the losses societies have suffered in the struggle for freedom.

It’s important to understand that the dynamics of struggles depend on each other. Sometimes that’s not really visible, but changes in the Middle East have a strong impact on politics in European states and elsewhere. We can easily see what kind of dynamic evolved, for example, in Europe, alongside the resistance in Kobane or Afrin. Many people questioned the politics of the EU states and saw the relationship between weapons production in their own countries and the attack against the revolution, with the same weapons. We have to ensure that our different struggles are strengthening one another at the same time as we engage in local fights.

**Clara:** Internationalism is to feel the duty of all revolutionaries to fight shoulder by shoulder together — it doesn’t matter where. On a theoretical level, we have to see that we cannot understand the reality of the world today if we do not share our different perspectives and realities. And that’s only possible if we struggle together. The new aspect we see in the internationalism of the Kurdish freedom movement

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is that they are proposing a common frame in which all revolutionaries and radical democratic forces can come together.

It's nothing less than challenging capitalist modernity with the idea of a democratic modernity: of a democratic modernity with a global and confederal structure, which will overcome the nation-state, industrialism and the capitalist mentality. As we cannot understand capitalist modernity just from one perspective, so also democratic modernity will have different shapes and colors. It's not a monolithic but a diverse system, like the capitalist societies around the world today. As internationalists in Rojava, we understand ourselves to be militants uniting democratic and revolutionary forces in order to overcome capitalism.

*What is the response of the local people to your presence in Rojava?*

**Clara:** In a society where the saying “the only friends of the Kurds are the mountains” is widespread, and where so many young people left the country, people appreciate our presence a lot. They understand it as friendship between the people around the world.

**Casper:** In many families, we are seen as their daughters or sons — and that's not just a saying. We can feel it. By becoming part of society, we have a growing responsibility to defend its values.

*In your observation, how has the revolution in Rojava shaped the lives of the people on the ground?*

**Clara:** I would say the situation has changed the most for women. They are affected by all the aspects Casper mentioned but additionally by patriarchal structures in society. Be-

fore, women could not participate much in public life and patriarchal family structures and social expectations were strongly affecting personal and social life in general. To give some examples, it's now forbidden to marry women under the age of 18 or for men to take multiple wives.

The participation of women in the different social and political structures is also more visible. This is most obvious in, but by no means limited to, the military structures of the women's self-defense units (YPJ). Women are also experimenting with different ways of living. The woman's village, “Jinwar”, is a place where only women are living together in a communal way.

**Casper:** One of the really obvious examples is the use of the Kurdish language in public, in school and in the self-administration structures. Language is an important part of identity, and so the attempt to wipe out the language was a serious attack on Kurdish culture and identity. For students to be able to study their own history in their own mother tongue is a major change.

Another significant achievement is the chance for all people to participate in the political structures and decision-making process. Under the Ba'ath regime, these basic rights were taken away from the Kurdish population, and they had no possibility to express their interests. Now, in the communal structure, people are learning to use the tools of radical democracy through local assemblies. Society is becoming really political, as people take responsibility for their united destiny.

*What are the relations between the internationalist commune and the international volunteers who have traveled to Rojava to join the armed struggle?*



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PHOTO BY  
INTERNATIONALIST  
COMMUNE OF ROJAVA



**Casper:** There is no organizational link between the two. But of course people know one another and share their experiences and thoughts. For example, the people in the military structure often don't see much from civil society, so we share our experiences with them. And comrades who return from fighting on the front line against the Turkish state, Al-Nusra and ISIS share with us the realities of war.

**Clara:** And even if we did not choose to join the structures of YPG and YPJ, we know how important it is to be ready to give everything for the revolution, even our life, and to face the traumatic experiences of war. To honor and remember also our comrades that fell *şehid* (i.e., were martyred), we named our academy after Hêlin Qaraçox (Anna Campbell), who was killed by NATO warplanes from Turkey in the Afrin resistance.

*How do you see the revolution in Rojava developing, and in what ways can people abroad contribute to its success? How can people abroad express their solidarity with the revolution in Rojava in the most effective way?*

**Casper:** The time after the liberation of Raqqa from ISIS can be seen as a new era. The more or less stable consensus between the international powers is beginning to give way once again. Every state is trying to increase its influence in the region. The revolutionary forces in Syria — the Kurdish movement with its Arabic and Christian allies — are again trapped in the middle of a nexus of global superpowers. Now, even more than before, the success of the revolution will depend on the strength of the people here and around the world. The only real alliance of the revolution is that between the revolutionary and democratic people around the world.

**Clara:** We have to understand this as our responsibility, and one in which we must play an active role. Our actions can and will shape the reality of tomorrow. In this sense, it's important to keep up with solidarity work around the world. Even today, many people don't know about this revolution or the values it's based on. So everyone must share this with others around the world.

**Casper:** We know that the next big war is upon us. Especially with the fascist Turkish regime at the border, we all know that there will be no peaceful solution in Syria. For our friends around the world, it's important to understand and prepare for this certain eventuality. We have to be more effective in our work, at all levels of politics: we

must spread knowledge about Rojava in society and, at the same time, increase the pressure on our governments. But the most important aspect is to build ties between the Kurdish freedom movement and the struggles in other countries.

*The internationalist commune falls in a long tradition of leftist solidarity with revolutionary struggles across the globe, from the Spanish revolution to the Zapatistas. How do you place yourself within this tradition, and why do you believe it is important?*

**Clara:** Without this history, we cannot understand the current

situation. And even more importantly, we cannot give the right meaning to it. It's so easy for people to give up the fight, in a system that's telling you there is no alternative and that all attempts to build an alternative have failed. Instead, we have to see that resistance was always there, even if it was all too often hidden in the shadows. But if I see the fights today as the heritage of the Spanish war against fascism, and the struggle against colonialism around the world, my energy and motivation are redoubled. In this sense, we see the history of internationalism as our history. We are part of one continual, living line of internationalism.

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**Casper:** Today, the Commune is in Rojava. But the idea of the Commune is an internationalist one. It's not only about the Kurdish freedom movement. It represents internationalism based on the idea that as long as everybody in this world is not free, nobody is free.

*What is your message to the global left?*

**Casper:** Well, because I come from Europe my call for the European left would be that we have to rethink our methods of political organizing and fighting, as well as our ideological understanding. If we really want to make a revolution, we have to get organized in accordance with that aim and develop a long-term revolutionary perspective.

The Kurdish freedom movement can help us with that. We as revolutionaries have to learn again how to connect with society. We are part of it, we are fighting for it, but too often our fights are disconnected from it. And we have to learn to overcome our divisions. That does not mean we must all become the same, but we must find a way to use our differences in a productive, inspiring way, through which everyone can learn and develop.

**Clara:** In the end, our call is at once really simple and incredibly difficult: let us build together a global movement that is able to challenge and overcome capitalist modernity. Towards that end, we can look back to a long history of different struggles, which together are the path along the line of the resistance of the people, for a free life of the people, in balance with nature. ★

#### THE INTERNATIONALIST COMMUNE OF ROJAVA

*The Internationalist Commune of Rojava gathers the internationalists working in the civil society in Rojava. Currently it is building the first permanent non-military academy for internationalists. This academy will provide the basic education for internationalists who want to learn, work and organize in the Rojava revolution. Their book Make Rojava Green Again is currently being crowdfunded.*




SCALING OUT



Illustration by Istvan David





*BY CONCEIVING OF  
TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL  
CHANGE IN “TRANSLOCAL”  
TERMS, THE MUNICIPALIST  
MOVEMENT ENABLES US TO  
REDEFINE INTERNATIONALISM  
FOR OUR TIMES.*

TRANSLOCAL

SOLIDARITY

AND THE NEW

MUNICIPALISM

Laura Roth and  
Bertie Russell

**T**he Fearless Cities gathering, hosted by Barcelona en Comú in June 2017, made it clear that the “new municipalism” is not peculiar to the Spanish context: more than 700 people from around the world attended the event. Initiatives such as Massa Critica (Naples, Italy), Ciudad Futura (Rosario, Argentina), Beirut Madinati (Beirut, Lebanon), Zagreb Je Nas (Zagreb, Croatia), and the Jackson-Kush Plan/Cooperation Jackson (Jackson, Mississippi) demonstrated that the municipality is becoming a strategically crucial site for the organization of transformative social change.

What also became clear at Fearless Cities is that, while there is no blueprint for what a municipalist strategy looks like, there are some undeniable commonalities between movements that arose completely autonomously of one another. Certain debates or currents seem to animate these diverse movements in different ways, such as a commitment to disrupt the form of local-state infrastructure in an effort to distribute power and decision-making, the active support and promotion of the commons and solidarity economy, and an effort to feminize politics.

