

ORGANISE 98

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“It was so much easier to blame it on Them. It was bleakly depressing to think that They were Us. If it was Them, then nothing was anyone’s fault. If it was us, what did that make Me? After all, I’m one of Us. I must be. I’ve certainly never thought of myself as one of Them. No one ever thinks of themselves as one of Them. We’re always one of Us. It’s Them that do the bad things.” - Terry Pratchett, Jingo

We Anarchists, we’re drifters and dreamers, an erratic constellation of differing opinions, tendencies, and perspectives. We can seem so distant from each other in one moment, and in the next a deeply bonded network of autonomous cells, all primed for the same purpose. The principles of solidarity and mutual aid, cutting through it all, grounding us, helping us to remain, a community. Yet even here we have built us the barriers of “Us” and “Them”.

When I talk about the successes of anarchists and socialists, no one ever questions the collective attribution. When I talk about Anarchists today and suddenly it’s suddenly a fragmented array of alliances. These are sometimes personal, sometimes political, tho often based on nothing more than who someone interacted with, or read, first. So averse to being grouped together in some ad-hoc social order, many of us find ourselves desperately scared of being even perceived as “We”. Older comrades more and more reject the youth and vis-versa, generational sniping lettings us all down. Those who take pride in their resilience and hardy demenour couldn’t be any further from the soft of heart. Anarchists of differing tendencies treat each other with contempt, sheltering ourselves into ideological security, othering the alien and original in the same motion. *“I don’t have to take responsibility if I’m not a part of anything, it’s Them to blame for the death of the street movement. I’m one of US, and we’ve got the absolute truth of it. Someday they’ll agree with me!”*

Well there is no Absolute Truth. I’m an Anarchist Communist. Anarchist Communism is not an absolute truth.

We’re merely an aspect of The Beautiful Idea and the simple reality is that no tendency of Anarchism is an island. We cannot stand alone. We, us and them alike, need to break down the petty fiefdoms which we’ve constructed around ourselves. Stop seeking out a way to blame Them, and start making things better for all of Us. This magazine is taking those steps.

This continues with the follow three actions:

1. We now have an Organise Editorial Collective [OEC], composed of people both in and outside of the AF. We’ll be expanding this collective over time and growing Organise’s capacity.
2. We are broadening our remit. While we very much remain an Anarchist Communist magazine and website, our solidarity and our conscience compels us to speak on, and share info regarding the wider anti-authoritarian movement, both domestically and internationally.
3. Over time we’ll be assisting in the development of a Local Autonomous Media network. This will be composed of seperate autonomous groups, utilising shared resources and a collective platform to provide clear anti-authoritarian commentary at a community level. Get in contact if you’re keen to write about what’s happening down your ends.

We can help build a world where we no longer rely on “Us and Them” to escape our privileges, our history, or our futures. There is always something we can do. Silence and inaction are complicity and we can no longer afford to shy from this. The world is burning, working class people are suffering, the draconian state is biting down on our homes and freedoms.

Now is a time of solidarity. Now is the time of We. Put aside your grievances and stand together.
To the revolution now.

Peter Ó Máille
Editor of Organise
Member of the OEC

Organise is a project of the Anarchist Federation [AF]. It is composed by the Organise Editorial Collective [OEC]. As anarchists communists we fight for a world without leaders, where power is shared equally amongst communities, and people are free to reach their full potential.

We publish twice a year with the aim to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate discussion on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

With this in mind we positively solicit contributions from our readers regardless of their political tendency and host a variety of media relating to anarchism alongside broader anti-authoritarian and autonomous analogs.

As a result, the contents of this magazine do not represent the collective viewpoint of the AF unless stated as such. Revolutionary ideas develop from discussion, they do not merely drop out of the air! We hope this publication will help that discussion to take place and lights a fire in your heart.

Cover Artist: Roger Peet.

Roger is an artist, printmaker and writer living in Portland, Oregon. His work engages the millennial tension between human activities and the integrity of wild phenomena; addressing the contemporary crises of biodiversity and capitalism, how they change landscapes and lives, and what can and can't be done about them. He is a founding member of the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, coordinates the national Endangered Species Mural Project, and helps to run the cooperative Flight 64 print studio in Portland.

Find Roger:
@toosphexy on IG and Twitter
www.justseeds.org/artist/rogerpeet

Contact:
organise@afed.org.uk

Support us and subscribe:
patreon.com/Organise

Website:
organisemagazine.org.uk

Discord Server:
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Address:
AF c/o Freedom Bookshop,
84b Whitechapel High St.
London E1 7QX

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“To revolt is a natural tendency of life. Even a worm turns against the foot that crushes it. In general, the vitality and relative dignity of an animal can be measured by the intensity of its instinct to revolt.”

- Mikhail Bakunin

The Organise Editorial Collective are:

Peter O'Maille

The “vaunted” editor, composition, design

Ayden Parsons

Work place organising and researcher

Guillem Gallès

Int. correspondent, translations, and copy editing

Aces

Copy editing and proof reading

Zosia Brom

Ruiner of Anarchism, resercher, and copy editing

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS EDITION INCLUDE:

Roger Peet, Luther Blissett, Capybara, Nik from Housmans, Members of the RCN, IWU, NEU, CWU, UCU, and RMT, R3N, Sudanese Anarchists' Gathering, CrimethInc, ABC-Belarus, APO, Pagalya, John, Operation Solidarity, Malatesta, João Black, Parsnip, Reddebrek, Seditonist Distro, NoBonzo, the Atlanta Press Community Collective, Strangers In A Tangled Wilderness, Donald Room, Rabbits, Anna Keyes, and many more, unattributed and attributed, those whose work we used without asking or being granted permission, and those who never gave a name.

Oh and the Tarot cards are by the compas from Adbusters. Go to www.adbusters.org or add their socials to decypher the esoteric meanings.

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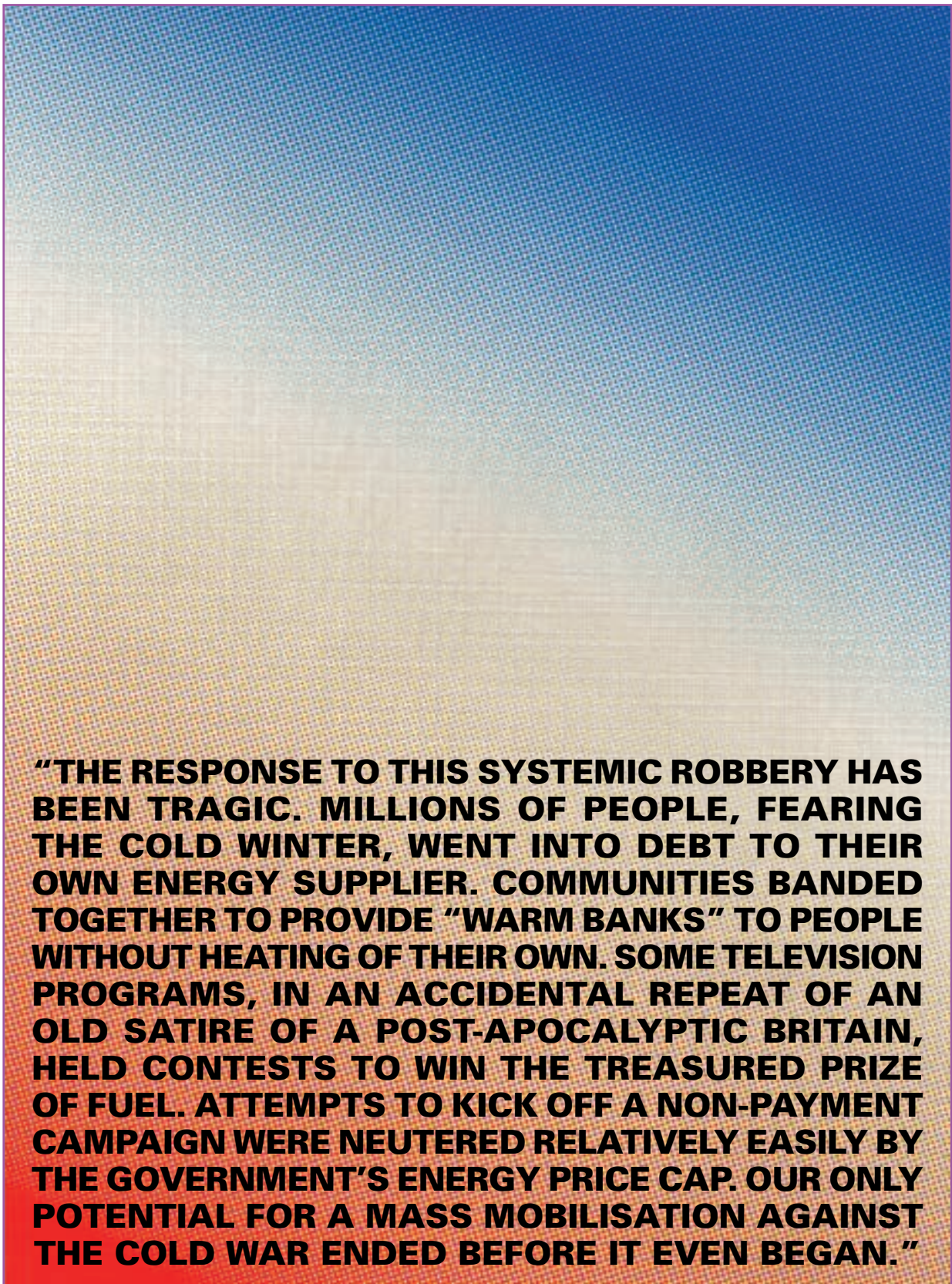
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“THE RESPONSE TO THIS SYSTEMIC ROBBERY HAS BEEN TRAGIC. MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, FEARING THE COLD WINTER, WENT INTO DEBT TO THEIR OWN ENERGY SUPPLIER. COMMUNITIES Banded TOGETHER TO PROVIDE “WARM BANKS” TO PEOPLE WITHOUT HEATING OF THEIR OWN. SOME TELEVISION PROGRAMS, IN AN ACCIDENTAL REPEAT OF AN OLD SATIRE OF A POST-APOCALYPTIC BRITAIN, HELD CONTESTS TO WIN THE TREASURED PRIZE OF FUEL. ATTEMPTS TO KICK OFF A NON-PAYMENT CAMPAIGN WERE NEUTERED RELATIVELY EASILY BY THE GOVERNMENT’S ENERGY PRICE CAP. OUR ONLY POTENTIAL FOR A MASS MOBILISATION AGAINST THE COLD WAR ENDED BEFORE IT EVEN BEGAN.”

THE UNITED KINGDOM OF MASS MURDER

It has now been 13 years since the Tories came to power, 13 years of economic misery, rising bigotry and autocratic overreach. The past year has felt like the culmination of the Tory political project, as all of these disgraceful movements have accelerated beyond what we’re capable of keeping up with.

On the surface, it’s looked like the Tory party has been in a never-ending clusterfuck. It seems like every time one disaster broke out, there were three or four more brewing in the background. Since the publication of our last issue, we have been through three prime ministers, and the two ousted PMs have already declared their intentions to return to power. But this was little more than a distraction.

For all their widely-publicised internal bickering, the Tories have been fundamentally united on the same three principles that have bound them together for years: classism, racism and authoritarianism. These principles have driven them to wage an undeclared war against us all.

“KILL THE POOR”

It was a cold, bleak winter to get through this year. The boiler and the radiator, usually our two most reliable lifelines for warmth through the winter, were no longer in reach. Our energy companies, clustered together in a cartel, took on the role of a protection racket – extracting more and more of our hard-earned money for the pleasure of allowing us to live in minimal dignity. Monthly bills doubled, tripled and quadrupled, skyrocketing into the hundreds and even thousands of pounds. Many more didn’t have bills to pay, as their houses were broken into

and forcibly fitted with pre-payment meters. Within the space of months, over 7 million households – a third of the British public – found themselves in fuel poverty.

The response to this systemic robbery has been tragic. Millions of people, fearing the cold winter, went into debt to their own energy supplier. Communities banded together to provide “warm banks” to people without heating of their own. Some television programs, in an accidental repeat of an old satire of a post-apocalyptic Britain, held contests to win the treasured prize of fuel. Attempts to kick off a non-payment campaign were neutered relatively easily by the government’s energy price cap. Our only potential for a mass mobilisation against the cold war ended before it even began.

But for many in the UK, even paying for heating has become a luxury, as we are forced to choose between a warm home or a full stomach. Food poverty is the new normal for millions of British people – 10 million adults and 4 million children – who often go for days without eating. It doesn’t even matter whether one works multiple jobs, or if you live in a household with others that also work themselves to the bone, as every month the prices on shelves increase by 5-15%. The “golden age of cheap food”, we’re told, is now over.

When the pandemic started, thousands of mutual aid groups were established throughout the country in order to ensure that we all got fed. But even now as the pandemic subsides, these mutual aid groups haven’t gone anywhere. One crisis has simply led into another. Food banks, community pantries and social kitchens »

have now become a necessary fact of life. But the diligent work of these groups just hasn't been enough and they're starting to buckle under the pressure of ever increasing mass hunger. Reports keep coming in that people that rely on food banks are beginning to reject potatoes and root vegetables, and increasingly request items that can be eaten cold, as the cost of cooking them is just too high to bare. Even people that once volunteered or donated their spare income to these food banks are now finding themselves on the other side of the line.

The most damaging effect that the rising cost of food is having is on our children. Kids that suffer through poverty have become reliant on free school meals, meals which are unavailable to them for months at a time. As these kids are not eating regularly, and when they are they're eating cheap unhealthy food, doctors and nurses are now reporting a sickening rise in cases of childhood malnutrition. Children as young as two-years-old are arriving to nurseries and schools already starving. And this is while their parents are actively skipping meals in order to keep them fed.

All of this would have been too much to bare even with a functioning health service, but a decade of austere cuts to the NHS mean there can be no recovering from this torture. Waiting times get longer and longer, with millions in line for treatment that is usually months away. In the worst cases, some people are waiting years for treatment, years that they may not have. Even emergency treatment is more difficult than ever to receive. Hundreds of people die each year while waiting for ambulances that never arrive or packed into overcrowded waiting rooms that overworked doctors and nurses can't possibly keep up with.

It's often said that every society is only nine missed meals away from revolution. But given how many meals we have all missed and how far away any revolution seems, this old proverb seems inaccurate. How do we make a revolution when we're too cold, hungry and sick to revolt?

“INVADERS MUST DIE”

As with any time of crisis, the ruling class have sought out a scapegoat to blame for the problems they caused, a way to keep us divided against each other rather than uniting against them. This time, the monstrous regime

of bigotry has selected targets from the most vulnerable people in our society: refugees.

Time and time again it has been made clear that there is no safe and legal route to asylum in the United Kingdom. Over the course of the past year, over 45,000 asylum seekers were forced to cross the English channel in small boats, in a dangerous route that has already claimed a number of lives. The Home Secretary Suella Braverman, building on the foundations left by her predecessors Priti Patel and Theresa May, is hard at work turning Britain's hostile environment into a deadly one.

Almost immediately after taking up the role, Braverman described refugees fleeing war-zones and economic collapse as “invaders”, in a shockingly fascist speech that a Holocaust survivor likened to the rhetoric used by the Nazis. Rhetoric aside, the Tory government has already established concentration camps, proposed the mass deportation of refugees and overseen the disappearance and kidnapping of children. They have even more shockingly sided themselves with the worst scum in society – slavers – with their declaration that they will withhold protection from victims of modern slavery.

The government's anti-refugee rhetoric and policies have emboldened a rise in street-level fascism. In October, a fascist carried out a terrorist attack against a refugee camp in Dover. Thankfully he was unsuccessful, but his genocidal call to action was taken up by fascists throughout the UK. Attacks on asylum centres have only increased since then, with one particularly shocking case of a fascist mob attempting to storm a hotel housing refugees in Merseyside. Were it not for the brave defence put up by local anti-fascists, a massacre may well have occurred. At every step of the way, the government has failed to condemn these attacks. In fact, their rhetoric has only grown sharper. Although they are not part of the same organisation, it would be naive to suggest they don't form two parts of the same whole. The Tory Party, for all intents and purposes, is transforming itself into the political wing of British fascism.

“DEATH TO DISSENT”

While we have been kept busy trying to keep food on their plates, the Tories are content that everybody is too distracted to pay attention to their moves towards creating a dictatorship.

The Tories were already moving to create an unaccountable executive government, outside and above the scrutiny of parliament and the courts. Since the Supreme Court rolled back Johnson's prorogation of parliament and blocked the deportation of refugees, the Tories have had their scopes set on the “lefty lawyers” that scuppered their autocratic ambitions. Justice Secretary Dominic Raab has already given the government the power to circumvent the courts and now wants to entirely block the possibility of judicial challenges to the government's actions.

Their desire for unaccountability has driven and been driven by attacks against their enemies. Not against His Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition, of course, but against the real opposition to the Tory project: political dissidents and the organised working class.

First and foremost on the government's enemies list was protestors. The rise in direct action campaigns against racism and environmental destruction has put the fear of the people into the hearts of the Tories. In response, they have moved to restrict protest – even the most peaceful – against their rule. Last year's infamous anti-protest act didn't go far enough for the Tories, who now intend to criminalise any form of disruptive demonstration. Long prison sentences await those that want to act against injustice, even those that wouldn't hurt a fly.

The government is also targetting workers, who dared to negotiate for better wages at a time when food and shelter are more unaffordable than ever before. At best, they offer paltry concessions that barely cover the cost of inflation. Meanwhile, they work together with the bosses to repress striking workers and their unions, pushing for new laws that would allow employers to fire and sue anyone that interfered with their profits.

The Tories have even set their sights on destroying their own greatest legacy by withdrawing from the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). Inspired by the dictatorships of Lukashenko and Putin, where dissidents are imprisoned, tortured and murdered as a matter of routine, the new Tory Party has declared that it no longer wants to be constrained by these pesky human rights. Without this bloody convention holding us back, they could finally Make Britain Great Again.

Before long, many of the rights and freedoms that we have taken for granted may no longer exist.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

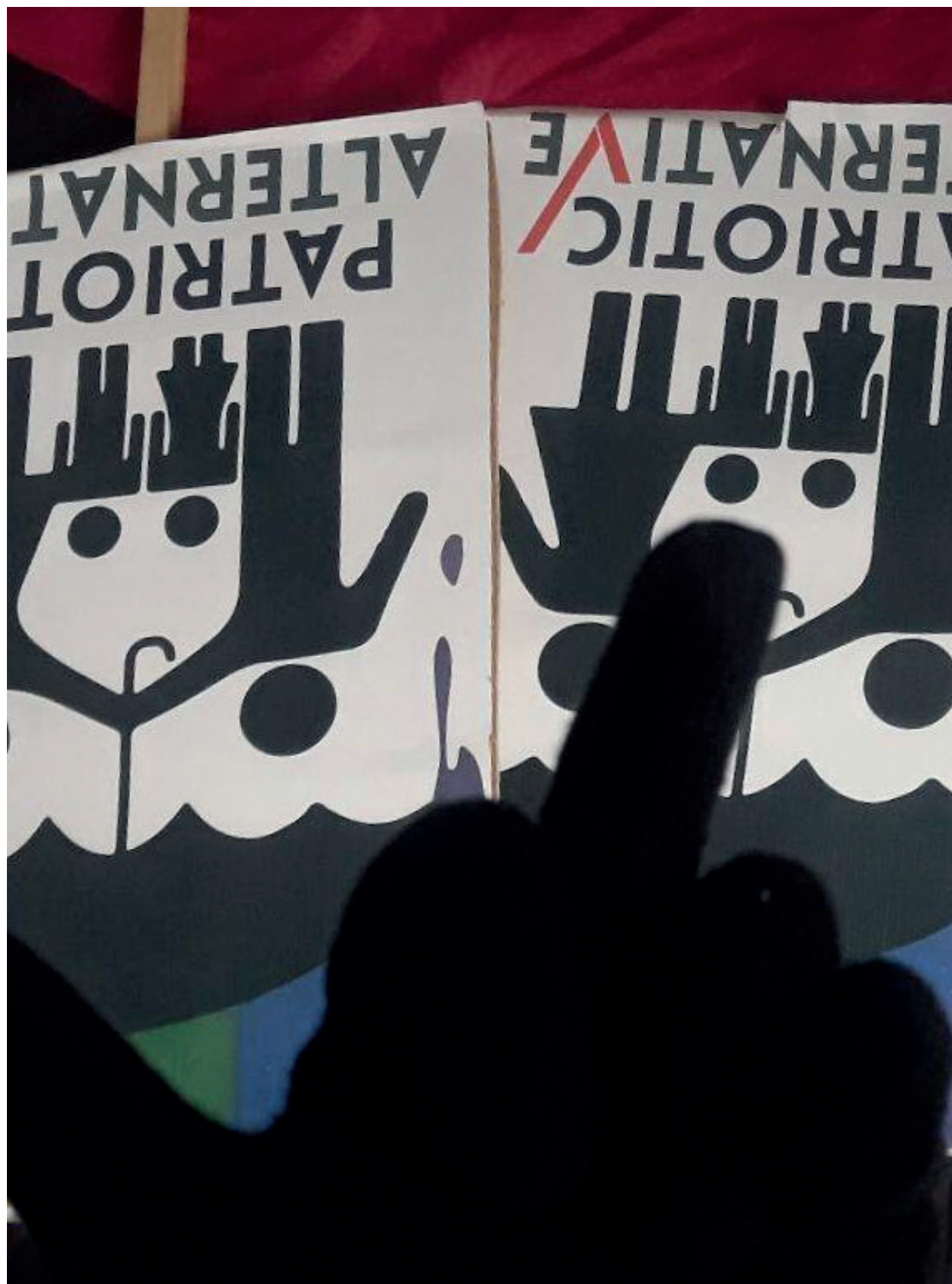
Having gone through all of this, it should be some relief to know that the Tories will likely be trounced at the next election. But unfortunately, we live in a society where the other faction of our ruling class is barely any better. Under Keir Starmer, the Labour Party is beginning to lose any real distinction from the Tories, in a sharp move to the right that makes even Tony Blair look like an ultra-left communist. The so-called party of the workers is now turning its back on workers. They have aligned with the Tories on attacking devolution, trans rights and the NHS. Even arch-nationalist Nigel Farage has endorsed Starmer's Labour, which he considers even further right than the Tories on immigration. At this point, Labour is little more than a more competent Tory party.

But even if we did elect the most benevolent and progressive Labour government in history, they wouldn't be able to undo a fraction of the damage that the Tories have done. Even if they dedicated their entire legislative power towards repealing the authoritarian acts passed by the Tories, it's inevitable that they'd miss some. The Tories have successfully Gish galloped their policies into the long-term. Tory policy is integral to the British state. The British state is a Tory project.

If the Tories are ousted, they will do what they have always done: regroup, bide their time and build their strength until they can take back the power they see as theirs by right. And when they return, they could be even worse than they are now.

The solution to this creeping tyranny in our country requires nothing less than the elimination of the Conservative and Unionist Party, all its organs and all that which enables its rise to power. If it's a war they want to wage against us, we must be prepared to fight back. ■

Guillem Gallès



SCRATCH A TRANSPHOBES: PT 1

The anti-gender (also known as ‘TERF’ or ‘gender critical’) movement represents a multi-pronged assault on the lives of trans people. This is being done via street-level fascism and more legitimated forms such as via charity status organisations like the LGB Alliance influencing government policy. This has proved a successful strategy, as both major political party leaders, Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak have expressed transphobic views in line with anti-gender ideology. This multi-pronged attack feeds straight back into the more mainstream, white nationalist, fascist movements, such as Patriotic Alternative, who have been focused recently on anti-refugee rhetoric and demonstrations. Once again, both major political parties seek to appease them and the Tory government is implementing an even more murderous border policy to “Stop The Boats”. This would, however, break international law such as the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). This has led to a campaign to leave the ECHR which would reduce everyone’s human rights in the UK.

I argue that the anti-gender and mainstream fascist movements are one and the same. The differentiation between so-called ‘TERFs’ and white nationalist fascists is effectively pointless and the muddying of the waters on this point has only served to help them spread their hatred. The anti-gender movement is simply a particular strategy or tactical wing, if you like, of the fascist movement. Over the past year or two, we have seen a marked increase in collaboration between the anti-gender movement and their fascist friends, particularly on a street level. This article aims to highlight the increasing unity between anti-trans and open fascist movements in Britain, with a Part 2 about how we can respond as anarchists and anti-fascists.

“I argue that the anti-gender and mainstream fascist movements are one and the same. The differentiation between so-called ‘TERFs’ and white nationalist fascists is effectively pointless and the muddying of the waters on this point has only served to help them spread their hatred.”

TRANSPHOBES AND THEIR FAR-RIGHT FRIENDS

Let’s take a closer look at some of the personalities involved in anti-trans activism and how their work on the ground has recently been converging with other fascist groups and personalities. In 2020, Posie Parker (AKA Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull) founded the organisation ‘Standing for Women’ and since then has been organising demonstrations under the slogan, ‘Let Women Speak’. These events are punctuated by long, often rambling rants as well as the selling of Parker’s own ‘Adult Human Female’ t-shirts. There’s always a grift. Posie Parker has undoubtedly become one of the most prominent faces of the anti-gender movement as its chief organiser of street-level events.

In October 2019, Parker appeared on far-right YouTuber Jean-François Gariépy’s channel. Gariépy has previously called for the creation of a white ethno-state. Some of his other guests include neo-Nazis Richard Spencer and Mark Collett, as well as former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. Parker has also written for the far-right Spectator magazine, criticising a John Lewis advert featuring a young boy playing with makeup and high heels. She claims the advert is part of a ‘harmful agenda’. Parker also tweeted strongly Islamophobic, now deleted, tweets calling areas of Bradford an “awful place for women” especially around one school that was “99.9 % Pakistani Muslim” and that the term ‘Islamophobia’ itself was a “bullshit meaningless word to silence critics of Islam.”

Appearing on the podcast ‘Feminist Current’ in 2019, she praised Tommy Robinson and repeated his Islamophobic conspiracy theory about Telford grooming gangs »

on her livestreams. She has also taken selfies with Norwegian, Holocaust denying, neo-Nazi Hans Jørgen Lysglint Johansen and appeared in another interview conducted by the far-right network ‘Soldiers of Christ Online’. Parker is also an ‘advisor’ to the Women’s Liberation Front (WoLF), in this case a literal wolf in sheep’s clothing, considering they have accepted funding from ‘Alliance Defending Freedom’, a group which organises campaigns against abortion and LGBT rights. Not all in the anti-gender movement claim her as one of their champions, but you will find far more praise than criticism. We can see, then, that Parker places herself within the wider context of far-right activism globally and is perhaps one of the main drivers of the increasing convergence between mainstream, white nationalist fascists, and the anti-gender movement.

In 2021 and 2022, Trans Safety Network (TSN) were already highlighting this increasing convergence. Exploring the links between the two, they said, “This growing accord between the far-right and the gender critical movement over their anti-trans stances is a worrying trend that suggests both a mainstreaming of the far-right, using transphobia as a ticket into other spaces, as well as a radicalisation of people who would otherwise not praise open fascists.” In the following article, TSN offers an even more thorough breakdown on the convergence, which I will quickly go over. Prominent anti-trans journalist Julie Burchill had her book published by Stirling Press, which is owned by neo-Nazi Tabatha Stirling. In a leaked voice note, Stirling talks about the ‘JQ’, code for the ‘Jewish Question’. Burchill later cut ties. Stirling also claims allegiance to the anti-trans hate group LGB Alliance. Another link is between far-right arsonist Lee Harrison (jailed for setting fire to a flat housing a trans woman) and Posie Parker, with Harrison sharing content from Parker prior to the attack. On TikTok, a 16 year old boy started the #SuperStraight meme which was shared rapidly online and Posie Parker had a t-shirt with the phrase up on her website. Days later, Tommy Robinson was advertising the meme on his Telegram.

Jennifer Bilek has been a popular figure in the anti-gender movement for years and was previously a member of transphobic eco-fascist group ‘Deep Green Resistance’, which played a key role in the Hands Across the Aisle alliance between Radical Feminists and US Christian

Conservatives in the form of previously mentioned WoLF. Research by Christa Peterson reveals Bilek’s antisemitic conspiracy theories, which involves “a secret plan by Jewish billionaires to use “transgenderism” as a plot to bring about a transhumanist immortality project and enslave humanity through technocapital.”

It goes further than just sharing memes though. TSN point out the material alliances formed, looking particularly at a submission to the UN by WoLF in collaboration with the Christian Right anti-LGBT organisation “United Families International”. Signatories include Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull, Graham Linehan, Harry Miller for “We Are Fair Cop”, and Heather Brunskell-Evans, “cofounder of the Women’s Human Rights Campaign, who’s submission to the GRA inquiry last year [2022] called for the elimination of “transgenderism” as a form of [classification] of women.” Next to them on the list are Evangelical Christian organisations the Heritage Foundation (tied to the Trump campaign), American College of Pediatricians (who produce pseudo-scientific studies claiming teaching children about LGBT issues is harmful), and Partners for Ethical Care (who were involved in a project mapping trans health clinics which has inspired targeted harassment and anti-trans protests outside these locations). Finally, TSN points to the Women’s Human Rights Campaign (WHRC) as a key point of convergence. WHRC leader Sheila Jeffery’s has called for closer collaboration between feminists and the right. In the US, Kara Dansky, a joint member of WHRC, WoLF, and DGR, is a regular guest on Fox News talk show ‘Tucker Carlson Tonight’. All of this demonstrates the close ties between the anti-gender movement and other fascists. It also demonstrates that trans anarchists and anti-fascists have been raising the alarm about this for years at this point, with little uptake among leftists generally.

A Multi-Pronged Assault

The anti-gender movement styled itself to have the look of a legitimate protest movement, similar to actually progressive social movements. Part of this is the co-optation and appropriation of the Suffragette flag. They have also been spotted making their own ‘Legal Observer’ vests to look like the ones Green and Black Cross use. These are not real Legal Observers and Green and Black Cross is a trans inclusive organisation. Despite being called ‘Let Women Speak’, when one cis woman dared to speak in favour of

trans people at one of these events, she had the microphone taken away from her. At a recent event in London, (26th February 2023) one man, loudly exclaimed that he was indeed a Nazi. At the same time, Posie Parker was on her livestream asking where the Nazis were.

