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Stormy Petrel

Issue 4: 2022

Theoretical Journal of the
Anarchist Communist Group



**War and Climate Change
Refugees pay the cost...**



Class Struggle, Solidarity and Mutual Aid

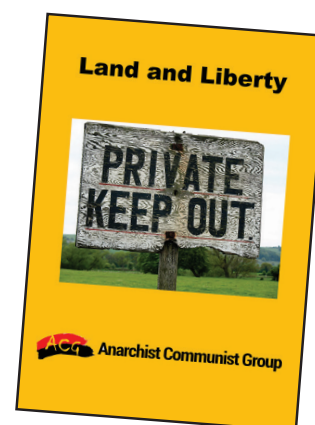
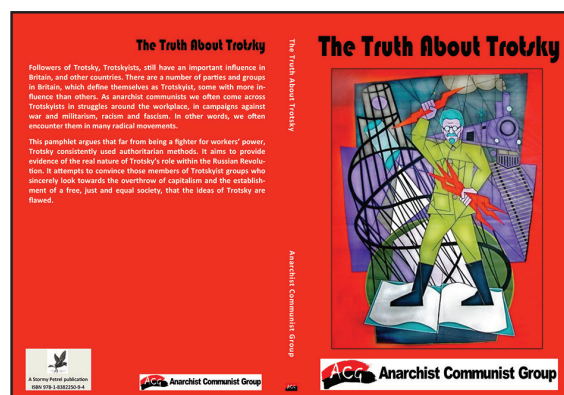
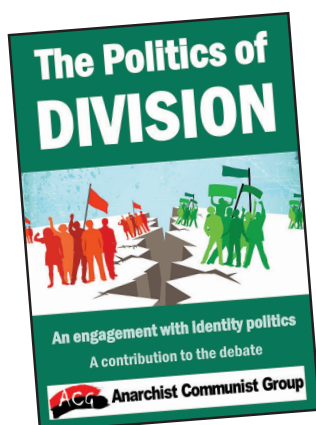
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Song of the Stormy Petrel

Maxim Gorky

High above the silvery ocean winds are gathering the storm-clouds, and between the clouds and ocean proudly wheels the Stormy Petrel, like a streak of sable lightning.

Now his wing the wave caresses, now he rises like an arrow, cleaving clouds and crying fiercely, while the clouds detect a rapture in the bird's courageous crying.

In that crying sounds a craving for the tempest! Sounds the flaming of his passion, of his anger, of his confidence in triumph.

The gulls are moaning in their terror--moaning, darting o'er the waters, and would gladly hide their horror in the inky depths of ocean.

And the grebes are also moaning. Not for them the nameless rapture of the struggle. They are frightened by the crashing of the thunder.

And the foolish penguins cower in the crevices of rocks, while alone the Stormy Petrel proudly wheels above the ocean, o'er the silver-frothing waters.

Ever lower, ever blacker, sink the storm-clouds to the sea, and the singing waves are mounting in their yearning toward the thunder.

Strikes the thunder. Now the waters fiercely battle with the winds. And the winds in fury seize them in unbreakable embrace, hurtling down the emerald masses to be shattered on the cliffs.

Like a streak of sable lightning wheels and cries the Stormy Petrel, piercing storm-clouds like an arrow, cutting swiftly through the waters.

He is coursing like a Demon, the black Demon of the tempest, ever laughing, ever sobbing--he is laughing at the storm-clouds, he is sobbing with his rapture.

In the crashing of the thunder the wise Demon hears a murmur of exhaustion. And he knows the storm will die and the sun will be triumphant; the sun will always be triumphant!

The waters roar. The thunder crashes. Livid lightning flares in storm-clouds high above the seething ocean, and the flaming darts are captured and extinguished by the waters, while the serpentine reflections writhe, expiring, in the deep.

It's the storm! The storm is breaking!

Still the valiant Stormy Petrel proudly wheels amid the lightning, o'er the roaring, raging ocean, and his cry resounds exultant, like a prophecy of triumph--

Let it break in all its fury!

Editorial

War, Pestilence, Hunger, Environmental Disaster - the New Four Horsemen

Welcome to the fourth issue of our magazine. Within it you can find articles on Populism, the Refugee Crisis, Green Landowners, Brewdog, Transhumanism,

Pathologising Rebellion, Kropotkin and a future anarchist communist society, as well as reviews and letters. In addition we include a statement on Ukraine from the



international network of which we are a member, Anarkismo, which we have co-signed with other libertarian communist organisations around the globe.

We review books and booklets on transformative justice and on the Kronstadt Revolt of 1921.

In the last issue of Stormy Petrel we dwelt on the COVID pandemic. This is still raging, with over 6 million deaths worldwide and the major port city of Shanghai in lockdown. In addition, the repercussions of long COVID are incapacitating a significant portion of world populations.

The COVID pandemic has aggravated the economic problems that capitalism is facing on a global level. As we noted in our last issue, 2,200 billionaires increased their profits by 60% during the pandemic. There are always profiteers to make money out of disaster and misery. This is also true with the ongoing environmental crisis. Our article on Green Landowners indicates the

cash to be made out of carbon trading and other environmental scams.