The trepidation — at least for some on the left — is that these new municipalist movements are a return to a parochial politics. Common arguments are that these municipal initiatives do not go beyond an attempt to build little anarchist or socialist islands of autonomy, isolated from a more substantial internationalist political project. There is also a latent danger of municipalist projects falling into what Mark Purcell calls the “local trap” — erroneously claiming the municipality to have some form of inherently “progressive” qualities — rather than adopting it as a strategic site for social transformation. Even if these problems were mitigated, others may claim that a “glo-

cal strategy” is fundamentally insufficient in the face of broader reactionary conservative governments, and that our political energies should remain focused on the nation-state.

Such differences in thinking about the scale of transformation are central to strategic debates about the place of new municipalist movements in fostering wider social change. Should these initiatives simply be seen as stepping stones to national government, leaving intact traditional scalar understandings of power that construe the municipality as “nested” under the nation-state? Or do they represent an effort to build an altogether different type of power, disrupting these conventional scales of power in an effort to produce some form of networked, translocal power?

## THE QUESTION OF SCALING UP

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Despite a commitment to internationalism, the theory and practice of left politics commonly takes the nation-state as the fundamental site of transformative social change. Despite the relative successes of municipalist initiatives, there are still some within these movements who maintain that the “real” aim remains to capture the institutions of the nation-state.

The strategy of winning locally, in this view, is understood either as a strategy we are forced to adopt in a time of weakness — the “best we can achieve for now” — or a systematic approach to build our capacity to move to the national scale. Typically, the argument follows that local institutions are constrained in terms of how they can act and the resources they have access to. The scope of municipal activity is understood to be constrained by greater powers, and while we might be able to do a better job at governing the city than others, we will always need to jump to the regional or national scale if we want to have the power to make really big changes.

There are others within the municipalist movement who challenge this idea that the municipality is (and should be) a “lesser” political unit — an administrative arm of the state removed from the real center of power. Rather, they see the municipality as a starting-point for pursuing a politics that is fundamentally transformative. Such perspectives challenge the assumption that the primary role of municipalist initiatives is

to be better urban administrators — which can push up against broader legal and fiscal limits quite quickly — and rather aim to transform the municipal scale itself. This means revisiting the meaning and practices of democracy, upending our understanding of who “does” politics and what it looks like, and seeking to foster fundamentally different ways for citizens to relate to the world around them.

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**A commitment  
to transformative  
municipalism  
means revisiting  
the meaning and  
practices of  
democracy.**

These diverging perspectives generate tension within some municipalist movements, but to a certain extent it is a productive tension: it reveals a responsible attitude towards the need for and possibilities of social change. It is also a debate grounded in concrete conditions rather than abstract ideology, taking place *within* movements and responding to very real and urgent challenges. In a context of generalized political pessimism about the prospects of transformative social change, and with traditional leftist actors generally failing to muster a coherent response to the rise of the

far-right, it is imperative that we find ways to illustrate that real social and political change is both possible and realistic. This is why winning power in cities and smaller municipalities seems to be a worthwhile strategy. So far, we can all agree.

## **THE DANGERS OF ENTERING THE INSTITUTIONS**

The problem — at least as it has been experienced in the Spanish context — is that as soon as movements look to “scale up” their politics to the regional or national level, they rapidly lose the very qualities and capacities that defined them as transformational. This has been the case both in Barcelona, with the movement’s engagement in the Catalan regional administration, and for those coming from A Coruña organizing at the Galician level. Seemingly inevitably, there are certain dynamics that

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MARC LOZANO  
FLICKR



FEARLESS CITIES CONFERENCE, BARCELONA, JUNE 2017

start to develop once one loses the ability to work closely with other activists and start developing more hierarchical and independent structures.

When municipalist movements speak of feminizing politics, for instance, the emphasis is on fundamental changes to politics itself — inserting empathy into the core of political action, questioning traditional understandings of strong leadership, learning how to distribute power throughout society, and decentering the role of institutions towards the horizon of collective self-governance. The reality is that developing this politics of care takes a lot of time and energy. It is no coincidence that as soon as one starts trying to win power at “higher” levels of government, organizations become more hierarchical, men usually take the lead, discourses become more theoretical, and urgency tends to trump trust in collective intelligence.

Something similar happens when one enters formal institutions, even local ones — once you are in, they simply swallow you. People are absorbed by the dynamics of a machine that is designed to process things in a standardized way; to divide the public from the private; to adapt the rhythm of politics to the rhythm of bureaucracy; to distinguish people according to their position and block dialogue between those at different levels.

As an activist involved within *Massa Critica* put it, “the idea is to be prepared not only to win something, but immediately to change it. If we think that we win and we change the world — or our country, or our city — only by going to manage it, we fail.” If we really want to transform these institutions, it is crucial

# The idea is to be prepared not only to win something, but immediately to change it.



to stay grounded in everyday life outside of the institutions. This means finding ways to open up institutions, to generate new relationships with social movements and — very importantly — with those ordinary citizens who are not mobilized.

The central question thus becomes: at what scale are we able to conduct these transformative political experiments? Or, conversely, at what political scale are our experiments most likely to have a transformative impact? This is not to ignore the realities of how power currently functions — one cannot pretend that the nation-state, amongst other scales, does not clearly delineate many of the ways municipalities can act — but to pose the municipal scale as a fundamental starting point for the organization of transformative change.

We can see this commitment to a prefigurative politics running through global municipalist movements. As one municipalist organizer from Madrid has suggested, municipalism “is not a way to implement the ‘state conception’

of the world at a smaller scale. It’s a way to actually modify this level of the local government into something that is different.”

In Rosario, Argentina, the movement-party Ciudad Futura had around ten years of experience in developing social infrastructure — such as secondary schools, farms, food cooperatives and construction cooperatives — when they successfully stood a number of councilors in the 2013 elections. Last year, one of their councilors suggested that:

“ *when social movements start to contest the institutional arena, we don’t want to appropriate or monopolize these constructs or these experiences in any way, as the state would usually do. Rather, we want to do the opposite, to develop and expand the diverse social management that exists from within the state apparatus.*

The demand to simply “scale up” municipalism, which tends to be based on a vision where

the local state is considered an instrument or tool to be wielded differently on behalf of the working class, is in significant danger of misinterpreting what many within these initiatives are looking to achieve. If we instead view the local state as a set of processes and relationships, the emphasis of politics thus becomes — at least in part — to attempt to substitute the old ways of how we relate to one another (as service users, as managers, as decision-makers, as representatives, as voters, and so on), with new processes and relationships that are more horizontal, open, deliberative and in touch with ordinary people.

In this sense, the municipalism of the international Fearless Cities network is quite different from simply winning locally and doing the same that parties would traditionally do, but just better. More than simply implementing more innovative leftist policies locally, they are aiming to change how to do politics to begin with. They recognize that one cannot keep on trying the same recipes and waiting for something different to happen. But this is also why the municipalist movements are works in progress: there are no roadmaps or blueprints to work with.

## TOWARDS A POLITICS OF SCALING-OUT

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This emphasis on transformation that characterizes these new municipalist movements seems particularly important, then, in challenging us to think differently about internationalism. Firstly, and this is a simple but important point, we may need to reconsider the term internationalism, which of course means “between nations,” and consider substituting it with the idea of “translocal solidarity” — or something along these lines — to speak to the idea of a broader transformative movement that is firmly rooted within local context.



### BARCELONA EN COMÚ

BARCELONA, SPAIN  
BARCELONAENCOMU.CAT



### CIUDAD FUTURA

ROSARIO, ARGENTINA  
CIUDADFUTURA.COM.AR



### COOPERATION JACKSON

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, USA  
COOPERATIONJACKSON.ORG



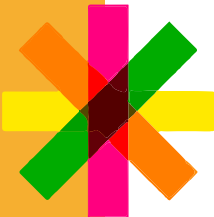
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### MUITAS PELA CIDADE QUE QUEREMOS

BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL  
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Of course, it is not the words that are fundamentally important here, but the broader challenge to the “state conception” that leaves intact certain inherited scalar understandings of power. If this conventional state conception demands that we overcome the limitations of municipalist institutions through scaling up — that is, focusing on governing at a “higher” level — then perhaps the more prefigurative municipalist approach should start thinking in terms of “scaling out.”

While it might sound a bit clunky, it is important to understand that these municipalist initiatives are not just rolling out some pre-existing political strategy based on inherited understandings. They are trying to think and act differently. Consequently, any internationalist political project that begins with these municipalist initiatives is liable to look quite different, challenging some of our deeply ingrained assumptions about organizing beyond borders. Again, this is a process of learning by doing, and one that has to constantly negotiate the tensions between the world as it is and the world we are trying to create.

Perhaps the best way to start fleshing out our understanding of what it would mean to “scale out” is thus to start with questions that many within these movements are asking themselves: how do we, as municipalist movements, meaningfully act in solidarity with one another? How can all these “small” acts of transformation become something greater than the sum of their parts? How can we amplify our successes, so that they “trickle outwards” and strengthen the capacity of others to organize?