Similarly, another Posie Parker rally saw the far-right turn out in force to support it. Holding a sign that said ‘Defy the Gaystapo’ was Max Dunbar and Joseph Finnie, both former BNP members with their colleague Alistair McConnachie, who was suspended from UKIP for Holocaust denial. Far-right groups in attendance included ‘UK: A Force For Good’, the ‘British Freedom Party’, the ‘National Housing Party’, the ‘Scottish Family Party’, ‘Alliance Defending Freedom’, and ‘Hearts of Oak’. There was also American far-right journalist Andy Ngo who has a history of filming and doxxing anti-fascists. This is what anti-fascists are seeing on the ground right now and it represents a serious escalation in street-level fascism around trans existence.

Working in tandem with Posie Parker and street fascists (though never officially endorsing them) are organisations like the LGB Alliance and Women’s Place UK. These organisations are legitimised in a way that transphobes ranting about transhumanism at Speaker’s Corner aren’t, with the LGB Alliance being given charity status. The aim of organisations like this is primarily to influence government policy through their legitimated roles as ‘advisors’ and otherwise being groups the government can point to as part of the consultation process for legislation. This includes legislation around gender recognition reform, single-sex prisons, and trans healthcare, either working to strip away trans rights legislation or slow its implementation. Therefore, these groups can, to a certain extent, resist being called ‘fascist’ because of their legitimated status. But my argument is that these groups are just as fascist as Posie Parker, not just because they are run by anti-gender activists (who are fascists ideologically) but also because their goals align, forming a second point of attack.

On 21st October 2021, we saw the first LGB Alliance Conference at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in London. Attending the conference was Andy Ngo, showing that the explicit fascist links already existed by this point in time. TSN points out that LGB Alliance had connections to the US religious right from an early stage. Conservative activist Gary Powell bragged about having attended

their first pre-launch meeting, “Gary Powell has a long track record writing for (American conservative anti-same-sex-parenting) Witherspoon Institute as well as part of a closely-connected bioethics group Center for Bioethics and Culture which was founded by Jennifer Lahl (an outspoken critic of same-sex marriage as supposedly being a threat to women).” “LGB’ may be their name, but there’s a strong emphasis on the absent T. Meanwhile, LGB Alliance does precisely nothing to improve the lives of any LGB person and work with people actively campaigning against LGB rights. Their areas of interest in terms of campaigning include: opposition to relationship and sex education in schools, opposition to reforming the gender recognition act, calling for the withdrawal of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act, targeting resources on sexual violence, and campaigning for the exclusion of trans people from anti-conversion therapy legislation.

On a government level, the Conservative Party has embraced the anti-gender ideology within its ranks. The LGB Alliance attended the last Conservative conference and leadership hopefuls Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak both pandered to gender criticals and right-wingers on gender, hoping these ‘culture war’ issues would be a vote winner among their membership, as well as among the public going into the next election. On the other side of the aisle, the Labour Party are at best fence sitters and at worst fascist sympathisers. Labour MP Rosie Duffield is one of Parliament’s most outspoken transphobes. They can be found as well in the SNP (Joanna Cherry) and the Green Party (Shahrar Ali). Policy-wise, the bill that sought to make all forms of conversion therapy illegal was amended to exclude trans people, at the advice of groups like LGB Alliance. The state is the most capable of all the entities I’ve mentioned so far of doing material harm to trans people, as it does on a daily basis.

In conclusion, the anti-gender movement and the far-right are converging at pace, prominent anti-trans activists have been working alongside the far-right for years, and the state is taking advice from the LGB Alliance (which has its own links to the religious right) In part 2, I will advocate for a militant anti-fascism to counter this threat, alongside community building and solidarity. ■

Luther Blissett

THE LONELINESS OF THE SMALL-TOWN ANARCHO-COMMUNIST

It's not easy being a small-town anarcho-communist. Even if you adopt a less theoretical, hands-on approach and avoid badgering the local farmers about Bookchin while they're getting on with lambing season, there can be issues involved when it comes to praxis. Go and chain yourself to the railings by all means, but you're in with a good chance of discovering that your arresting officer lives three doors down, goes to the same pub as you, and is the brother of a local councillor, and that suddenly it's very difficult to get help with housing, allotments or even replies to your emails to local authorities.

Being in a community in which there's one or two degrees of separation between everyone, but in which it's not literally true that everyone knows everyone, comes with some notable downsides. It's simpler to just associate people with what you see them doing day to day, and that's the label they end up with. There's the Plant Lady. There's the Man Who Runs The Ice Cream Shop. And, in some towns, there's the Resident Radical Who Won't Shut Up About Communism. And because it's taken as re(a)d that the Resident Radical will, in fact, talk quite a lot about communism, it's seen as just 'their thing', and you're unlikely to engage with them on more than a surface level. You don't stand a strong chance of changing individual viewpoints by lecturing people, let alone the status quo.

I'd argue, though, that there is a kind of radicalism in small towns, one that you might not experience to the same degree in urban settings. When I set up a mutual aid group at the start of the pandemic, I'd envisaged the same set-up as what I'd seen being done in the cities, namely that somebody's appointed to look after

each street and make sure everyone was having their shopping done if they couldn't go themselves. But broadly speaking, this happened automatically, and it happened because of the fact that everyone vaguely knows everyone in our community. Where help was needed, it was required because people couldn't afford food in the first place, but that's an issue imposed on us from the top down, and it's something people face regardless of where they live. So the mutual aid group instead concentrated on setting up and running a free community larder, which is still operational and supported by the community to this day, three years on.

It can be easy to dismiss smaller communities and to act on the assumption that they're inherently less radical than urban ones, but I think this is an oversimplification. A different approach is called for, and it's one that is anything but top-down. Resist the temptation to lecture the farmers about Bookchin. Listen to them talk about their work. Don't ascribe political views to them that they may not hold, and take account of the challenges they're facing. Just as importantly, don't assume that they're unable to grasp political theory or that they're uninterested in it, or that your mention of anarchism is the first time they're hearing about it.

Seeing rural communities as a blank canvas, ready for you to paint black and red, mightn't be the best approach. There are reasons people may be reluctant to nail their colours to the political mast, and it isn't always lack of political conviction.

So what is the best approach? At the risk of oversimplifying, I would say that going out and helping your



communities is the way forward. I find it's more effective to avoid words like communism, anarchism, and even anarcho-syndicalism entirely, but rather to lead by example and let people come to these conclusions, or conclusions very close to them, on their own.

Look at what's there in your community, and meet people where you find them. Many if not most small towns have a food bank these days – just another thing we can thank the government for – and not all those running

these food banks will be communists. In fact, most of them won't be. They might not even be anti-capitalists. But they are decent people doing good work, and in joining them, you are in no way compromising your anti-capitalist principles; in fact, you are demonstrating why you have them in the first place. ■

Capybarbara,
A farming enthusiast in the rural north of England.

ON BOOKS...

My name is Nik and I'm the convenor of the Alliance of Radical Booksellers (ARB), and also a long time staff member at Housmans, a radical bookshop in London. In this little piece I'm sharing some thoughts about the role that books can play in anarchist/socialist organising.

At the simplest level books are ideas in physical form, and as politics is fundamentally a struggle of ideas (and of course the power to put those ideas into practice) it's perhaps not surprising that books have long played such a central part in left culture. Historically the pamphlet and the newspaper were particularly crucial in rabble rousing and raising consciousness; much of that ground has now moved to writing online, but printed books seem to have maintained their central position, despite the existential challenge that eBooks have posed.

I'd go as far as to say that this is a particularly great time for radical publishing. Books sales are reported to be generally up, with mainstream publishers like Penguin increasingly getting in on the radical publishing act, suggesting that political ideas once considered fringe are becoming more commonplace. Even the once free-falling numbers of independent bookshop closures seems to have stopped, with more bookshops opening than closing in recent times. The ARB has had around 15 new shops join in the last couple of years.

I don't think it's contentious to suggest that explicitly-anarchist activity is at a bit of a low point these days in the UK, and anarchist publishing seems to broadly

mirror that. On a positive note though, it seems to me that some anarchist ideas have become much more influential in the wider world, including the previously more hierarchical parts of the UK socialist left. Horizontalism, accountability, and the desire to correct bias and power imbalances, seem much more commonplace and common-sense than they were even ten years ago, and anarchists should take at least some credit for that.

Books could be considered a very isolated way of communicating between author and reader, each in their own private world, but it's the way that books bring people physically together that excites me the most. Meeting up around books has long been a core part of left organising. Whether it is a talk around a new title, a regular book club, or an annual bookfair, books have long been the perfect excuse for people to get together and ideally to make connections. Nothing makes me happier than hearing anecdotes of people who got talking at a book event at Housmans and then went on to continue the relationship afterward, be it a new friendship or starting up a new activist project.

I'm convinced that it's only through the bonds of real world social interaction that we can build strong movements. Due to profound changes in the way many of us work and reside, lots of the ways these social bonds got made in the twentieth century are either gone or greatly weakened. Book events definitely have a role to play in bringing us together.

In the past I would've made more of the fact that book culture can be intimidating to some, and the

idea of meeting up at a 'book event' would put some people off. But the social media age is also the age of democratising ideas and debate. Online spaces are filled with video essays, blog posts, hot takes, and sharing of links. Having an opinion and making it public has never felt more normal.

I feel like there is a new window of opportunity opening right now for more in-person exchange of ideas. Covid took the momentum out of in-person meetings, and hopefully that threat is increasingly in retreat. There seems to be a revived appetite for people to meet up and we're certainly not short of political crises to discuss and agitate around.

From my conversation with customers at Housmans over the years, bookshops can certainly be a more welcoming and less intimidating way for people to come into contact with radical politics, and I think doing whatever we can to increase the sense of accessibility and normality towards revolutionary ideas, the better.

Getting people into the same room is one thing, making them feel comfortable and having a positive experience another, but for me the hardest part – and this is something I've been thinking about a lot but don't have a perfect solution for – is how to get people talking to one another and allow for relationships to develop and grow beyond any single meeting.

People (myself included) cringe at exercises where they are asked to introduce themselves to the person sitting next to them, but it's exactly that kind of thing that needs to happen more. I would love to hear people's ideas about ways to achieve better interactions at events, and if anyone feels knowledgeable on the topic I would be thrilled if they got in touch with me (nik@housmans.com). It is certainly something we are going to try and introduce into our events programme at Housmans, once it gets rolling again this year.

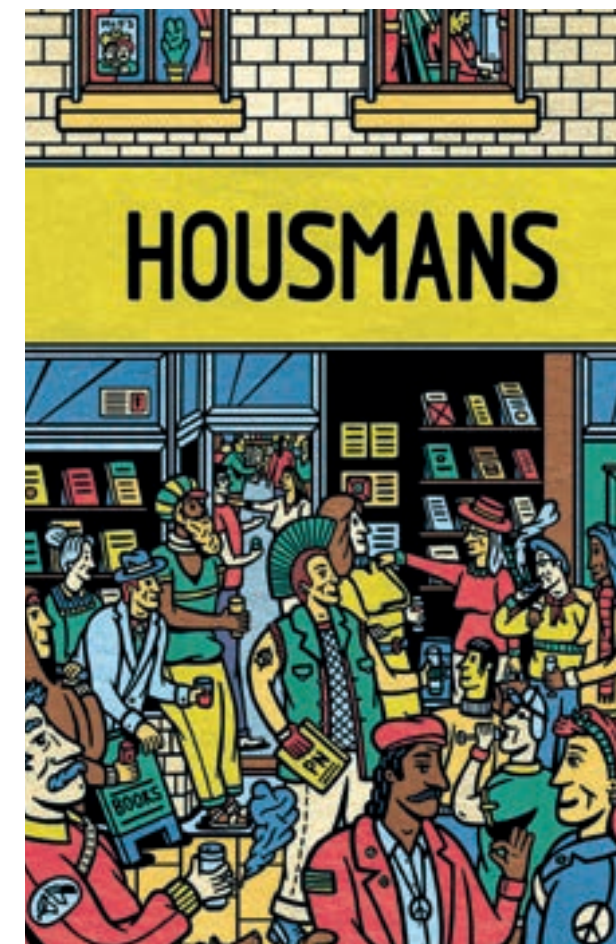
The book world may seem to rest at the more sedate, theorising end of the political spectrum, as opposed to the energetic and practical world of activism, but it needn't necessarily be so. In a way writing something and publishing it is the easy bit. The hard bit is to get people to engage with the writing and

come together around it. On one level the explosion of internet writing and other modern competing attention-demands makes that somewhat harder than in the past, but while there might be a flood of shallow internet connections people can make, there's a real appetite and need for meaningful in-person experiences. It may seem counterintuitive considering the private nature of reading, but books can be a great way of making those connections. As ever though, it is up to us to make that happen. ■

Nik

Housmans Bookshop, is a not-for-profit bookshop, specialising in books, zines, and periodicals of radical interest and progressive politics, including Organise.

*You'll find them at :
5 Caledonian Road, London, N1 9DX*



STRIKE



With the bosses?

Never.

With the union reps?

Sometimes.

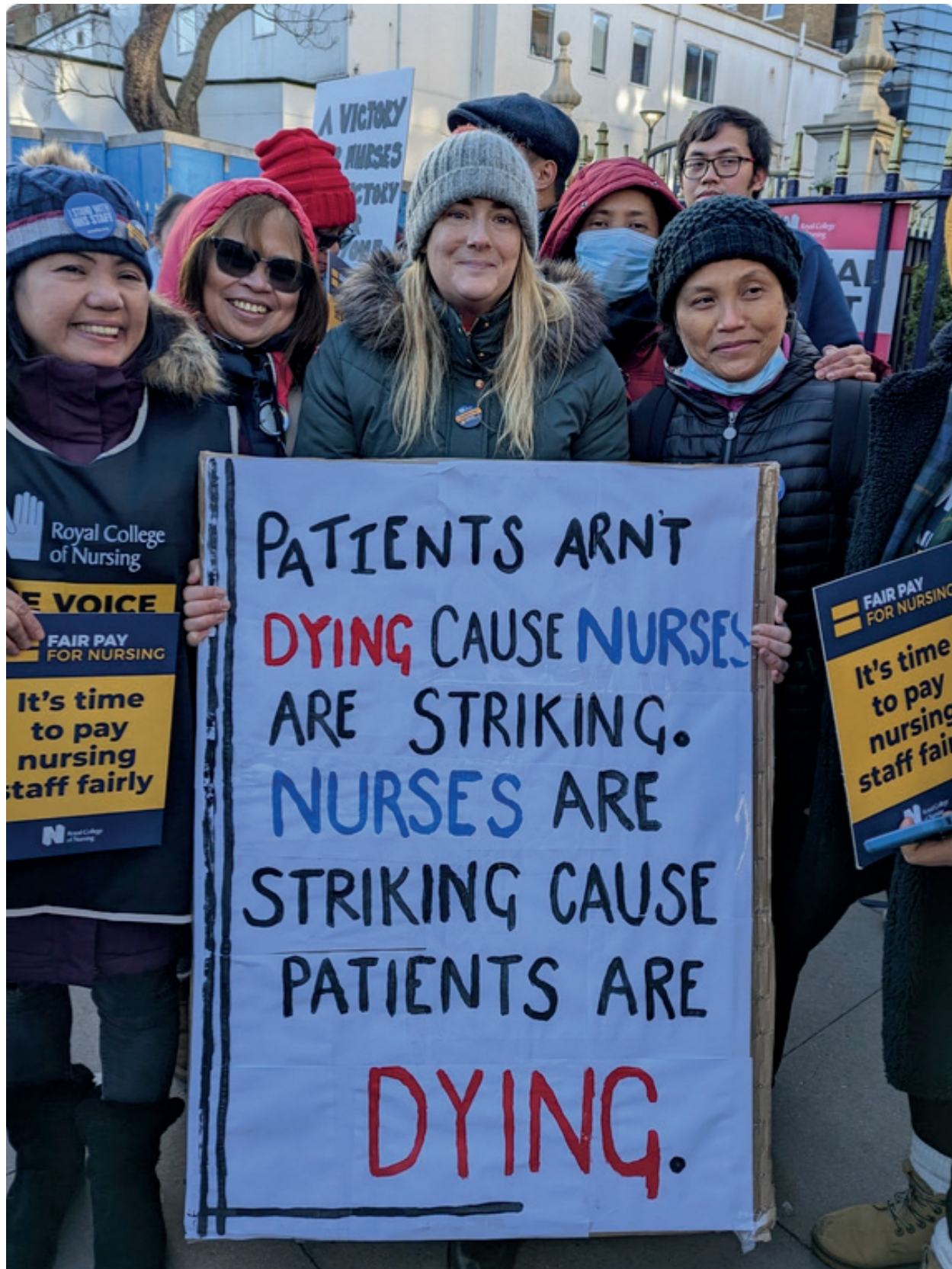
With the rank and file?

Always.

Across the next section we cover a variety of reports from across the union landscape through 2022-2023.

The situation with most of these changes constantly as the negotiations go back and forth. Some of the information may already be "out of date".

WAVE



RCN: A NURSES-EYE VIEW FROM THE PICKET LINES

On packed picket lines up and down the country, NHS nurses are once again taking action that until very recently would have seemed impossible, and finding massive support for doing so. As the government belligerently refuses to negotiate, colleagues from physiotherapists to doctors greet us warmly as they too prepare to down tools and join us. Passers-by continue to honk their horns in support. Members of the public brave the weather to bring much needed supplies of coffee and cake, to share a song, a laugh and their own stories of struggling to get by.

It cannot be overstated just how extraordinary all of this is. The Royal College of Nursing has never before called a nationwide strike in its 100 year history. Indeed, until the mid-1990s the RCN was constitutionally opposed to industrial action. Ambulance workers are taking part in the biggest strikes since Thatcher took on the paramedics in the dying days of her administration and lost.

How did we get to the point where NHS workers, traditionally less organised and more reluctant to take action than most, are participating in some of the largest and most disruptive strikes of the current mini-wave?

If we listen to the government and both its supporters and detractors in the media, the reasons ultimately boil down to two things: Covid and Putin. This is extremely convenient for the Tories, as they can by and large get away with claiming neither is really their fault—the catastrophic handling of the pandemic and aggressive NATO posturing notwithstanding. The argument is by now tediously familiar to everyone from GB News viewers to Guardian readers. Covid created a huge

backlog in non-Covid healthcare and the subsequent return to normal economic activity increased demand and pushed up global prices. This, along with the invasion of Ukraine, has led to double-digit inflation, eating into budgets including that of the NHS.

However, the roots of the present situation are both older and deeper than this convenient, superficial analysis would have us believe.

I, like many nurses, still vividly recall working through winter crisis after winter crisis in the years before the pandemic, including 2017-18 when the International Red Cross declared a humanitarian emergency in a healthcare system that not that long ago could truly claim to be the envy of the world.

During the height of the Covid pandemic I first became familiar with the term ‘moral injury’. Used in this context it describes the psychological and eventually physical effects on healthcare workers of repeatedly being exposed to suffering and death that, despite their best efforts, they could do little about. Looking back this phenomenon has existed at least for my entire nursing career. A common refrain in break rooms and now on picket lines is that staff are exhausted, burnt out and demoralised because day after day and night after night they are simply unable to provide the levels of care that they aspire to.

As time goes on, as the effects of years of austerity manifest, as the NHS slips down international tables on every measure, the level of care that can be provided falls further, and the moral injury worsens. »

Meanwhile the government can claim, truthfully, that it is spending record amounts on health (in cash terms, not in real terms per capita, the only measure that means anything), and an avalanche of preventable and unnecessary human suffering has led, before the pandemic, to the first drop in life expectancy since the second world war.

Since the 80s, pay for 2.5 million public sector workers, including NHS staff, has considered to be based on recommendations from ‘independent’ Pay Review Bodies. Every year a panel of ‘experts’ appointed by the government and drawn from the world of senior management and HR consultancy, provides ministers with recommendations on pay. These are based on submissions from employers, trade unions and, crucially, a remit that includes the overall budget set by the government. On several occasions in recent years, and indeed in the case of other PRBs in 2022, the government has not accepted their recommendations, which have in any case never been binding.

And yet the government line, learnt by rote and repeated by everyone from the PM to whichever poor unfortunate Junior Minister for Paperclips has to face the cameras, remains the same: we cannot override the Pay Review Body. Never mind that they did it last year in the NHS, or this year in two other cases, a point that they are surely grateful never seems to be put to them. In one sense the government is entirely right to say that even restoring NHS pay to 2010 levels is unaffordable. In fact, the cost is earth-shattering. It would cost them an economic orthodoxy that lifts caps on bankers’ bonuses and fails to tax wealth whilst Victorian diseases of poverty rear their ugly heads and people freeze in their own homes. It would cost them their jobs and their power.

Because we have not seen this level of strike action in over 30 years, and because of distortions and outright lies across the whole political spectrum of the media, there is a lack of understanding about what these strikes entail. This is amplified in the NHS as the action is in many ways unprecedented. No colleague I have met has any experience of going on strike.

The public have been led to believe that well-paid people seeking enormous pay rises are going to walk out and let people die, and yet despite this constant

barrage of misinformation most news outlets have struggled to find patients opposed to the strikes. There are hilarious and heart-warming clips of BBC interviewers desperately trying to get patients seriously inconvenienced by strikes to condemn workers and failing abysmally. I invite you to watch them if you are ever feeling despondent and need to be reminded that 99% of us are on the same side.

In theory, our strikes are not “all-out” and picket lines are not about trying to stop all colleagues from crossing. Local strike committees agree ‘life and limb’ cover with employers and release a certain number of union members from striking to provide these services. In practice, this means on inpatient wards, where I work, ‘safe staffing’ levels are agreed that are higher than what we have on non-strike days, an admission that patients are not usually safe. Often, staff who are opposed to the strike and not members of the union fill those numbers anyway, but the union will ‘derogate’ members (release them from striking) if needed.

On the picket line, I have spoken to paramedics who say 75% staffing levels have been agreed, with strikers ready and willing to be called back by the union in case of emergency. Locally, they had the best response times in months. While I was there a member of the public had a seizure on a bus next to the picket line and received the quickest and best staffed attention anyone has ever seen as twenty paramedics co-ordinated a response.

Outpatient and non-emergency care is inevitably delayed. This can be very serious, as people will have delayed diagnoses and increased anxiety, or wait longer for treatments that would alleviate pain. However, all of us as patients are experiencing this slow collapse of the system already, and much to the chagrin of the government and media, people know that the failings in their care are due to Tory negligence and that workers are fighting not just for fair pay, but for a better NHS. Our resolve is only strengthening as it becomes clearer that what is needed is investment beyond anything countenanced by the political class and a radical overhaul of health and social care to achieve a true cradle-to-grave public service.

In the atmosphere of shared power brought about by collective action many will begin to wonder what

other impossible things they can make happen. How about union leaders more concerned with empowering their members to fight than defending their own sectoral privileges? A Labour Party worthy of the name? Industrial action that not only seeks to defend workers from attack but to actually advance their interests further? Action that brings workers facing similar struggles together and uses the strength in numbers they are starting to witness to actually win? Perhaps even to hear spoken aloud those two words that are still only mentioned in hushed tones on the fringes of TUC meetings: General Strike.

Already rank and file pressure has forced all 14 health unions to collectively refuse to engage with this year’s pay review board. The government’s latest anti-strike legislation is provoking a coordinated and escalating response. Indeed, in threatening to preclude the possibility of lawful action, it may yet lead many into open revolt. For the ruling class, what nurses and other NHS workers are fighting for is dangerous: a country in which you can expect to receive excellent and timely medical care whenever you need it, where social care needs are met, where transport is affordable and reliable, where Uberisation does not replace a universal postal service, where heating and eating is a right and not a privilege.

Our demands most moderate are:
We only want the Earth. ■

At the time of print, RCN had suspended its plans for its largest ever strike action in order to negotiate with the Department of Health and Social Care. In Scotland, members accepted an immediate pay rise of 6.5%, but in England, the offered pay rise of 5% was rejected by 54-46. English members of the RCN have now scheduled a 48-hour walkout to take place from 30 April to 2 May.

IWW: Solidarity Is Strength not Enough

Up to half a million workers in the biggest industrial action in a decade; the number of days lost to strikes biggest since the Thatcher era; largest strike in the history of the health service; worst year for strike action since 1989. Calls for indefinite strikes, hashtag #generalstrike trending.

There’s an image been going the rounds of left circles for a while – four identical photos of a woman sitting, head down and miserable, by a production line – the captions, “before Brexit, after Brexit, before the election, after the election”. It could as well say, “before the pandemic, after the pandemic” and I’m surprised I haven’t seen someone do that.

The pandemic gave focus and force to a movement against the intensification of work. The four-day week, the 6-hour day, rising complaints about work-life balance and burnout, demands for hybrid work, all threaten employers’ attempts to recoup the financial cost of Covid. For some there has been a reintensification of work after a period of relative ease working from home. For all of us, realities of life before and after the pandemic have given the lie to the tentative freedoms many of us felt and cautiously explored during the lockdown. The significance of the resistance against work discipline could be seen by the slew of articles in the business and right-wing press in the past year condemning an irresponsible and selfish horde of quietly quitting, millennial serial quitters. After the lockdown, there is a swell of feeling for a deintensification of work. »

Threats to the value of shareholder returns must be dealt with so in response to these sentiments, we have a manufactured crisis – the Bank raised interest rates to trigger an artificial recession to reimpose work discipline via the cost-of-living. This has sparked widespread anger, and the traditional organs of the Left have mobilised to take the reins. The fightback against austerity has been union-led. Public sympathy for the strikes has been strong, but moral support, coins in collection buckets or posts on social media won't address the wider issue, and nor will marches and rallies. Last summer, an RMT comrade from Bristol AFed commented, If passengers, staff and all workers across the country come together ... but despite those early, heady days of chatting to fellow workers on picket lines, there is a vanishingly small chance of this now. The government's anti-strikes bill is likely to keep future union demands – and action – modest.

The hashtag #generalstrike is over-optimistic and workers' self-management is not on the table. The current wave of strikes is not about how the economy is run, but about workers having some say in how

Sabo-Tabby Kitten
by Ralph Chaplin

*You rotten rats, go hide your face;
I'm right here, so find your places.
Hurry now! Wonder how?*

MEOW! Sabotage!

*The tiger wild in its jungle sittin'
Never fights like this here kitten.*

Hurry now! Wonder how?

MEOW! Sabotage!

Chorus

O, the rats all hate and fear me.

MEOW! MEOW!

*The softest paw can be a claw;
They seldom venture near me.*

Hurrah, they saw your Sabo-tabby kitten!



the proceeds of the economy are distributed. Union bureaucracies will settle for a few gains, retain authority over their members and then want to see this wave of solidarity and militancy fade into the background routine. Meanwhile, pay rises can be absorbed by productivity deals and changes to conditions so that returns to shareholders are maintained. Away from the workplace, pay rises can be absorbed by inflation until the anti-work wave is deemed to have dispersed, discipline has been reimposed and we've been put back in our box – and then the recession will magically go away.

If the strikes win, they will lead to a new round of maneuvers as capital accommodates to the cost. Employers' losses to pay rises can be reabsorbed by capital, but demands for the deintensification of work are not so easy for capital to accommodate. There have been some gains, and workers getting pay rises and workers showing solidarity for each other is a wonderful thing to see and part of. But the present moment is about more than only pay rises. The price of goods is based on struggles over the price of labour, and the cost-of-living crisis is both capital's response to the cost of Covid and to the rise of anti-work sentiment. For the first time ideas around the abolition of work are in the mainstream. Workers want more of the freedoms they saw revealed during the pandemic – including essential workers who saw others enjoying those freedoms but were unable to themselves – when a portal briefly opened, and another world was glimpsed. Time and energy are essential to a life worth living, and we must claw them back. The 'cost-of-living crisis' is capital's answer to this threat. Employers fear giving us more time or more power on the job – these losses cannot be so easily reabsorbed.

In response to capital's offensive, there is a crisis of action and a crisis of creativity, and a resort to using the same old tactics. These tactics won't break the chain of capital consuming labour to produce surplus value, and workers consuming goods and services to reproduce themselves again as labour. There is little if any chance of using union organs to promote self-management. The unions have relied on patchwork strikes, a few days here, a few days there. UCU leadership came under fierce criticism from its members in calling off one week of these rolling strikes

when the employers tabled a pay offer. Another pay offer has seen the RMT call off its next planned one-day action. The RCN has broken ranks with the GMB and Unison in shooting for a separate pay deal. EIS and the CWU have suspended strike action and are accepting employer-imposed 'revision of conditions' as part of their own pay deals. The unions face dwindling fighting funds and the government's new anti-strike bill. The ultimate objective of the unions is to seek an accommodation with capital before their strike funds are too diminished and the new bill comes into force.

Independent industrial unions have made some recent gains and perhaps the future might see more small, privatised providers being targeted by syndicalist unions, but their impact is sure to remain modest. There have been some successes at unionising within private contractors in e.g., the education industry and pay deals have been won, but these are likely just to put them in line with other providers. Meanwhile, there are calls from within the trades unions to use



union organs to build indefinite strikes. The UCU, for example, has a £30m fighting fund, and even at a daily cost of c.£250,000 could maintain an all-out strike for far longer than the employers could bear. For the union bureaucracy this is not on the table, occupation of admin buildings is clearly beyond the grounds of acceptable behaviour, and building a fighting industry-wide alliance with the Students' Union or Unite and Unison which represent non-academic staff has never been under serious consideration. In the health service the RCN's move has broken what seemed the strongest industry-wide alliance in the current strike wave.

It may be that resistance to the Minimum Service Bill will see 'passengers, staff and all workers across the country' coming together in a moment the like of which we haven't seen since the Poll Tax or the Iraq War – but not if it is led by the traditional organs of the Left, with trusted Labour MPs parachuted in to steer it away from the open seas. The curse of the trades unions is representation. Recently, a comrade from the SAC commented that union members cannot be like a football team sitting in the stands hoping the coach will win the matches and I am now remembering the immediate and unprecedented outbreak via social media at the beginning of the first lockdown of neighbours spontaneously organising to check on and support vulnerable people in their communities. We didn't need representatives to do that for us, we just upped and did it.

The government's anti-strikes bill is intended to keep future union demands – and action – modest. Rank-and-file anger over limited gains made in the current strike wave may see the question begging, 'how hard will workers fight against the bill i.e., fight for the unions?' Or will future struggles see them bypass a hamstrung bureaucracy and fight on terrain of their own making? In the article quoted above, the Swedish comrade also commented, Creative workers find alternatives to striking. Victories over pay are not to be sniffed at, and perhaps more-so victories over casualisation and precarity, if there will be any. But creative alternatives are needed if we are to keep alive ideas of having control over our lives, and the deintensification of work. ■

Rabbits, Northumbria IWW

NEU: CLASS (ROOM) WARFARE

A rundown of the school strikes from a National Education Union (NEU) school rep.