The situation has been further aggravated by the defeat of the US in Afghanistan, which dealt a severe blow to American global hegemony and added further fuel to the refugee crisis. This was not the only woe, as now the ongoing war in Ukraine has moved to a higher level with the Russian invasion and the barbaric attacks on civilian populations. Like Afghanistan, the Ukraine crisis has fed the refugee crisis. Similarly it has caused the massive disruption of global supply chains, already affected by COVID, as for example with the Shanghai lockdown which has had a devastating effect on the flow of products from China.

This disruption of supply chains has worsened inflation rates around the world. For example inflation has risen to 7% and rising in the UK, whilst workers in, for example, Egypt and Lebanon, are feeling the pinch acutely. As we remarked in our previous issue, 250 million people worldwide are below the poverty line already, and this can only get worse with rising prices of food, energy and other products. The reliance of the West on energy supplies from Russia has been highlighted. Even the cutting off of wood supplies to the West from Russia have contributed to food rises, as wooden pallets used to transport food and other commodities are now at a premium.

The March food price index put out by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation went up by 34% annually, in a third consecutive monthly record. Meanwhile, once again, the rich are profiting from this as the Wall Street Journal reported that price rises “are a windfall for big agricultural companies like Bunge Ltd and Archer Daniels Midland Co. that buy and transport crops”. Their shares are up by 25% and 40% respectively.

The stock markets are booming as the rich gamble on big profits from military spending as the result of the Ukraine war. The Financial Times reported on 18th March 2022 that “European stocks have now fully recovered from the shock of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine”. The Stoxx 600 European share index fell by more than 10% just before the Russian invasion. It has now fully recovered, with the biggest weekly rally since late 2020. That is the reason add the Financial Times, why, the “developing narrative that the Ukraine war will foster heavier government spending on defence”. The recent actions of the Russian state in Ukraine follow from its military support for the Assad regime in Syria, its presence in Libya, its intervention in Kazakhstan to help crush the revolt there, its support for the Lukashenko regime in Belarus, and its disguised military presence in Africa via the Wagner Group. In all these cases the Russian state wants to maintain and/or further its imperialist interests. Some leftists, both here and abroad, have maintained that Russia is only defending its borders against NATO expansion, whereas in reality the Putin regime is pursuing a doctrine of expansion and maintenance of a sphere of influence going back to Tsarist times, that was continued under Lenin and then particularly under Stalin. The invasion is not due to the wishes of one unhinged individual, as it is now being widely portrayed in the establishment media, but is the conscious policy of the ruling class in Russia, which needs to assert its own imperialist interests.

In opposing Russia some of the Western states have chosen to back Ukraine, both politically and with limited military support. The war has brought NATO further under the control of the USA, and strengthened the ties between the EU and the USA,

something that the regime in Russia had not counted on with the invasion. Many Western politicians are escalating their rhetoric in terms of hostility to Russian moves, from Biden to Johnson. Biden has called for the equivalent of £620 billion for US military spending for the 2023 fiscal year. He told businessmen he was meeting with prior to the recent NATO summit that “There’s going to be a new world order out there, and we’ve got to lead it”. Biden intends to re-assert US priority in this world order.

In this developing war, revolutionaries need to keep their heads and stand by the principles of internationalism. The joint internationalist statement published here in SP shows our commitment and that of other libertarian communist organisations to these principles. Ukrainians are the unhappy victims of a proxy war between the imperialist interests of both Russia and the West.

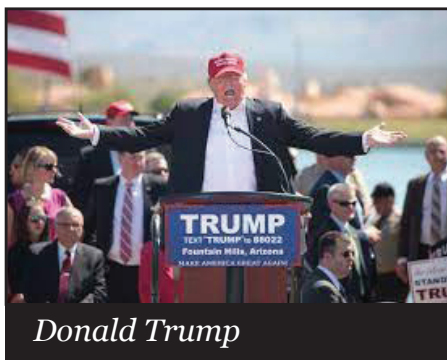
Revolutionaries are a tiny minority and have little influence on these events. What we can do is try to support the Russian anti-war movement, currently involving thousands, hoping for a wider connection with working class discontent there. That movement needs to turn to a call for turning imperialist war into class war. Similarly, we must report on and support the mutinies breaking out in the Russian armed forces. We should not fall into the trap of some leftists calling for more arms for Ukraine and neither should we make excuses for Russian aggression, citing NATO expansion, as other leftists have done.

Against the moves of the ruling class, whether in Moscow or Washington, we have to persist in calling for a turn to class war, as the Ukraine war comes home to billions around the planet.

Problem with Populism: People not Class

NB: This piece was written before the 2nd round of the French Presidential election.

For the last decade or so populism has become an increasing topic of concern for liberal democratic circles. And since the 2016 victories of the Leave vote in UK referendum on EU membership and the US



Presidential victory of Trump, the term is used, often badly, everywhere. There have been any number of popular and academic pieces analysing populism and proposing solutions to the populism 'problem'.

Some of these works are good, some flawed but interesting, some frankly terrible, but few have been written from a class based perspective and even fewer from an anarchist viewpoint.