Can our municipalist strategies develop “transversal” identities based not on where we are from, but where we live and what we partici-

pate in? Can this logic erode identities based on borders and boundaries? It is through producing answers to these questions in practice that we can begin to develop an answer to a broader question: what is it that allows us to talk about this as a transmunicipal social movement with the potential to drive deep and broad-based social change?

## SOCIAL CHANGE IN PRACTICE

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We can already see a number of ways in which this translocal solidarity is starting to concretely take shape. Organized primarily by and for municipalists in the Spanish context, the *Municipalismo, Autogobierno y Contrapoder* (MAC) gatherings in 2016-17 provided an opportunity to learn how to deal with the difficulties and contradictions of “actually existing” municipalism, providing space for more speculative thinking about what the municipalist movement could achieve.

The 2017 Fearless Cities gathering in Barcelona expanded this initiative beyond national boundaries, opening up the possibility for new relationships and new opportunities for a scaling out of the municipalist movement. These gatherings allowed many concepts and experiences to circulate between participants, and began to develop a sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves.

From the side of municipalist governments, certain campaigns illustrate the potential of political action beyond traditional local competences and powers. One example would be the manifesto on the right to housing that Barcelona is promoting at the United Nations High Level Political Forum. Equally, the proactive stance of Naples, Messina and Reggio Calabria in the recent case of the rescue vessel *Aquarius* demonstrates the leadership role that cities can take on in relation to issues of international migration and asylum, pushing back against and challenging the reactionary positions taken by national governments.

In addition, municipalist governments are implementing innovative policies while supporting and inspiring other governments — even

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**What is it  
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social  
movement?**



non-radical ones — to adopt and develop their practices in areas that range from urbanism to gender equality and social economy. Many of these practices are being mapped, documented and promoted by collaborations of scholars, institutes and citizen platforms, in initiatives such as Urban Alternatives, helping to demonstrate the sheer breadth of innovative urban transformations that are already starting to take shape.

A particularly striking example is the case of the Decidim and Consul digital infrastructures, which were developed to facilitate participatory decision-making and budgeting in Madrid and Barcelona, based on open-source licensing. These free software tools have already been adopted and used in dozens of other cities and show how collaborations between governments, programmers and other organizations can foster more participatory municipalities without having to depend on big tech companies.

Political platforms also collaborate, independently of the position they occupy in their respective city councils. While many of these collaborations are the result of one-on-one engagements — such as supporting electoral campaigns or sharing tools — some broader goals are starting to be undertaken by networks of municipalist actors. For example, seven European organizations affiliated with the Fearless Cities network are currently implementing a project promoting and supporting the feminization of politics, running a set of internal reviews as part of a broader campaign aiming to change both perceptions and practices within municipalist platforms.

In July 2018, New York and Warsaw both hosted regional Fearless Cities gatherings for the North American and European continents, providing crucial opportunities to expand upon the ideas

and relationships formed over the previous few years. These events build towards the second global Fearless Cities gathering scheduled for the spring of 2019 — a significant year for the Spanish municipalist movements as the face their first electoral test since 2015. Alongside this, there are a series of collaborative projects facilitating ongoing learning and change between and within these municipalist movements, ranging from the co-authoring of a book, *Ciudades Sin Miedo* (an English version is due in Spring 2019), to a map of the municipalist movement (available at [www.fearlesscities.com](http://www.fearlesscities.com)).

It is in projects and spaces of collaboration such as these, which bring together municipalists from both inside and outside institutions, coupled with those looking to promote and pursue municipalist initiatives elsewhere, that new possibilities can arise. Taken collectively, all the examples of how the movement is working as a network provide an opportunity for a series of individual initiatives to realize themselves as part of a broader global tendency to adopt the urban scale as a site of progressive transformative political change. With this comes a circulation of ideas and the promotion of common practices — and new political approaches — that works to expand the horizons of political possibility.

But other, more formal and institutional ways of cooperation are also possible, both within the movement and with other local governments. We could, for instance, envisage municipalities collaborating to force substantial changes to procurement law — an example of something shaped at European level — to not only allow but also incentivize municipalities to direct their spending towards the social and solidarity economy. This recognizes the reality of pursuing a transformative politics within the existing scales of political power, and asks us to think about how municipalists can coor-

*When social movements start to contest the institutional arena, we don't want to appropriate or monopolize these constructs or these experiences in any way, as the state would usually do. **Rather, we want to do the opposite, to develop and expand the diverse social management that exists from within the state apparatus.***

— CIUDAD FUTURA CITY COUNCILLOR



ROSARIO, LARGEST CITY IN PROVINCE OF SANTA FE, ARGENTINA.



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# The internationalism of the municipalist movement is about the emergence of a new common sense and a new form of political action.

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## DEVELOPING A TRANSMUNICIPAL MOVEMENT

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If we are going to see the reality of this, municipalists (and municipalities) need to develop a clearer understanding of what material leverage they collectively hold over national and supranational institutions, and to begin forging political strategies that can force the hand of these institutions. Crucially, we cannot just be thinking about the role of municipal institutions here, but need to think about the kind of demands that international social movements could begin to coalesce around, and the range of tactics that could be developed to pursue these demands.

In many ways, having developed visions of a networked municipalism — one that facilitates collaborative co-ownership, democratic management and ecologically progressive initiatives — helps provide us with a common direction to move in. It is this ability to concretely imagine a common future that really energizes and speaks to a developing transmunicipal movement, providing us with the hope of real and achievable alternatives.

Scaling out a municipalist politics has to begin with the understanding that these initiatives are not just rolling out a politics-you-already-know at a local scale. This perspective fundamentally fails to grasp the prefigurative and transformative elements of this municipalist movement, and instead asks questions about “scaling up” that belong to a different (and dominant) intellectual register. While the diversity of these movements necessitates context-specific approaches to organizing — no two of these municipalist movements are the same — there is nonetheless an emerging common sense about what we are trying to achieve, and a proliferation of strategies for trying to achieve it.

In moving together, municipalist movements are already demonstrating internationalism — in the “old” sense of working together across boundaries. Yet this internationalism provides the crucible for working towards internationalism in a “new” sense, one in which we develop new political horizons built out of our existing experiences. This is not about finding a new route to fulfil an old idea, but about the emergence of a new common sense and a new form of political action. ★



BERTIE RUSSELL

*Bertie Russell is a research associate at the University of Sheffield’s Urban Institute and on the steering group of Urban Alternatives. He tweets @alterurbanist*



LAURA ROTH

*Laura Roth is a researcher and activist based in Barcelona. She is interested in participatory democracy, feminism, political culture and the law. As a member of the International-Group of Barcelona en Comú, she helps build a global municipalist network.*

HOMO SACER



*Fires in the Void:*  
**THE NEED FOR**  
**MIGRANT**  
**SOLIDARITY**

**DISMANTLING  
BORDERS  
WILL REQUIRE  
ORGANIZATION,  
CONFRONTATION,  
DIRECT ACTION,  
SABOTAGE AND,  
ABOVE ALL, THAT  
BORDERLESS PRAXIS  
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KNOWN AS  
INTERNATIONALISM.**