Mid January saw the National Education Union (NEU) become the largest union yet to beat the government's anti-strike ballot thresholds.

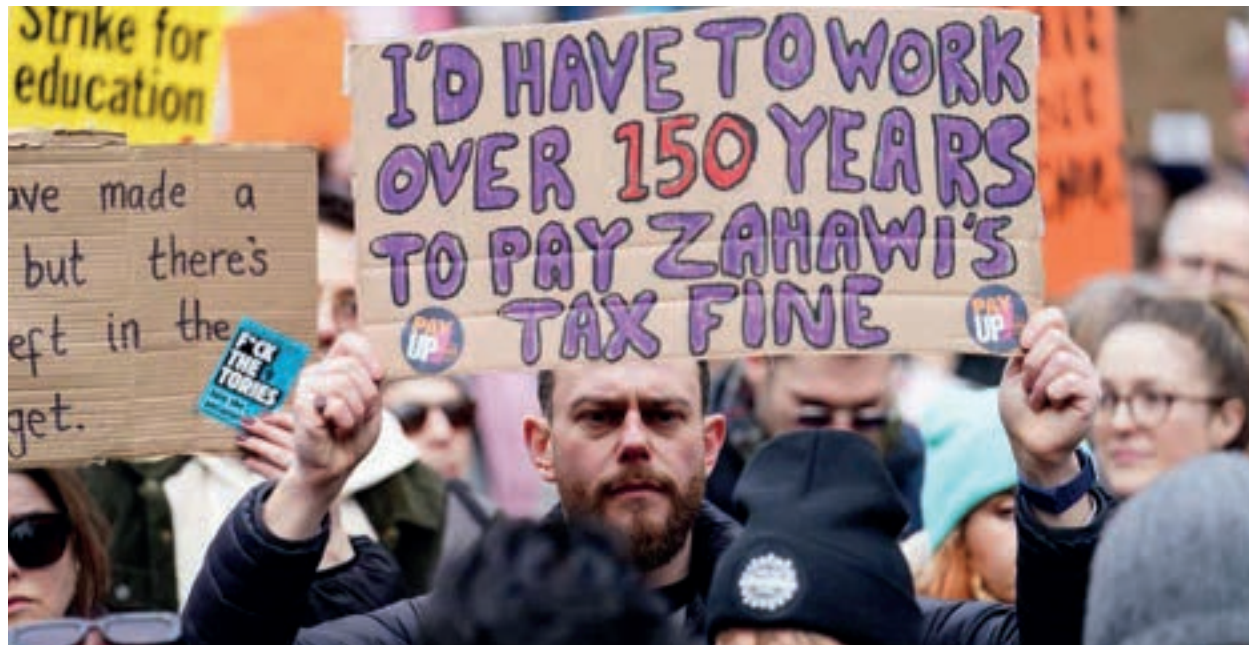
Members were balloted in response to a derisory 5% pay offer (a 7% pay cut in the context of inflation at 12%) awarded against the backdrop of 10 years of below inflation/no pay awards. Just as importantly, the ballot demanded that any pay increase be centrally funded, meaning that the bill for a fair pay settlement should be footed by government not schools already at financial breaking point after over a decade of brutal austerity.

The ballot win was the result of thousands of meetings across 25,000 schools and a massive centralised operation of targeted communications.

Whilst teacher members won their ballot, unfortunately the support staff ballot fell a couple of percent short, with 85% voting in favour of striking on a 47% turnout »

- a massive mandate In literally any other election!

It is also notable that the NEU was the only education union to win their ballot, with the head teachers union falling 2% short and considering a rebalot, and the NASUWT missing the threshold by a greater margin. Whilst NEU teachers going it alone is not ideal, the



appetite for action across education was demonstrated by the 45,000 new NEU members who joined between the ballot result and the first day of strike action.

The strike day itself was inspirational! 40,000 teachers marched in London, 9,000 in Bristol and 10,000s more joining hundreds of demos in their towns and cities. Solidarity from parents and other unions was noticeable, with a large contingent of FBU firefighters joining the 6,000 teachers marching in Sheffield. Particularly notable were the hundreds of members who turned out at Education Secretary Gillian Keegan's usually sleepy constituency of Chichester - allegedly to be the focus of larger actions in future. An exciting new development has been the organising of picket lines - something which has not traditionally happened in national education disputes. The next 3 days of strike action (with each NEU region joining one of the 3 days of action) were very similar in terms of participation and impact.

These strikes are particularly welcome given the

wider context in education. Workload is on the rise, academy trusts are chipping away at long-held terms and conditions and the nature of education for pupils is changing drastically. A move towards a competitive exam & discipline driven culture is not creatively alienating for teachers but robs pupils of a broad, discursive curriculum. The sort of curriculum that would be necessary for them to develop a love of learning and engage critically with society. It also further fuels a mental health epidemic amongst youth who are increasingly stressed by academic targets.

All of these issues, stemming from the neoliberal assault on education are best fought in the workplace, and the normalising of pickets as part of a national dispute will give many members the confidence to take action on workplace level issues.

Morale is high, the anger is there and numerous surveys continue to show parental support for the strikes. We now move towards our 5th and 6th days of action, with March 15th shaping up to be an absolutely massive national demonstration in London to coincide with the Spring budget.

Our side is looking strong going into the next phase of action, but the question remains what intensity of action will be needed to win against a Tory government hellbent on using their last year in power to inflict as much damage on our class as possible, and if the leadership will be willing to take it. ■

At the time of print, Welsh members of the NEU had accepted the Welsh government's offer of an 8% pay rise, with 73% support. But in England, members rejected the government's "insulting" offer of a 4.3% pay rise by a landslide 98%. The Tory government had planned to deduct the pay rise from the national school budget, stretching their already thin margins even thinner. English teachers are set to strike again from 27 April to 2 May.

“THEY USED TO GIVE A LITTLE SPEECH ABOUT HOW ALL PICKETS HAD TO BE LEGAL AND RESPECTFUL. WHICH WAS TBH COMPLETELY UNNESSECARY. REALLY PATRONISING STUFF, ABOUT HOW WE SHOULDN’T BE ABUSIVE OR AGGRESSIVE, LIKE WE WERE SCHOOL KIDS. THEY WERE GIVEN IN EVERY OFFICE AS A NATIONAL STRATEGY. THEY ALSO TOLD US A LOT OF NONSENSE, LIKE IF THERE WERE MORE THAN THE SIX OFFICIAL PICKETS OUTSIDE THE BUILDING WE’D BE BREAKING THE LAW, OR IF WE TOOK PHOTOGRAPHS WHILST OUTSIDE OUR WORKPLACE THAT WOULD BE BREAKING THE LAW. ALL TO TRY AND INTIMIDATE US OUT OF OUR COMPLETELY LEGAL ACTIONS. THERE HAS BEEN A CAMPAIGN OF SUSPENDING UNION REPS, AND ACTIVE STRIKING WORKERS ON SPURIOUS GROUNDS. THE SUSPENSIONS ALWAYS END, AND THEN THE SUPPOSED CASES GET DROPPED, BUT IT IS STRESSFUL IN THE MEAN TIME.”

CWU: TALKING TO POSTIES

As a strike for fair pay continues, we sat down with two posties ‘Kevin’ and ‘Spud’ to discuss life on the pickets.

What are your jobs?

Kevin: I’ve been an OPG postie for about five years.

OPG?

Kevin: Ordinary Pay Grade

Spud: is that what that means, same here, also for about five years.

Have you been involved in industrial action before?

Spud: No, we’ve both been in the CWU since we started here (communication workers union), but this is the first time we’ve been on strike.

Kevin: I’ve supported some other picket lines but never been on strike myself, I’m also a dual carder with the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World Union).

Why was striking important to you?

Spud: From my point of view it was because they are trying to turn the royal mail into another amazon style delivery service. They don’t want to do literally what its there for, just profit at the expense of those sending and receiving post. It has always been there to deliver letters, and now packets, to every

single house hold in the UK six days a week, with few exceptions. It’s always had no discrimination between packets and letters, and no added costs for distance.

Spud: Now they want to prioritise the big retailers packages, rather than the letters. Even if that letter is your doctors appointment, or like you’re letter to your gran.

Kevin: Yeah they want to be more of a parcel delivery company, do away with the Universal Service Obligation that means they have to keep doing what Spud just said.

How would those changes effect your job?

Spud: more unachievable work targets

Kevin: It’d be a ‘race to the bottom’. The proposed changes are a big attack on T&Cs not just pay. For example they want tot switch to later start and finish times, which is a big problem for those of us who have to pick up kids from school. It also means working later into the dark in winter. They are completely changing the company.

So worse hours for less money?

Kevin: They tried do all of these changes by a sort of ‘executive action’ without consulting the union, which goes against previous agreements. It is the biggest attack on the workforce and union possibly in the history of the Royal Mail. »

Any reason they chose to go for the union ?

Kevin: Simon Thompson , our current CEO has a history of union busting. The whole board probably see the union as a big obstacle to them changing the Royal Mail so drastically. Hence the all out warfare against the union.

How much support has there been in the work place?

Spud: The support has been very strong

Kevin: We've only had two of our workers cross the picket lines and scab, out of a workplace with sixty of us.

Spud: Nationally the vote has been like 92% in favour of strike action, and this is easily reflected on the ground

Kevin: Yeah our office has been pretty solid.

How active is this support?

Spud: We've always had the legal number of official pickets, with lots of the rest of us out in support. Plus lots of other organisation's joining in with that.

Kevin: It has been a bit weather dependent. On a sunny day you'll get more people out supporting us.

Worst pickets?

Kevin: Early in the morning in decemeber, we were out in the ice and snow, a lot of rain and wind

Spud: Normal British weather! But even when it was at its worst we still had enough people outside to be meaningful.

Must be used to it with the job

Spud & Kevin: Yeah!

Spud: Something maybe the management lot didn't take into consideration. They thought it would tail off as it got colder and wetter, but it didn't!

Kevin: We're in it 'till we win it. The passing support, from both pedestrians and motorists has been great. Even the vast majority of our customers, even when they are showing up to be told they can't collect a parcel today have been supportive.

How long have the strikes been going on now?

Spud: Us posties have been started in August. Must've been out 18 or 19 days in total.

No drop in morale or determination since then?

Spud: If anything the attitudes have hardened on both sides. Those who support it support it more, where as those against it are doing whatever they can to make life difficult.

Kevin:By people against he means management!

Spud: Yeah!

So what've they been doing ?

Kevin: They used to give a little speech about how all pickets had to be legal and respectful. Which was tbh completely unnessecary. Really patronising stuff, about how we shouldn't be abusive or aggressive, like we were school kids. They were given in every office as a national strategy. They also told us a lot of nonsense, like if there were more than the six official pickets outside the building we'd be breaking the law, or if we took photographs whilst outside our workplace THAT would be breaking the law.

All to try and intimidate us out of our completely legal actions. There has been a campaign of suspending union reps, and active striking workers on spurious grounds. The suspensions always end, and then the supposed cases get dropped, but it is stressful in the mean time.

Spud: I think it is systemic bullying and intimidation, from Simon Thompson at the top all the way down, to the petty local managers.

Kevin: There was also an overtime ban despite a massive backlog of work.

Spud: They wanted to starve us out of the pay.

Kevin: Instead they got in agency staff, on way more money than us, to try and clear the work.

Spud: And these staff don't have the training or experience to do the job we do. Things take much longer to clear with them.

Has there been a big involvement of agency workers on strike days as well, as scabs?

Kevin: We have had some turn up on strike days. They weren't told they were going to be scabbing, first most of them realised was when they saw our picket. A lot of them were turned round and refused to cross. A couple even joined our picket line with us!

Spud: They wern't the only ones given no info. The company made no effort to let customers know. Lots of people would show up to pick up parcels only to find the office closed, and get quite perturbed.

Kevin: next time we're giving them the managers mobile number so they can sort it out hah!



So Royal Mail hasn't been able to keep things running on strike days?

Kevin: Nope!

Spud: Not even special deliveries! Those are normally the 'beyond important' top of the list deliveries to be made.

Kevin: When they do get the agency staff would go out on delivery, they've been making mistakes, getting lost, taking aged. They've been leaving parcels on door steps – which we never do in Royal Mail. Meanwhile the actual posties scabbing on the strike were allowed to stay indoors,

Spud: Lots of managers going to hang out inside as well. Always being blatant in crossing the picket line.

Kevin: Some of them would come out and try and talk to you like their you're mates. Like we're a big team and this is an unavoidable natural event, and soon it'll blow over and we'll be having pizza parties.

So are the managers trying to do your jobs?

Kevin: A couple of them have given it a go! Just parcels, since the company doesn't care about letters any more. A lot of the time they just seem to hide in the building all day. Seems like they just sit in the office twiddling their thumbs.

Spud:They've also been getting 'strike busting bonuses' to cross pickets on strike days. They started off as cash incentives, and have ended up being shopping vouchers. "be a scab, get an M&S voucher!"

What has it been like working in between strike days?

Spud: Tense! They've gone out of their way to break the trust between management and the workforce. The managers don't seem to understand that once the union is broken the management are next.

Kevin: They've destroyed any semblance of good will from us towards the management of all levels. The quality of my work has definitely deteriorated. »

It's harder and I have less incentive. You'd be more inclined to go the extra mile – often literally – when the company seemed at least half way decent, and management were supportive. Now I'm starting to hate not just my managers, but the whole company itself. It's like they've forgotten we're the ones that keep things running, and there are way more of us than them. We're not locked in the office with them, they're locked in the office with us!

Spud: Up until february things were still chaotic from the decemeber strikes.

Kevin: We were delivering flyers for black friday sales in january. It was unprecedented chaos. it was glorious.

Any predictions for how the action is going to go?

Kevin: Well we've won some things already. There has been a limited agreement on pay.

Spud: Apparently. They have been making agreements on a friday, then breaking them again on a monday. So its really hard to understand what the outcome will be. They've taken the good name of the company and put it down with Evri (*Ed. Previously Hermes*), in the minds of customers.

Kevin: Thats 500 years of good will down the drain. In honestly? we will win some things, we'll loose some. This whole thing has been quite emotional. It has been empowering seeing action in the form of strikes, in the wider social, in the wider context of the strike wave along side other workers, it has been inspirational, to see a bit of class pride and solidarity. I only hope its radicalised more of our colleagues.

Is it common feeling that you are part of something bigger?

Spud: Seems like it.

Kevin: for one thing I think people would feel more vulnerable if it was just us, and more open to criticism. I like to think we all recognise we are part of something a bit bigger

Spud: Having the other unions and other workers show up has helped with this. We've had teachers, lecturers, firema, and a couple of nurses. At one point some folks from a renters union blocked the gates of one of the delivery centres!

Kevin: Some of our members have joined other peoples picket lines as well its been going both ways.

Where would you like to see this bigger something go?

Kevin: Well a general strike and a revolution of course. But we've got a way to go! At the very least an increasingly generalised class based resistance to the powers that be, to the ever encroaching cut backs and repression. I'd like to see some of the elites hanging from lampposts.

Spud: It would be nice if we had a proper national strike, just to let the ruling class know that everyone has had enough. That the current way society is structured isn't sustainable, and isn't in anyone's interest except a small group of the super wealthy.

Kevin: We want to foster and encourage the culture of resistance. Something we see a lot more in other countries. Even places as close as france, they strike harder, they riot harder, and they win more victories for the working class as a result.

How much trust do the rank and file have in union leadership at the moment ?

Spud: There is some worry that the union will allow the company to get away with too much, in order to try and save as many jobs as they can – rather than trying to save the institution AND the jobs.

Kevin: Obviously everyone supports the union, though of course we are critical when needs be. People are worried about how it will end, worried about loosing more money, but we recognise there is no other choice. It's a big fight for our futures.

Spud: And it is a fight worth having.

Kevin: And a fight our employers started – but we will finish it.. Like I said I haven't seen such an

unmitigated attack on workers in a long time.

Spud: It is very Thatcherite, its like they looked at the playbook for the mines and went 'we could do that'.

Do you feel there are stronger bonds between Royal Mail workers now, perhaps more of a chance of radical action? Wildcats and the like?

Kevin: Well a wild cat is a beautiful thing, and sometimes they inspire me more than the bigger union organised strikes. I think certain of our offices are pretty famous for them!

Spud: When one of our fellow workers was suspended during the strikes we all sat in the tea room and refused to work. Eventually we were persuaded back with some promises about the outcome for her, but it was long enough to make the point.

Kevin: One of our offices in Liverpool went wildcat over allegations of a racist manager. The strike then spread to the main mail centre, so post for the whole region was shut down. Whenever there are bullying managers who cross a line, everyone just sits in their tea room!

Our little wildcat tea room sit in was the first time something like that has happened in years. I like to think our colleagues see the wider issues, like it isn't just about one of us getting buillied, or one persons job, even people that dislike the person in trouble will come out.

Spud: Also we're seeing a lot of people flat out refuse to do things they would do before. Either because they are helpful people, or are persuaded or pressured to do them by management. We effectively have self imposed bans on doing any little extra work that helps management.

You mentioned earlier that a lot of the public seem supportive. Even those disrupted. Has that stayed the case even after the months went on?

Spud: It has actually gotten better. I'm pretty sure it started off with some folks thinking 'bloody posties they just want more money and don't want to work hard'. That has now, with more reporting, and more word of mouth, turned into "I can't believe the bosses wanna do that to Royal Mail". Feels like way more of them are with us than opposed to us.

Kevin: I think anyone who saw any of those parliamentary committee hearings about Royal Mail isn't on our side now! Simon Thompson was caught out lieing to this parliamentary committee, and then he got recalled, and made to swear as if in court! When he was speaking that time, and trying really hard not to lie OR to tell the truth he ended up crucifying himself, got properly roasted by the committee.

The CWU put some clips of it on youtube, they are comedy gold.

Any thing you'd like to add to the interview?

Kevin: Victory or death! Escalation or utter defeat! Something along those lines.

Spud: There has to be change, the ruling elite can't expect it to carry on with the same bullshit. Hopefully we're worrying some people in their expensive suits, and hopefully the change will be for the better. ■

Many thanks to "Kevin" and "Spud" for their time and thoughts. Solidarity to them both and all the postal workers, especially when they are out on strike!

At the time of print, the CWU's leadership had halted strike actions and its negotiators have reached an "in principle" agreement with Royal Mail. Members still have yet to vote on the proposed deal on pay, working conditions and the terms of employment. Previous pay offers have been rejected as insufficient and compulsory work on Sunday has been a red line in the talks so far. According to Royal Mail, the company had already lost £200 million during the strikes and even feared that it might fold entirely.

UCU: THE MOOD IS RADICAL, BUT THE SITUATION IS COMPLEX

In their dispute the UCU are representing Teaching and Research staff, Research Only staff, and some Administrators at English and Welsh universities (other workers are in Unison and Unite, and as usual the trade unions structure keeps them legally separated). The university sector sits on £40bn in reserves and feels justified in clinging on to this excess because it no longer regards itself as a public service but part of a profit-driven, internally competing market. Universities do this by choice – they were not forced into it. The ones ‘winning’ in the market thrive on external grants brought in by research staff on temporary contracts, and by attracting high-paying students as cash-cows, taught by overworked, underpaid staff.

There have been 18 days of strike action between February and March, in which 150 universities have been affected by strikes and ‘action short-of-a strike’ (ASOS – not taking on voluntary duties and not working evenings or weekends). Because of anti-trade union laws, a strike mandate can only run for 6 months, so the union is currently also re-balloting.

However, we have had a track record of winning disputes through industrial action (notably in 2007). In spite of defeats in more recent disputes, our dissatisfaction and ongoing dissent has set the tone for the confrontation.

One demand of the strikes is to resolve a long-running dispute concerning pensions. These have been eroded from something which, while far from ‘gold-plated’, did at least feel secure enough to be worth entering the profession. Ridiculous changes were made because of mishandling of predictions of the future ‘health’ of

the scheme, resulting in reduced benefits, a higher proportion of contributions lying with employees. Many staff look set to lose tens of thousands in benefits each year, even though the scheme was forced to admit to a £56 bn surplus. UCU have been striking on and off since 2018 to get their previous benefits back.

UCU’s other goal is named the Four Fights: pay which has fallen significantly in real terms, like everyone’s, with a demand for a 2% to 12% pay rise (with more at the bottom of the scale); a national strategy to abolish gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps; the casualised nature of staff contracts; and nationally agreed parameters on the volume and type of work staff are expected to do.

Stress and depression levels in the sector are the second-highest nationally, with staff routinely doing 50 hour-weeks instead of the notional 36.5, and rarely taking their full holiday entitlement because of the volume of work still to be done. Mountains of admin are routine for all university staff, much of which is dreamed up by people with little understanding of the job and clearly imposed to grind us down.

It should be said that the sector’s long-established teaching body is predominantly comprised of people on decent, permanent contracts – but only narrowly. This security is being deliberately eroded at a generational level, as Vice Chancellors realise that T&R staff are now the only workers outside of the public sector to whom job security still largely applies. 90,000 staff are on insecure contracts. For academics at the bottom of the ladder, it is pretty much impossible to get any job at all nowadays, let alone a permanent one, even

after doing hourly- or unpaid classroom experience as a PhD student, then being a Teaching Associate or junior researcher (typically between one-term and a couple of years, and often term-time-only, and where a 50-hour week is normal). At the same time as this, in order to get a look-in at a permanent post, you have to find the time either to bring in a major research grant or to publish a book with a top-ranking publisher. Research only staff have faced this situation for decades, which is probably where employers took the model from. After that, there are still precious few ‘real’ jobs to compete for anyway.

This does not just apply to newly qualified PhDs, in the first stages of working life after a minimum of 8 years of academic study. This has become the norm, across the entire sector, and it is not only at ‘junior’ levels. Because new contracts are so short-term and insecure, staff in their 30s and beyond are often still living away from partners and even children, paying for two lots of accommodation, spending a fortune in time and money on travelling at weekends. Even those settling in the town where they work have little or no chance of getting on the housing ladder and struggle like everyone with rent and childcare costs, even without the current cost of living crisis.

The union called a suspension of the dispute on Monday 27th February for three days because we were making good progress – a ‘cooling off period’. Why let things cool off because you are getting somewhere? Whilst it meant that people could go back to work and stop losing money for a bit, there were unfortunate implications. We were notified on Friday at 6.00pm that this would come into effect on Monday morning. Given ASOS, some staff didn’t even know until Monday morning. Others had to scramble lectures together over the weekend and break ASOS, or embarrassingly un-cancel activities with external partners. Students didn’t know whether they were coming or going in the chaos, didn’t know where to get supportive information, and missed classes due to not being psychic. This undermined important trust between striking staff and students. The suspension momentarily replicated the sort of unreasonable demands that are put on us by management and led to a great deal of stress, to the extent that the union instigated a poll to see how members had felt about the decision.

In the union’s words, ‘In the previous ballot, our union promised to use your votes responsibly. And we have done that, ensuring at every stage members have their say in what the action looks like’, but this certainly wasn’t the case with the suspension of the action! The membership was effectively told that the union negotiators knew things it didn’t, and that we had to trust them.

In itself, it doesn’t matter to anarchists whether reformists or leftists are in charge of unions. Both are obstacles to workers’ autonomy. As such, neither the leadership nor UCU Left are able to transform the fundamental nature of industrial action in this sector, as needs to happen, and not just within higher education. From the perspective of teaching staff, there is one form of action which is far more effective than any other. Withdrawing labour for a few days at a time is ineffective: students don’t mind a few missing classes, and in practice staff still have to make the time up afterwards or get even further behind and more stressed by the admin. The most effective model is a marking boycott, which has been proposed for the May-June period of this academic year. This is what the reballot is about, and it seems highly likely that the majority will vote Yes to further action unless the sector agrees to our combination of five demands.

Ultimately, this might mean in theory that some students do not graduate. That is the gun we hold to the head of management, because ultimately they care more about students’ opinions than ours, which can threaten recruitment of the next fee-paying cohort. This has previously proven too much for management and they have always caved.

I have some frustration with what I’ll call the ‘porous picket line’. The point of a traditional picket line was to make it shameful and even intimidating for fellow workers to cross the line and go to work as normal in a ‘closed shop’ (i.e. where everyone had to be in the union). It’s only a few decades since someone would have been called a ‘scab’ for crossing a picket line. This got muddled with the demise of the closed shop, and workers being in a variety of unions or none at all, in which case they wouldn’t have legal protection for not going to work. This makes it easier also for those members of the union not prepared to strike to slip through as well. In a university, people going in and out alongside with scabbing UCU members are students, Unison and Unite members, GMB members, non-unionised staff, »

and also the Public. They can't be told apart. The 'line' is now almost irrelevant in many workplaces, and in my own workplace strikers cross the picket line too, for example to park on campus because there is nowhere else for miles; go to the loo, for the same reason; go to the campus museum or gallery, because it's the only time you can fit it in. The porous picket line is actually endorsed at our workplace because the union organises marches into campus to the management building, which has a courtyard with an amazing echo. Shouting anti-management slogans outside the vice chancellor's office is such an empowering feeling that it almost feels worth the contradiction, but the 'picket line' itself is actually just a demonstration.

However, a number of good things have come out of this action. It seems possible at this stage that the battle over pensions might have been won! We aren't holding our breath, but it looks as though things will go back to what they were in 2021, because the scheme has said that the cost of restoring benefits will be low. This feels like a real victory and worth the pay lost whilst striking for it.

The action has also brought together the five grievances above, uniting different interest groups within UCU. This has not been straightforward, with the union having previously been unwilling to complicate struggles over things like pay, conditions and pensions for 'traditional' workers, with those of workers on a range of precarious contracts and those under-represented in the workplace by gender, ethnicity and disability. The union seemed to consider that it was too difficult to measure what the problems are and what real change might mean in these latter areas, but rank-and-file working groups have managed to make these demands specific and realistic.

This has also produced widespread empathy and solidarity between workers doing very different jobs. If we are successful, this will also build momentum for further progress in Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity areas, seeing PhD students treated like staff where they are working like staff, leverage for people with caring responsibilities, and maybe even an end to student fees and a return to a public-funded sector. To anarchists, these are reformist demands and not 'revolutionary' per se. But as the AF has always recognised, this does not mean that there is not a significant improvement to

the condition of the working class, and victory brings confidence and practical ability for further action.

Academics have brought their own disciplines and expertise to the dispute. This has been fun – historians evidently produced placards including harking back to the Diggers, 'When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the overpaid Vice-Chancellor, man?', but also serious – the fact that the pensions fund and predictions had been so incompetently handled was first spotted by academic economists and pensions experts and the possible victory in this case is the result of knowing exactly how to prove this. Also, our communities are close-knit ones. We all know dozens if not whole networks of people working and studying in other universities, through our disciplines as well as radical networks, and these networks are completely independent of the union, providing a safety net which helps keep the radical nature of any dispute on track (one reason why our disputes are often successful).

Student activism in support of the strike has also been encouraging. The universities model Gen Z students as 'snowflakes', which they spin positively, presenting themselves as committed to supporting the individual student within the broader (implicitly exclusionary) student and staff body. They should be supporting individual students, and, in fact, they have to by law! But in reality, they are manufacturing an environment that is afraid of and discourages collective demands, e.g. those of marginalised students as a powerful group, and of trade unionists. In this scenario, UCU is the enemy of the students, damaging the individual's growth with our old-fashioned collective concerns. So, university management seeks to juxtapose the interests of workers (collective) and marginalised students (individual). Our experience on the picket lines shows that this is not working. The LGBTQ+ community in particular has been amongst our most vocal supporters.

The shape of our original pension scheme has been reinstated in the latest offer. Striking works! But as noted, this primarily benefits longer-standing staff at 'pre-1992' universities. The Four Fights are far from settled. Some of what is on the table is partially hard to pin down quantitatively and enforce, but nonetheless progress has been made there. We do seem to have the offer of an end to zero-hour contracts, and we have an improved pay offer, but still well below inflation.

As things stand today, on Sunday March 19th, UCU is baffling. During the week, the General Secretary wanted to pause the strike again and put the new deal to the membership. Because of the outcry about the previous 'pause', it initiated an informal Yes/No poll conflating 'pausing' with initiating a formal ballot on the deal. The linking of the two questions and the idea that the deal was as good as it might possibly get, angered branches and was rejected by the NEC. So, we have three more days of striking coming up. This puts us in a stronger position than Jo Grady would have had us in. The mood is radical and workers are taking a more advanced position than the union leadership itself. On the one hand, to many rank and file workers, we have voted not to pause essentially as a point of principle; it's only three days and employers will surely ride it out, so it's another three days of losing pay without longer-term gains. Does the real potential lie with the re-ballot over extending the mandate and the marking boycott? That too now feels like a 'pause', but it's certainly something the universities can't ignore. However, the employers now have the advantage of perhaps making a final 'all or nothing' offer, refusing to decouple pensions from the Four Fights, perhaps even dividing more and less privileged staff over whether or not to accept.

The mood is radical, but the situation is complex. The next steps are unclear and it will be a difficult couple of weeks. ■

At the time of print, UCU have made significant progress regarding their pensions dispute, having voted 85% in support of a new offer that will restore many of the retirement benefits previously afforded. Regarding pay and conditions disputes, UCU have voted to reject the offer currently on the table, and will be moving ahead with a marking and assessment boycott beginning on the 20th of April at 145 universities as well as extending their existing strike mandate a further 6 months.

RMT: Support The Rail Workers Strike

I am a typical railway worker based in Bristol, I have worked on the railway for over 3 years, having started just under a year before the Covid-19 pandemic. I worked through the pandemic as normal, as did all of my colleagues. We understood that our job was to keep the country going through difficult times. We risked our health to come in and do our job, sadly many of our colleagues didn't make it and I miss them deeply.

During Covid, we were taken over by the Department for Transport under an Emergency Measurers Agreement (EMA) which meant that the Department for Transport funded our costs whilst the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) operated the service. This meant that they took on the financing of the railways, including controlling any pay awards that were given to staff. Today, we continue to be under the control under the Department for Transport, under a system called a National Rail Contract (NRC). These contracts are to prepare the TOCs for operation under Great British Railways (GBR), the latest attempt by the Tories to repaint the turd of privatisation.

Since British Rail was broken up in the 90s, mostly under John Major, various Labour and Conservative governments have tried to reform the privatised system that was put in place. The Governments first plan was to have every part of the railway for pure profit, which resulted in several major derailments and crashes. Then the government took part of the system in house under Network Rail, but kept the train operation under the control of the TOCs – mostly profit driven private entities. »

Sadly Covid meant that many passengers stopped using the railway, and this is what led to more government intervention this time round. Covid changed the way we worked, because we became directly accountable to the Department for Transport for every penny that was spent. If we wanted to buy a pack of pens or cleaning cloths, it had to be justified to DfT civil servants! However, post pandemic travel has nearly returned to what it was in March 2020, shortly before lockdown, in some cases services are busier than they were.