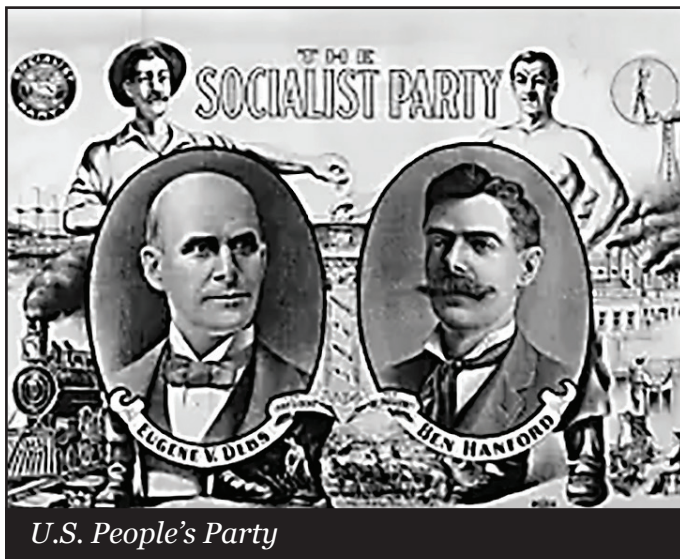
The common anti-populist liberal viewpoint starts from the unspoken basis that populism is an aberration, a deviation from the norm of (neo)-liberalism. Even in those cases when the long existing history of populism is recognised, populism is the problem, the virus that has sporadic outbreaks into the liberal body politic. Yet any anarchist communist analysis needs to consider the relationship between populism and anti-populism from a class based perspective.

Liberalism is anti-populist; efficiency and productivity are threatened by the participation of non-experts, rude guests that do not comprehend, or abide by, the rules of the game. Liberalism's enclosures exclude the majority therefore create the ground for a push back against it that has resulted in the emergence of populisms, recent and older. Populism is not an alternative to liberalism but rather a response to it.

History

One thing most writers on populism agree on is the difficulty in discussing populism, that it is a more indistinct term than other political ideologies. It exists in different forms - right-wing, left-wing, pure. The key to populism is the underlying appeal to 'the people,' however defined, rather than to class or nation.

Going back as far as ancient Athens you can find anti-populist attacks on the people, and the focus on politics as a science, an area of expertise that should not be interfered with by the common people. As an idealised entity 'the people' were a focus of thought during both the English Civil Wars and the American Revolution. But it is in the late 19th century that conflicts between anti-populism and populism appear in the modern sense. The People's Party emerged from previous populist groups in the USA around 1890 and which attracted some support from figures like Eugene Debs and Edwards Bellamy. The People's Party enjoyed some electoral success, but the combination of internal contradictions, factionalism, and lack of a breakthrough led its effective demise. However, several its activists joined



either the Democrats or the Socialist Party, and support for populist politics that had led to formation of the People's Party also fed into the support for the presidential campaigns of William Jennings Bryant and the rise of the labour movement. Both the People's Party and Bryant faced huge opposition and demonisation from anti-populists.

The nationalism of the First World War provided a strong barrier against populist politics in many countries. In addition, the growing socialist- in the widest sense- movement, with its greater political coherence of class based politics, was more successful than populist politics. It would be incorrect, however, to say that populism died totally, elements fed into the New Deal, some parts of the labour movement and nationalistic groups (as outlined below fascism is distinct from populism, although there may be overlap). Again in the post-WWII period liberal, national and class politics were the dominant ideologies, although there were occasional populist-influenced outbreaks, such as the Poujadists in 1950s France.

It is the victories of the state and capital over labour from the 1970s on, with the increasing dismissal of class and enthusiastic embrace of neoliberalism by parties of both the right and left, that

has provided space for the growth of the populist politics and parties in recent years. The ever-increasing technocratic nature of governments and supra/inter-national entities and their anti-populist politics has created a situation where populist parties are now attracting significant support, or even in government. And even in those liberal democracies where there is no clear populist party, populist politics are increasingly a factor.

Left-wing populism

Left-wing populism attempts to place the people against the elite, in contrast to socialism's conflict of labour, capital, and state. As the post war consensus started to break down, some on the left argued for replacing class, seen as no longer relevant and not appreciated by many, with an appeal to the people, or for 'democracy' instead.

Following the severe round of attacks on workers after the global financial crash of 2008, attacks in most cases supported by the former social democratic parties, left populism showed some growth. Left populism fed into the movement of support for Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn, but the biggest success was in Spain with Podemos.

In the 2015 election Podemos took 20.7% of the vote, a significant result for a party in their first general election, and held by some as an example of a left wing politics for the 21st century. Forming an alliance with smaller left wing parties for the 2016 election, the resultant Unidos Podemos (UP) managed to take 21.2 % of the vote (down from combined 24.5 Podemos and the United Left had taken in 2015). In both of the 2019 elections UP saw their vote decline, to 14.3 and then 12.9%. However, despite the decline in their share of the vote the balance of parties was such that in



Podemos and PSOE

As Ellen Mieksins Wood put it in *The Retreat From Class*: *“The declassing of the socialist project represents not only a redefinition of socialist goals, which can no longer be identified with the abolition of class, but also a rejection of the materialist analysis of social and historical processes. It should be evident that the logic of the whole argument requires a relegation of material production to at best a secondary role in the constitution of social life”.*

Right-wing populism

November 2019 a coalition government was formed with UP as the minority partner to the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE).