Carlos Delclós

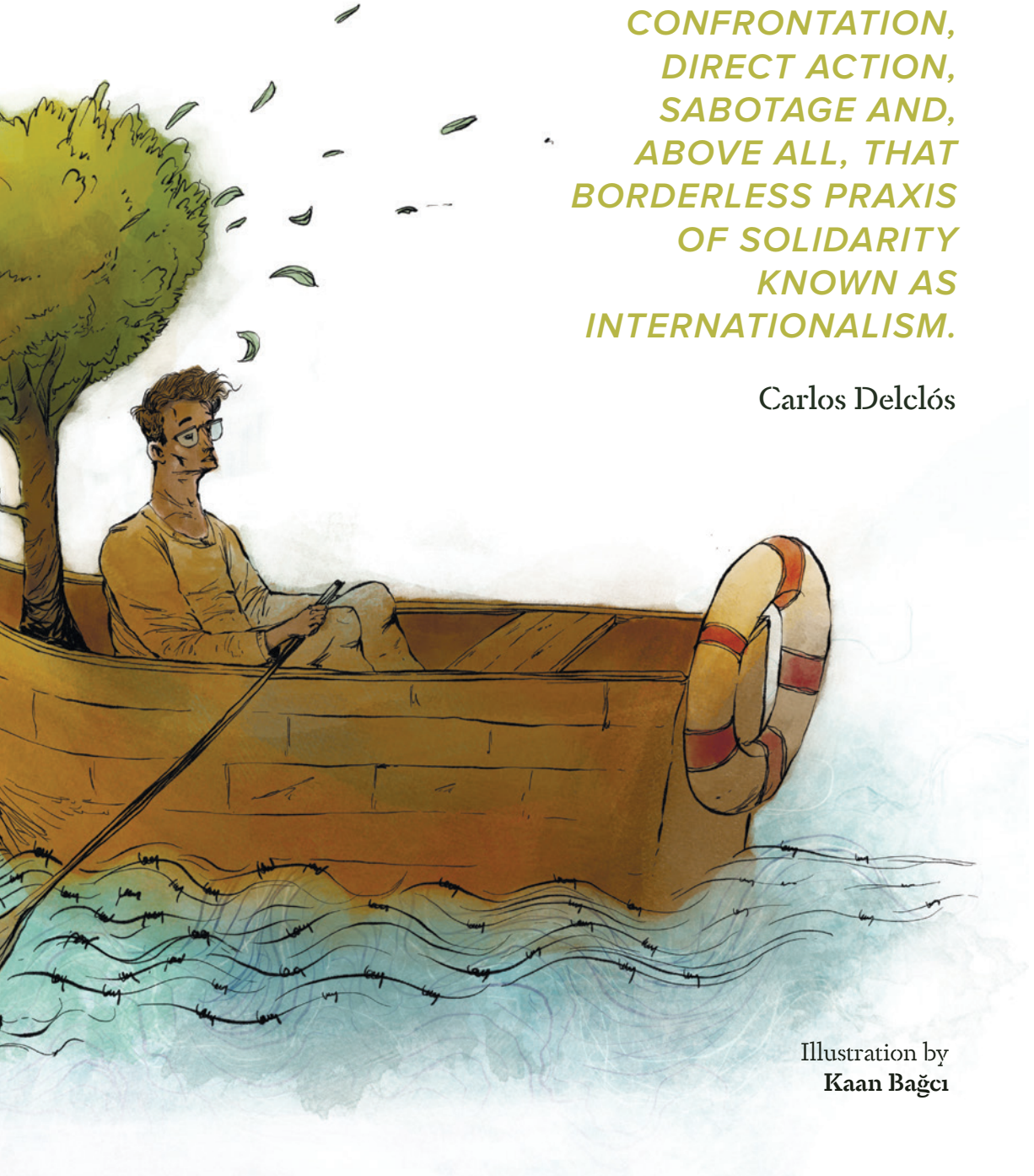


Illustration by  
Kaan Bağcı

**F**or most, Barcelona's immigrant detention center is a difficult place to find. Tucked away in the Zona Franca logistics and industrial area, just beyond the Montjuïc Cemetery, it is shrouded in an alien stillness. It may be the quietest place in the city on a Saturday afternoon, but it is not a contemplative quiet. It is a no-one-can-hear-you-scream quiet.

The area is often described as a perfect example of what anthropologist Marc Augé calls a non-place: neither relational nor historical, nor concerned with identity. Yet this opaque institution is situated in the economic motor of the city, next to the port, the airport, the public transportation company, the wholesale market that provides most of the city's produce and the printing plant for Spain's most widely read newspaper. The detention center is a void in the heart of a sovereign body.

Alik Manukyan died in this void. On the morning of December 3, 2013, officers found the 32-year-old Armenian dead in his isolation cell, hanged using his own shoelaces. Police claimed that Manukyan was a "violent" and "conflictive" person who caused trouble with his cellmates. This account of his alleged suicide was contradicted, however, by three detainees. They claimed Alik had had a confrontation with some officers, who then entered the cell, assaulted him and forced him into isolation. They heard Alik scream and wail all through the night. Two of these witnesses were deported before the case made it to court. An "undetachable technical error" prevented the judge from viewing any surveillance footage.

The void extends beyond the detention center. In 2013, nearly a decade after moving to Spain, a young Senegalese man named Alpha

Pam died of tuberculosis. When he went to a hospital for treatment, Pam was denied medical attention because his papers were not in order. His case was a clear example of the apartheid logic underlying a 2012 decree by Mariano Rajoy's right-wing government, which excluded undocumented people from Spain's once-universal public health care system. As a result, the country's hospitals went from being places of universal care to spaces of systematic neglect. The science of healing, warped by nationalist politics.

Not that science had not played a role in perpetuating the void before. In 2007, during the Socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Osamuyi Aikpitanyi died during a deportation flight after being gagged and restrained by police escorts. The medical experts who investigated Aikpitanyi's death concluded that the Nigerian man had died due to a series of factors they called "a vicious spiral". There was an increase in catecholamine, a neurotransmitter related to stress, fear, panic and flight instincts. This was compounded by a lack of oxygen due to the flight altitude and, possibly, the gag. Ultimately, these experts could not determine what percentage of the death had been directly caused by the gag, and the police were fined 600 euros for the non-criminal offense of "light negligence".

The Romans had a term for lives like these, lives that vanish in the void. That term was *homo sacer*, the "sacred man", who one could kill without being found guilty of murder. An obscure figure from archaic law revived by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, it was used to incorporate human life, stripped of personhood, into the juridical order. Around this figure, a state of exception was produced, in which power could be exercised in its crudest form, opaque and unaccountable. For



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Agamben, this is the unspoken ground upon which modern sovereignty stands. Perhaps the best example of it is the mass grave that the Mediterranean has become.

## ORGANIZED HYPOCRISY

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Its name suggests that the Mediterranean was once the world's center. Today it is its deadliest divide. According to the International Organization for Migration, over 9,000 people died trying to cross the sea between January 1, 2014 and July 5, 2018. A conservative estimate, perhaps. The UN Refugee Agency estimates that the number of people found dead or missing during this period is closer to 17,000.

Concern for the situation peaks when spectacular images make the horror unavoidable. A crisis mentality takes over, and politicians make sweeping gestures with a solemn sense of urgency. One such gesture was made after nearly 400 people died en route to Lampedusa in October 2013. The Italian government responded by launching Operation Mare Nostrum, a search-and-rescue program led by the country's navy and coast guard. It cost €11 million per month, deploying 34 warships and about 900 sailors per working day. Over 150,000 people were rescued by the operation in one year.

Despite its cost, Mare Nostrum was initially supported by much of the Italian public. It was less popular, however, with other European member states, who accused the mission of encouraging “illegal” migration by making it less deadly. Within a year, Europe's refusal to share the responsibility had produced a substantial degree of discontent in Italy. In October 2014, Mare Nostrum was scrapped and replaced by Triton, an operation led by the European border agency Frontex.

With a third of Mare Nostrum's budget, Triton was oriented not towards protecting lives

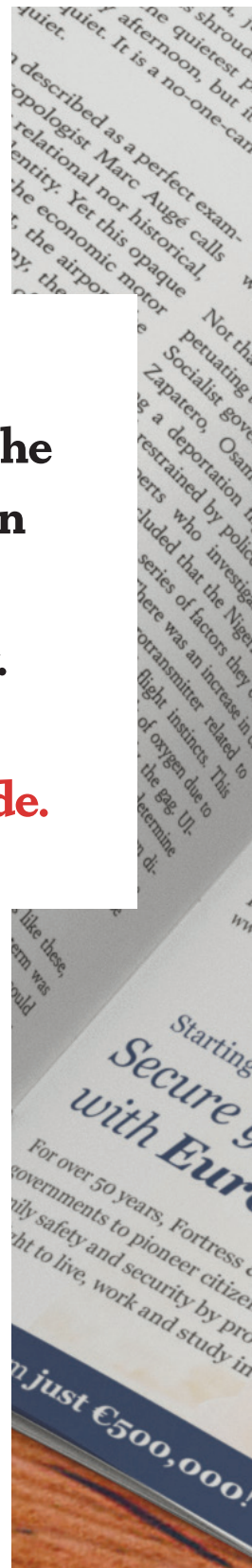
but towards surveillance and border control. As a result, the deadliest incidents in the region's history occurred less than half a year into the operation. Between April 13 and April 19, 2015, over one thousand people drowned in the waters abandoned by European search and rescue efforts. Once again, the images produced a public outcry. Once again, European leaders shed crocodile tears for the dead.

Instead of strengthening search and rescue efforts, the EU increased Frontex's budget and complemented Triton with Operation Sophia, a military effort to disrupt the networks of so-called "smugglers". Eugenio Cusumano, an assistant professor of international relations at the University of Leiden, has written extensively on the consequences of this approach, which he describes as "organized hypocrisy". In an article for the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Cusumano shows how the shortage of search and rescue assets caused by the termination of Mare Nostrum led non-governmental organizations to become the main source of these activities off the Libyan shore. Between 2014 and 2017, NGOs aided over 100,000 people.

Their efforts have been admirable. Yet the precariousness of their resources and their dependence on private donors mean that NGOs have neither the power nor the capacity to provide aid on the scale required to prevent thousands of deaths at the border. To make matters worse, for the last several months governments have been targeting NGOs and individual activists as smugglers or human traffickers, criminalizing their solidarity. It is hardly surprising, then, that the border has become even deadlier in recent years. According to the UN Refugee Agency, although the number of attempted crossings has fallen over 80 percent from its peak in 2015, the percentage of people who have died or vanished has quadrupled.