Until recently, workers were able to get pay deals every year, with our unions able to pressure the private companies. We were also able to guarantee good conditions to our members, because the railways over the last 20 years have seen an explosion in passenger numbers, partly as a result of Network Rail's improved safety record, and the increase in attractive leisure fares being offered.

During the height of Covid, we took part in meetings with senior managers from the TOCs, Network Rail, and the Department for Transport. In these meetings, we were told that the railway wasn't fit for purpose, that it was too expensive to run and that it had to be reformed. We were asked to agree to a voluntary severance scheme, in



order to help reduce the cost of running the railway by £2 billion a year. Trade unions walked out of meetings with management and the Department for Transport at this point, because it became increasingly clear that the government wanted to come after us. We were told that pay rises were not possible because of the amount of money that the government had spent on subsidising the day to day cost of the railway. We were to pay the monetary cost of the Covid pandemic.

The latest from the government is that if we want a pay rise, we will have to agree to savage cuts, that will lead to all the ticket offices in England being closed, our pensions being devalued and cut, people that work on stations being given extra work for no extra pay, and passengers being left with stations that have no facilities or staff. Not only are these terms unacceptable to us, they should also be unacceptable to anyone who uses the railway. If these cuts are allowed to happen, our railway will be less safe, less user friendly, and less accessible for everyone. It has been proven multiple times that removing staff from the railway causes a worse service for the passenger, and an increase in violent incidents.

If passengers, staff and all workers across the country come together, we can effectively oppose these cuts and call for higher wages. More than this we have the potential to start a mass movement to call for higher pay and better conditions for every worker, something which the RMT supports.

If you support every worker getting a pay rise, please support our actions. ■

At the time of print, the RMT has concluded its negotiations with Network Rail, with members voting to accept its offered 9.2-14.4% pay rise by a 76% approval. As it closed its latest round of negotiations with the Tory government and the train companies, it called off its planned rail strikes for March and April and plans to re-ballot its members in May. But the rail companies, which continue to push ahead with their plans to modernise the rail network, has signalled to the government that it may not be able to afford such pay rises.

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INTERNATIONAL ROUND UP



Afghanistan

The Taliban may have taken the country, but they have not captured the people. Their theocratic move to ban women from education was met with fierce protest in cities around the country. Their totalitarian control of the country is still challenged by a republican insurgency in the north. Even their own fighters are becoming disillusioned with post-revolutionary life, now alienated by the trappings of their new capitalist state, with its desk jobs and awful urban traffic. The regime has had nothing to offer any of its detractors, so it can only respond with violence.



Image: Ebrahim Noroozi

Artsakh

Artsakh is once again under siege. Following the criminal invasion and brutal occupation of Southern Armenia, the Aliyev regime and its NATO backers have moved to isolate Artsakh from Armenia and Armenia from the world. The regime has blockaded the humanitarian corridor through Lachin, cutting off access to food, fuel and medicine for 120,000 Artsakhis as part of a slow-moving genocide against the Armenian population. While Azeri anarchists are imprisoned and killed for speaking out, useless Russian “peacekeepers”, a flaccid international community and bought mass media ignore the horror so they can prop up their favourite Petro-dictator.



Image: Vahagn Khachatryan

Barbados

The waves of decolonisation continue to emanate from Barbadian shores. Having already rid themselves of the monarchy and torn up the colonial-era criminalisation of sexual freedom, Bajans have now set their sights on reparations. Their targets include Richard Drax, Tory MP for South Dorset, who today sits on a hoard of wealth pillaged from the island over hundreds of years by his slaver family. The disgraceful crimes of slavery and colonialism must be answered for, and this is a crucial step forward in doing so. We look forward to seeing these rich colonisers fleeced for all they're worth.



Image: Stacy Benedict

Belarus

On 6 September 2022, the Tarakanishche regime concluded its show trial against the so-called “international criminal organisation”, sentencing ten anarchists and anti-fascists to between 5 and 17 years in prison. Supporters of the repressed, including a human rights activist and even their own lawyers, were arrested during the proceedings. They join numerous other anarchists behind bars, where they face isolation, battery and torture by the dictatorship. The Anarchist Black Cross diligently continues its work to support our repressed comrades.



Brazil

Unable to cope with being losers, on 8 January, thousands of fascists stormed the Brazilian Congress in an attempt to force a military coup. Like the Yanks that inspired them, the putschists in Brazil were thankfully limited by their own foolishness and failed to accomplish anything with their outburst. The far-right regime fell and with it, hopefully, will go its authoritarian, ecocidal and supremacist machinations. His aspirations to power cut short, Bolsonaro has retired to his favourite past time of dying in hospital. Brazilian socialists and anarchists now have the task of rebuilding from the ruins left by 4 long years of fascist barbarism.



Image: TV Brazil

Chagos

The British government has seen the writing on the wall – it will sit down and negotiate with Mauritius over handing back the Chagos islands, finally righting a multi-generational wrong. While these discussions are welcome as a crucial movement in the decolonisation process, the lack of a seat at the table for Chagossians themselves is nothing short of atrocious. To silence the Chagossian voice from these negotiations is to continue the disgraceful imperial conduct that uprooted their lives and ruined their lands. Whatever the outcome, Chagossians must get their land back, they must be permitted to return.



Image: Fiona Hanson

China

Workers, students and pensioners have taken to the streets throughout China, in protest against the government's repressive "zero-COVID" policy and its neo-liberal cuts to welfare. Under this regime, workers had been isolated and forced to toil in a "closed loop system", while the strict lockdown even resulted in at least ten Uyghurs being killed in a fire, prevented from escaping by the colonial police. Within weeks, the protestors forced the government to recognise that its policy was no longer sustainable and to finally phase it out. For the first time in decades, the Chinese people have tasted victory.



Image: Wikimedia Commons

Ethiopia

The brutality of war has finally come to an end in Tigray, but the brutality of peace is only just beginning. After wrapping up their genocidal war of conquest, during which an estimated 600,000 civilians (roughly 10% of the region's population) were killed, the Ethiopian and Eritrean states are now carrying out a military occupation of Tigray. Meanwhile, Amharic supremacist militias have carried out pogroms against Oromo and Tigrayan peoples. Even in the face of such terror, oppressed people all over the country resist. The Horn Anarchists continue to agitate against this regime of death and destruction.



Image: Horn Anarchists

Germany

99 years after the Beer Hall Putsch and the Nazis are back at it again. Members of the German aristocracy, military and far-right political parties were recently caught plotting an absurd coup that would have overthrown democracy and re-established the long-dead German Empire. Drawing from the fascists that came before them, this planned putsch was completely unsuccessful and its conspirators now face possible treason charges. But that it made it so far along, having already accumulated weapons and willing militants, is cause for alarm. One thing is clear from all this: denazification didn't go far enough, German anti-fascists need to finish the job.



Image: Boris Roessler

Georgia

The people said no. When the government motioned to pass a law that would have designated countless organisations as "foreign agents", Georgians immediately took to the streets in protest against this authoritarian turn. The police brought tear gas and water cannons to disperse them, but they were met with a people that planted themselves like trees and refused to move. Despite all the state's efforts to crush the protests and even direct threats of invasion by Russian imperialists, the people were successful and the government withdrew its criminal bill. Georgians reminded us that people can win when they stand strong.



Greece

The deterioration of the Greek state under the watch of the right-wing New Democracy party continues. Police brutality against dissidents, women and racialised people is reaching new heights. Refugees face an increasingly hostile environment and destitute conditions, as the border is fortified and militarised. Most recently, mismanagement of the country's privatised rail network resulted in the deaths of dozens of people. On top of all this, the government is using all the surveillance tools in its arsenal to keep a lid on activists and opposition figures. As always, Greek anarchists spearhead the fight against the police state, its borders and its murderous desires.



Iran

The Mullahs have no shame. As the feminist revolution continues to sweep through the country, the regime has stepped up its terrorist campaign against its own people. Protestors have been subjected to mass arrests, show trials and even barbaric public executions. In a desperate attempt to hold onto its femicidal way of life, some of the regime's terrorists stooped so low as to poison thousands of school girls. But the Iranian revolutionaries, many anarchists among them, refuse to submit. Every time the state murders its citizens, it proves without a doubt that it is the state that must be killed.



Image: Wikimedia Commons

Israel

Bibi's back with a vengeance. When his new far-right coalition took power, it immediately announced its intention to intensify colonisation of the West Bank, persecute LGBT+ people, and destroy the independence of the judiciary. It was the latter that brought hundreds of thousands of Israelis out into the streets in protest against the moves towards dictatorship, while workers in the country's massive healthcare and technology industries have also gone on strike. Despite the best efforts of Israeli leftists and anarchists, the protests still largely represent a conservative desire to maintain the broken status-quo. These problems go far deeper than Netanyahu.



Image: Wikimedia Commons

Italy

After half a year of struggle, Alfredo Cospito has ended his hunger strike against the torturous conditions of his imprisonment. Despite the neo-fascist government's attempts to kill him, the Italian Constitutional Court ruled against his life imprisonment and the European Court of Human Rights is now investigating the legality of the 41-bis regime. Throughout the whole process, Cospito was supported diligently by the international anarchist movement, which the neo-fascists feared was part of a conspiracy to destroy Italy. Well, if destroying Italy is what it takes to end the torture and isolation of our comrades, that's a price we are more than willing to pay. Viva Cospito.



Image: ANSA

Kosovo

The Serbian and Kosovar governments have once again been locked into a face off. When the seemingly small question of what flag would be allowed on license plates reached a boiling point, Serbian state officials in Kosovo resigned en-masse and barricades were erected over the bridges to Northern Kosovo. Serbian fascists rapidly took to fanning the flames of the nationalist conflict and the Serbian military looked like it might invade. Thankfully, an agreement was reached and the situation has been deescalated, hopefully looking towards a lasting settlement, but the dangers of nationalism remain an ever-present threat that we must combat.



Image: Stacy Benedict

Moldova

The economic crisis brought by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has driven people out into the streets. As the cost of living becomes increasingly untenable, all Moldovans ask for is financial support. But it wasn't long before familiar opportunistic faces began to position themselves as the movement's leaders, which came to resemble a curious alliance of neo-Sovietists, oligarchs, populists and nationalists. As the government collapsed under the weight of the situation, fears began to spread that movements were being made towards a Russian-backed coup d'état. While the people continue to call for food and fuel, politicians can only beat the drums of regime change.



Image: Wikimedia Commons

Myanmar

The civil war rages on. With the backing of American oil barons, local drug lords and the Chinese military, the Tatmadaw junta continues its genocidal quest to massacre civilians and pillage the country's natural resources. While opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi languishes under another life sentence, a broad coalition of democrats, communists and ethnic minority organisations fight on to overthrow the dictatorship and replace it with a free federal republic. In the liberated areas, they protect each other with 3D-printed guns and bamboo drones. In regime-held territory, persistent wildcat strikes sabotage the dictatorship's functioning. The Rebel Alliance has not yet yielded.



Image: Aung Khiant Zaw

Nigeria

Muhamaddu Buhari's term has ended in a profound failure, but the last bones of the military dictatorship have not yet been buried. Although not a military officer himself, the establishment candidate Bola Tinubu still stands in the way of completing Nigeria's democratic transition. Hype for the reformist Peter Obi translated to victory in Lagos, Abuja and the long-oppressed south east, but was not enough to defeat the old guard. After a fraught election full of dodgy turns, the opposition are now contesting the results. It remains to be seen whether Nigeria can break the stagnation, corruption and authoritarianism of the old regime.



Image: Kola Sulaimon

Pakistan

As Pakistanis continue to rebuild from the destruction caused by last year's floods, there are some apparently intent on keeping the country in ruins. After being deposed by the old militarist establishment, populist opposition leader Imran Khan was shot by a fundamentalist terrorist. In Peshawar, a resurgent Taliban killed over 100 people in a suicide bombing of a mosque, while their supporters in the government send hundreds of Afghan refugees back into the jaws of the regime they escaped. In the face of all this violence, our anarcho-syndicalist comrades of the WSF still continue their work to provide flood relief, oppose the militarist regime and fundamentalist violence. Reconstruction perseveres.



Image: @WorkersSolidar1

Palestine

Settler violence against Palestinians is getting even more extreme. Homes are being demolished, freedom of movement is being restricted and even children are being murdered, as violent settler-colonists and their "defenders" target the local people they are displacing in racist riots. In a vicious cycle, any time Palestinians step up to defend themselves, this is taken as a retroactive justification for the violence against them. It's clear that the far-right regime in Israel want nothing less than the elimination of Palestinians from Palestine. This cannot continue. The colonial settlements must be stopped. Palestine must be freed.



Image: Raya Sharbain

Peru

When an attempt by President Pedro Castillo to dissolve parliament was reversed, and parliament instead dismissed him, a familiar smog settled over the mountains of Peru. The Fujimorists that control parliament and have blocked any progressive reform for the last year are now back in the state's saddle. Their goal: a return to dictatorship, the genocide of indigenous peoples and the violent suppression of their political opponents, all so they can hold onto their power and privilege. The Peruvian people have come out to resist the coup, knowing what lies in store if they don't. All power to them.



Image: Wikimedia Commons

Qatar

Despite the loud calls for a boycott, due to Qatar's litany of human rights abuses, the 2022 World Cup went off largely without a hitch. After a spectacular final dual between Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé, the Argentine team took home the trophy. But by other accounts, the real victors of the tournament were Morocco: the first ever African team to reach the semi-finals, after trouncing the former colonial states of Portugal and Spain. A welcome sight of Palestinian solidarity emanated both from Moroccan supporters and players, who proudly waved Palestine's flag and called for its freedom. We look forward to future victories for African teams, next time hopefully in a less problematic host country.

Syria & Turkey

An earthquake has shaken through southern Turkey and northern Syria, devastating the region and hundreds of thousands of peoples' lives. Warning signs of such a catastrophe had been ignored by property speculators, keen to develop as much for as little as possible. The state was almost entirely absent from the rescue and reconstruction efforts, leaving the people themselves to carry out mutual aid disaster relief. Turkish and Kurdish anarchists were among the first to provide much needed support to the region, demonstrating the power of solidarity in the face of an ambivalent state and capitalist class. It was barely a couple of days until Turkey returned to shelling Kurdish communities.

Ukraine

A year on since the invasion and desperation is setting in. Having lost most of their territorial gains, the Russian state is now throwing wave after wave of conscripts into the Donbas meat grinder and has intensified its terrorist attacks against Ukrainian civilians. Struggling to hold the line, the Ukrainian government has responded by criminalising conscientious objection and desertion. Despite the danger, Ukrainian anarchists continue to provide humanitarian aid and protection to people suffering on the front lines, where at least four of our comrades have been killed, six wounded and three captured by the invaders.



DISPATCH FROM KHARTOUM #10

Thursday 13th

The sudden military movements of the Rapid Support Forces [RSF] confuse the Sudanese scene..and the army warns of “a conflict that may eat everything and everything”. The RSF continues to spread in various regions in Sudan, which made the army fearful

Saturday 15th - Morning

The clash began in our region, Khartoum, between the Rapid Support Forces and the army, and in large cases of killing among the citizens and the two armies, and the possibility of the internet being cut off. My friends, we hope to meet after the war in peace.

Now, clashes are taking place between the two armies in the capital, Khartoum, in which we live. A few moments ago, some citizens died, and the clashes are now taking place in different parts of Sudan. The Rapid Support Forces control the presidential palace, Khartoum International Airport and Marawi Military Airport, and the clashes are still ongoing.

If the Rapid Support Forces achieve control, how will they behave towards social movements like yours? And would their control be more fragile than the current government? - Ed

The Rapid Support Forces are merciless militias. Any peaceful demonstrations will be like [protests against] the Afghan Taliban.

Saturday 15th - Evening

The situation is now calm in Khartoum. The Sudanese army has regained many areas in the capital, Khartoum.

The army stated that in the coming hours it is working to strike by air the headquarters of the Rapid Support Forces in the capital.

So far, 15 citizens have died in the capital, Khartoum. There are heavy losses in the midst of the two armies. Marawi city airport and El Geneina city airport are in the grip of the Rapid Support Forces and some military areas. The army regained Khartoum airport and took control of the Khartoum again. The total number of dead citizens is 25 people all over Sudan, and the injuries are 183 people.

We are now working to spread awareness and sensitize citizens to the importance of armies leaving outside residential cities to reduce losses among citizens in the future, if this happens again. Today a citizen was run over inside his car because of the recklessness of the tank driver on the public road full of citizens.

Sunday 16th

In these hours, the Rapid Support Forces in Khartoum are being bombed by air forces inside their camps. A large number of the Rapid Support Forces fled and took refuge in citizens' homes in the Jabal Awliya area, south of Khartoum, and the citizens were expelled from their homes. And now the bombing is continuing and the accessories operation is continuing, and it is very likely that the war will move inside the homes of the citizens in the coming hours

Monday 17th

The situation is very difficult. The past hours witnessed heavy shelling. Now the situation is relatively calm.

Only the clashes are in the vicinity of the General Command and the Presidential Palace now. We in the group educate the citizen and give first aid to every injured person as a result of the bombing. Medical supplies have become a scarce thing, and few hospitals are functioning, and they are filled with injured citizens and soldiers.

We are not neutral, because we are in a peaceful battle since the era of the ousted al-Bashir until now, against the militarization of the country and the control of guns on the streets. We started with our peacefulness and we will continue with it to achieve our goals against

all parties to the war now taking place in the streets of the country. We started with it and through it we will be victorious, because we are against war and against any outcome that results from it. Both belligerents do not care about the security and safety of our people, so we call on them not to settle their scores among innocent citizens. ■

#A_C_A_B

#No to war, yes to peace

Sudanese Anarchists' Gathering

(Compositon by Organise)



MOMENTS AFTER AN ARMY TANK DROVE OVER A CIVILIAN CAR WITH A MAN INSIDE.



FRANCE IN FLAMES

When French president Emmanuel Macron ran for office last year, part of his platform was an unpopular pension reform that would force workers to work several years more before retirement. Forced to choose between outright fascists and neoliberals, French voters grudgingly elected Macron, but a showdown has been brewing ever since.

The movement against the pension reform got underway with a strike on January 16, 2023. Polite protests gave way to generalized unrest on March 16 when prime minister Élisabeth Borne used article 49.3 of the Constitution to bypass a vote in the National Assembly, implementing the new law by force. As the revolt gathered steam, it expanded beyond opposing the pension reform to rejecting neoliberalism as a whole. The protests, strikes, and blockades became gestures of resistance against the arbitrary power of the executive office as well as against Macron and his cronies (“Macron et son monde”), reminiscent of the Yellow Vests movement in 2018.

Today, the movement has reached another stage. In response to the intensification of the struggle and the diversification of tactics and battlefronts, police have dramatically escalated the violence with which they are targeting demonstrators. Even corporate business media like the *The Financial Times* are criticizing Macron’s repressive and authoritarian handling of the movement.

The General Strike of March 23

On March 22, the day before a general strike called by the unions, Macron stoked the fires of resentment. He showed up to address corporate media wearing a

watch worth 80,000 euros, which he attempted to subtly remove during the interview. In that media appearance, Macron presented an authoritarian and disdainful figure, lying about the movement and the repression that the police had meted out. Effectively, he told the unions and the people that he cared neither about what they had to say nor about their lives in general.

On Thursday, March 23, about 3.5 million people took the streets, including more than 800,000 in Paris alone. The blockades and strikes were successful all over the country, impacting high schools, universities, city transit, garbage collection garages, refineries, harbors, airports, trains, highways, and other institutions. The day ended with numerous “manifs sauvages” (wildcat marches) in the streets of Paris and fires all around the country—some at symbols of the executive and the government, including county offices, town halls, and police stations.

While it felt like a victory and a sort of coming together, Thursday also revealed that Macron and his police aimed to crush the budding uprising at any cost. Police targeted everyone without exception—for example, they usually abstain from hitting the security line that protects the unions, but in this case, they did not hesitate to. Images circulated widely showing police charging protestors indiscriminately, shooting military-grade GM2L grenades upwards and into the crowd, knocking people unconscious. While French police have never shied from using military weapons to subdue rebellious crowds—for example, during the Yellow Vest movement and the eviction of the ZAD in Notre-Dame-des-Landes in 2018— »

it is unusual for them to target elected officials, unions, students, and children as well as the black bloc. In many cases, the entire crowd responded with collective anger, which is also unusual.

Compared to the tremendous number of people in the streets, there were very few arrests. This was for two reasons. First, people were well organized, outnumbered the cops, and protected each other as much as they could. Second, the cops were not trying to grab people, but to inflict physical and emotional damage, in hopes of dissuading the many people who were taking to the streets for the first time from returning. Whether they succeeded or not remains to be seen.

The Strike Continues

Friday, March 24 opened with a strong presence on the picket lines, in particular at the refinery Total Normandy (close to Le Havre). People came from Paris and neighboring regions to support the blockade throughout the night and early in the morning. Comrades who appreciate French pop culture will be happy to know that rapper Medine and actress Adèle Haenel were on the picket line.

A part of supporting the strike is resisting “réquisitions.” Despite the right to strike being written into the French Constitution, there is a legal provision that allows the local government (la Préfecture) to force strikers back to work if the strike puts the economy at risk. In Le Havre, the blockade remained strong, but the state has been carrying out réquisitions across the country, especially in the field of energy. This confirms that the strike is working, as there is usually a delay between refineries shutting down and fuel shortages beginning, but it also indicates that the government is prepared to send the cops to people’s houses in order to force them back to work.

A Few Days Later

Many people attended a nationwide mobilization against the “Loi Asile et Immigration” (also called the Loi Darmanin, after the Minister of the Interior—the head cop of France, if you will). This law, the next one on Macron’s oppressive agenda, will severely reduce the rights of migrants, facilitating the imprisonment and deportation of exiled and undocumented people on French land. While the number of people who attended



that protest was nothing close to the number of people who are protesting against the pension reform, we are slowly building ties connecting anti-racist resistance and solidarity with wider resistance against the government.

From Saturday on, police violence became the chief topic of conversation and media coverage. Gérald Darmanin and Laurent Nuñez (the head cops of France and of Paris, respectively) did their best to spread lies about the events in Sainte-Soline and to try to legitimize the police retaliation in Paris. In the city, the BRAV-M police units—the “mobile” units that chase people around on motorcycles—took center stage in this discussion. There is already a remarkable number of videos of the BRAV-M assaulting isolated individuals, running over people, and verbally and sexually abusing people; this should not be surprising, as their ancestors, the “voltigeurs,” were famous for similar behavior, including the murder of Malek Oussekine in 1986, which inspired the movie *La Haine*.

Some unions—including the CGT and Solidaires—also spoke out against police brutality, expressing solidarity with those who suffered in Sainte-Soline. The slogan “Ni oubli, ni pardon” (“don’t forget, don’t forgive”) is slowly proliferating among striking workers. Even international media covering the movement and condemning Macron’s autocratic and repressive strategy has begun focusing on police violence rather than the pension reform.

At several work sites, as a consequence of requisitions and fatigue, workers had taken a break from the strike over the weekend. Many resumed striking again on Monday and Tuesday, but there is undoubtedly a certain weariness amongst strikers and supporters doubled with sadness and fear in the face of large-scale military repression. Darmanin and Macron are hoping to sway public opinion by brandishing the specter of violence in front of people’s eyes in the same way that the government did to suppress the *Gilets Jaunes* movement in December 2018. Whether this strategy will be successful remains to be seen. It will depend, in part, on how successful we are at presenting other narratives.

The general strike of Tuesday, March 28 was relatively successful, depending on who you ask. The number of people in the streets is diminishing, but it was still among the highest recorded over the past two months—

about two million. Cities in the west of France (“le Grand-Ouest”), famous for their insurrectionary tendencies, coordinated successful road blockades. A significant number of refineries, fuel storage units, and other logistical centers were blocked or on strike; more than 400 gas stations in France were out of fuel on Wednesday, March 29. Schools and universities remained on strike as well—as did the Eiffel Tower, among other well-known French institutions.

As for the demonstrations themselves, the results were mixed. Fierce gatherings took place in Rennes and Nantes, where the black bloc is always offensive, and in cities like Lyon, St-Etienne, and Toulouse. In Paris, the atmosphere was tense. While some confrontations with police broke out late in the day, they felt more symbolic than strategic. Significantly, the spontaneous night marches have died down. If spontaneous marches and other forms direct action return to the streets despite the government’s show of force over the weekend, that could give the movement a second wind; if they do not, that could determine its fate.

While the government’s perverse rhetoric should not shape our actions, it is important to puncture the narratives that they are trying to propagate. Essentially, Macron is using the same strategy he used to suppress the *Yellow Vests*. He is blaming the protesters for the injuries that police inflict on them, in order to infantilize and discredit those who defend themselves against the police and to justify the escalation of police repression.

This circular rhetoric is already at play in Darmanin’s lies about the events in Sainte-Soline, as explored in the analysis “The Trap of Sainte-Soline.” Darmanin has initiated a legal process targeting the collective “Les Soulèvements de la Terre” for “dissolution,” equating ecological sabotage with terrorism by claiming that many of the protesters at Sainte-Soline are long-time “A-listed dangerous individuals” (“fichés S” in the French counter-information databases).

The state is attempting to turn the popular outcry about police violence on its head. The goal is not so much to legitimize the use of military force on unarmed protesters—Macron won’t admit to that—but to present it as the unavoidable side-effect of his righteous efforts to protect the French Republic »

from dangerous and irresponsible individuals who must be stopped for their own sake. But there is another way to read this whole situation.

If Macron is determined to force his agenda through without a vote regardless of how unpopular it is, and to suppress all protest by means of militarized police violence, then the only way to prevent the arrival of outright autocracy is to establish a rapport de force with the police. In that case, those who take the initiative to experiment with ways to defend themselves from police are neither infantile nor irresponsible. On the contrary, they are the only thing standing between us and tyranny.

In this spirit, many people have called for gatherings across France on Thursday, March 30 to oppose police brutality and stand up for the people who have been wounded, some of whom are still fighting for their lives in the hospital.

Facing down the police is not a matter of bringing symmetrical force to bear against them, but of outflanking them. It requires outsmarting them as they attempt to isolate and corner us, whether physically or discursively. It means escalating all together, uncontrollably, as a network too extensive to surround—moving, merging, branching off, changing course, and innovating more rapidly than they can keep up with, and doing so on every kind of terrain, from the streets themselves to the narrative about what is taking place in them.

For now, the issue of police brutality threatens to supplant all other subjects of public discussion, including the pension reform, work itself, and the power of the state. This may also conceal a trap for the movement. Focusing on the police alone will not necessarily produce a strategy that enables us to overcome them.

The intersyndicale (the coordination of the eight biggest national unions in France) has called for the next nationwide strike to occur on Thursday, April 6. In many people's eyes, that is too late, as the events that will determine whether the movement lives or dies will have occurred by then. This long gap will give unions time to negotiate with the state: already, some union leaders have been speaking with the government. While a few hardliners inside the CGT and other unions are resisting their leaders' pressure to concede, the history

of union politics is a veritable litany of cautionary tales.

Of course, when the unions announced the general strike for March 23 after the spontaneous protests of Thursday, March 16, many people also believed that the movement would die over the following week. As always, what takes place in the streets will determine everything. Despite fatigue, pain, and grief, French people have yet to give up the fight. Long live the revolution! ■

CrimethInc

www.crimethinc.com/2023/03/30/france-in-flames-macron-attempts-to-crush-the-movement-against-the-pension-reform-with-lethal-violence-1



ANTI-REPRESSION WORK IN A GHOSTLIKE MOVEMENT

It's been almost two years since the uprising in Belarus was suppressed by the regime. It left many anarchists in jails, while others had to flee from their country in fear of repression. In this text, a member of Anarchist Black Cross Belarus will dwell on what it's like to keep doing antirepressive work when the movement is not really there anymore.

The two biggest groups of anarchists are now distributed between Belarusian prisons and exile. ABC-Belarus, after operating for over 14 years in the country, also had to leave to protect its members and keep up the work.

For the first half-year in migration, comrades seemed to be eager to stick together and do something - if not change the regime in the country, then at least attract attention to some 30 comrades who ended up in jails.

Of course, this activity was impeded by the need to figure out one's life and papers in a new place, lack of local language proficiency, people being scattered all around Europe and Asia, and depressive states caused by forced migration and lack of any personal or political prospects.

Every now and then, at our strategic meetings, ABC-Belarus discussed the potential of remaining one of or the only anarchist collective from Belarus. We asked ourselves, if there is no movement anymore, would our work make sense? We don't see ourselves as a charity group that exists exclusively for the benefit of those facing repression. We see our work as political action that is only valid and legitimate when we have a movement around that we can not only

serve and be accountable to, but also rely on.

Our hardships are very much related to the context in which our group was formed and how it functioned. Trying to avoid repression, our members were anonymous even to the most trusted comrades. That created problems with collecting money inside the Belarusian movement, the lack of channels of talking to groups and individuals without compromising anonymity and the inability to personally interfere in the urgent situations of repression. We still needed the comrades to do the field work while we made sure people felt secure about their legal expenses being covered by the movement, instead of become a burden of their families. We also pioneered the shaping of collective security culture to avoid potential expenses and repression because of people's security neglects.

It also created a disbalance in who people saw as responsible for doing repression response work. It felt like comrades mainly relied on ABC-Belarus in terms of raising money and organising lawyers, which was fine as long as we had small amount of comrades to take care of in the course of the last decade.

But things changed drastically after many of us had to leave and the number of prisoners increased exponentially. It feels like the movement is slowly fading, with many people choosing to continue with normal life, while we can't really afford that, having 30+ comrades to care about, with some sentenced to terms of 15-20 years in prison.

Interestingly, it seems like when some Belarusian anarchists left the repressive context and they found themselves in a safer environment, the need for networking or relying on the community became less pressing. And the inclination to avoid any clashes with the past reality in the form of reading sad letters of comrades or reports of ongoing pressure on them in jails is very much understandable as a psychological self-defence mechanism. Activists are traumatised and tired and need some rest. Some will probably not return from that activist break. At the same time, when they personally don't need the ABC-Belarus protection anymore, there is no need to follow and engage with us. Previously, people invested in ABC knowing that the structure will protect them and their comrades in case of necessity. Now this doesn't seem real.