The trajectory of UP, as well as that of the Corbyn project and progressives within the US Democratic Party, illustrates the problems that left populism has to face - in most cases left populist parties/groups end up being enveloped by the liberal left, becoming part of the elite they opposed. UP look less like a new form of politics for the 21st century and more like a traditional social democratic party, existing on the left flank of the liberal left PSOE.

The fatal flaw of left populism is the removal of class as the basis of organising. Class politics does not place the working class as the basis for organising on moral concerns but because the working class is the only group that is capable of dismantling capitalism. Substituting the people for the working class is unable to bring about the changes that anarchist communists' desire, as it substitutes a politics based on alignment of material interests for a politics that is constructed on values.

Right-wing populism has largely been the form of populism that has attracted the most media attention. Here there is not only a division between the people and the elite but the people are also separated from another group 'the outsiders' (immigrants, minorities, political opponents). There has been a tendency by some to include right wing populism within fascism, or at least argue that it is some sort of pre-fascist politics. However, a closer contrast between populist radical right and the extreme right shows some very significant differences. The populist radical right is not revolutionary, it may wish to make significant changes to the liberal democratic system, changes that favour authoritarianism, but it seeks to obtain power via the liberal democratic system. In contrast the extreme fascist right is opposed, often violently, to the system. The line between the radical and extreme right is blurred, with groups and individuals shifting, and there may be overlap at the edges, but the distinction is nevertheless important.

Populist radical right parties have enjoyed considerable electoral, and political, success across many countries. In Western Europe they have not been able to secure a majority, or even a large enough plurality to govern they have still managed to have a considerable effect on society. In Eastern Europe populist radical right parties are, or have been in government for some time, most notably in Hungary and Poland. In the US right wing populism has been so successful that it has managed to take control of the Republican Party. In the UK UKIP and the Brexit Party, and the BNP before them, had some short-lived success, and this strain of right wing populism has some influence within the



Conservative Party. Whereas the Republican Party can be described as populist, it would be more accurate to describe the Conservative Party as have a right populist influence, balanced against Neo-liberal and Neo-conservative elements. Even where the populist radical right is not in government or part of a governing coalition it has been able to have political success. Liberal right and left parties have responded to populist attacks by taking lines and implementing policies that are reminiscent of those proposed by the populist radical right.

Where Next?

A few liberal thinkers have proposed that the COVID crisis has seen off populist

forces, or at least given them a significant setback. It is true that many traditional liberal parties did see a bump in support at the start of COVID. However, it is far too early to write off the populist radical right just yet.

At the time of publication the 1st round of the French Presidential election has been held and the performance of the radical right can be partially evaluated. While Macron increased his 1st round vote with respect to 2017 so did Le Pen, with the other populist right candidate Éric Zemmour gained 7%. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, whose campaign had left populist elements, also improved on his 2017 result, breaking the 20% barrier.

At the same time 2022 has revealed how far the two traditional centre parties Les Républicains (LR) and the Socialist Party have fallen neither even managing to get 5% (in fact the French Communist Party did better than the Socialists). Macron must be the strong favourite to win the 2nd round and retain the Presidency, however, polling and political sense would lead one to predict an improved performance from Le Pen. Whatever the result of the 2nd round the 2022 election has already confirmed the growth of the populist right. The FN/RN's share of the right bloc vote has increased at four successive elections - 25% in 2007, 39% in 2012, 46% in 2017, 62% in 2022. If Le Pen and Zemmour's shares are combined the populist right took 81% of the right bloc vote in 2022.

Moreover France shows the political success radical right populists are able to achieve beyond their straight electoral success. The French electoral system has deliberately limited the number of representative positions the FN/RN has been able to take. However, the populist radical right has succeeded in forcing the centre right to fight



on their terrain, with attacks on workers and marginalised groups. The centre right LR was already being pulled apart, caught between the populist RN and the liberal Macron. The poor performance of Valérie Pécresse the LR candidate, will only increase the cracks within the centre right. Macron himself has modified the language of the populist right in attacking outsider groups, for example with ridiculous claims about ‘Islamism-Leftism’ in universities. Such appeals to the populist right also align with Macron’s continuing attacks on workers and the authoritarian measures he is willing to employ to stop those opposing him.

(<https://jacobinmag.com/2021/02/france-macron-vidal-islamism-leftism-universities>)

April also saw a general election in Hungary with the governing populist far right Fidesz winning over United for Hungary, a coalition of liberals, greens and conservatives, including the hard right Jobbik.

In Italy as in France, there are two radical right populist parties competing - the Lega and the Brothers of Italy (FdI). Just as the Lega displaced Berlusconi’s populist Forza Italia it is now finding itself being partially displaced by the FdI. As the only large party excluded from the current coalition government, the FdI may be best placed as the opposition before next year’s election. There is not space enough to go through all examples (see also the Swedish Democrats, the Republican Party in the US, the True

Finns), but while COVID, and now the Ukraine crisis, might see some voters moving back to traditional liberal politics, the idea that populism can be put back in its box is naive.