It is not my intention, with the litany of deaths described here, to simply name some of the people killed by Europe's border regime. What I hope to have done instead is show the scale of the void at its heart and give a sense of its ruthlessness and verticality. There is a tendency to refer to this void as a gap, as a space beyond the reach of European institutions, the European gaze or European epistemologies. If this were true, the void

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could be filled by simply extending Europe's reach, by producing new concepts, mapping new terrains, building new institutions.

But, in fact, Europe has been treating the void as a site of production all along. As political theorist Sandro Mezzadra writes, the border is the method through which the sovereign machine of governmentality was built. Its construction must be sabotaged, subverted and disrupted at every level.

## A CRISIS OF SOLIDARITY

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When the ultranationalist Italian interior minister Matteo Salvini refused to allow the MV Aquarius to dock in June 2018, he was applauded by an alarmingly large number of Italians. Many blamed his racism and that of the Italians for putting over 600 lives at risk, including those of 123 unaccompanied minors, eleven young children and seven pregnant women.

Certainly, the willingness to make a political point by sacrificing hundreds of migrant lives confirms that racism. But another part of what made Salvini's gesture so horrifying was that, presumably, many of those who had once celebrated increasing search and rescue efforts now supported the opposite. Meanwhile, many of the same European politicians who had refused to share Italy's responsibilities five years earlier were now expressing moral outrage over Salvini's lack of solidarity.

Once again, the crisis mode of European border politics was activated. Once again, European politicians and media talked about a "migrant crisis", about "flows" of people causing unprecedented "pressure" on the southern border. But attempted crossings were at their lowest level in years, a fact that led many migration scholars to claim this was not a "migrant crisis", but a crisis of solidarity. In this sense, Italy's shift

reflects the nature of the problem. By leaving it up to individual member states, the EU has made responding to the deaths at the border a matter of national conviction. When international solidarity is absent, national self-interest takes over.

Fortunately, Spain's freshly sworn-in Socialist Party government granted the Aquarius permission to dock in the Port of Valencia. This happened only after Mayor Ada Colau of Barcelona, a self-declared "City of Refuge", pressured Spanish President Pedro Sánchez by publicly offering to receive the ship at the Port of Barcelona. Party politics being as they are, Sánchez authorized a port where his party's relationship with the governing left-wing platform was less conflictive than in Barcelona.

The media celebrated Sánchez's authorization as an example of moral virtue. Yet it would not have happened if solidarity with refugees had not been considered politically profitable by institutional actors. In Spain's highly fractured political arena, younger left-wing parties and the Catalan independence movement are constantly pressuring a weakened Socialist Party to prove their progressive credentials. Meanwhile, tireless mobilization by social movements has made welcoming refugees a matter of common sense and basic human decency.

The best known example of this mobilization was the massive protest that took place in February 2017, when 150,000 people took to the streets of Barcelona to demand that Mariano Rajoy's government take in more refugees and migrants. It is likely because of actions like these that, according to the June 2018 Eurobarometer, over 80 percent of people in Spain believe the country should help those fleeing disaster.

Yet even where the situation might be more favorable to bottom-up pressure, those in power

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**This is no  
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will not only limit the degree to which demands are met, but actively distort those demands. The February 2017 protest is a good example. Though it also called for the abolition of detention centers, racial profiling and Spain’s racist immigration law, the march is best remembered for the single demand of welcoming refugees.

The adoption of this demand by the Socialist Party was predictably cynical. After authorizing the Aquarius, President Sánchez used his momentarily boosted credibility to present, alongside Emmanuel Macron, a “progressive” European alternative to Salvini’s closed border. It involved creating detention centers all over the continent, with the excuse of determining people’s documentation status. Gears turn in the sovereign machine of governmentality. The void expands.

Today the border is a sprawling, parasitic entity linking governments, private companies and supranational institutions. It is not enough for NGOs to rescue refugees, when their efforts can be turned into spot-mopping for the state. It is not enough for social movements to pressure national governments to change their policies, when individual demands can be distorted to mean anything. It is not enough for cities to declare themselves places of refuge, when they can be compelled to enforce racist laws. It is not enough for political parties to take power, when they can be conditioned by private interests, the media and public opinion polls.

To overcome these limitations, we must understand borders as highly vertical transnational constructions. Dismantling those constructions will require organization, confrontation, direct action, sabotage and, above all, that borderless praxis of mutual aid and solidarity known as internationalism. If we truly hope to abolish the border, we must start fires in the void. ★

CARLOS DELCLÓS

*Carlos Delclós is a sociologist, researcher and editor for ROAR Magazine. His research interests include international migration, social stratification, fertility, urban sociology, social movements and cultural theory.*



BEYOND THE NATION

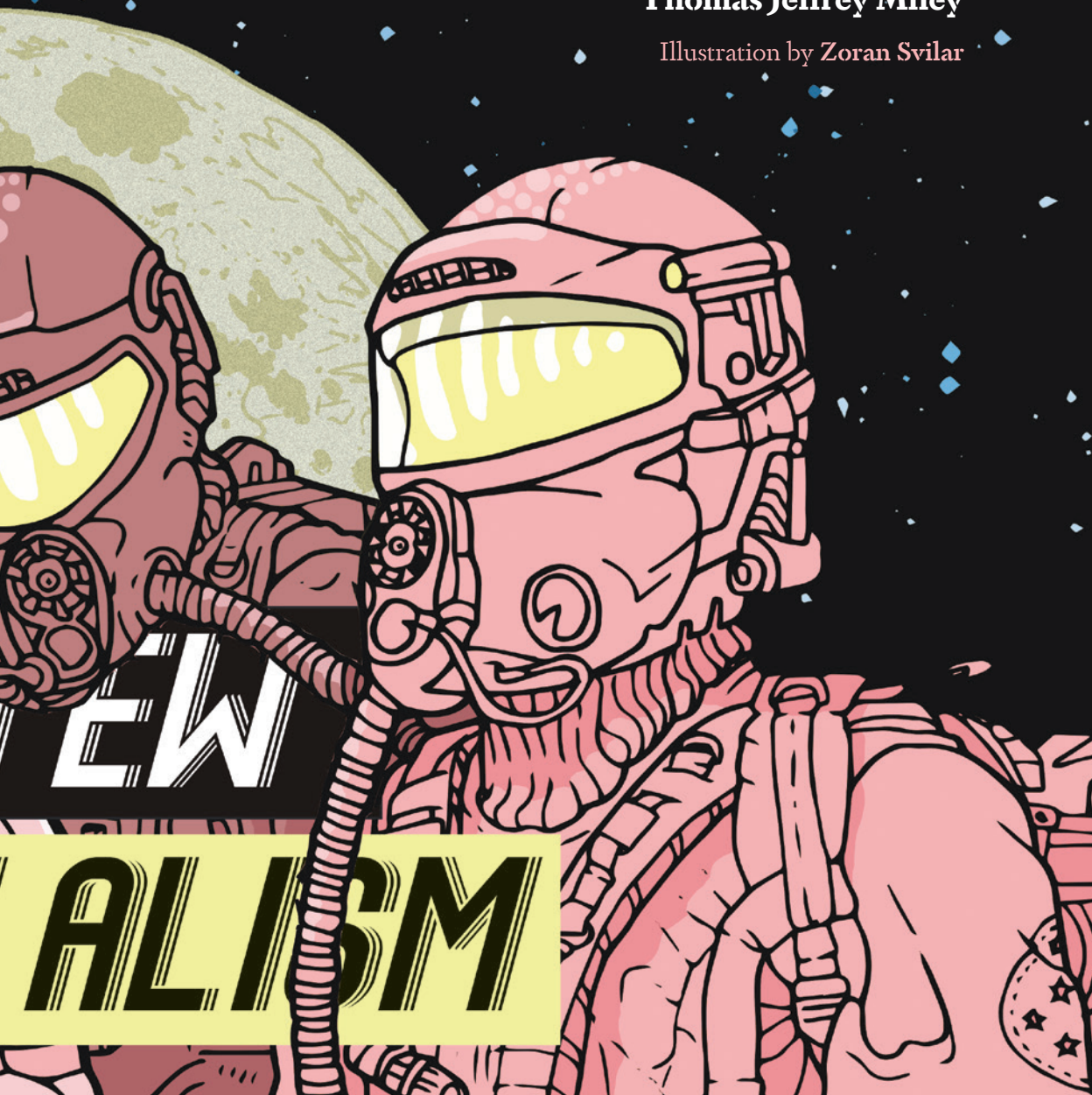
**TOWARDS A N**

**INTERNATION**

IF THE CLASS STRUGGLE IS  
TO BE REIGNITED, WE MUST  
DENOUNCE SOCIAL  
CHAUVINISM. THE WORKER,  
ONCE AGAIN, MUST COME  
TO REALIZE THAT SHE  
HAS NO COUNTRY.