On the other hand, the fact that Belarusian anarchists found themselves in more liberal countries that allow organising public campaigns there and awareness-raising or benefit events, they are not massively using this chance to fundraise for their imprisoned comrades. Even for simple tasks like helping to layout a book by a prisoner or create some design to advertise our campaigns are no eager volunteers.

Over time, activists also get disillusioned in the struggle for change in Belarus, because it is not really possible to greatly influence the situation there, and being active in exile feels like fake and sectarian activism for the sake of activism. Moreover, like in most political movement, the "effective life" of an anarchist amounts to 3-5 years. It means, the more time passes in exile, the less comrades we will have around, with almost no influx, since the diasporas are not so numerous and mostly consist of the same tired, traumatised and demoralised migrants.

In light of this, ABC-Belarus remains a very specialised labour-force that seems to be responsible and accountable for organising full-fledged and long-term support of our imprisoned comrades.

Needless to say that we are also traumatised and tired, just there is no one we can share this burden with or pass it to, so we will have to carry it.

Of course, not everything is so dark, we still can rely on some comrades, we are just concerned about the gloomy trend as the years go by.

Anyways, our imprisoned comrades still need support, now more than ever. To be able to sustain the level of financial aid we used to provide to them, we need external help. Just recently, we have launched a 'personal supporter' campaign which implies looking for individuals and groups who would take custody over a Belarusian imprisoned anarchist and cover most or all of their expenses. Read more on the campaign on our website abc-belarus.org. Consider becoming such a backer, seriously.

www.abc-belarus.org/en/supporters

We also invite you to think about how solidarity and antirepression work is organised in your activist communities, because we all deserve to be reassured that we will not be left behind in dark times. ■

ABC - Belarus



THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT

On Feb 28th, a train crash in the Greek region of Thessaly killed dozens of people. Before the wreckage had even been cleared, the right-wing government coldly responded by blaming the public sector and pushing for further privatisation. In the days since, thousands of people across the country have rallied in protest and the rail unions have called rolling strikes, against the Greek state's inhuman disregard for people's lives. Here we publish a statement from our sister federation, the Anarchist Political Organisation, who have likewise raised the call for justice.

**THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT.
WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS.
THE STATE AND CAPITAL ARE KILLING US.**

On the night of 28 February 2023, a freight and a passenger train carrying hundreds of passengers and dozens of workers collided violently, killing at least 57 people and injuring hundreds. With the carriages in flames, the power cut and the doors impossible to open, people fought to save themselves and their fellow passengers.

The unspeakable tragedy of the train collision in Tempe unfortunately reminds us, in the worst possible way, of how the state and capital perceive human life: as a means of making profit - AND ONLY AS THAT. They don't give a damn about our safety, just as they don't give a damn about our lives. Just last month, announcements by the train drivers' union spoke of the criminal conditions on the railways, stating clearly that it is only a matter of time before something fatal happens.

This is precisely what makes it obvious why we cannot refer to the event as an accident.

With the sale of TRAINOSE to Italian investors and the simultaneous reintroduction of trains that had been withdrawn in Switzerland, the government's dithyrambs about upgrading the railways followed. So this is the upgrade to privatisation: to gamble with the lives of workers and travellers, since no money is to be given for control, prevention or people's safety. So when our lives are counted as just another expense in the budget of the state and capital, we are talking about predetermined murders - neither accidents, nor "human errors", nor "bad timing". The criminals of the Ministry of Transport, the Hellenic Train administration and the entire state apparatus who contributed to this murder will be held accountable by the entire social base, the organised movement and its resistance. The hypocritical mourning declared by the government only provokes our anger. Our struggles for public and decent means of transport, our struggles against the state and capitalism carry the justice we seek. ■

**NEVER FORGET THE STATE-CAPITALIST CRIMES.
CLASS SOLIDARITY - SOCIAL COUNTERATTACK.**

Local Coordination of Thessaloniki/ A.P.O.-OS.

MANIFESTO OF PAGLAYA

A manifesto for a libertarian youth organization in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and its communities

Who is PAGLAYA?

PAGLAYA is a university-based anarchist community organization that explores, imbibes, and prefigures libertarian practices.

It hopes and organizes for and with autonomy, consent, direct actions, and free association. We desire for collective total liberation and the cultivation of libertarian tendencies within our spaces now.

PAGLAYA goes beyond schooling and institutions and acknowledges that there are students who are not part of the current educational system and most of them are students who are actively pushed out.

PAGLAYA Manifesto

A manifesto for a libertarian youth organization in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and its communities.

All our efforts are tabled in the Philippine left movement, Experiencing a traumatic and unfortunate ruination, Where you are unhinged if you are not organized nor participating,

Only a few people from the left must be heard,
Only a few people from the left must be acknowledged,
Only a few people from the left can be given a platform.

But we disorganized ourselves,
Going beyond institutions and organizations,
We fully realized our being of liberation,
To free ourselves from the chains of both oppressors and neo-oppressors,
To free ourselves from the harm done by both fascists and neo-fascists.

We disorganized ourselves,
To liberate,
To consent,
To value autonomy,
To build relationships,
To do mutual aid,
To trust,
To care,
To help,
To support,
And to prefigure a free society.

We find some ground to act from,
In a society where we are seen as dangers,
Where there is practically no space at large,
For anarchist values to be legitimized and even understood,
We create spaces and actions,
To instill the desire for collective liberation and the cultivation of care.
We stand our ground against the oppressive structures and cultures of education,
Where we demand,
Integrity that will tend to the harmonic development of our being,
Rationality that is consistent with the principles of modern science not faith,
Diversity of beliefs, ideas, and principles,
Liberation, that will sanctify at the base the abolition of authority in education.

We exist to start the rebuilding of our education and our world,
There's no after school revolution,
For we are now revolting. ■

PAGLAYA

www.bandilangitim.xyz/library/paglaya-manifesto-en



A YEAR AFTER: 29 LESSONS OF OPERATION SOLIDARITY

Operation Solidarity was a volunteer organization created by anarchists prior to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the early stages of the new round of war, the organization became an important, useful and media-successful project. We, its founders and participants, reflected on our own experience and drew practical lessons, which we want to share in this article. We hope that our experience will help other activists in their work and prevent them from making some mistakes; we hope that new, beautiful anarchist projects will emerge from this experience.

Some pre-words: In the article you can find a word “*Milieu*”. By this we mean all entire people who are interested, sympathize or get involved into anarchist activism. We use this word instead of Stage or Movement, because think that these words are not fulfilling our understanding of local reality and practices.

COMMON CONCLUSIONS

1. Organizations must begin with careful preparation: in-depth discussions, reflection and detailed proposals.
2. The Collective Agreement’ creation stage is extremely important.
3. Structures need mechanisms of self-sustaining, embracing integration of new people.
4. It’s always necessary to negotiate the terms of cooperation with other people/structures BEFORE cooperation begins, in order to understand each

other’s expectations and not to let each other down.

5. We shouldn’t empower people to make strategic decisions from the beginning, assuming that since you are an anarchist, there will be no problems.
6. Communication should be respectful and comfortable - otherwise the team can fall apart.
7. We must fight with informal hierarchies in the Movement.
8. It’s better to refuse or cautiously cooperate with “leftists”. We shouldn’t let them chart the development course of our structures.

OUR LESSONS

1) Prepare everything in advance

We began preparing for the invasion and creating the organization in late January 2022. We didn’t have enough time to think all things through and get a total agreement on the interaction, which subsequently led to a split and further animosity. Therefore, it’s important to take enough time to create new structures, which takes at least 3 months.

2) Get busy with your equipment

An individual lesson.

We provided 150+ fighting comrades with basic items: body armors, helmets, IFAKs, and tourniquetes. In addition, more serious and specific requests were met, like quadcopters, cars, and radiostations. »

Nevertheless, it was incredibly difficult in the chaos of the first days of invasion. Much of what arrived to the comrades at the time turned out to be useless or even harmful and the necessary things had to be sought in Europe and the United States.

Over time the situation got balanced, but it became obvious that it's better to take care of your own equipment and have the maximum necessities in advance. Therefore, we recommend every non-belligerent activist own and know how to use a tourniquet, IFAK, radio, body armor and helmet, ideally to have their own weapons; and know how to drive a car.

3) Have a well-thought-out proposal

Organization starts with an idea, then comes to the project proposal. It can be created individually or collectively. A project emerges when the team has discussed, finalized and approved the proposal.

But when it comes to extreme situations, like the outbreak of war or uprising, it's better to have a ready and concrete proposal that people can support and implement. Often you can see anarchists supporting or rejecting some ideas only on the basis that the speaker displeases them. It's time for us to change our internal culture of voting «for people» and come to a culture of voting «for projects».

4) We need documentation

We didn't have time to finish the documentation detailing the inner workings, rules and a number of other important points - the Collective Agreement. This was necessary in order to create complete transparency about the project, to develop in harmony and to integrate new people to the project. Our attempts to finish the documentation in parallel to the activities of the organization were actively resisted and resulted in a split.

It's important to finish the documentation BEFORE launching the project; or at least to have an established and understandable culture of interaction.

5) Make a Collective Agreement

Collective Agreement (CA) — is a written document that records goals, describes mechanisms and processes and the culture of the project. On the basis of this information further activities are built, experience is transferred and new people are integrated.

A CA can include all kinds of tools for resolving conflicts, making decisions, electing and appointing specific people to perform certain functions, describing public communication, recording the collective criteria for accepting or expelling participants, etc. You choose the items to fill out the CA based on your group's needs, desired efficiency and work processes.

6) Think through the process of integrating new people

Unfortunately, we didn't have the opportunity to discuss in detail with each new person their tasks and responsibilities. So later we faced a situation where misunderstanding and disagreement with the goals of organization turned first into a conflict and then into splitting of the team on the basis of disagreement in the vision of the goals, means of their achievement and the need to stick with the already existing prescribed plan.

The information contained in the CA can be simplified and used for the reception of participants. It should be communicated and discussed with each individual at the stage of admission to the structure, given time for reflection and only then accepted into the organization. There is nothing wrong with the idea of a «trial period»: often 1 month of working together is enough to see how well you fit each other.

7) Structure is incredibly important

Operation Solidarity had an elaborate (but not prescribed) structure, documented and approved tasks, functions, a media strategy, a forward-looking vision (a network of cooperatives, a social center, and fellowship structures).

There was an assumption of organizational

membership. The members belonged to the «Core» and could make decisions on the development of the organization through a system of assemblies, but within the framework of the goals and strategy. Volunteers who came for the activity and didn't want to be a part of the organization/weren't anarchists, were part of the «Environment».

With the arrival of new volunteers, and then participants, our group encountered resistance, devaluation, and denial of the organizational work we had done before. The new people wanted to do things in their own way without offering any specific proposals nor mechanisms. Decisions to approve the structure were delayed and sabotaged. People began to hold their own meetings, bypassing the usual mechanisms to exclude us; negotiating among themselves, carrying out duties as they thought was right. Together, this led to growing tensions and new conflicts.

What conclusions did we draw? If you are building an organization, then: 1) stick to the structure you originally planned; 2) inform people about how it should work, get full clarity and agreement on your processes and mechanisms; 3) don't be afraid to say «no» and refuse - people can always create something in their way if they don't like yours; 4) stay flexible to feedback from people and newcomers, but always



be aware of your own boundaries.

If you come to an organization: 1) it's your responsibility to familiarize yourself with its documentation, including goals, mission, vision, values and principles, standards and expectations, mechanisms; 2) if the organization doesn't suit you for some reason, don't join it; 3) it's normal to have your opinion and be critical, but if you come to the organization and you don't like something in it, it's worth discussing, not demanding immediate changes. Because you may not fully understand the context.

8) Hold the course

It's especially important to emphasize the need to follow the goals/set course of the project. Of course, it can evolve; reformatting/rejecting the original idea in favor of a better one is a good thing. Just not in the initial stages and only when you have confidence in those around you. Obviously it's strange to start out as a revolutionary organization and become a parliamentary party along the way, for example, without having achieved the original goals.

The course is maintained through regular synchronization. This is why strategic meetings are necessary, where development is discussed, achievements and failures are analyzed, misunderstandings are eliminated and team unity is strengthened. With lack of attention for to this factor, it will be very difficult to reach consensus and keep the team together when important decisions should be made.

9) People's inexperience

Most anarchists & leftists denied the possibility of invasion until the last minute, and had minimal experience of collective coordination, participation in long-term projects and organization building. A serious problem arose with sometimes radically different understanding of Anarchism. Unfortunately due to a lack of time and energy, we haven't been able to bridge the gap of experience, practice, and theoretical basis between different people.

It's necessary to be very careful in the selection of personnel, to gradually deepen the inclusion »

of people in the activities of the organization. It's especially important to train them before transferring direct responsibilities.

10) Visioning and dividing of duties

Before even having the headquarters and a functioning organization, based on previous experience, we agreed that the work processes would take place in the Departments: Media, Communication, Warehouse, and Technical. Within these Departments, participants could make local decisions, while strategic decisions would be made at the General Meeting. Each Department was accessible for people after: familiarization with their functions, communication with coordinators, and expression of desire.

In reality, there was no time for interviews, so responsibilities were divided spontaneously among the most active people. A clearer division and structure came a month later. Although many participants were against a structure, one was formed naturally, matching and complementing our expectations: instead of 4 Departments, we had 9, each of them had its own coordinator and together we tried to make decisions at the General Meetings.

Duties can and should be divided among the people, by discussing their abilities, functions and responsibilities in advance. This increases efficiency and reduces conflicts.

11) Delegate and contact experts

It's super important to have people from different spheres of life you can turn to for advice or help.

At the beginning, not many of us knew much about military equipment. We were reached a comrade who was well aware of the subject. We were therefore eager to get her estimate or recommend before buying.

Setting up a system of accounting and storage also took a lot of time and was accompanied by conflicts, because people didn't have similar experience and a clear idea. The issue could have been resolved much more quickly and easily if we had approached

competent people.

If it's possible to delegate responsibilities without loss of quality, or to ask for help from a more experienced colleague, it's always worth it.

12) Formality balance

Regular meetings and a written protocol of the results are necessary. Sooner or later, there is a need to go back to previously made decisions, expressed ideas and suggestions, to check the fulfillment of tasks, etc. For this to be possible at all and for you not to lose the "pearls" of collective activity - it's necessary to keep agendas (a list of questions to discuss) and meetings reports.

Some may think this is an unnecessary bureaucracy, but even during OpSol we had many situations when we needed to refer to "the past", so the described approach fully justifies itself.

13) Take decisions with those whom you trust

On the day the invasion began we made ourselves known media-wise and signaled to other comrades: «Let's join us in volunteering to tackle this problem together!» We didn't want people scatter to other projects or get lost. We were able to bring them together and set a vector for the development of the entire local Milieu. Absolutely different anarchists with absolutely different points of view and intentions came to us, so we got kind of a mix. The situation was intensified by the fact that people had none or very little experience of working with each other on serious projects.

Despite this, we tried to make decisions by consensus. Where it wasn't possible, we looked for synthetic alternatives or made compromises.

Our experience confirmed once again that compromises are the worst way to make collective decisions. It's almost always better to pause or divide than to go along with someone else. Diversity is good, but not in the ideological and strategic issues of one collective.

Decisions are best made by people who have a positive experience interacting in common projects and have been actively communicating for at least 6 months. This is not a guarantee of success, but it increases the chances that conflict will resolve good.

14) Vouching is working badly

Vouching is one of the oldest and most organic anarchist practices.

Nevertheless, our experience has shown that it worked very poorly when accepting new people. Members and volunteers recommended others more as friends than as comrades and good performers. The decisive factor in vouching was the convenience of interpersonal communication.

It seems to us that this practice must be changed by making ideological orientation, reliability, and performance of the primary criteria.

15) Against "leftists"

In Ukraine, the majority of anarchists don't consider themselves "leftists" and feel distrust to those who identify themselves in that way. This is due to the memory of the history of the anarchist movement, the betrayals by the "allies" (think of the bolsheviks) and contemporary events.

Paradoxically, anarchists actively communicate and cooperate with the "leftists", joining as crowd their projects like "Social Movement", supporting their initiatives and there's no a problem with it. But the problem is that ideologically we are different, and sooner or later it becomes critical. The worst thing happens when we allow "leftists" to be hegemon in our projects and discourse: in 2014 this led to the situation when most Western leftists/anarchists weren't understanding what was happening in Ukraine, remaining "neutral" or supporting Russia; in 2022 this ended with the collapse of at least one ideological and strategic project - Operation Solidarity.

We recommend creating common organizations with people with whom you agree on major issues and have worked on the same project(s) for at least 3

months. Always discuss in detail the expectations of each other, unity of opinion on key issues, details and boundaries of your cooperation.

16) Commune = Great idea

From the beginning we thought about the format in which the organization would work. In January-February, we searched for the space that could meet all the living and working needs of the participants: it should have the necessary working area, storage space, recreation area, separate WC and kitchen. The resulting solution of a closed commune as a form of organization of work and life was successful in the initial stages for several reasons:

1. Making a closed commune of politically similar people, having an action plan and activities for everyone had a positive effect on the psychology of the participants and helped them to concentrate on their actual tasks; to feel involved in an important cause.

2. The space appeared to be safe and logistically comfortable, became a shelter for many people. Especially during the hottest days of the occupation of the Kyiv region and bombing of the city.

3. Because we were in an enclosed space for a long time, there was full inclusion in the work process and greater transparency. The live communication between the participants always simplified the understanding of work processes and increased the efficiency of task implementation.

4. We gained tremendous experience in communal self-organization and self-government, gained important skills of collective activity and organization building.

17) Healthy communication is very important

Trust and team dynamics depend on the nature of interpersonal communication.

We fell apart up because of, aside from other things, rude communication from one of our group members occurred. In stressful situations it can be difficult to control your frustrations and reactions, »

but you should strive for consistently calm, considerate and inspiring communication.

18) Learn to facilitate and solve conflicts

The knowledge and skills of facilitation are basic team-building activities, without those you will hardly create a sustainable team project.

Conflict is a problem with all people and communities. Unfortunately you can't build a conflict-free society. The good news is that conflicts can be learned to be solved! Conflictology and practicing facilitators/mediators can help.

Even short reflection sessions work great, but it's a really good idea for a structure to have its own facilitator whose main task is to prevent and regulate conflicts in the team.



19) Towards the healthy conflict culture

Conflicts are inevitable and it's important to learn how to resolve them. Anarchists often do this very badly, making conflicts public and turning into scandals. We cease to look serious to outsiders; activists become frustrated and discouraged, which has a negative impact on the whole Movement.

Therefore, we need to improve our culture of conflict. We need to understand that spreading rumors and lies is immoral and that public disputes and bullying is offensive. It's not a good idea to bring internal conflict to public without the consent of all parties. Conflicts within organizations can only be discussed by external actors if they are called upon and legitimized by the conflicting parties as those who can help resolve the conflict.

Bringing out information about internal conflict in interpersonal communication without broadcasting (adequately) the position of the other party is wrong. Either this shouldn't happen at all, and the desire to complain about comrades in private, behind-the-scenes rather than public discussion, should be suppressed by participants as inappropriate behavior. Or it should happen in a balanced and formalized way. For example, with short texts about the situation from all sides of the conflict, which we can use to tell someone about the conflict, to ask for help, etc.

We need to develop and implement fair conflict resolution mechanisms.

20) Horizontality is a dynamical process

No organization has become horizontal because it was named as such. Horizontality is formed through specific processes, mechanisms and a culture of interaction. Its establishment sometimes takes years. Horizontality is very fragile and can easily be destroyed at almost any stage - by a careless word, a rash action or, conversely, by inaction. This is an art that we anarchists ought to master to perfection. Alas, with few exceptions it isn't.

Everything we organize and do as anarchists is an exercising and seeking the answer to the question,

“How can a horizontal organization of community/society work?”

21) Look after each other

The mental and physical state of the project participants is very important. If one person has too many tasks, and the others don't show solidarity and help, it will likely lead to burnouts and conflicts.

Any structure has a much better chance of survival when the relationships within it are like in a strong and friendly family.

We must take an interest in and care for the condition of those with whom we work side by side; pay attention to already deteriorating emotional or health conditions and help comrades in difficult situations: plan days off, sick leave, vacations, and any opportunities for mental and physical recovery.

22) Connections mean a lot

Operation Solidarity wouldn't become as large-scale as it was, if there were no help from other people and structures.

The headquarters were provided to us by caring friendly entrepreneurs. We are immensely grateful to the international support network that have been raising money and sent supplies to our comrades-combatants. Moreover, we often found that foreign comrades did most of the logistical work: finding the right equipment, making the necessary arrangements with traders, buying, organizing delivery, getting the vegan food and humanitarian aid.

Thanks to old connections, new acquaintances and mutual help, we managed to get or exchange valuable and necessary things. We were helped by hackers, famous clipmakers, journalists and talented videographers, people with military experience and other volunteer organizations. This was made possible by: a) visible and important activities; b) the absence of certain ideological barriers and demonstrative attributes that discouraged people; c) the professional and cultural diversity of the participants.

23) Negotiate the terms of cooperation

When working with other organizations, foundations, groups, or individuals, it's important to be specific: what? how? who? why? Receiving assistance (financial, material, humanitarian, etc.) almost always imposes additional responsibilities and obligations on you - these must be made clear. It's necessary to specify in advance the goals and conditions of cooperation, its framework and mutual expectations, so that there are no conflicts and negative situations due to unjustified expectations from each other.

24) Lack of communication within the Movement

Communication consists of coordination (“what and how are we doing?”) and synchronization (“why are we doing it?”).

We realized that we are in lack of the Movement's communication organs, both national and international. There are no platforms where we can collectively present a proposal, start a project, or come to an agreement. There are no mechanisms or bodies that can reason or appease/agree on the ambitions of individuals and groups.

Earlier, secure mailing lists were used - today messenger chats. But we feel that something more meaningful and huge is missing: an international network with a common council of national actors, organized from the bottom up. When we have such a body, we will be able to act many times more effectively, coordinate interests more quickly, and regulate conflicts much more easily.

25) Reaching out to the broader target audiences

Through organized media work and cooperation with foreign activists and journalists, OpSol has become known not only in activist circles. We reached a broader target audience and exposed ourselves as a structure that supports the anarchists/leftists in the struggle against imperialism. In this way we drew attention to ourselves and the situation as a whole, increased interest in our ideas, »

and gained recognition and additional support. Here are the most important stories about the organization:

- Channel 5: garnered 2.1 million views on YouTube in two days.

- Popular Front documentary about HoodsHoodsKlan anti-fascists fighting: 143k views on Youtube in total, 400k Instagram followers and several live screenings in the US and Europe.

26) Don't fixate on Movement

Contrary to popular perception, it wasn't only leftist/anarchist structures that provided us with financial and material support. A significant portion of the donations came from Ukrainian businesses, the middle class, ordinary people, and the diaspora. At best, they were liberals who helped our comrades and Aim.

We achieved this because we followed a premeditated media strategy, contacted various organizations, and tried to talk less about our political views publicly and directly, while remaining attractive to ordinary people, but keeping our core.

27) Decentralize the resource

OpSol was indeed centralized in the control of resources. The reasons were: a) the tight deadline for preparation; b) the initiative of one person and the unwillingness of others to take responsibility until Feb 24.

Conflicts arose with the arrival of new participants, denial of the work done earlier and a lack of trust. They ended in ultimatums, blackmailing and an international boycott of our group.

We gave most of our resources to the opponents of the new initiatives, and we can see that they are doing really important work in organizing military support at the expense of anarchists/leftists from all over the world. But we see two problems with this:

- 1) The comradeship resources are pretty limited and drying up - confirmed by ColSol' member. In addition, they are also needed elsewhere: Rojava, Chiapas, Myanmar.
- 2) Military support is far from the only challenge facing individuals and the Milieu today.



The challenges we have faced and will continue to face cannot be met by spontaneous acts of mutual aid. We need stable, self-financing and regularly operating structures: a replenished self-help fund, lawyers, rehabilitation and training centers, jobs, and recruiting mechanisms. We were understanding this before the invasion, a year ago and we are more and more convinced of it today. Operation Solidarity was about that.

Therefore, our lesson: decentralization of resources can and must happen in projects where there are clearly defined, equally understood objectives (unity) and trust in each other, based on actions.

28) Explore the possibilities of cryptocurrency

Although the original idea of cryptocurrencies as decentralized and beyond the control of big capital and governments is now defamed, it's a very useful tool.

We had been accepting donations to the bank accounts, PayPal (requiring passport details) and cryptocurrencies. We had the least problems with cryptocurrency, which allowed us to make almost instant transfers from anywhere in the world.

With a deeper knowledge of crypto it turned out to be possible not only to save, but also to multiply existing finances. That's what we used to refill the organization's funds.

29) Use the suitable tools

We started using Telegram first, then Signal, and then Element to organize our work. Telegram is insecure by default, but relatively convenient for collaborative work. Signal is known as secure (which we doubt), but uncomfortable for teamwork. Element satisfies both requirements well, but it took us almost 3 months to figure it out.

We recommend doing preliminary research on technical solutions potentially suiting your tasks and making their use a prerequisite for participation in the organization.

Afterwords

Much has been done in the Milieu in the last 30 years. Much remains to be done and we are, in a sense, just starting our frighteningly beautiful journey. But we believe we can do it.

There is no clearness about when the war will end and what damage it will bring to the country, to the Movement and to all of us individually. But it's in our power to come together, to organize ourselves, to overcome our differences and become better because of past experiences, to minimize the damage of historical events and to face the future with confidence. Both terrifying and inspiring prospects for this new reality are already visible and inevitable: grassroots volunteer networks, infrastructure facilities, queer units, anarchists who control kamikaze drones and have gone through trench battles, structures born in the dark — many, many things. How will we face this reality? What will we become, and how will it change because of us? - As always, it's up to us. Individually and collectively.

What has happened this year and our further perspectives requires a more detailed analysis for better understanding of the connection with the global context and the Movement. This is the work we have yet to do and present the results to you, our dear comrades. ■

Ed. OperationSolidarity would ultimately come to an end due to internal difficulties, however if you're interest in sharing material resources to Ukraine you can do so via :

Help War Victims

PayPal: helpwarvictimsua@riseup.net

Solidarity Collectives

PayPal: suppliesforukrainenow@proton.me

PayPal for humanitarian aid only:

humanitarian.aid.for.ukraine@proton.me

Good Night Imperial Pride

Paypal: <http://paypal.me/gnimperialpride>

TALES OF A SEEDCASTER SPRING 2023

‘Twer never suche men more happily freed,
Than they who cast grene flowery seed’
- Robyne Hode of Loxley, 137 BC



I love guerrilla gardening.

Well, I love the idea of guerrilla gardening, but I’ve always been put off by the ongoing maintenance and logistics of squatting a specific patch of wild abandonment. Sideways baseball caps off to anyone with the staying power to do it, but I already struggle to keep on top of my medium sized garden.

So last month I rustled up a handful of friends, colleagues and neighbours and founded the Nottingham Seedcasters. The goal is to plant zero maintenance hardy perennial plants, flowers and herbs in our communities. If any or all of the group decide they can no longer be arsed then the things we’ve planted will thrive just fine without us – beautifying street corners and providing nourishment for pollinators. But either way, there should be no need for any Seedcaster to revisit a cast plant except to bask in its tiny glory.

The structure is simple and casual. Seedcasters are encouraged to start off a batch of something wholesome at home (I’ve currently got a few dozen lavender seeds sprouting on my windowsill). When they’re big enough to survive outdoors, they’re shared with the other Seedcasters to be planted in neglected spots on their dog walks, commutes to work, local street corners, etc. On my first few missions I felt a bit self-conscious digging away with my little trowel and suspiciously squirrelling away secret stashes. But now I just get on with it, either being totally ignored by passers-by or exchanging a few pleasantries with them.

There’s no rules about what to plant, but I’d avoid anything controversial like mint, which is lovely & aromatic but tends to colonise. Perennial herbs like lavender, sage and thyme are safe options that will almost definitely be loved by humans and bugs alike. Self-seeding wildflowers are brilliant but might struggle to compete with grass so they’re a little more advanced. Bulbs are great because they have the oomph to push up through grass & weeds each spring without any human assistance. However, some bulbs are quite toxic to humans and/or animals (looking at you, lilies) and some plants are invasive, so spend some time reading up beforehand. You are responsible.

When it comes to picking locations, that’s when things get a little grey. We don’t interfere with anyone’s personal garden, or anywhere that is clearly being looked after by someone because rude. But office car parks, apartment block communal gardens, neglected parks, bases of suburban pavement trees...



you probably walk past hundreds of spots every day. From micropatches of dirt for a single tulip, to shady glades for a grand bluebell and lavender meadow.

Just for fun we tag everything we plant. One of the Seedcasters is a member of our local Hackspace. He designed a simple vector logo in Inkscape (shout out Free Open Source software) and laser cuts batches of them out of laser-safe scrap plywood. These get painted and stuck in the ground with our plants. As a bonus bit of fun the Hackspace embroidery machine is used to produce group mission patches.

I have high hopes that our small band of merry men will sow flora aplenty over the coming seasons, spreading joy to the good people of Nottingham and endowing multitudinous pollen for the good bugs of the same. ■

Parsnip
Nottingham Seedcasters



THE WRONG 'UNS WALKING GROUP

I am an old punk rocker and how this came about is 5 years ago I got diagnosed with type two diabetes, I was told I might be able to control this through lifestyle by losing some weight before being put on medication. But there was virtually no help or information on how to do this, so in true punk D.I.Y style I decided to do it all myself. I started off walking a mile a day and over six months increased it to five miles a day, I also eat healthier cutting all the crap food out of my diet, it was quite easy being vegan I just switched to the wholemeal versions of everything as in wholemeal bread, brown rice, brown pasta etc., lots of vegan Indian foods with lentils, chickpeas, and that sort of thing. Within a year I had lost three stone reversed the diabetes and now it is officially in remission.

This encouraged me to keep walking and stay on top of my health. I walk in the countryside around Manchester, and this inspired me to get out as it is great being in beautiful natural places, not only is it physically good for you but it is also great for your mind being in such relaxing and chill surroundings. It can really help reduce stress. As I was out walking so much, I thought, I could start a YouTube channel and inspire others to get outdoors walking to reap the benefits.