Responses

The emergence of radical right populism has led to some on the left to embrace liberal anti-populism in a flawed attempt to oppose Trump, UKIP, Le Pen and the rest. In Stormy Petrel 2 the distinction between anti-fascism, a natural opposition from workers, and Anti-Fascism, a state/elite supported top-down opposition, was outlined. And while radical right populism is not fascism, any productive opposition needs to be class based. Technocratic liberalism is incapable of being an answer to populism because the pro-capital pro-state politics it creates are precisely the reason why populism appeals to some.

Seeing the appeal of populism, other left-wingers have turned not to anti-populism but to left populism. The problem here is that that replacing class with some type of alternative based on ‘the people’ is not only incoherent but flawed, as evidenced by the political trajectory to those that advocated such a journey.

Equally important as any response to populism is the response to anti-populism. Anarchist communism is not populist but neither can it be anti-populist. After all many of the complaints raised by populists are true - people are becoming worse off, workers do have less control. The populist attack on liberal politics offers potential opportunities for organising. The form and nature of the attacks may not be what anarchist communists would wish for, but we can only engage with the world as it is not as we wish it would be. The key is taking the opportunities for advancing class struggle without falling into either support for populism or anti-populism.

The Refugee Crisis

The governments of rich countries are making it difficult for people from poor countries to seek refuge from the wars, climate crises and habitat destruction which the wealthy are fuelling and promoting in order to enrich their corporate sponsors. They have placed, or are in the process of placing, curbs on the free movement of people from poor countries to rich countries.

In the UK, for example, the Nationality and Borders Bill (2021/22) intends to criminalise asylum seekers who enter the UK by crossing the English Channel in small boats. It does not, however, intend to provide safe ways for people to enter. The intention is to stop people who are fleeing from danger in other countries from seeking refuge in the UK. According to a October 2021 report by Amnesty International, the Bill is incompatible with international law, damages access to justice and will affect the role of lawyers in immigration cases. The UK government would appear to be hell bent on stopping refugees.

Foreigners

On the surface, this is illogical within a capitalist, free market frame of reference because industries in most rich countries have labour shortages and the majority of refugees want to work. Moreover, the 'refugee problem' in the UK is insignificant. In 2020 the Red Cross pointed out that the asylum applications received by the UK were one third those received by France, Germany and Spain respectively and, according to figures released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2018 refugees only made up one quarter of a percent (0.25%) of the UK's total population. However, instead of welcoming refugees to fill 'skills

gaps' and playing down the significance of the impact of refugees, the ruling class is erecting barriers to their entry. The bosses do this because they have their sights on a bigger prize than cheap labour in the short term. They want to keep their hands on the levers of political power as a means to preserving their wealth in the long term. The working class has been indoctrinated over generations to believe that foreigners are their enemies (1) and that people from ethnic backgrounds different to their own are, at best, inferior and, at worst, malevolent. Far right populists are pushing the anti-foreigner, racist narrative as a way to gain influence and they have to be appeased so that reformist governments and political parties seeking power and driven by electoralism can keep the popular vote.

One of the ways that the ruling class maintains its rule over the working class is by dividing it. The ruling class is numerically inferior to the working class. A united working class could easily wipe the floor with the ruling class but a factionalised and atomised working class can be managed. By turning the working class against itself, getting it to love 'big brother' consumerism and undermining solidarity with 'others', the ruling class can maintain its power and preserve its wealth.



It is the 'others' which this article will concentrate on.

Moral Panics

Moral panics surrounding the 'hordes' crossing the English Channel in 'swarms' are promoted by the Murdoch and Rothermere media outlets and far right sponsored social media pages (2). Refugees are portrayed as 'folk devils' who are out to destroy us and our way of life. They encourage organised crime and don't deserve our help. They should be pushed back into the sea or sent back to their own countries and so on ad nauseam. There is no escaping the fact, however, that this sort of depressing narrative has traction with many sections of the working class and it is difficult to counter. But challenge it we must. It is a distraction from the class struggle and makes engagement with our class problematic. Class struggle activists will know only too well that too many conversations on the streets can be dominated by, or turn to, matters to do with migration in its various forms.

It is something that we have to deal with. It does not help working class communities to accept and welcome asylum seekers when the majority of asylum seekers are settled in poorer, working class areas. The asylum seeker becomes a competitor for services and housing and a consumer of limited, local resources. By failing to adequately resource areas where asylum seekers are settled, the ruling class feeds potential antagonisms (3). The Refugee Crisis is central to the Culture

Wars being waged by authoritarian governments around the world. In the USA, Biden may not be building 'that wall' but his policy on migration is not too dissimilar to Trump's. In the UK, a government elected on the promise of controlling 'our borders' strains to demonstrate its aversion to 'foreigners'. The New, patriotic, Labour Party, under new management, is little better (4). In Fortress Europe, member countries such as Poland and Hungary may be in trouble with the EU Commission for their non-EU social policies but they, nevertheless, appear to have influenced EU attitudes towards refugees (5). It should be noted that both Poland and Hungary have a different attitude towards those seeking refuge from wars. There would seem to be a racist element involved in attitudes towards asylum seekers.