Thomas Jeffrey Miley

Illustration by Zoran Svilar



**T**he tyranny of capitalist social-property relations, ever more consolidated across the globe, leads humanity to perpetual war and ecological catastrophe. The very future of life on the planet is under threat, the cancerous contradiction between the imperative for growth built into capitalism and the finitude of natural resources ever more manifest. The entrenched obstacles to collective rationality that we must successfully surmount if we are to avoid a brutal and tragic denouement are immense and global in scope.

We desperately need a new revolutionary internationalism, capable of coordinating and connecting local struggles against global capitalism and against related, intersecting systems of domination — of ethnicity and race, of gender, over nature. And yet, the specter of nationalism continues to haunt hegemonic social imaginaries, hindering the urgent task of organizing anti-capitalist resistance both above and below the level of the nation-state.

Parts of the left move to embrace anew the tactic and strategy of national populism, when we need instead a thoroughgoing internationalism. We have seen such opportunistic capitulation to the appeal of social chauvinism before, with devastating human consequences. There is no plausible reason to believe that riding the nationalist tiger again will lead to a socialist destination this time around.

To the contrary, there are good reasons to be even more skeptical. Not only is the global scope and coordination of capitalist production, finance and, consequently, capitalist political dominance more intense and cohesive than ever before in history, a state of affairs sufficient to render promises of a renaissance of the “golden age” of social democracy smack of utopianism; more disturbingly, so too are these neo-social-democratic agendas

tainted by chauvinistic compromises, especially on matters of “foreign policy” — that is, in relation to policies of neo-imperial intimidation, sanctions, violent aggression and natural resource plunder. Worse than compromise: complicity.

## WHEN THE WORKER HAD NO COUNTRY

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In the middle of the nineteenth century, Marx and Engels could famously declare that “the worker has no country.” The origins of working-class internationalism lie in the absence of political representation and of material integration into the nation-state. The working class was at first beneath and beyond the nation. Its “nationalization” took place rather late in the day, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and especially in the first decades of the twentieth.

Compulsory education for the purposes of creating a literate and nationalized pool of labor; recruitment into war machines capable of mobilizing masses for suicidal sacrifice in total war — these were the motives and mechanisms that underpinned and propelled forward the “nationalization” of the masses throughout much of the capitalist core. “Nationalization” and state-propagated nationalisms were the products of deliberate decisions made by rulers commanding rival ships of state across the stormy seas in an era marked by creeping democratization, capitalist and imperialist expansion, and looming inter-imperialist war.

As Eric Hobsbawm eloquently insisted, during this era, all versions of nationalism that “came to the fore” had one thing in common: “a rejection of the new proletarian socialist movements, not only because they were proletarian, but also because they were, consciously and militantly internationalist, or at the very



least non-nationalist.” Indeed, in the crucial prelude to the unprecedented level of human destruction of the so-called Great War, mass nationalism competed directly for appeal amidst a host of rival ideologies — “notably, class-based socialism” — which, tragically, it vanquished.

arc of the party’s organizational trajectory was thus: from a small group of professional revolutionaries to an ever-bigger bunch of reformist bureaucrats.

It was a trajectory that mirrored and corresponded with the growth of the state itself in Germany, and indeed, across much of Europe and North America in the so-called “capitalist core,” from the third quarter of the nineteenth century, and that continued with an ever-more militarist bent with the onset of the age of imperial scramble.

Only the most committed revolutionaries, who were by no coincidence among the most profound theorists and thorough-going critics of imperialism, most prominently Lenin and Luxemburg, but also all the individuals

and organizations involved in the Zimmerwald movement, held true to internationalist principles; only they proved capable of resisting the hegemonic current towards “national integration” and ultimately capitulation before the warring idols of the nation.

Where was the mass mutiny? Where was the will to resist a meaningless and brutal death? Where was the solidarity among the workers of the world? Where was their will to unite, to break the chains that bound them together, despite and across national boundaries? Even Luxemburg’s faith was shaken by the outbreak of war, causing her, from the prison cell in which she would pen her *Junius Pamphlet*, to double down, or up the ante, formulating the alternatives in the famous phrase “socialism or barbarism” — a phrase which she attributed to Engels.



## We desperately need a new revolutionary internationalism

The Second International eventually succumbed to the opportunism of social democracy, and to the intimately connected contagion of nationalism. Working-class solidarity was undermined by the machinations of divide and conquer, crushed in the context of inter-imperial rivalry, and buried in the trenches of the First World War.

In the paradigmatic case of Germany, Rosa Luxemburg famously diagnosed and sought to explain opportunism as a fundamental obstacle to the victory of revolutionary struggle, as a pathological but historical phenomenon, which she persuasively interpreted — through the lens of historical materialism — as related to the infiltration of a creeping petit-bourgeois mentality by the growth of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and its corresponding bureaucratization. The

If, and only if, out of the ashes of the catastrophe the phoenix of the world revolution were to arise, then, and only then, could humanity avoid an endless descent into “barbarism,” a telling term in its own right. A world revolution, nothing less, was what anti-capitalist internationalists believed the necessary outcome and denouement of the contradictions, the crisis, the total war. The alternative was simply unthinkable, or at least unspeakable, for them.

## LUXEMBURG AGAINST BOLSHEVISM

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The Russian Revolution, when it came, was hailed among internationalists — Luxemburg, Trotsky and Lenin alike — as a precursor and trigger for world revolution. Such was the criterion upon which all the most prominent revolutionaries — in the Marxist tradition, at least — agreed was most relevant for judging the ultimate success or failure of the “local” revolution: whether it served to set off the world revolution.

All the great Marxist internationalists concurred: the revolution to overthrow capitalism was bound to be global in scope. Lenin, for certain, had a very hard time conceiving of the prospect of a Russian revolution without “further repercussions,” “abandoned to itself.” Indeed, as Paul Mattick pointed out long ago, Lenin seemed to assume “that the onslaught of the imperialist nations against the Bolsheviks would break the back of the Russian revolution if the proletariat of Western Europe failed to come to the rescue.”

However, when the world revolution in fact failed to materialize, the Bolshevik party in power did not put down its weapons and simply give up. Instead, it proceeded to improvise, to further fasten its grip on the levers





of power, its fusion with the state apparatus, and ultimately to forge ahead with the project of “socialism in one country.” A hyper-centralized dictatorship of the Bolshevik party in a one-party state; and within the party, a hyper-centralized dictatorship of the Central Committee over the members; and within the Central Committee, a hyper-centralized dictatorship of the Chair. In sum, a dictatorship of the party, over the proletariat, and over the population more generally.

This was the governing model of Marxist-Leninist democratic centralism in practice, in the USSR, and, with some variation, in all the states where Marxism-Leninism subsequently came to power, most frequently transforming into state-capitalist and “developmentalist” dictatorships. A tyrannical model, a far cry from human emancipation as envisioned, for example, in Marx’s early writings, or for that matter, in his depiction of the dictatorship of the proletariat in his later work on the Paris Commune — or even as envisioned by Lenin in *State and Revolution*, on the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power.

If only Luxemburg had lived! There is a case to be made that her martyrdom, along with that of her comrade Karl Liebknecht, in January 1919, marks a world-historic turning point — a critical juncture at which the world-revolutionary tide began definitively to ebb, and the countervailing forces of fascism began to gain momentum instead.

In the wake of her martyrdom, Luxemburg’s image was elevated to the status of sacred, hoisted amid the revolutionary pantheon; but too often, her fierce polemics against the opportunistic and tyrannical tendencies inherent in the Bolshevik model have been altogether ignored, when not patronizingly dismissed.

But Red Rosa was certainly right in her early criticism of the Bolshevik organizational form for its authoritarian structure and style, its promotion of “blind subordination, in the smallest details, of all party organs, to the party center, which alone thinks and decides for all” — a criticism she first formulated as far back as 1904. Though it is more controversial to say so, Red Rosa was also more right than wrong in her tenacious opposition to nationalism in all its manifestations. She, not the Bolsheviks, proved the more “far-sighted about the dangers lurking in nationalism for revolutionary internationalism.”

Luxemburg was indeed correct to emphasize the link between Bolshevik opportunism and its espousal of the dogma of national self-determination, a piercing criticism for which she has been much caricatured and maligned. Not that Luxemburg was opposed to national freedom; she was not. As Jacob Talmon pointed out, she was just more honest, more sober, more incisive than the Bolsheviks in her two-pronged assessment that “socialism could not be reached via national liberation struggles,” and, inversely, that “national freedom could be obtained only through an international social revolution,” which together led her to espouse the programmatic conclusion that “the first and categorical imperative was therefore to sink all national differences and to unite in a common anti-imperialist front.”

Easier said than done; more difficult to practice than to preach.

## **ANTI-COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

The World War and the Bolshevik revolution may not have spread across Europe and triggered the world revolution, as its protagonists had initially hoped and believed it must. But it

did certainly contribute to the percolation of anti-colonial consciousness throughout the colonized world — with the conscription of colonial subjects into imperial armies playing a significant part in the process.