I then started thinking about starting a walking group which would be a safe space for us alternative folks, as I knew lots of punks, metal heads and goths who love the outdoors but did not feel they fit into most of the walking/hiking groups out there, which from my own experiences can be a bit “nobby” middle class and judgmental towards alternative folks coming on group walks. So, three years ago I started up a walking group

specifically for us alternative lot, the outcasts, the misfits, and the black sheep and called it the “Wrong Un’s” for a laugh. The group has been very successful, we run monthly group walks, it is one of the best free activities out there, we run walks to beautiful countryside locations and interesting places, sometimes visiting abandoned buildings or interesting ruins on the walks. I work out the walk routes in advance and try to offer both easy and more challenging routes to suit different abilities in the group. I try to make sure the walks end at a café or pub where you can get a brew or a nice pint of crisp cider personally. I run the walks on Sunday afternoons, and they are typically between four or five miles long.

The group is a great social activity, and I have found when walking away from pubs, clubs, and gigs (though I like those things) you tend to have some good, interesting conversations. We run the group as a safe space where people can be free from racism, sexism, homophobia, or any other unpleasant behaviors. For me I have to say there is something special about being in a group of like-minded people who have just climbed a big hill and are surrounded by breath taking views of nature. Then sitting in a circle eating and sharing food and drink, probably a very natural human activity that our ancestors would have done in the distant past.

We need to use our rights to walk public footpaths, or we are at risk of losing them. I can say that I regularly find public footpaths overgrown or fenced off illegally by landowners trying to deny the public using them. I have encountered some landowners who are not happy for me to be using public footpaths across their land, but we need to keep them in public use. One easy bit

of direct action that you can do is get a pair of garden secateurs and keep them in your walking bag, then when you encounter styles overgrown with nettles and brambles you can clear them yourself. I have cleared a lot even though it is the landowner’s responsibility to clear them, some of them seem happy for them to become overgrown to deter the public.

If you live in the Greater Manchester area there are some great walks around Glossop which is within spitting distance, and you can visit the Globe Vegan pub afterwards for food and a drink, it is a wonderful

place. But wherever you are in the world I would urge you to set up your own community walk groups. ■

John

You can find out more about John and the walking group via the aforementioned YouTube channel “The Health Anarchist” here: youtube.com/@thehealthanarchist



TWO MALATESTA PIECES

The following two articles by Malatesta were originally published under the titles “Perché il fascismo vinse” and “Comunisti e fascisti”. More info at the end of each article.

WHY FASCISM WON

Material force can prevail over moral force; it can even destroy the most refined civilization, if the latter does not know how to defend itself with appropriate means against the offensive returns of barbarism.

Any wild beast can tear a gentleman to shreds, even if he is a genius, a Galileo or a Leonardo, if he is naive enough to believe that he can curb the beast by showing it a work of art or announcing a scientific discovery.

But brutality hardly triumphs — and in all cases its successes have never been general and lasting — if it fails to obtain a certain moral consensus, if civilized men recognize it for what it is and, even if powerless to eradicate it, flee from it as from something filthy and repugnant.

Fascism, which synthesizes all the reaction and calls back to life all the sleeping atavistic ferocity, won because it had the financial support of the rich bourgeoisie and the material help of the various governments that wanted to use it against the pressing proletarian threat; it won because it found against it a tired mass, disillusioned and made helpless by fifty years of parliamentary propaganda; but above all it won because its violence and its crimes have certainly provoked the hatred and spirit of revenge of the offended but have not aroused that general reproach, that indignation, that moral horror which it seemed to us should arise spontaneously in every gentle soul.

And unfortunately there will be no material reconquest [riscossa] if there is no moral revolt first.

Let’s say it frankly, however painful it is to verify. There are also fascists outside the fascist party, in all classes and in all parties: that is, everywhere there are people who, despite not being fascists, despite being anti-fascists, nevertheless have a fascist soul, the same desire to abuse that distinguishes fascists.

It happens, for example, to meet men who call themselves and believe themselves to be revolutionaries, and perhaps anarchists, who in order to resolve any question affirm with pride that they will act fascistically [fascisticamente], without knowing, or knowing too well, that this means attacking, without concern for justice, when you are sure not to run danger, either because you are by far the strongest, or because you are armed against an unarmed one, or because you are many against only one, or because you have the protection of the public force, or because it is known that the assaulted person is against reporting [il violentato ripugna alla denuncia] — in short, it means acting as a camorrista and a policeman. Unfortunately it is true: one can act, and often one acts, fascistically without having to join the fascists; and it is certainly not those who act or propose to act in this way who will be able to provoke the moral revolt, the sense of disgust that will kill fascism.

And don’t we see the men of the [General] Confederation [of Labour],¹ the D’Aragonas, the Baldesis, the Colombinos, etc., licking the boots of the fascist rulers, and then continuing to be considered, even by their political opponents, as gentlemen?

These considerations, which we have made many times, came to our minds while reading an article in “L’Etruria Nuova” from Grosseto, which we were amazed to see complacently reproduced by “La Voce Repubblicana” of 22 August. It is an article by “its valiant director”, the good Giuseppe Benci, the chief [decano] of the republicans of the strong Maremma (just to use the words of the “Voce [Repubblicana]”), and it seemed to us a document of moral baseness, which explains why the fascists were able to do what they did in Maremma.

The brigandish deeds of the fascists in the unfortunate Maremma are well known. There, more than anywhere else, they vented their evil passions. From brutal murder to bloody beatings, from arsons and devastations to petty tyrannies and petty vexations that humiliate, insults that offend the sense of human dignity, they have committed everything without knowing limits, without respecting any of those sentiments that, as well as being a condition of every civilized life, are the very basis of humanity as it is distinct from the lowest bestiality.

And that proud republican from Maremma speaks to them in an unassuming tone and treats them as “people of faith”, and begs for their tolerance and almost their friendship for the republicans, claiming the patriotic merits of the republicans themselves.

He admits that “the government (the fascist government) has the right to guarantee the free carrying out of its activity”, and suggests that when the republicans come to power they will do more or less the same thing. And he objects that “no one will be able to claim that here (in Grosseto) the Republican Party has attempted to hinder the experience of the dominant party with any act”, and boasts of “not having hindered the action of the government in the slightest, even withdrawing from electoral battles to wait for the experiment to be carried out”. That is, to wait for the experiment of domination over all of Italy to be carried out by those people who have tormented his Maremma.

If the state of mind of Mr. Benci corresponded to the state of mind of the republicans, and if the fate of the fascist government were to depend on them, Mussolini would be right when he says that he will remain in power for thirty years. He could remain there even for three hundred. ■

(Taken from “Libero Accordo”, August 28, 1923)

[1] CGL — Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (translator)

COMMUNISTS AND FASCISTS

We are not scandalized by the violence and electoral plots [pastette elettorali] of fascism. Workers must face the matter. The communist conception of electoral and parliamentary tactics does not logically exclude, not even on our part, the... plot [pastetta]. If we could make plots and chase opposing voters away from the polls, it would be comforting because we would be closer to being able to deploy forces ripe for the offensive.

So says the engineer Bordiga in l’Unità, who aspires to be the Lenin, in reduced copy, of communist Italy. And this is the fundamental reason why fascism was able to triumph and still continues to ravage.

There has been — and not only among those who call themselves communists — »



a lack of moral revolt against the abuse of brutal force, against the contempt for freedom and human dignity, which is the characteristic of the fascist movement.

Too many people, even among the victims, have thought: we would do the same if we had the force. Naturally, many who have thought so felt attracted to the side where the force was or seemed to be.

But then, if the Communists triumphed, what difference would there be from fascism?

The same bullies, the same thugs who now beat, burn and kill in the name of great Italy, would run into the ranks of the communists and beat, burn and kill in the name of the proletariat; and the engineer Bordiga would find himself in the same position in which Mussolini seems to find himself: after having incited the beast to get on [salire su], he would like to curb it in order to avoid the inevitable fall to which excesses lead, and he could not.

The revolution will have to be carried out in the name of justice, freedom and human solidarity and proceed with methods inspired by justice, freedom and solidarity. Otherwise, one will only fall from one tyranny into another.

We had already written this commentary on Bordiga's lines, which we took from Reggio Emilia's «La Giustizia», when we are told that from the context of Bordiga's article those words took on another meaning.

We have not been able to obtain the text of the article, but let our comment pass anyway, because the meaning of those words seems too clear for us to speculate about it.

After all, even if Bordiga didn't mean exactly what he said, we have heard those things, and even worse, to be said personally by many communists. It is quite the style of a sect. ■

(Taken from "Pensiero e Volontà", May 1, 1924)

Errico Malatesta

Translation: João Black



BURN AFTER READING

Review: ANDOR

In short: It's aight, well worth a watch, but fuck Disney.

"What is my sacrifice? I'm condemned to use the tools of my enemy to defeat them. I burn my decency for someone else's future. I burn my life to make a sunrise that I know I'll never see. And the ego that started this fight will never have a mirror or an audience or the light of gratitude. So what do I sacrifice? Everything!"
- Luthen Rael

I've got 500 words. I'm pairing down from 4000. Urgh. Between September and November last year I would not shut up about Andor. A life long lover of the franchise, a plucky rebel, and someone who strongly feels that "Rogue One" is the best feature film in the canon, I have so much to say, but I want to focus on one scene.

The end of episode ten, sees Luthen Rael deliver a powerful monologue in the final act and for me shows the true face of Andor and it's creators, Disney. It's a powerful moment, he's in a heated discussion with a lacky who he's trapped for working for the proto-rebellion and is asked "What do you sacrifice?". The anguish drips from him and his words punch a hole through many a revolutionary's heart. He's their mirror.

The beauty of Star Wars from their perspective is that the "Empire" can be whoever you want it to be. Sometimes depicted as a hyper fascist martial society laden with xenophobia and social hierarchy, other times as a bureaucratic authoritarian communist macro-state rife with corruption and cultural assimilation. Disney, they know how to play the game. If you're a nihilist who feels like they've been consumed by their revolutionary ideas

all hopped up on the *Catechism*, Luthen is you right? Maybe tho, you're a blue-blooded hero of decency, a patriot and freedom fighter "a bad man who keeps good men safe" type whose noble sacrifice will place them on the right side of history, Luthen is you really, right?

This has always been the dichotomy of the Rebels. They are a bland stand in for your wish fulfilment, regardless of your politics. Engagement will be high, the cash prints itself.

In truth, it's even worse.

It isn't even honest in this. Writer Beau Willimon, merely wrote a fantastic bit of recuperation. This isn't some earnest Ken Loach war drama, the words dripping with truth and sorrow. The vast corporation simply made your revolutionary emotional driver a product. Just like they always do. They replaced the genuine realities of organising with some aspirational twaddle and somewhere a possible comrade decides she'd rather wait until the revolution is drowning itself in glory and noble sacrifices.

It's just a story, the words mean nothing. The rebel is just an interesting character study, their words hollow. It's a powerful scene but I'm not Luthren.

Later...

I thought I was so damn smart, look at me, the corporate bastards won't trick me. Then came the final episode. Now I know I'm not Luthren, heck, I'm not even Maarva. Still, my eyes welled up with rage and righteous fury, and I find my mirror: I'm Brasso and I'm tired of being asleep.

It's not some complex rebel orchestration nor a valiant paragon of goodness standing against evil which sees the planet of Ferrix rise up. It's just a working class community who cannot take any more. The scene is alive and visceral. I've seen that guttural passion in the people next to me as the armour clad bastards made their shield line. Fuck, Disney got me. The Fuckers.

Oh it's entirely without genuine substance, the plot points schlocky and it's "message" delivered with a sledge hammer, but fuck me it's got a mirror for everyone and for that, it's fucking genius. I watched the series through again, and yep, it's the best Star Wars has ever been.

Also Saw Gerrera is a fucking bad boi for sure. Yep. I need more than 500 words. ■

Review: Suzerain

Over the past week I've been playing Suzerain, a sort of choose your own adventure political simulation game. Released in 2020 by Torpor Games, I totally missed it until browsing a recommended for you tab during a sale. The aim of the game is for the player to take on the mantle of President of the nation of Sordland, a country with a very complex and bleak political history, complete with revolutions, military coups, civil wars and deposed monarchs. The game treats it all very seriously, with many of the people and cultures and organisations being similar but not copies of our own world during the early days of the Cold War. The game is set in 1953 by its own calendar and the technology and development and political situation of the world tally with that.

Once a decision is made you cannot reload and undo it, you'll have to start a whole new game if you really need to change course. The game starts with a profile builder for your character and a timeline of events in Sordland's recent history. Throughout you are given some options to choose from about certain actions and beliefs, this is largely to help the player build a picture of the character Anton Rayne, but some of the options do come up and have some bearing in the game. Eventually the timeline shifts to documenting Anton's rise to the Presidency, and the game proper starts with your inauguration.

The goal is to essentially survive as President and depending on player decisions stay alive until the conclusion of your first (only?) term. At the start you are given some options, economic outlook, pro-market or pro-planned economy, which sector of government to prioritise, defence, health etc. and which of the worlds two superpowers to develop closer ties or to push for a

third path. The prologue is there to give you a rough plan of who you wish to be as a person and a President. I chose to stick to that plan as closely as possible with deviations being forced upon me. I ended the game as partially successful reformer who had been swept up in the CSP, the game's version of the Warsaw Pact.

The game is very gripping, my first play through was over 11 hours which I played over a week. I needed to spread it over several days because otherwise I would've just done nothing but play the game until it ended. The world of Suzerain is full of characters, institutions, nations, cultures, religions, and so on. There is a codex for nearly everything referenced in the game and its information can be useful at certain parts of the game. It took 11 hours to play the game, just reading a file of the codex entries alone will add several more hours. But, you don't need to be overly familiar with the games codex to be successful, its an asset, but not a vital one, you can still complete a play-through with some thought and a strong sense of what you want to achieve.

The music is also a strong point of the game. Most of the games action is through text boxes so the soundtrack had to work hard to deliver on setting appropriate moods. After playing the game I bought the soundtrack and have listened to it quite a bit. The tracks were composed by James Spence and they're fantastic. *Suspense*, the track that often accompanied the stressed and important political meetings made me feel like biting my nails, a habit I broke years ago, and *Past* which covers more reflective episodes had me looking back on my own life.

It does allow you scope to play radically differently, I ended the game as a mostly clean democrat who leaned left and had made some ground to support minorities and averted an invasion from a powerful neighbour. Looking at the achievements on Steam, I can see that I could've done the exact opposite, become a brutal and corrupt despot, or overthrown in yet another civil war, and many points in between. And crucially, the developments largely made sense, there were times when bombshells were dropped in my lap, but once the smoke cleared and I learnt more about those events they also made sense. I understood why my opposition, oligarchs, foreign powers, conservatives and nationalists, were out to get me. I didn't particularly sympathise with their views but they had reasons for doing what they were doing.

Sordland is, to put it bluntly, a mess. Its been ruled by a military strongman whose shadow still looms over everything, it is technically a democratic state but its constitution was devised with the explicit intention of maintaining strong central authority, and the ruling party the United Sordland Party (USP) has ruled unquestioned since the end of the civil war. You are the current leader of the USP which is both a blessing and a curse. And a failed reformist administration provoked a major economic recession, and there's a powerful and active nationalist movement even more fanatically devoted to the ruling ideology than the USP, violent extremist groups and at least one regional power looking to change the map for good. And that's just on day one. For a text based game that moves from one backroom meeting to the next its surprisingly eventful.

Which brings me to this games most important teaching moment. No matter how strong my mandate or how dirty I fought or how pure my ideals, I could not carry out fundamental change to the system. The best I could do was push through some reforms, and that had to be watered down when I faced intractable opposition. If I kept pushing things to their limit, at best all my reforms would fail, and I would probably be done for, or attacked by a foreign power. The Anarchist criticism of power isn't that bad people can hold power, it is power itself that is the issue. Being President of a nation is not a blank check to do whatever you wish so we just have to make sure the best person gets the top job and all is well. Presidents et al are constrained by other forces

and circumstance, compromises have to be made and no matter what the system continues grinding on. And Suzerain teaches this important lesson at every step on the road.

I promised to expand healthcare during my first term, but we were in the middle of a severe recession inherited from past administrations, and the oligarchs and the ultra conservative political elite had already threatened me repeatedly. So, I expanded funding for the courts and created an anti-corruption force to tackle corruption but also to investigate both factions, healthcare had to make do with what resources it had. Later I was able to find enough money to combat a Polio outbreak and make prescription medicine free, but that put Sordland in debt and hindered the overall economic recovery. This is just one example, it simply isn't possible to achieve everything you promise the electorate. Which is also a lesson we are taught in the real world time after time. Dictator or Democrat, there is not one leader in world history whose legacy doesn't have many stains and broken promises.

Usually, in political commentary the reaction to this is to lambast the individual leader or their network of advisers. And occasionally the criticism will expand to include the whole political party or coalition and very rarely during the time of political revolution the whole governmental mechanism will be condemned. Its obvious that some senior politicians are actively corrupt or promise well beyond their means to deliver, do I need to cite an example? I'm sure every reader can think of a dozen examples at least and some will be unique to their background. But Suzerain goes further than this, you can be an angel and work beyond the limits to achieve your vision, its a video game after all, even if Anton Rayne gets shot the player will be fine. It just won't be enough, forces outside your control with their own wills, desires and concerns will clash with you, even allied and friendly ones.

I have no idea if this was the intended message of Suzerain's developers Torpor Games. Though I find it difficult to see any other intended message. Especially when attending the games version of the United Nations the AN. The AN meeting is essentially where all of the foreign policy tangles you've tried to smooth out come to ahead. One after another Rayne and his counterparts

in the other nations ascend to the podium and give their views, the words and specific goals of each speaker are different but the forms and structure are the same. They each outline their grievances with each other, often at opposite sides of the same tensions, each one is selective in their arguments and uses high talk of ideals to cloak pragmatic demands, and each one has a point. There is no `good guy` there, they all are equally to blame for causing these tensions and are all equally blameless since they are the inheritors and responders to past and current tensions beyond their control. Even your nation Sordland behaves in much the same way, or at least my Sordland did.

There were dialogue options to stress peace and co-operation, but I just didn't see the point in choosing any of them, it was far too late for any such talk to make a difference. By that point I had a neighbour actively trying to provoke a war with me and building a nuclear weapons program, I had also signed Sordland into the CSP a powerful block of nations and its leader had already started modernising Sordland's military. I had already been pressured into taking a side in regional and global conflict that seemed about to rip open any day. And I had seen no evidence from the other heads of government that neutral appeal would work at all in advancing Sordland's benefit.

I had set out with the goal of staying independent and maintaining peace and treating everyone fairly but the events of the game forced me to make serious compromises on nearly every front. Which is also a testament to the games excellent writing: it's a video game, I could've have at any point said `to hell with it` and played how I wished damning the consequences and just booting up a new game when the sword finally dropped on my head. But, I just couldn't play like that, I cared what those close to me felt about me and wanted to collaborate with them. And I actively viewed several characters in contempt and looked forward to arranging their downfall and felt cheated in the cases where I could never catch them. And for the bigger picture I struggled to do the best I could with the limited resources I had while doing my best to keep all those plates spinning.

This is how I ended up. (See Below) ■

Reddebrek

You can read more from Reddebrek on their website here: reddebrebsowl.blogspot.com

SUMMARY

ANTON RAYNE

History will remember you as...
Valgslandian Socialist

4th President of Sordland

Assumed Office: 1954

Vice President: Petr Vectern, Lucian Galade

Preceeded By: Eward Aphonia

Personal Details

Born: 1908, Geyr

Political Party: USP

Spouse: Monica Rayne

Children: Franc Rayne, Deana Rayne

Alma Mater: DUAC (History)

Between 1954-1958...

- 2.5 million workers benefitted from minimum wage.
- 57% fewer maternal deaths were recorded.
- 8,222 people died to criminal violence.
- 15,440 people were arrested for their suspected ties to Young Sords.
- 1,314 conscripts died in training.
- More than 15,899 people with Bludish descent were released from prison.
- Investigations were launched on 48 businessmen.
- 614,470 women joined the workforce and 805,380 girls were enrolled at secondary education for the first time.
- Foreign investors have pulled out around 3 billion sit from the Sordish market.
- 998 CSP officers arrived in Sordland.

Show Sordish Publications

FINISH

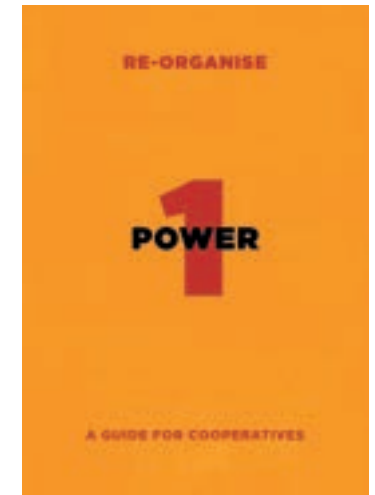
Review: REORGANISE

In short: This trio of booklets is a new benchmark for materials for nascent organisers and seasoned comrades both. They provide an array of valuable lessons which will prove useful for anyone working to establish a cooperative or similar. It is full of tips, advice, and lessons various which I hope become every bit as much of our default mode. If you're looking to set something up, read these booklets.

Developed by the Loughborough University Cooperative Organisation Development Programme (LUCOOP) and published by Dog Section Press, this short series is one of the most accessible educational resources I've ever come across for those looking to get a grounding in how and why we use cooperative structures. Written in a clear and concise tone which manages to breeze through the often difficult task of conveying complex information without being patronising, *Re-Organise* makes it's arguments with a direct tone which slices through each topic without treading water. This is made all the more digestible by the layout which skips between block text, isolated boxes to provide quotes or specific lessons, and conversations between some well known anarchist faces.

The first booklet "**Power**" addresses the issue at the heart of any social movement, the very nature of "power" and the dynamics that flow from it's misuse. First building a frame work by discussing what "Power" is on an individual and organisational levels and how it is wielded for capital benefit before addressing how cooperative structures manifest power differently.

The second booklet "**Governance**" lookings into how we form the framework of our organisations, from legal



and procedural issues, to dealing with social divisions and managaing task allocation. This will probably turn up the nose of our more insurrectionary compas, however that will still be plenty to take home even then.

The third and final booklet is "**Stratergy**", provides some very practicable lessons on the workflow of a new cooprative, from building a shared vision to those first tentitive steps. It's a refresher even more established groups might want to run through. We can only benefit from restating our assumptions and developing our operational method.

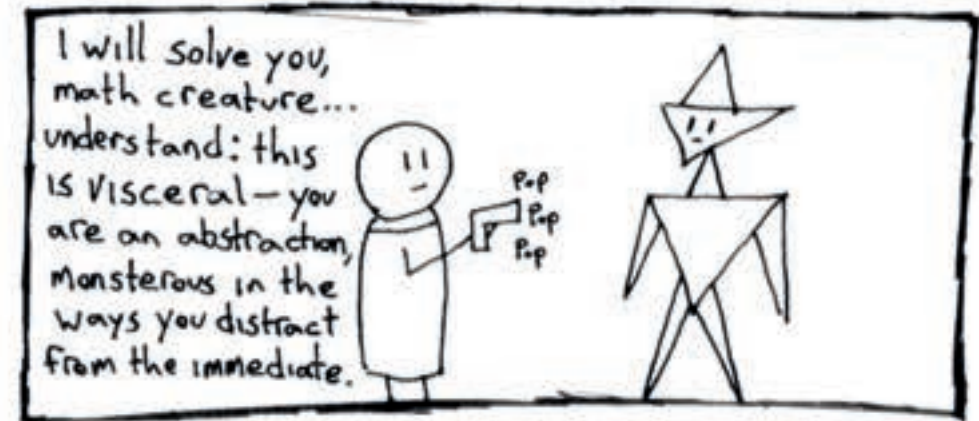
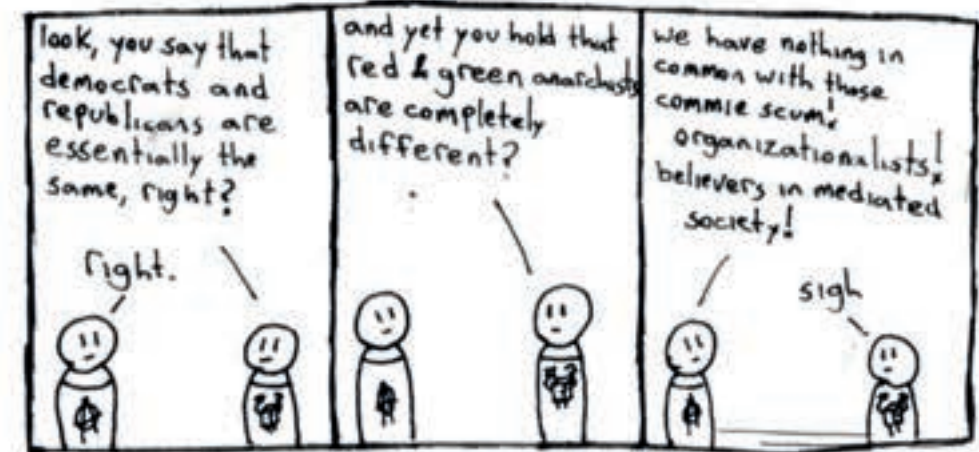
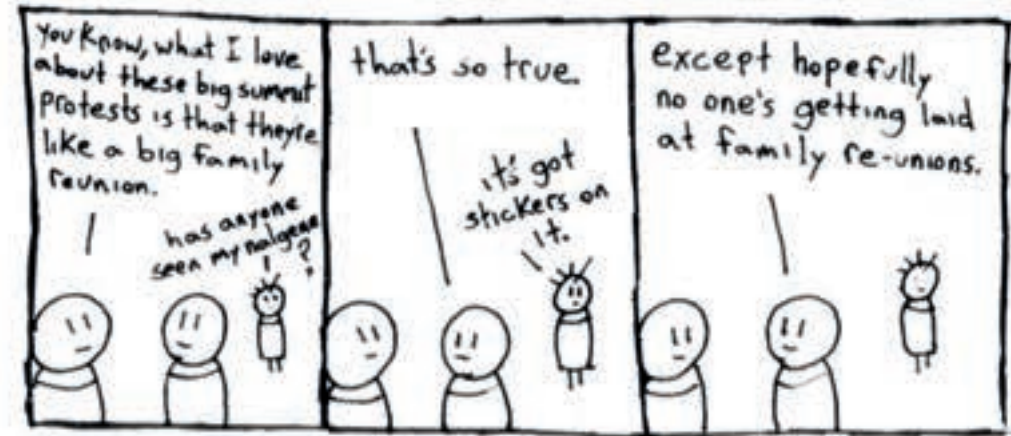
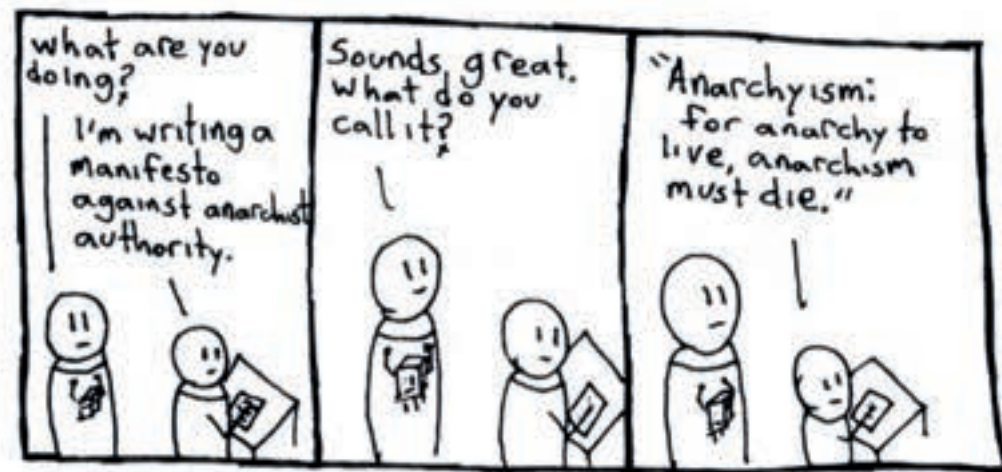
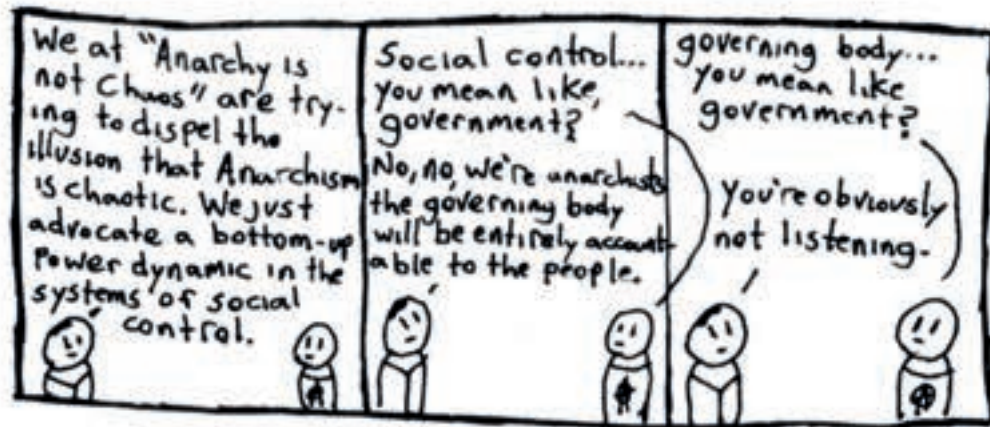
Dog section and LUCOOP, along with designer Matt Bonner (revoltdesigns.com) have put together a fantastic series here. While not the densest of works, these are the materials that will get people thinking like anarchists and starting to engage with their own power and sense of autonomy.

Re-Organise is something you could pass on to everyone from your sparkie pal whose just poking his nose into this ol' Anarchism lark to the most ardent street organiser. My only minor criticism is that it'd be easier to share as a single work, at 40-ish pages after trimming the repeated section, it'd still be quite compact.

Regardless, I'd be surprised if *Re-Organise* didn't become as ubiquitous on the shelves of infoshops and social centres as *No Comment*. Excellent stuff.