One aspect of the Culture War and how it approaches the Refugee Crisis are the terms used for those who are forced to migrate. The BBC, on the one hand, refers to Refugees as migrants. The Guardian, on the other hand, refers to asylum seekers as prospective refugees (6). An asylum seeker is a person seeking refuge from danger.



A refugee is a person who has been granted asylum. Terminology is important and we have to explain the distinction between an economic migrant and a refugee. A person fleeing conflict and privation is looking for a safe place to live, not a better job. In our conversations with our class we cannot stress that too strongly.

Of course, there is nothing new with the shameful way that refugees are being treated by populist governments today. The plight of refugees in the run up to the Second World War is a good example of how, so called liberal, humanitarian governments have reacted to refugees in the past.

Barriers were erected to prevent refugees from escaping certain death in Germany and other European countries which were controlled by the Nazis (7). This should have been a message for future generations but it has not. History continues to repeat itself as tragedy and will continue to do so long as capitalism prevails. The bosses deal with commodities and the working class is just another. And, like all commodities, the working class is graded and sorted and divisions are erected according to grade. The lowest grade is the 'others' who, according to the narrative, are 'not like us'. Anarchist Communists, on the contrary, proclaim that all working class people are Us!

Of course, there is a racist element to capitalism's approach to asylum seekers. There can be little doubt that those escaping from fascism in Hitler's Germany were denied entry to liberal democratic countries because of their ethnicity. The majority of these asylum seekers were Jews and there were votes in anti-Semitism during the pre-war years.

Migration

Human beings have always moved around the Earth. As A E Housman puts it:

"Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep." (8)
People have lives to live and will move to preserve and better them. Whether it's 'out of Africa' or 'The Mayflower', history is strewn with examples of migration. Migration is a fact of life and societies have developed ways to accommodate it. Thus, history is also strewn with examples of how to regulate and categorise migration. A refugee is a migrant who flees danger and seeks refuge or asylum in a safe country. Again, history is replete with examples of 'refugee crises' and attempts to regulate the asylum-seeking process. The study of these attempts is not an edifying experience (9). The ruling class would like to portray itself as benevolent and humanitarian in its instincts but struggles to reconcile that with the inhumane way that it treats asylum seekers, i.e., as rejected, sub-standard commodities.

Recent attempts to thwart the free movement of people attempting to escape from danger are just as unedifying. The Arab Spring which started in 2010 led to conflicts throughout the Middle East. These conflicts were fuelled by the arms industries of rich countries. The ruling classes of these rich countries make immense profits from the arms trade and their avarice has contributed enormously to the scale of the conflicts and increased the numbers of



people who were displaced and who had to flee from danger.

Having helped to create refugee crises, the ruling class then refuses to accept the consequences of its actions. It will not accept responsibility and blames the refugees instead. Refugees are often characterised as economic migrants who are looking for better paid work and opportunities rather than human beings who have been displaced by bosses' wars. It is important for those of us who live in the poorer communities which do have to deal with the consequences of the bosses' wars which produce asylum seekers to hammer home the slogan on one of our ACG stickers that states: **"If you export armaments, don't complain about importing refugees!"**



The recent, chaotic evacuation of Kabul when the British Prime Minister apparently intervened to assist the safe passage of animals rather than human beings (10) is a tragi-comic example of how politicians who represent the bosses' interests only see refugee crises as public relations difficulties to be managed rather than opportunities to save human beings from torture and death. The war in Afghanistan is being portrayed as a genuine attempt by Western governments to improve the lives of

Afghans. What total nonsense! Western governments only exist to serve capitalism, which only improves the lives of the ruling class, if by improvement one means enrichment. Billions of dollars were pumped into Afghanistan, as the narrative goes, only to be wasted by corrupt Afghan officials. Don't blame us, blame them! This is the message, repeated Josef Goebbels fashion, throughout the Western media. Again, more nonsense and its repetition does not hide its mendacious intent. Much of the money spent on Afghanistan found its way into the coffers of the arms trade, security companies and organisations attempting to impose a neoliberal system on the Afghan people (11). The neoliberal, ruling class got richer because of the Afghan conflict and some Afghans got an education, a job, which would later endanger their lives, and privileges. This created resentment in the wider population and brought about a situation which the Afghan Taliban could exploit to its advantage. In short, the western intervention in Afghanistan only produced a situation whereby one bad ruling class was replaced with a worse ruling class and this produced refugees (12). Now it is Afghans who are portrayed as 'folk devils' along with Syrians, Iraqi Kurds and all the other peoples who have become the 'collateral damage' of bosses' wars.

Conclusion

The refugee crisis currently unfolding in the Ukraine, confirms a number of points made here. First, it is the working class which suffers the most from the events which produce displaced persons. Second, attitudes towards refugees in Western democracies are essentially racist. Third, the ruling class gets richer by selling arms to the combatants whose wars produce refugees. We are seeing working class children being killed in Ukraine. We note with interest the

EU's decision to supply arms to Ukraine. We have the shameful spectacle of people of colour trying to escape the fighting in Ukraine being treated less favourably than their white counterparts by Fortress Europe's border guards (13).

If you find all of this rather depressing and would rather hide from it than confront it, then nobody could blame you.

We are all struggling just to pay for roofs over our heads, to put food on the table, pay for energy and to 'live alongside' a deadly disease. We have our own problems to deal with.