As Timothy Mitchell has emphasized, while “Lenin’s declaration the day after taking power that ‘any nation that desires independence’ should be allowed ‘to determine the form of its state life by free voting’” definitely had a broad appeal among the colonized, and beyond; indeed, it “echoed wider campaigns, emerging across several continents, against the violence and injustice of Empire.”

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After all, Lenin’s own theory of imperialism was largely derivative of the work of J.A. Hobson, the British liberal who provides the seemingly paradoxical connection between Lenin’s ideas about self-determination and those of Woodrow Wilson. Hobson had “supported the Afrikaner republics that Britain defeated in the South African war,” and had befriended the Afrikaner military and political leader Jan Smuts, “who fought the British but then negotiated the incorporation of the Boer republics into the Union of South Africa,” and who later joined his ‘old friend’ on the British War cabinet “to participate in framing the post-war settlement.”

Indeed, as Mitchell has provocatively but compellingly argued, it was Smuts who would “in fact guide the formulation of the ‘ideal’ of self-determination later attributed to Woodrow Wilson.” The model for self-determination in practice? None other than “the development of self-government in South Africa, which became a method of empowering whites and further disempowering non-whites.”

The experience of the Boer republics thus shaped “the wider solution to the claims of subject populations after the First World War,” in a way that subtly transformed “the demand for democratization into the very different principle of self-determination, or ‘the consent of the governed’.” The regime of self-determination as an alternative to more thoroughgoing democratic demands, as an efficient means to fend off the threat and the specter of an emergent global demos — in sum, decolonization as a re-equilibration and transition to a neo-colonial global system of “decentralized despotism,” to invoke Mamdani’s most suggestive term.

Luxemburg, like no other, saw right through the pious cant about self-determination. She cogently insisted, against Lenin, in no uncertain terms, that “so long as capitalist states endure, particularly so long as imperialist world-politics determines and gives form to the inner and outer life of the states, the national right of self-determination has not the least thing in common with their practice either in war or in peace.”

Nor did she refrain from drawing far-sighted conclusions from this analysis, urgently appealing to her fellow revolutionaries to resist at all costs the siren song of the nation, clairvoyant in her warning that, as Mattick later put it, “any socialist policy which fails to take account of this definite historical level and which in the midst of the world vortex lets itself be governed merely by the isolated viewpoints of a single country is doomed in advance.” A more concise description and diagnosis of the inherent limits of the tactics, strategies, and (lack of) principles destined to be pursued by the Third International would indeed be hard to find.

To side with Luxemburg against Lenin on the matter of self-determination of course begs the question of the relationship between revolutionary internationalism and anti-imperialism. We could argue, with Mattick, that anti-capitalist internationalism must certainly be anti-imperialist — but at this point in history, we simply can no longer afford to delude ourselves into thinking that putting an end to imperialism can be achieved by any other means than by destroying the capitalist system in the so-called “advanced capitalist core.” In the absence of such destruction, we can rest assured, sooner or later, “‘liberation’ from one type of imperialism leads to subordination to another.”

## READING LUXEMBURG WITH FANON

In a recent article for Al Jazeera, Hamid Dabashi called Luxemburg “an unsung hero of postcolonial theory.” This perhaps takes the point too far, but Luxemburg’s revolutionary internationalism certainly has a lot more in common with later postcolonial thinkers than is too often assumed. Emblematically, with Frantz Fanon, who lived long enough to witness the “pitfalls of national consciousness,” to see with his own eyes that “nationalism, that magnificent song that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters, and dies away on the day that independence is proclaimed.”

Indeed, Fanon was particularly acute in his observations about the degeneration of party politics in the post-colonial context, in his de-





nouncement of nascent national despotism and creeping corruption. As he astutely surmised:

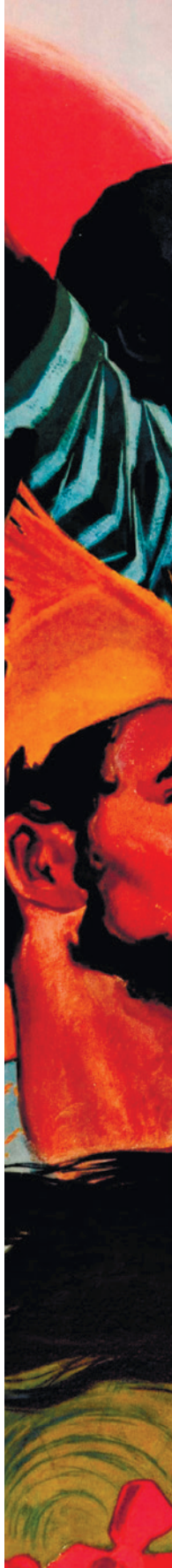
*After independence, the party sinks into an extraordinary lethargy. The militants are only called upon when so-called manifestations are afoot, or international conferences, or independence celebrations. The local party leaders are given administrative posts, the party becomes an administration, and the militants disappear into the crowd and take the empty title of citizen. ...*

*After a few years, the break-up of the party becomes obvious, and any observer, even the most superficial, can notice that the party, today the skeleton of its former self, only serves to immobilize the people. The party, which during the battle had drawn to itself the whole nation, is falling to pieces. The intellectuals who on the eve of independence rallied to the party, now make it clear by their attitude that they gave their support with no other end in view than to secure their slices of the cake of independence. The party is becoming a means of private advancement.*

Even so, Fanon remained perhaps overly optimistic in his formulation of the remedy for this collective ill, in what now appears a rather naïve prescription: “If you really want your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness.” In retrospect, Smuts and Hobson were more realistic, in their judgment that national consciousness was the precise antidote and alternative necessary for fending off and domesticating the prospects of revolutionary internationalist challenges to the tyranny of global capitalism, for translating and transforming threatening claims about global justice into more innocuous matters of international charity.

Less naïve on Fanon’s part were his two additional, related points of counsel: the first, about the vital urgency of the task of “political education”; the second, intimately related point, about the need for “decentralization in the extreme.” To open people’s minds, to “awaken them,” means nothing else, for Fanon, than “allowing the birth of their intelligence.” This task cannot be confused with “making a political speech.” It means, on the contrary, “to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too.”

To put such revolutionary pedagogy into practice, Fanon continues, “in order really to incarnate the people,” extreme decentralization is essential. A political education into self-determination, understood







and practiced, literally, as taking matters into one's own hands — this is Fanon's radically decentralizing spin on self-determination. It constitutes a crucial, dialectical counterpart to Luxemburg's emphasis on thoroughgoing, revolutionary internationalism.

## BEYOND THE CULT OF THE NATION

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The nation as a mystified basis of community has not only defeated revolutionary class-based alternatives at multiple critical junctures over the course of the past century, it has also been institutionalized and thus reified in the educational system, the mass media, the state bureaucracy, as well as by political parties, including the representatives of social democracy.

The forces of social democracy, along with their allies in the trade union movement, were together responsible for many of the democratic limits to commodification imposed upon capitalism, especially in the north and west of Europe, in the decades after the Second World War, when social rights expanded under the aegis of the welfare state. Yet such accommodation came at a price — namely, the disorganization and depoliticization of the working class, its progressive conversion into passive spectators of politics at most, more often than not, into mere consumers. This waning, if not death, of class consciousness helped paved the way for the subsequent victory of neoliberalism, the triumph of the cult of the market — not to mention the resurgence of the cult of the nation.

The manifold ways in which national consciousness has been institutionalized, reinforced by the frequent appeals of political elites to supremacist, exclusionary and patriarchal conceptions of national belonging, for

the purposes of dividing and conquering the exploited and oppressed, have effectively hindered the popularity and salience of feelings of transnational empathy, solidarity, loyalty, community and belonging.

In a word, the cult of the nation constricts and constrains the horizons of our collective consciousness. It thus undermines our capacity for exercising collective rationality in the face of the urgent social and political

problems we must confront together, as members of the human race, if we are to stand a chance of successfully transforming global constellations of social-property relations.

Such a transformation is urgently needed not just for the sake of justice. The privileges of the plutocrats, the tyrants and the war-mongers must be checked, they must be held accountable, because their greed, their lust for power, their lethal ineptitude and

their colossal irresponsibility are literally threatening the future of life on our planet. But so long as the cult of the nation continues to mystify our consciousness, we will remain disempowered — or worse, we will remain complicit, condemned to aiding and abetting their crimes.

There is a long history of crimes committed in the name of the nation, especially in the name of those nations that can be classified as “Great Powers.” In fact, the crimes of the past can in large part account for the “Great Power” status of some nation-states today. In this sense, these crimes do not remain in the past, but live on in the present. And they live on in another sense as well, for the lies and propaganda employed to justify the crimes of the past continue to resonate in the present, even when they are not explicitly repeated and defended, but simply downplayed and whitewashed, or even covered over in an attempt to induce historical amnesia.