Buy *Re-Organise* from www.dogsection.org or start reading it today online, and for free, at www.issuu.com/dogsectionpress. ■

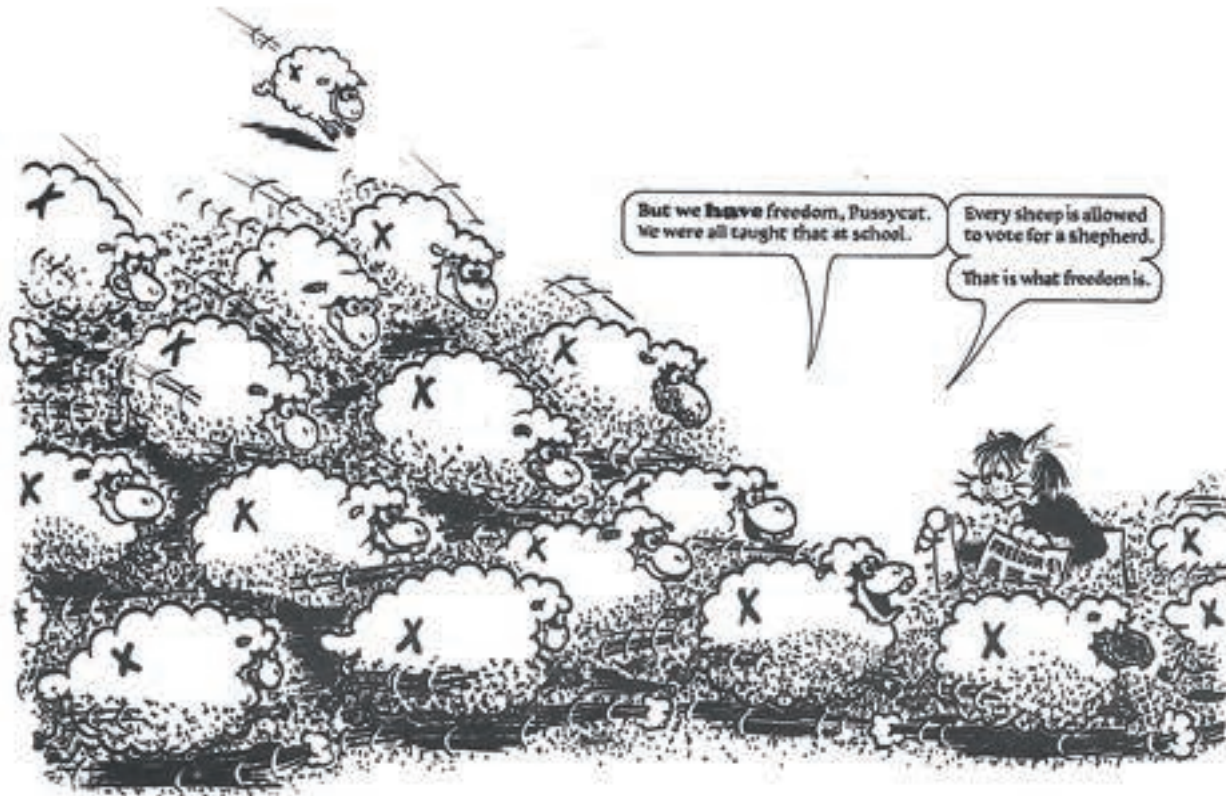
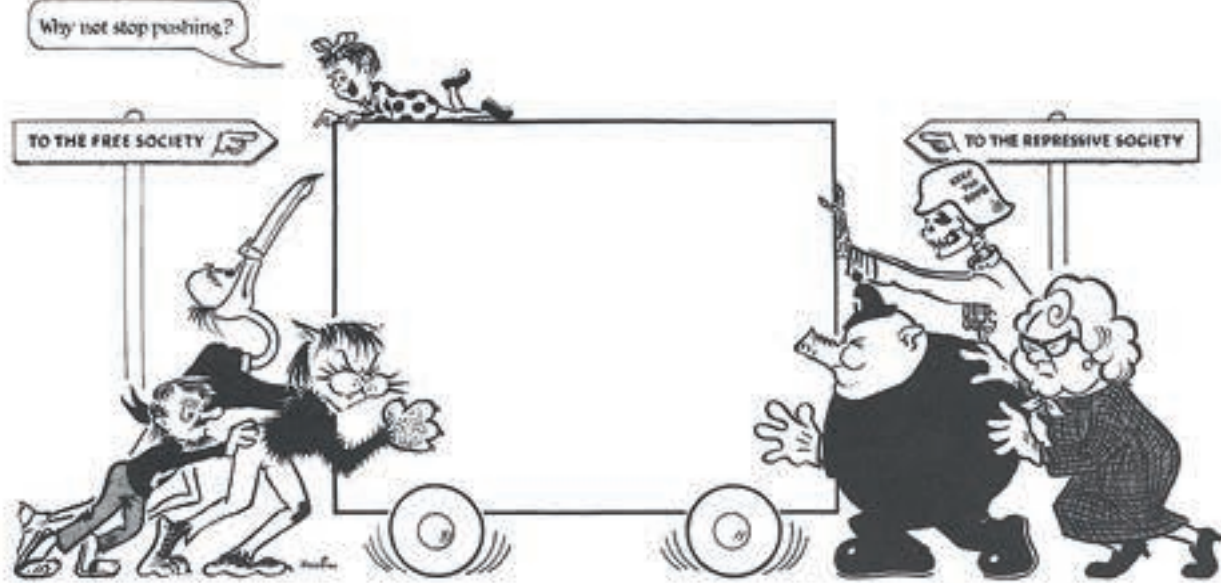
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WILDCAT

Cartoons by Donald Room
Collected editions available
from Freedom Bookshop





THE ABOLITIONIST MISSION ISN'T DONE UNTIL EVERY PRISON IS EMPTY. WHEN THERE ARE NO MORE COPS,
 WHEN THE LAND HAS BEEN GIVEN BACK, THAT'S WHEN IT'S OVER.
 I DON'T EXPECT TO LIVE TO SEE THAT DAY, NECESSARILY. I MEAN, HOPE SO. BUT I SMOKE.

MEMORIA: TORT

On Jan 18th, a taskforce set to enforce the construction of the “Atlanta Cop City” . The next day the *Atlanta Press Community Collective* issued the following:

“We are devastated by the loss of our friend who was killed by the police. Tortuguita was a kind, passionate, and loving person, cherished by their community

They spent their time between Atlanta, defending the forest from destruction and coordinating mutual aid for the movement and, and Florida where they helped build housing in low income communities hit hardest by the hurricane. They were a trained medic, a loving partner, a dear friend, a brave soul, and so much more. In Tort’s name, we continue to fight to protect the forest and stop cop city with love, rage, and a commitment to each other’s safety and well-being.

Many people have reached out with memories and accounts of Tortuguita. They are remembered and cherished by many friends, loved ones, and people who they supported with mutual aid.

‘They loved all life and people -especially their qt poc community — deeply.’

‘Tortuguita was a very kind person. They were always willing to help and take care people in need around them, especially the qt bipoc community. They were always attentive to others needs and offer always the best of them. A truly warriors for the forest and the people! I miss them so much.’ ■

REST IN POWER



Ed. Just as we go to print, CrimethInc have put together a study of the evidence and autopsy. The piece is appropriately named:

“Atlanta Police and Georgia State Patrol Are Guilty of Murder”

www.crimethinc.com/2023/04/20/atlanta-police-and-georgia-state-patrol-are-guilty-of-murder-the-evidence-and-the-motive

MEMORIA: MENDÚA

On Sunday 26th February, in the small town of Dureno in the Sucumbios region of Ecuador, two armed men wearing hoods approached the garden of A'i Cofan Indigenous community leader Eduardo Mendúa and shot him twelve times, killing him and his brother Gino Mendúa.

Mendúa was a land defender and organiser against the ongoing oil exploration in Sucumbios. He served as the secretary of international relations of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) and had recently returned from an assembly in which they declared in one of several resolutions “We demand that companies stop their illegal & divisive activities in the communities”. During the meeting, the organization announced its decision to desist from participating in a further dialogue between the Ecuadorian government and various social sectors led by the Indigenous movement, due to the lack of compliance with the agreements by Equadorian president Guillermo Lasso and the increased repression of Indigenous communities resisting extractive industries in their territories.

Over the last decade, the government-run companies Petroamazonas and Petroecuador have tried to install

three platforms to open 30 oil wells. They have done this in the traditional method of Neo-Liberal corporations in South America, from Chevron to Chiquita, through sowing social discord, using vast legal might to control and influence the people, pushing political elites into action in their favour, and when that fails utilising direct and fatal violence to silence opposition.

The Ecuadorian government makes cooing noises at the international community while back home they continue to demonise and criminalise indigenous opposition to their environmentally destructive projects while continuing to apply persistent pressure on communities as it spies with envious eyes the natural resources in their keeping. Projects are pushed through without Free, Prior, and informed consultation. With all of this, There is no doubt why Eduardo was targetted for such violence, and tho the identity of the gunmen may never be known, who caused his death, is known to everyone.

The Organise Editorial Collective would like to express our condolences and solidarity with the family and loved ones of Eduardo and Gino Mendúa. ■

REST IN POWER.

“... They’re restricting access to the ocean. The poor fishermen are being forced out, the industrial producers are taking everything. All workers are affected. We began this fight, this resistance, to create a better future. We’re doing this for all Ecuadorians.”

- Eduardo Mendua

(Taken from an 2022 Interview you can watch here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MT4DWkJE2h4)



WHO ARE THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION?

We are class struggle Anarchists.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

For further information contact us:-

Website / i-f-a.org

Twitter / IntFedAnarchist

Facebook / InternationalOfAnarchistFederations

Federación Libertaria Argentina (FLA)

federacionlibertaria.org

Iniciativa Federalista Anarquista (IFABrasil)
anarkio.net

Anarchist Federation (AF)
afed.org.uk

Федерация на анархистите в България (ФАБ/FAV)
anarchy.bg

Anarchistiká Federáce (AF)
afed.cz

Federation Anarchiste (FA)
federation-anarchiste.org

Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchistinnen (FdA)
fda-ifa.org

Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI)
federazioneanarchica.org

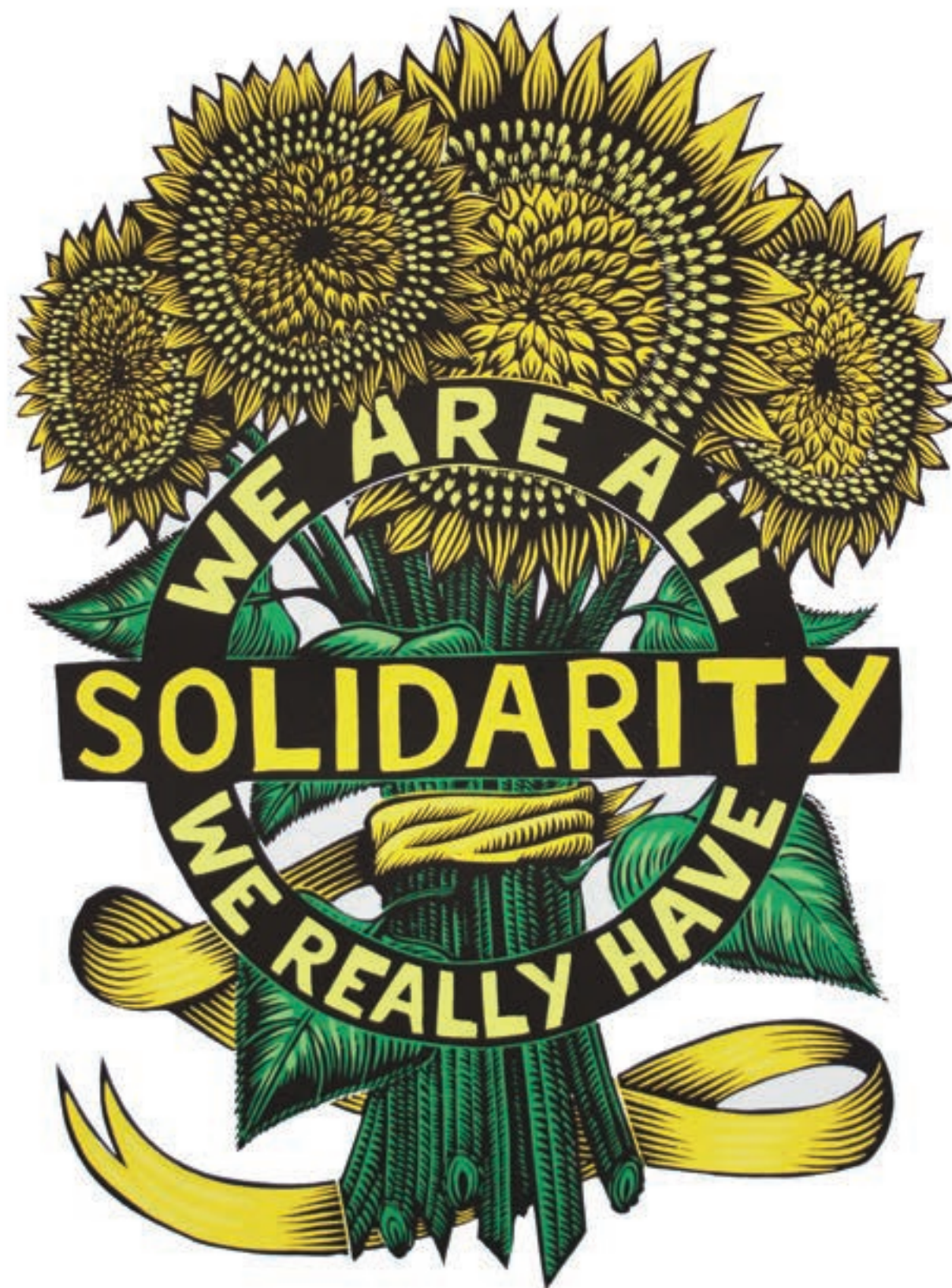
Federación Anarquista de México (FAM)
federacionanarquistademexico.org

Federación Anarquista Iberica (FAI)
federacionanarquistaiberica.wordpress.com

Federacija za Anarhistično Organiziranje (FAO)
a-federacija.org

Federazione Anarchica Siciliana (FAS)
fasiciliana.noblogs.org

Sekoy Anarkistani Kurdiy-zman (KAF)
twitter.com/anarkistan





“And now they
get one sniff of an
ermine robe and
they go all gooey,”

-Vimes

When Queen Elizabeth II died, a mass hysteria engulfed Britain. News channels were packed with nothing but fawning praise for her 70-year reign. The country ground to a standstill at such a rapid rate that it put the preceding months-long strike wave to shame. Countless mourners lined up around central London, just to catch a glimpse of her coffin.

It was strange for so many of us to be mourning someone that none of us had ever met, but who simultaneously was so omnipresent in our lives. Such an outpouring of societal grief, usually expected of authoritarian states with lifelong dictators, unveiled for the first time in decades the totalitarian cult that lies at the heart of the United Kingdom. It was as though God themselves had died, because to millions of people, they had.

Before Elizabeth's body had gone cold, the position was immediately handed to her oldest son, as is the tradition. “The Queen is Dead! Long Live the King!” We had been ruled by the same single person for five generations and now, without so much as a moment to adjust to the change, we were ruled by someone else. People that objected to the regime change, or asked for a democratic say over the transition, were attacked, arrested and prosecuted for speaking out. The first act of the monarchy's latest iteration was a crackdown on freedom of speech.

Soon an old English wizard will present him with a special hat, while he's sat on a special slab of Scottish sandstone, and his sovereignty over the lives of all Britons will be confirmed. There will be a huge parade through London, guarded by an army of police to ensure it's not ruined by any dissenters that might interfere and to block any signs of the country's systemic poverty from spoiling the view from our new King's golden carriage.

No expense will be spared to ensure the country's richest and most powerful man finally gets his big special day. While His Majesty's Government could barely scrape together any money to provide starving children with food, they managed to find enough down the nation's sofa to provide an estimated £100 million just for the coronation. Bread is literally being stolen from our mouths to pay for an exercise in societally-enforced narcissism.

How did we get to this point? How did we end up at such a dire stage in our existence, that millions of people are starving in the streets while the richest and most powerful few gorge themselves in palaces? And what can we do to stop it?

The crown estate owns a portfolio of properties worth £15.6bn, including 241 in central London

London properties owned by the crown estate and the businesses that rent them



The sovereign and the wider royal family have two other sources of income – the Duchy of Lancaster, which has various agricultural and commercial interests, and the Duchy of Cornwall – with combined assets of more than £17bn. **This is stolen wealth.**

THE CONQUEST OF INBREDS

Until the 9th century, monarchy was quite the foreign idea to the people of these islands. We had experienced the rule of far-away emperors and followed the odd chieftain into battle, but none before had called themselves “King”. That was until the squabbling polities of what we now know as England and Scotland each fell, piece-by-piece, to the rule of one.

In 1066, the problem of rule by one led to catastrophe, as people from distant lands claimed the right to rule England. It was the Normans that won the day and cemented their rule over the country with fire and blood – literally burning down and massacring whole villages until their rule was accepted. Native English rebels, with support from the Scots, Welsh and Irish, attempted to overthrow these new rulers, but to no avail. England was remade into what it is today by conquest, but the conqueror's blood lust was not sated. As they progressively lost their holdings in their native France, the Normans turned their attention towards the north and west.

Almost immediately, the Normans and their English collaborators in parliament set their sights on subjugating Wales. The English Kings appointed their successors as the “Prince of Wales”, in a sick imperial tradition that continues to this day. Attempts by the Welsh to choose their own leaders and rebel against imperial rule were suppressed, and eventually, Wales was annexed into the English empire. They then moved onto Ireland, colonising its eastern coast and slowly bringing more of its land and people under their thumb. Until this point, the Irish had not known the rule of a monarch, and they had little desire to get acquainted.

But the monarchy's rule was shaky. None of their new subjects seemed to particularly like them and they couldn't seem to settle on

who was the rightful king. They needed something to unite people behind them, a guiding ideology to stabilise and totalise their rule. This was when they took over the Church, assuming the status of the divine, becoming God-Kings. Anyone that opposed them was no longer just some peasant rebel, but a dangerous heathen, a sinner against the true Christian faith.

Despite a minor constitutional hiccup, during which one of our kings ended his reign shorter than when he started, the monarchy solidified its totalitarian rule over Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England. With the close collaboration of parliament, the nobility and the clergy, finally working together in harmony, they turned their attention to new lands to be exploited, new people to subjugate and murder. Britannia would rule the waves and make millions into slaves.

The British Empire was founded on the monopolisation of the slave trade, under the supervision of the monarchy. It stole millions of people from their homes, shipped them across the ocean to plantations and forced them to work themselves to death for the profits of a few rich men in the home islands. When some uppity colonists in America overthrew the monarchy, it was because they felt they weren't profiting enough from slavery, that too much of their stolen wealth was going back across the sea.

Like clockwork, the monarchy again turned its attention to other evil outlets they could pursue. They occupied India, pillaged its resources and starved its people. They colonised Australia, destroying its environment and massacring its native populace. Then they finally moved on to Africa, where they carved up the continent between them and their fellow monarchs, causing such horrendous devastation everywhere they went that the scars are still felt to this day.

Of course, like all their evil endeavours, they were eventually overthrown by the people they had oppressed for so long. Despite their best attempts to hold on to power, waging war against any rebels and splitting up the countries to keep them divided and conquered, the sun finally set on the British Empire. Our King Charles III was there himself to witness its long-overdue death.

THE LITTLE PRINCE

From the very first days of his life, Charles Windsor was told by everyone that he would one day rule the world. He was the inheritor of a 1,000-year-old empire, the defender of a 2,000-year-old religion, the living embodiment of a nation. It was his right given by the heavens, he was just better than everyone else, above all but the very God that chose him.

This cumbersome psychological weight became too much to bear as he grew, watching as his rightful colonies all over the world declared his family's rule to be over. He was supposed to be their future King, but they did not respect him as one, nobody did. This wouldn't do.

As is tradition, he began using his position in the royal family to get what he wanted, what he felt he deserved. Like his father before and his sons after him, Charles was given his own vanity commands in the armed forces. He got to dress fancy and strut about on big ships, telling people what to do, without fear of battling anything more dangerous than a small Icelandic fishing boat.

He then shifted his attention to more important matters than national defence: scalping the poor. Among his long string of royal titles, one of the most important to Charles was his role as the Duke of Cornwall. As the latest colonial overlord to rob the Kernowyon, his vast landholdings in the south-west brought him £612 million in cash.

Of course, our Glorious King never felt it right to declare this income. In fact, as the profits of this enterprise grew exponentially, he halved the amount of tax he paid on it, not wanting to bother the people with more money for public services. But he did make sure

to order the Tory government to prevent his subjects from buying their own houses back from him. He was even gracious enough to start paying rent – to himself – for the many mansions he had built with these stolen funds.

By the new millennium, Charles' empire was largely no longer in his grip. Luckily for him, the British government was determined to keep the imperial dream alive by invading and bombing half of south-west Asia. Charles himself was happy to facilitate this, taking a new job as a personal weapons salesman for his pals in the Saudi royal family, who made him a key part of their mass murder campaign in Yemen.

Despite attempts by assassins and the coronavirus, Charles lived long enough to witness the moment he had always dreamed of: his mother's death. On 6 May 2023, he will be crowned as our newest King, the third of his name.



THE HOUSE OF THE DRAGON

The expiration of ol' Liz has shifted the centre of gravity within the royal household. Before the Queen's corpse had even gone cold, Charles's younger brother Andrew quickly positioned himself to retake his position in the royal hierarchy. Anyone that reads his name should rightfully feel a pang of disgust, as the Grand Old Duke of York is now widely known to have been a client of the child sex-trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. It was only with his mum's money and the threat of violence that he managed to see the charges against him dropped.

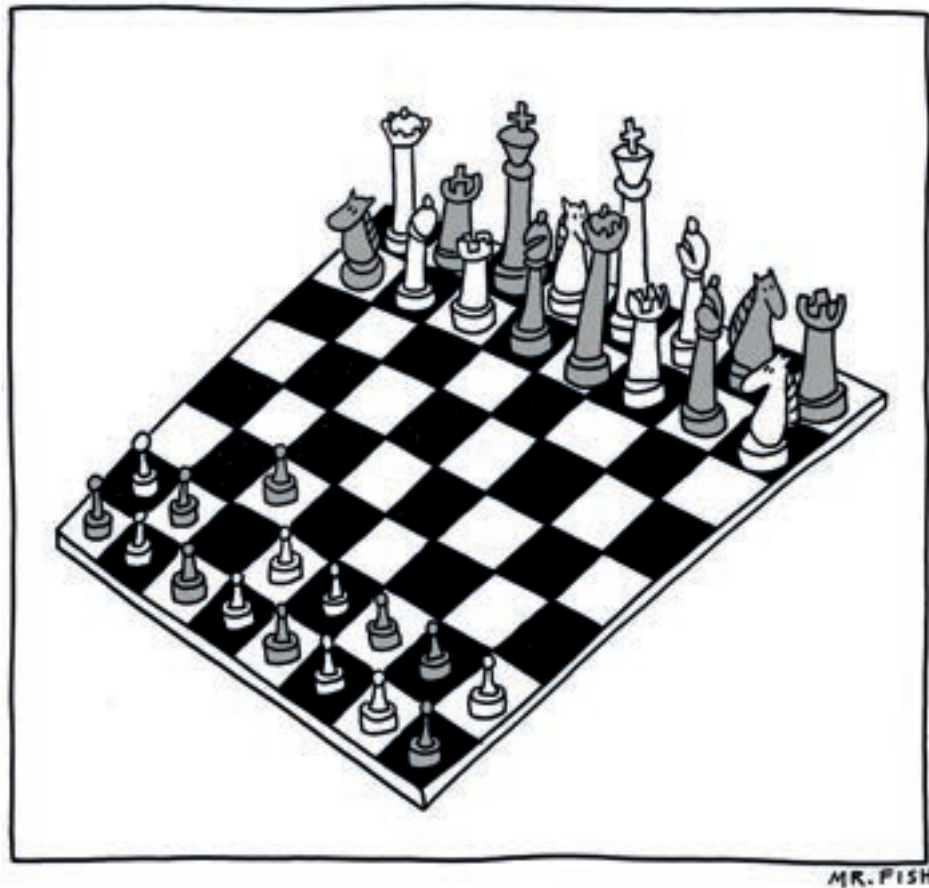
But now we're asked to forget about this, to put our rage at this vile excuse for a human aside. Andrew is now back on the public stage, using his own mother's coffin as a shield from criticism. When one brave soul in Edinburgh rose their voice to call him what he is – a sick old man – they were assaulted by this perverted prince's white knights and arrested for breaching the peace. Charles' reign began with a clear message that sexual predators have the protection of the crown.

But that's just the worst of the bunch, what about Charles's less controversial relatives? Well his kids sometimes seem even more dedicated to bringing about the collapse of the monarchy than even the most radical republicans. Harry's spat with his family, as he very publicly comes to understand that all this stuff is a bit weird and horrible, has proved an even greater royal embarrassment than that time he wore a Nazi uniform out in public.

It's also good to see that our future king William has made such a habit of gallivanting around the globe, keeping the colonial nightmare fresh in our minds. During his most recent holiday to the Caribbean, intended as a reminder to former British colonies

of their place, he received a rude awakening as Belize, the Bahamas and Jamaica all told him to get back in the ocean and start paddling. The two big R words he never wanted to hear, Republic and Reparations, were all he heard during those days in the sun.

The picture painted of the Windsor family is not a pretty one, and that's even before you remove the layer of airbrushing that the Windsor name itself applied. Charles might call himself Windsor but really, through his Nazi father, he's a member of the German House of Glücksburg. This makes him the fourth reigning monarch to belong to this house, alongside his cousins Harald of Norway, Margrethe of Denmark and Felipe of Spain. The rise of Charles isn't just the problem for the subjects of the Commonwealth, it's part of a pandemic.



WHAT IF WE DIDN'T HAVE A KING?

Right now, it seems as though even the worst Republic would be infinitely better than this United Kingdom. A state where millions can't afford to eat, while one man clothes himself in gold and jewels, is not fit to exist. It is a failure of our own humanity that we have allowed this decrepit institution to persist for this long.

The monarchy is the rot at the core of British society. Every person murdered by its own government, every person enslaved by rich industrialists, every person subjugated by a red-coated army, has been so at the beck and call of whoever sat on the throne in London. It is the originator of everything wrong with its country and only with its removal can we begin to rebuild.

But it would be naive to suggest that simply removing them from their official positions and replacing them with an elected president would cure Britain's ills. If the monarchy's most loyal institutions – from His Majesty's Government to his Armed Forces, Church and Police – are not done away with along with them, then we will have a republic in name only. If their estates are not dissolved and their property not redistributed to those they have exploited, then they will still be kings in all but name. And if the executive government centralises too much power, as it has in countless republics throughout the world, we could end up with monarchic rule by a different name.

Like his predecessors, Charles probably sees the writing on the wall, the threat to his strong and stable rule. Like his predecessors, he may make some paltry and ultimately meaningless reforms in order to make the monarchy seem more progressive, more modern. But it won't be enough, none of it will, to undo the damage of one thousand years of devastation. Charles is known to all as the third, but he knows better than anyone that he could also be the last.

THE QUEEN IS DEAD.
FUCK THE KING.



THE SPIRIT OF REVOLT
PËTR KROPOTKIN
(1880)

There are periods in the life of human society when revolution becomes an imperative necessity, when it proclaims itself as inevitable. New ideas germinate everywhere, seeking to force their way into the light, to find an application in life; everywhere they are opposed by the inertia of those whose interest it is to maintain the old order; they suffocate in the stifling atmosphere of prejudice and traditions. The accepted ideas of the constitution of the State, of the laws of social equilibrium, of the political and economic interrelations of citizens, can hold out no longer against the implacable criticism which is daily undermining them whenever occasion arises, — in drawing room as in cabaret, in the writings of philosophers as in daily conversation. Political, economic, and social institutions are crumbling; the social structure, having become uninhabitable, is hindering, even preventing the development of the seeds which are being propagated within its damaged walls and being brought forth around them.

The need for a new life becomes apparent. The code of established morality, that which governs the greater number of people in their daily life, no longer seems sufficient. What formerly seemed just is now felt to be a crying injustice. The morality of yesterday is today recognized as revolting immorality. The conflict between new ideas and old traditions flames up in every class of society, in every possible environment, in the very bosom of the family. The son struggles against his father, he finds revolting what his father has all his life found natural; the daughter rebels against the principles which her mother has handed down to her as the result of long experience. Daily, the popular conscience rises up against the scandals which breed amidst the privileged and the leisured, against the crimes committed in the name of the law of the stronger, or in order to maintain these privileges. Those who long for the triumph of justice, those who would put new ideas into practice, are soon forced to recognize that the realization of their generous, humanitarian and regenerating ideas cannot take place in a society thus constituted; they perceive the necessity of a revolutionary whirlwind which will sweep away all this rotteness, revive sluggish hearts with its breath, and bring to mankind that spirit of devotion, self-denial, and heroism, without which society sinks through degradation and vileness into complete disintegration.

In periods of frenzied haste toward wealth, of feverish speculation and of crisis, of the sudden downfall of great industries and the ephemeral expansion of other branches of production, of scandalous fortunes amassed in a few years and dissipated as quickly, it becomes evident that the economic institutions which control production and exchange are far from giving to society the prosperity which they are supposed to guarantee; they produce precisely the opposite result. Instead of order they bring forth chaos; instead of prosperity, poverty and insecurity; instead of reconciled interests, war; a perpetual war of the exploiter against the worker, of exploiters and of workers among themselves. Human society is seen to be splitting more and more into two hostile camps, and at the same

time to be subdividing into thousands of small groups waging merciless war against each other. Weary of these wars, weary of the miseries which they cause, society rushes to seek a new organization; it clamors loudly for a complete remodeling of the system of property ownership, of production, of exchange and all economic relations which spring from it.

The machinery of government, entrusted with the maintenance of the existing order, continues to function, but at every turn of its deteriorated gears it slips and stops. Its working becomes more and more difficult, and the dissatisfaction caused by its defects grows continuously. Every day gives rise to a new demand. "Reform this," "reform that," is heard from all sides. "War, finance, taxes, courts, police, everything must be remodeled, reorganized, established on a new basis," say the reformers. And yet all know that it is impossible to make things over, to remodel anything at all because everything is interrelated; everything would have to be remade at once; and how can society be remodeled when it is divided into two openly hostile camps? To satisfy the discontented would be only to create new malcontents.

Incapable of undertaking reforms, since this would mean paving the way for revolution, and at the same time too impotent to be frankly reactionary, the governing bodies apply themselves to halfmeasures which can satisfy nobody, and only cause new dissatisfaction. The mediocrities who, in such transition periods, undertake to steer the ship of State, think of but one thing: to enrich themselves against the coming débâcle. Attacked from all sides they defend themselves awkwardly, they evade, they commit blunder upon blunder, and they soon succeed in cutting the last rope of salvation; they drown the prestige of the government in ridicule, caused by their own incapacity.

Such periods demand revolution. It becomes a social necessity; the situation itself is revolutionary.