The biggest problem for the working class, though, is capitalism. The Refugee Crisis is a symptom of capitalism and we have to see it as an opportunity to take our message to our class. We do not promote hatred and fear of 'others'. We will not be divided by bosses who see all working class people as expendable in their pursuit of profit. We tell our class the truth.

As Anarchist Communists, we say that capitalism is our enemy and not other members of our class. We say that a united working class which sees clearly its own class interests is the only force which can do away with capitalism and improve the lot of all working people. We must continue to advance the causes of the self determination of working class people and free movement.

Notes:

(1) For example see: Matthew Hendley, *"Anti-Alienism and the Primrose League: The Externalisation of the Postwar crisis in Great Britain 1918-32"* (Albion 2003 Summer 2001)

(2) See for example: "Anti-migrant Propaganda in the United Kingdom in the Wake of the 'Refugee Crisis' (2015-2016): "Othering of Refugees and Migrants in the British Press 2020" (Mateo Ravelin 2020) and "A quantitative analysis of anti-migrant sentiment on Twitter during the

Covid-19 pandemic" (Megan Clark 2021)

(3) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/05/ukraine-refugees-may-struggle-to-find-places-in-english-schools-councils-say>

(4) It is not contentious to state that Trump in the USA and UKIP in the UK have influenced the tenor and direction of politics in their regions.

(5) See, Gabriela Stanimirova; *"Irregular Migration to Europe: How a New Pact is Shifting Old Routes"* (2021)

(6) BBC News online: "Migrant Crossings: Numbers reaching UK this year three times 2020's total" (Mark Easton 22/11/2021) ; The Guardian online, "Helping Refugees in Poland's icy, border forests is illegal – but it's not the real crime" (Anna Alboth 08/12/2021)

(7) Readers' letters, Guardian online: "Our wartime treatment of refugees still shames us" (John Green 04/02/2021)

(8) A E Housman (1859-1936) "A Shropshire Lad, IV REVEILLE"

(9) "The Effectiveness of Governments' Attempts to Control Unwanted Migration" by Eiko R. Tielmann, Department of Government & Political Science, In: [Immigration and the Transformation of Europe" (Cambridge University Press Forthcoming)]

(10) "Boris Johnson authorised Afghan animal evacuation, leaked email suggests" (BBC News online 26/01/2022)

(11) What did billions in aid to Afghanistan accomplish? 5 questions answered (The Conversation 26/10/2021)

(12) "Why Did the Taliban Win?" (The Institute for Peace & Diplomacy 25/08/2021)

(13) https://www.vox.com/22948699/ukraine-refugee-crisis-us-eu-russia-war?utm_source=pocket-newtab-global-en-GB

International Anarchist Statement Against Militarism and War:

For self-organised struggle and social revolution

A proclamation by Russian President, Vladimir Putin, gave the green light for Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. Putin claims that Russia's act of war against Ukraine is aimed at supporting the Russian-occupied Crimea and the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics in Ukraine, which is flirting with NATO membership at Western instigation. On Tuesday, 22 February, Russia recognised the independence of its informal protectorates in Donbas, exacerbating existing tensions with the Euro-Atlantic axis that supports the Ukrainian regime.

It should not be forgotten that a low-intensity civil war has been going on in Ukraine since 2014, when the then pro-Russian government of President Yanukovich was overthrown by an 'Orange Revolution' that brought to power a pro-Western regime willing to side with the Euro-Atlantic axis. The Euromaidan, from which the Western imperialist bloc benefits, took Ukraine out of Russia's sphere of influence. It also strengthened the Ukrainian far right, which gained seats in parliament and developed paramilitary units that committed atrocities against Russian-speaking people and members of trade unions. Russia, on the other hand, was not prepared from the outset to lose its imperialist foothold in Ukraine and especially in the Crimean region, regardless of the will of the Ukrainian people.

The Euromaidan uprising may have resulted in the neoconservative regime that it ended up with, but there is no one who is under any illusion that the non-acceptance of that regime came out of Russia's 'anti-fascist' sentiment or its 'need to protect Russian citizens'. After all, Putin's authoritarian regime in Russia has rewarded Nazis and fascists inside the country by imprisoning and killing anti-fascists, while the numerous interventions of Russian imperialism in areas of the former USSR needed no such justification. Russia wanted and still wants one thing: to impose its own terms in the evolving imperialist antagonisms. It will not tolerate the military encirclement it claims it is being subjected to by NATO, the installation of nuclear weapons on its doorstep, the Western inducement of Ukraine to join NATO, the attempted



energy blockade of its gas supplies to EU countries and the reduction of its control over the former Soviet periphery. Another factor is the blatant nationalism within Russia's ruling class - Ukraine is where the origin of the Russian state (the Kievan Rus) lies and the eastern part of Ukraine is inhabited by Russian-speaking Ukrainians. That is if not by the irredentist doctrine of the All-Russian nation Ukrainians (together with Belarussians) are seen as a part of the Russian nation.