When not confronted directly and deliberately deconstructed, in the name of truth and more than mere reconciliation, in the pursuit of just compensation, the lies and propaganda inherited from the past will continue to weigh on the collective guilty conscience. They will continue to contaminate the collective subconscious, and they will thus

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# The worker, once again, must come to realize that she has no country.

inevitably seep into, be inflected and reflected in, the contours of contemporary collective consciousness.

This is precisely why conflicts and taboos about collective memory are never just about how the past is remembered, but are instead so often central to struggles for hegemony in the present, pitting those committed to the preservation of the status quo against those committed to alternative projects seeking to contest and transform existing constellations of material and social power relations. “The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.”

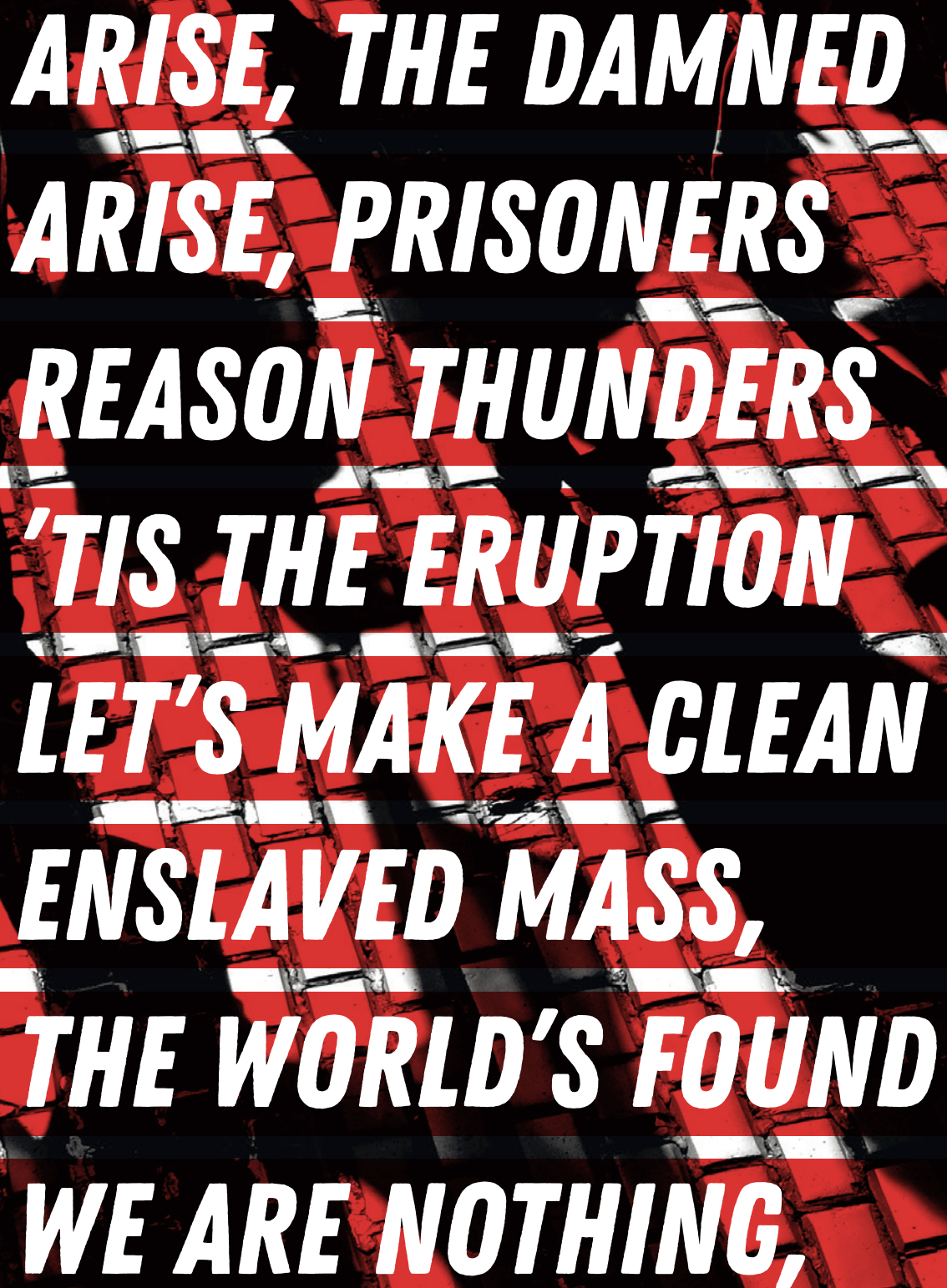
We on the left must denounce in no uncertain terms any and all concessions to resurgent social chauvinism. The worker, once again, must come to realize that she has no country. The transnational cohesion and global coordination of the capitalist class has effectively outflanked and progressively undermined the class compromises and limits to commodification that had been negotiated and institutionalized at the level of the nation-state in response to the collective demands of organized labor.

As a consequence, the working class finds itself ever more disorganized, unincorporated, disenfranchised. Now, more than ever, it finds itself scattered across the globe, multi-ethnic in composition, below and beyond the nation. If the class struggle is to be reignited, both locally and globally, it is imperative that it reorganize and re-articulate itself accordingly. ★



THOMAS JEFFREY MILEY

*Thomas Jeffrey Miley is Lecturer of Political Sociology in the Department of Sociology at Cambridge. His research interests include comparative nationalisms and democratic theory. He is currently working on a project on struggles for self-determination in the twenty-first century. His latest book, co-edited with Federico Venturini, is Your Freedom and Mine: Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish Question in Erdogan’s Turkey (Black Rose, 2018).*



***ARISE, THE DAMNED  
ARISE, PRISONERS  
REASON THUNDERS  
'TIS THE ERUPTION  
LET'S MAKE A CLEAN  
ENSLAVED MASS,  
THE WORLD'S FOUND  
WE ARE NOTHING,***



***OF THE EARTH!***

***OF HUNGER!***

***IN ITS CRATER,***

***OF THE END.***

***SLATE OF THE PAST,***

***ARISE, ARISE!***

***ATION WILL CHANGE,***

***NOW LET'S BE ALL!***

# Dear readers, supporters and friends of ROAR...

This issue marks the end of ROAR's adventure in print — and it has been a great one. Over the past 2.5 years we put together eight issues covering a wide range of themes, from communes to climate change, from urban and anti-fascist struggles to the future of work, finance and surveillance. Our aim for the print magazine was to provide a diverse and international readership with revolutionary perspectives on some of the most pressing social challenges of the twenty-first century. The amount of support and solidarity we have received from you has been truly overwhelming. We are immensely grateful for this. Of course our print run would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and dedication of the dozens of contributors, illustrators, friends, comrades and loved-ones listed on the right.

In gratitude & solidarity,

**Jerome Roos**, *Founding Editor*

**Joris Leverink**, *Managing Editor*

**Bojan Kanižaj**, *Art Director*

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**VISA APPLICATION**  
(FOR NON-VIETNAMESE PASSPORT HOLDERS)

EMBASSY OF THE S. R. V. OF VIETNAM  
IN THE STATE OF HOA CHI MINH

ADD : 101, 103, 105, 107, Nguyen Du, Hai Anh  
Tel : (84-90) 4206, 82-494 4311  
Fax : (84-90) 4247  
Email: vnmembay@gmail.com  
Website: vietnamembay-hoachinh.org

01 Photo  
(4 cm x 6 cm)

1. Name (in block letters):  
First name \_\_\_\_\_ Middle name \_\_\_\_\_ Family name \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date / Month / Year

3. Male  Female

4. Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Nationality at birth: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Nationality at present: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Passport number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of issue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of expiry: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Profession: \_\_\_\_\_  
Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Telephone (V): \_\_\_\_\_ Date / Month / Year

10. Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Telephone (H): \_\_\_\_\_

12. Purpose of visit to Vietnam: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Proposed date of entry: \_\_\_\_\_ Date / Month / Year

14. Proposed date of exit: \_\_\_\_\_ Date / Month / Year

15. Requesting a visa good for:  
• Number of entry: \_\_\_\_\_  
- Single (one time) visit   
- Multiple visits   
• Length of stay: \_\_\_\_\_  
- One month   
- 03 months   
• Visa on the spot (+10 NIS)

16. Name, address of your contact (sponsor, host, hotel...) in Vietnam (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

I solemnly declare that the statements made in this application are true and correct.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_



## Passports, (20th Century)

ID Cards, Visa Applications

ISSN 2468-1695



In the early 20th century, so-called “passports” were introduced on a global scale. This document quickly became a more important representation of one’s existence than the person themselves. Having the “wrong” passport generally prevented people from crossing certain borders or being eligible to appeal to so-called “universal” human rights. The archaic institution of national citizenship — which led to the introduction of passports in the first place — was abolished along with its paper representation in the immediate wake of the World Revolution.