When we study in the works of our greatest historians the genesis and development of vast revolutionary convulsions, we generally find under the heading, "The Cause of the Revolution," a gripping picture of the situation on the eve of events. The misery of the people, the general insecurity, the vexatious measures of the government, the odious scandals laying bare the immense vices of society, the new ideas struggling to come to the surface and repulsed by the incapacity of the supporters of the former régime, — nothing is omitted. Examining this picture, one arrives at the conviction that the revolution was indeed inevitable, and that there was no other way out than by the road of insurrection.

Take, for example, the situation before 1789 as the historians picture it. You can almost hear the peasant complaining of the salt tax, of the tithe, of the feudal payments, and vowing in his heart an implacable hatred towards the feudal baron, the monk, the monopolist, the bailiff. You can almost see the citizen bewailing the loss of his municipal liberties, and showering maledictions upon the king. The people censure the queen; they are revolted by the reports of ministerial action, and they cry out continually that the taxes are intolerable and revenue payments exorbitant, that crops are bad and winters hard, that provisions are too dear and the monopolists too grasping, that the village lawyer devours the peasant's crops and the village constable tries to play the role of a petty king, that even the mail service is badly organized and the employees too lazy. In short, nothing works well, everybody complains. "It can last no longer, it will come to a bad end," they cry everywhere.

But, between this pacific arguing and insurrection or revolt, there is a wide abyss, — that abyss which, for the greatest part of humanity, lies between reasoning and action, thought and will, — the urge to act. How has this abyss been bridged? How is it that men who only yesterday were complaining quietly of their lot as they smoked their pipes, and the next moment were humbly saluting the local guard and gendarme whom they had just been abusing, — how is it that these same men a few days later were capable of seizing their scythes and their iron-shod pikes and attacking in his castle the lord who only yesterday was so formidable? By what miracle were these men, whose wives justly called them cowards, transformed in a day into heroes, marching through bullets and cannon balls to the conquest of their rights? How was it that words, so often spoken and lost in the air like the empty chiming of bells, were changed into actions?

The answer is easy.

Action, the continuous action, ceaselessly renewed, of minorities brings about this transformation. Courage, devotion, the spirit of sacrifice, are as contagious as cowardice, submission, and panic.

What forms will this action take? All forms, — indeed, the most varied forms, dictated by circumstances, temperament, and the means at disposal. Sometimes tragic, sometimes humorous, but always daring; sometimes collective, sometimes purely individual, this policy of action will neglect none of the means at hand, no event of public life, in order to keep the spirit alive, to propagate and find expression for dissatisfaction, to excite hatred against exploiters, to ridicule the government and expose its weakness, and above all and always, by actual example, to awaken courage and fan the spirit of revolt.

When a revolutionary situation arises in a country, before the spirit of revolt is sufficiently awakened in the masses to express itself in violent demonstrations in the streets or by rebellions and uprisings, it is through action that minorities succeed in awakening that feeling of independence and that spirit of audacity without which no revolution can come to a head.

Men of courage, not satisfied with words, but ever searching for the means to transform them into action, — men of integrity for whom the act is one with the idea, for whom prison, exile, and death are preferable to a life contrary to their principles, — intrepid souls who know that it is necessary to dare in order to succeed, — these are the lonely sentinels who enter the battle long before the masses are sufficiently roused to raise openly the banner of insurrection and to march, arms in hand, to the conquest of their rights.

In the midst of discontent, talk, theoretical discussions, an individual or collective act of revolt supervenes, symbolizing the dominant aspirations. It is possible that at the beginning the masses will remain indifferent. It is possible that while admiring the courage of the individual or the group which takes the initiative, the masses will at first follow those who are prudent and cautious, who will immediately describe this act as "insanity" and say that "those madmen, those fanatics will endanger everything."

They have calculated so well, those prudent and cautious men, that their party, slowly pursuing its work would, in a hundred years, two hundred years, three hundred years perhaps, succeed in conquering the whole world, — and now the unexpected intrudes! The unexpected, of course, is whatever has not been expected by them, — those prudent and cautious ones! Whoever has a slight knowledge of history and a fairly clear head knows perfectly well from the beginning that theoretical propaganda for revolution will necessarily express itself in action long before the theoreticians have decided that the moment to act has come. Nevertheless, the cautious theoreticians are angry at these madmen, they excommunicate them, they anathematize them. But the madmen win sympathy, the mass of the people secretly applaud their courage, and they find imitators. In proportion as the pioneers go to fill the jails and the penal colonies, others continue their work; acts of illegal protest, of revolt, of vengeance, multiply.

Indifference from this point on is impossible. Those who at the beginning never so much as asked what the "madmen" wanted, are compelled to think about them, to discuss their ideas, to take sides for or against. By actions which compel general attention, the new idea seeps into people's minds and wins converts. One such act may, in a few days, make more propaganda than thousands of pamphlets.

Above all, it awakens the spirit of revolt: it breeds daring. The old order, supported by the police, the magistrates, the gendarmes and the soldiers, appeared unshakable, like the old fortress of the Bastille, which also appeared impregnable to the eyes of the unarmed people gathered beneath its high walls equipped with loaded cannon. But soon it became apparent that the established order has not the force one had supposed. One courageous act has sufficed to upset in a few days the entire governmental machinery; to make the colossus tremble; another revolt has stirred a whole province into turmoil, and the army, till now always so imposing, has retreated before a handful of peasants armed with sticks and stones. The people observe that the monster is not so terrible as they thought they begin dimly to perceive that a few energetic efforts will be sufficient to throw it down. Hope is born in their hearts, and let us remember that if exasperation often drives men to revolt, it is always hope, the hope of victory, which makes revolutions.

The government resists; it is savage in its repressions. But, though formerly persecution killed the energy of the oppressed, now, in periods of excitement, it produces the opposite result. It provokes new acts of revolt, individual and collective, it drives the rebels to heroism; and in rapid succession these acts spread, become general, develop. The revolutionary party is strengthened by elements which up to this time were hostile or indifferent to it. The general disintegration penetrates into the government, the ruling classes, the privileged; some of them advocate resistance to the limit; others are in favor of concessions; others, again, go so far as to declare themselves ready to renounce their privileges for the moment, in order to appease the spirit of revolt, hoping to dominate again later on. The unity of the government and the privileged class is broken.

The ruling classes may also try to find safety in savage reaction. But it is now too late; the battle only becomes more bitter, more terrible, and the revolution which is looming will only be more bloody. On the other hand, the smallest concession of the governing classes, since it comes too late, since it has been snatched in struggle, only awakes the revolutionary spirit still more. The common people, who formerly would have been satisfied with the smallest concession, observe now that the enemy is wavering; they foresee victory, they feel their courage growing, and the same men who were formerly crushed by misery and were content to sigh in secret, now lift their heads and march proudly to the conquest of a better future.

Finally the revolution breaks out, the more terrible as the preceding struggles were bitter.

The direction which the revolution will take depends, no doubt, upon the sum total of the various circumstances that determine the coming of the cataclysm. But it can be predicted in advance, according to the vigor of revolutionary action displayed in the preparatory period by the different progressive parties.

One party may have developed more clearly the theories which it defines and the program which it desires to realize; it may have made propaganda actively, by speech and in print. But it may not have sufficiently expressed its aspirations in the open, on the street, by actions which embody the thought it represents; it has done little, or it has done nothing against those who are its principal enemies; it has not attacked the institutions which it wants to demolish; its strength has been in theory, not in action; it has contributed little to awaken the spirit of revolt, or it has neglected to direct that spirit against conditions which it particularly desires to attack at the time of the revolution. As a result, this party is less known; its aspirations have not been daily and continuously affirmed by actions, the glamor of which could reach even the remotest hut; they have not sufficiently penetrated into the consciousness of the people; they have not identified themselves with the crowd and the street; they have never found simple expression in a popular slogan.

The most active writers of such a party are known by their readers as thinkers of great merit, but they have neither the reputation nor the capacities of men of action; and on the day when the mobs pour through the streets they will prefer to follow the advice of those who have less precise theoretical ideas and not such great aspirations, but whom they know better because they have seen them act.

The party which has made most revolutionary propaganda and which has shown most spirit and daring will be listened to on the day when it is necessary to act, to march in front in order to realize the revolution. But that party which has not had the daring to affirm itself by revolutionary acts in the preparatory periods nor had a driving force strong enough to inspire men and groups to the sentiment of abnegation, to the irresistible desire to put their ideas into practice, — (if this desire had existed it would have expressed itself in action long before the mass of the people had joined the revolt) — and which did not know how to make its flag popular and its aspirations tangible and comprehensive, — that party will have only a small chance of realizing even the least part of its program. It will be pushed aside by the parties of action.

These things we learn from the history of the periods which precede great revolutions. The revolutionary bourgeoisie understood this perfectly, — it neglected no means of agitation to awaken the spirit of revolt when it tried to demolish the monarchical order. The French peasant of the eighteenth century understood it instinctively when it was a question of abolishing feudal rights; and the International acted in accordance with the same principles when it tried to awaken the spirit of revolt among the workers of the cities and to direct it against the natural enemy of the wage earner — the monopolizer of the means of production and of raw materials.

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Fortress Conservation and Indigenous Sovereignty: Reflections on COP 15

Adam Cogan

COP 15 recently concluded in Montréal, likely leaving many people scratching their heads and thinking: ‘Didn’t COP27 happen just the month before?’ The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is perhaps less well-known, and its media coverage less extensive, compared to its sibling. The CBD’s main goals are ‘the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.’ In the latest conference, there were important takeaways from the resulting final document, referred to as the Kunming-Montréal Global biodiversity framework, or GBF. Some of these resolutions, however, should be troubling to anyone concerned with Indigenous sovereignty.

It is important to say right off the bat that some of these recommendations were quite positive. Most notable of these is the section on subsidies, which states that the vast subsidies currently granted to ecologically harmful industries should be reduced by at least five hundred billion US dollars by 2030. Another much feted aspect of the final document was the consistent recognition of the vital role Indigenous peoples and local communities play in conservation, as well as emphasis on Indigenous rights (at least on paper). Most contentious, however, was the headline-grabbing target of 30x30 – that is, the designation of 30 percent of land and sea as protected areas (PAs) by 2030 – whose attractive branding belies a much darker truth.

The 30x30 project has been praised by many conservation organisations and governments in the Global North who insist that

it is the most promising way to halt biodiversity loss. In reality, it is a highly controversial and potentially dangerous idea which relies on the oppressive powers of state and capital. Proponents naively assume that state and corporate actors are – when it comes down to it – generally well-meaning and fail to understand that violence and expropriation are inherent in the structures of their political economy. It is therefore highly likely that 30x30, as conceived of by the states and industry partners present at COP 15, would be disastrous for people and the planet.

The concept of 30x30 is relatively new, but with deep roots spanning back to the birth of the conservation movement. The dominant model of conservation in the present day is reliant on the formation of PAs, the logic being that if areas of land can be protected from unwanted human intruders, then biodiversity will thrive. The protected area model draws from a continuing legacy of colonial dispossession and violence against Indigenous people that harks back to the American National Parks movement championed by the ‘conservation president’ Teddy Roosevelt (as well as carrying onward and outward the rapine logic of the land enclosures of the Early Modern period). In addition, the model is premised on the notion that humans are both separate from and naturally inimical to Earth’s ecosystems, erasing the history and culture of Indigenous peoples who have not pillaged these natural resources.

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PAs generally rely on top-down governance by states, often in partnership with private organisations or NGOs (usually based in the Global North). A highly militarised approach is required to effectively 'protect' an area within this framework. Many conservation NGOs, with the help of national governments, train and arm private militias to patrol parks and ostensibly protect the wildlife within. Areas designated for protection are frequently cleared of any prior inhabitants; Indigenous peoples are then kept from returning. This has earned this approach to conservation the name 'fortress conservation.' A detailed report by The Guardian outlines how this approach has led to the forced displacement of thousands of people belonging to various Indigenous groups across the world, including the Maasai (Tanzania), Lickan Antay (Chile),

Hmong (Thailand), and Baiga (India), in order to make way for the opening of PAs.

Out from this background comes 30x30, which is basically a less radical version of biologist E. O. Wilson's Half-Earth Project (where 50 percent of earth would be designated as PAs). According to the narrative of its NGO and government backers, 30x30 enjoys strong scientific support and is the silver bullet to solve the biodiversity crisis. It is, therefore, well-worth investigating the various critiques levelled against 30x30, and the fortress conservation industry at large.

The Indigenous rights charity Survival International has branded 30x30 'the new green colonial rule' and 'the biggest land grab in history.' They note how the concept of so-called 'nature-based solutions' (NBSs) (e.g., tree planting, carbon credit systems, etc.) — much beloved of the corporate world — has succeeded in allying the conservation industry to corporate capital. Conservation organisations can now profit from NBSs through the selling of carbon credits from their PAs, and polluters also strongly support them because they can pretend to nullify their emissions by trading in these apparently worthless credits, planting trees haphazardly, or — crucially — funding yet more PAs rather than addressing their fossil fuel use or carbon emissions.

PAs and NBSs are the 'economic mainstay' of conservation, hence why stakeholders are invested in expanding them — and why critics fear a rapid increase of targets would lead to land grabs of Indigenous peoples' and local communities' (IPLC) territories. Survival, along with 248 other Indigenous rights NGOs, anthropologists, and progressive conservationists, signed an open letter in 2021 expressing concerns about plans for 30x30 put forward by the CBD. They wrote:



'We believe this target is counterproductive and could further entrench an outmoded and unsustainable model of conservation that could dispossess the people least responsible for these crises of their lands and livelihoods.'

And that, despite provisions and on-paper avowals to include a variety of conservation measures:

'[E]xperience has shown that state-owned, strict protected areas have often remained the default choice in much of the Global South.'

They further included an estimate, based on planned areas for PA designation, that up to three hundred million people could be displaced if 30x30 were implemented. This would be on top of the current fourteen million conservation refugees in Africa alone. Following the COP 15 agreement, Survival once again released a statement claiming the framework had 'failed biodiversity' and that it 'could still fail Indigenous people if, as we've seen before, promises to respect the rights of Indigenous people are ignored by the conservation industry, leading to horrific abuses in the name of "nature protection."'

Predictably, the COP 15 proceedings and fortress conservation foist responsibility for biodiversity loss on the Global South while doing little to address the real root of the problem — which is the mass extraction, production, and consumption generated by, or for, the capitalist heartlands in the Global North. It is much easier and more profitable for states and transnational corporations to maintain business as usual; expanding protected areas and nature-based solutions provide the perfect vehicle for doing so. It is clear that the states and industries involved in fortress conservation and pushing for 30x30 have only an oblique interest in preserving biodiversity — essentially only inasmuch as it can generate revenue now and in the

future. This becomes obvious when considering the evidence.

Simon Counsell, a specialist in rights-based conservation and director of the Rainforest Foundation UK, scrutinised the allegedly robust scientific support for 30x30 cited by the Secretariat of the CBD when they put forward their case. He found that out of the meagre eight papers cited, two are exclusively about marine areas, one is not a scientific paper, and the remaining five papers are all by authors who have had long careers working in or on PAs for large international NGOs or the IUCN (two of them are by the same author, the outspoken Half-Earther and former lead scientist at WWF, Eric Dinerstein).

Conversely, there is a wealth of rapidly mounting evidence showing that not only do Indigenous peoples play a vital role in conservation efforts across the globe, but also that they are generally more effective at preserving forests and biodiversity. In fact, biodiversity is often higher in Indigenous or local community managed lands than in protected areas. With 80% of the planet's biodiversity in Indigenous lands, the significance of supporting secure land tenure for these communities should be the number one priority.



The CBD certainly makes noises to this effect, rhetorically peppering their statements with recognitions of Indigenous lifeways. However, were this truly the case, then the Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity's call for Indigenous territories to count towards the 30 percent target would not have been rejected by conference delegates (predominantly from the EU). Chris Chapman, Amnesty International's Adviser on Indigenous Rights, noted in a statement following the conference that 'states have failed to fully recognize Indigenous peoples' immense contribution to conserving biodiversity, putting them at greater risk of human rights violations.' If the primary goal was simply to protect biodiversity rather than set up more lucrative PAs and expand the sphere for NBSs, then including Indigenous territories in the 30% target and ensuring the safety of their territories would be, put bluntly, an absolute no-brainer.

Of course, it is not particularly out of character for Indigenous peoples to be acknowledged in theory but completely overlooked in practice. Following COP 26 in Glasgow, the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' Forest Tenure Pledge committed \$1.7 billion in funding forest communities between 2021 and 2025 as 'greater recognition and rewards for their role as guardians of forests and nature.' A progress report in 2022 found that 'only 7% of total funding went directly to organisations led by [Indigenous peoples] or [local communities], while around 50% was channelled via international non-governmental organisations' (largely headquartered in the West). This shows that the 'West knows best' mindset still dominates when it comes to conservation and climate action, despite strong evidence to the contrary.

Ultimately, as Lakpa Nuri Sherpa of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact rightly observes, it is difficult to see how the top-down approaches promoted by the big players at COP 15 would work unless those same organisations are able to radically change how



Baka people in Messok Dja National Park. Credit: Farouk

they relate to Indigenous peoples and their everyday realities on the ground. While supporters of 30x30 vociferously argue that it will not result in displacement and human rights abuses, the unfolding reality of present-day conservation is one defined by precisely that. Two of the world's largest and most prestigious conservation organisations – WWF and the Wildlife Conservation Society – are both responsible for perpetrating human rights abuses against Indigenous peoples and local communities who pose commercial threats to existing or planned protected areas. Eco-guards on their payroll are guilty of beating and torturing people, burning their villages, and forcibly evicting them from their homes.

The anthropologist Jerome Lewis, who has worked with the Baka people in Central Africa for decades, notes how the state, international NGOs, and their private militias are complicit in these atrocities. He describes how NGOs use state-armed militias to target tribal peoples in order to meet anti-poaching targets (which they can advertise to international donors). Of course, as Lewis explains, the Baka have lived in these areas for millennia, and it is only with

the arrival of development initiatives and conservation NGOs that biodiversity has plummeted and deforestation and illegal poaching runs rife.

While public assurances were made that the Baka would have safe access to the areas of their territory now castled off in protected areas such as the Messok Dja National Park, WWF has persecuted them violently and criminalised them at every turn. No longer able to pursue traditional lifestyles, Lewis finds that radically egalitarian gatherer-hunters are becoming proletarianised. Many Baka men are obliged to try and make a living in WWF-partnered logging camps only to be paid in illegally distilled alcohol, and the women subjected to sexual violence by outsiders who arrive as the once-teeming forest opens to industry.

These devastating extractive industry concessions are part and parcel of the fortress conservation model (a phenomenon known in academic circles as the 'extraction-conservation nexus') and it is not uncommon for resource extraction to take place directly adjacent or even inside protected areas under the auspices of their NGO and state partners. In fact, EU nations brazenly attempted to water down the COP 15 GBF agreement so that extractive industries would be openly allowed access to new and existing protected areas. While Indigenous peoples and local communities suffer, NGOs and governments profit handsomely and launder their reputations. What's more, they conspire to further increase their profits under the guise of a just cause. Notwithstanding the vital role IPLCs play in conservation action, this is something which should not, and cannot, be tolerated.

Given the evidence of displacement, violence, extraction, and general duplicity on show, it is abundantly clear that the claims made by the CBD at COP 15 cannot be trusted in the slightest. The state itself has long played a role in violating the rights of IPLCs in



the name of environmental protection or conservation. Any state-backed projects implemented from the top-down will almost certainly involve more oppression, violence, and criminalisation of any who stand in the way. In fact, the very character of the state – with its political centralisation, claim to absolute legitimacy, and service to the ruling class – means it is fundamentally incapable of generating the granular, pluralistic approach required to ensure IPLCs can preserve their autonomy and be effective conservation partners.

The systems of knowledge and experience of many IPLCs are often predicated on deep physical and spiritual entanglement with the land in ways that are far more diverse, complex, and nuanced than typical portraits of the 'noble ecological savage' suggest. As such, they are incompatible with the capitalist approach of the CBD and their ilk who view the world as a series of assets, 'natural capital,' and 'ecosystem services.'" The latter is a paradigm which Adrienne Buller effectively illustrates in her book *The Value of a Whale*, so titled because in 2019 the IMF calculated the value of a whale at two million US dollars (one trillion US dollars for the entire species) based on its estimated ecotourism and carbon-sequestration potential. As Buller explains: 'Prices, markets and clever financial

products are guiding much of the global response to the ecological crisis.’

One has to wonder exactly where the Indigenous peoples and local communities on the frontline of the crisis fit into such a value-driven framework. It is estimated there could be up to 1.2 billion climate refugees by 2050, with the UN forecasting that water shortages (known to increase the chance of conflict and displacement) will affect five billion people by the same year. The point is not to further instil fear and panic in readers, as the dire facts are by now well-known by any who take interest. The significance lies in the fact that if the ecological crisis is set to cause further displacement and conflict in already highly volatile areas, then interested parties in the Global North will likely seize on these opportunities to justify an increasingly militarised and exclusionary form of conservation (with the tacit goal of protecting any ‘natural assets’ at risk). This will undoubtedly lead to yet more bloodshed as, in order to meet protection targets, more land is claimed and enclosed and any local inhabitants are thrown out and kept out. (It is important to note once more that this is not speculative fiction; it is already happening.) At worst, Indigenous peoples – particularly tribal forest groups in areas of high biodiversity – risk the destruction of their autonomy and livelihoods in horrifying ways. We have seen how this problem has manifested in Central Africa and elsewhere.

However, with capitalism’s historic ability to commodify virtually everything, one can equally imagine a dark future where ‘the value of a whale’ becomes the ‘the value of a “tribe.”’ In this reality, IPLC stewards of biodiversity would get drawn into the market logic of financialised conservation as traditional knowledge systems and unique and complex ways of seeing, and being in, the world and find themselves reduced to abstract calculations. Like whales, whole communities would be assigned values based on their poten-

-tial to attract ecotourism and provide services. The implication being: who gets to decide the value of a whale, or the value of a person, or an entire people? Should anyone? And what happens when it is decided by some IMF hacks in Washington, DC, that a value is negligible? Equally, what happens to communities deemed ‘valuable’ – are they allowed to reside in and around protected areas, perhaps in exchange for contribution to tourism and ‘cultural’ displays? The history of Indigenous peoples and tourism is already long and bleak, defined by expropriation and exploitation (‘reducing indigenous [sic] peoples to simply another consumer product’). To be clear, then: under no circumstances should a value be ascribed to any living being, much less should it be decided by another person or organisation.

Despite the praise the Kunming-Montréal global biodiversity framework has garnered, it must be understood that a financialised, market-oriented approach will inevitably abuse and eventually destroy the very things which make these communities such effective stewards of biodiversity in the first place. The key thing conservationists must always keep in mind is that ‘there can be no biodiversity without human diversity.’ As such, the autonomy of Indigenous peoples and local communities anywhere in the world must be supported, even if it is merely as an active negation of forces, like the CBD and colonial conservation, which threaten it. However, Indigenous sovereignty should not be thought of in an abstract, coldly utilitarian way which sees IPLCs as a useful tool in a time of crisis. Nor should it be considered simply from the basic albeit not erroneous Liberal view that these communities are made up of people who have as much a right to free, fulfilling lives in their homes as everyone else. Instead, it should be made in recognition of a global network of comradeship and solidarity that sees the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere as co-constituted on some level – and that commonly desires a world free from the toxic, and toxifying, economic, social, and ecological

relations of capitalism.

Ultimately, the <5 percent of the world's population safeguarding 80 percent of the planet's biodiversity, spread across ninety countries, making up five thousand different peoples and speaking four thousand languages, represent a last line of defence against the totalising, destructive logic of neoliberal capitalism and the ecological crisis it has wrought. These communities are living reminders that it is possible to relate to the world in so many different ways, that there is — there are — alternatives to marketised, hyper-individualised life under neoliberal capitalism, and that it is the deep plurality of humanity which makes it beautiful. The choice is simple: we can struggle for, and cherish, the Human in all its best iterations, and thereby see all life flourish. Or we can take the cynical route of markets, money, and disavowed genocidal violence paved by each successively ineffective COP and watch life's diversity vanish — and the beauty of the world with it.



Swiss "Climate Action" is Climate Imperialism

Jordan Lunness

It is no secret to most who will read this that affluent States use coercion, through geopolitical power and hoarding of resources, to push their self-inflicted problems onto those who are already suffering. And let's not forget, less powerful nations are often weaker as a direct result of wealthier countries' colonialism, extractivism, and imperialism. The resulting power imbalance is ripe for exploitation when wealthy nations run into national crises. Such is the case with Switzerland.

Switzerland has put itself on a course to 'offset' its own ecological destruction by providing the means for developing nations to become more environmentally sustainable. This is because Switzerland has set itself a supposedly ambitious, but ultimately necessary, goal: to cut its emissions in half by 2030. While this is far from sufficient to have a good chance of fighting back the worst of the climate crisis, it is better than what many other affluent States have set as their climate targets.

However, the Swiss government is now claiming they have bitten off more than they can chew with this new pledge. Or it might be just that they actually don't care about addressing the climate crisis and never did, and that this was one of the usual half-empty promises made by OECD countries. I'll let you decide. Either way, they are now looking outward for answers.

Switzerland has turned to funding poorer nations to enact local ecological projects. In the roster so far are Ghana and Dominica, with several more having signed agreements. In Ghana, one of Switzerland's proposals is to outfit five million households with



efficient lighting and cleaner-burning stoves. This undoubtedly seems like a good idea, and it cannot be denied that it does have some surface-level advantages — reduced exposure to pollution in the home, for example. It is moving more steps, if only a few, toward a more ecological future.

However, this outsourcing strategy ultimately obscures deeper problems. For instance, Switzerland gets a public relations boost by taking credit for these advancements without any real sacrifice in its own territory. Not only is it a lazy way of contributing to natural harmony, but it will also no doubt be used by Switzerland to demonstrate its supposed climate morality as it continues to feed a growth economy. All the while, their PR-focused plan plays into historical tropes of rich, mostly white nations abusing the needs of poorer countries with populations of colour to further their own goals.

Moreover, this kind of outsourced approach misses the forest for the trees. We have countless studies that show that affluent nations

are the overwhelming contributors to the climate crisis, and that developing countries pay the brunt of the cost for that ecocide. We also know that the richest individuals in the world are also the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. For its part, Ghana contributes a mere .04% of global CO₂ emissions; Dominica is at 0%. Switzerland, meanwhile, is responsible for .11% of global CO₂ with significantly more emissions per capita than either of its two new 'partners.' With this in mind, does it make sense for Switzerland to be putting the focus on rice growers in Ghana? Imagine what might be achieved by targeting the actual culprits of global climate change rather than piecemeal stunts like this.

This twisted logic bears out in the fact that many of the projects Switzerland will end up investing in will already be in the works, or will be at some point, regardless of funding from other nations, per the NYT. To put it another way: Switzerland is pushing at an open door when it comes to these investments. So it is that they get easy PR while letting themselves off the hook for further indulgence in the excesses of capitalism.

It is unclear how the Swiss public feel about this most recent development. However, a narrow majority rejected by referendum a package of proposals for better ecology last year. If that still holds true, then they may very well welcome the deals with Ghana and Dominica as a 'compromise' option which doesn't impact their day-to-day comfort. Yet let's not confuse the issue: it may seem like a savvy move, but it is ultimately a showing of climate apathy to others around the world, and particularly those in the Global South.

Switzerland is at least somewhat honest in claiming there is no way they will complete the last third of their targets to halve their emissions by 2030. Also, to their credit, they already generate most of their energy through renewables, chiefly hydroelectric and nuclear, so cutting emissions further is arguably more difficult for

them than many other affluent nations. However, this talking point elides the fact that two-thirds of Swiss pollution is outsourced to other countries, allowing their lands to stay clean and their affluence to remain greenwashed. Consider, for example, the fact that Switzerland is known for its chocolate, but doesn't grow almost any cocoa itself. Its most famous product is therefore generated by importing cocoa instead from countries in the Global South. Top of the charts?

You guessed it: Ghana (at least until last year).

Meanwhile, little has been done to curb total consumption in Switzerland. This means that although the country has turned to renewables, its citizens haven't given up anything in terms of lifestyle or capitalist growth. All of this shows that the troubling and untenable dynamics between the Global North and South are to stay firmly in place.

As we are aware, we are only in the beginning stages of the climate crisis, and it is already harrowing. Long gone is the question of whether it will ever be on humanity's doorstep; it is here, and has



been for a long while now, especially in the Global South. Rich nations have an obligation to assist poorer ones in building lasting green infrastructure.

However, this should never be some trade-off wherein the wealthy country abandons the fight against emissions on its own turf in favour of feel-good projects abroad. There are worries that the actions Switzerland is taking will have a domino effect and other affluent nations will follow suit, giving themselves more opportunity to consume at terribly high levels while the rest of the already suffering world picks up the slack. As evidence of this, the NYT reports Sweden and Japan have already said they will be following a similar path to the Swiss. This pivot is a sort of inverse of climate reparations, the notion that those who have consumed the most should help mitigate the effects of climate change for the nations who are facing the brunt of the consequences. As if to hammer home how far we are from entertaining that idea, the latest UK Prime Minister on the merry-go-round has now sworn off climate reparations altogether at COP27.

The Swiss approach is simply not the way forward. We have to look inward, not outward, and challenge the real sources of emissions: big companies and the ultra-rich. We must slow this runaway train before it is too late. Our deadline for significant mitigation is coming much sooner than we think, or would ever wish.



This printed edition is written in solidarity with Stop Cop City/Defend Atlanta Forest. These eco-activists are putting their livelihoods on the line to defend a forest in South Atlanta from being destroyed and turned into a police training facility.

On January 18, the police shot and killed Tortuguita, one of the defenders of the forest. Meanwhile, the State is criminalising defenders as 'terrorists.' These are only snapshots in the ongoing repression of their work to defend the environment from police militarisation.

The police are the protectors of the State and capital, and it is the State and capital that are destroying the environment. Therefore, the cause in defence of the environment must be a cause against the State and policing. The defenders of the South Atlanta Forest are putting this cause into practice.

Please consider donating to the various funds in support of Stop Cop City/Defend Atlanta Forest. You can learn how to donate, or take other actions in solidarity, by accessing this link: <https://defendtheatlantaforest.org/solidarity/>



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IN COLLABORATION WITH ORGANISE!

Website: www.thecommoner.org.uk

Contact: contact@thecommoner.org.uk





"To revolt is a natural tendency of life. Even a worm turns against the foot that crushes it. In general, the vitality and relative dignity of an animal can be measured by the intensity of it's instinct to revolt."

- Mikhail Bakunin

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