On the other side, the US and the Euro-Atlantic camp, with the UK prominent, are pushing in violation of international agreements for the eastern expansion of NATO, the exertion of economic and energy pressure on Russia in favour of US liquefied natural gas (LNG) and control of the Arctic trade route, which is opening up with the melting of the ice due to the destructive effect of capitalism on the natural environment and ecosystem. Both Russia and the US are trying to export their internal crisis abroad, while attempting to cause shifts in the global imperialist hierarchy.

Russia has amassed some 200,000 troops on the border with Ukraine. The Russian army is pounding the entire Ukrainian territory with bombardments. At the time of writing this statement, it is attacking mainly from Crimea, Lugansk and Kharkiv. The first casualties of the imperialist war are a fact. There is already talk of civilian casualties. The Ukrainian Government, which, let us not forget, is an amalgamation of neoliberals and neo-conservatives, has declared martial law throughout the country. We are still at the beginning of the horrors of war.

The only losers from the war are to be the world working class, especially the proletarians of Ukraine and Russia. They are the ones destined to be the cannon

fodder of the states and the capitalists. The imperialist war is being waged for the sharing of spheres of influence, energy routes and the rearrangement of geopolitical power. We have no interest in fighting for the interests of the powerful, for the interests of capital. Moreover, the outbreak of war is expected to bring further price increases and inflation in both energy and basic commodities, putting even more strain on the pockets of those who are already unable to meet their basic needs. We must not forget that war is a solution of capital to overcome the structural crises of over-accumulation from which capitalism is periodically afflicted. The destruction of fixed (means of production) and variable capital (labour power) paves the way for capitalist reconstruction and development. Our revolutionary and class duty dictates the organisation and strengthening of the internationalist, anti-war and anti-imperialist movement of the working class. The logic of more aggressive or more progressive imperialism is a logic that leads to the defeat of the working class. There can be no pro-people's imperialist road. The interests of the working class cannot be identified with those of the capitalists and the imperialist powers. The sabotage of the war machine, the organisation of the class and internationalist anti-war movement and the strengthening of the social and class struggles in the direction of the world social revolution for the construction of a libertarian communist society are the urgent and historic tasks of the oppressed and exploited everywhere. We cannot and must not settle for mediocre and detrimental arrangements.

The workers, the unemployed and the youth have no reason to go to war for the interests of the ruling class. Let us be aware of our social position and our class interests. Let these be the indicators of our attitude and

action and not the belligerent, orderly and nationalist rhetoric promoted by the bosses and the propaganda media they control. We will not pay for the crisis of the capitalist system with our blood. We will not kill each other with the poor devils of other countries. On the contrary, it is our duty to block the war machine and to rebuild the social and class resistances, with the promotion of the class interests and the material needs of the social base as our guiding principle. To organise ourselves in the social and class formations of the working class, organising the counter-attack of our class in mass and militant terms. This system gives birth to wars and is responsible for poverty, injustice, exploitation and oppression. It is therefore time to challenge it in an organised and dynamic way, organising its overthrow on an international scale.

**NO WAR BUT CLASS WAR!
NEITHER NATO NOR MOSCOW!
CLASS AND INTERNATIONALIST
SABOTAGE OF THE WAR
MACHINE! AGAINST MILITARISM
AND WAR: FOR SELF ORGANIZED
STRUGGLE AND SOCIAL
REVOLUTION!**

- ☆ Alternativa Libertaria (AL/FdCA) – Italy
- ☆ Anarchist Communist Group (ACG) – Great Britain
- ☆ Anarchist Federation – Greece
- ☆ Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) – Aotearoa/New Zealand
- ☆ Coordenação Anarquista Brasileira (CAB) - Brazil
- ☆ Federación Anarquista de Rosario (FAR) – Argentina
- ☆ Federación Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU) – Uruguay
- ☆ Embat, Organització Llibertària de Catalunya – Catalonia, Spain
- ☆ Libertäre Aktion (LA) – Switzerland
- ☆ Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group (MACG) – Australia
- ☆ Organización Anarquista de Córdoba (OAC) – Argentina
- ☆ Organización Anarquista de Santa Cruz (OASC) – Argentina
- ☆ Organización Anarquista de Tucumán (OAT) – Argentina
- ☆ Organisation Socialiste Libertaire (OSL) – Switzerland
- ☆ Tekoşina Anarşist (TA) – Rojava
- ☆ Roja y Negra – Anarchist Organisation (Buenos Aires) – Argentina
- ☆ Union Communiste Libertaire (UCL) – France, Belgium & Switzerland
- ☆ Grupo Libertario Vía Libre – Colombia

Forward Together!

Review of the 3rd Year of *Die Plattform*

Stormy Petrel is happy to share this review of the year from our comrades in Germany, who, like ourselves, are a fairly new organisation.

The year 2021, like the previous year, was strongly influenced by the corona pandemic, which on the one hand dictated the circumstances of the further development of our organisation and on the other hand

influenced our work in the social struggles. Despite the limitations that the pandemic and the repressive state handling of it meant for our construction and our work, this year we were able to take some further steps towards building a powerful, revolutionary anarchist organisation that is active in the social struggles of our region and anchored in our time, moving forward.

Further development of the organisation

A milestone within the organisation for us in 2021 was the implementation of a federation-wide awareness concept. After we had discussed the first concept ideas in 2020 and tried them out in the local groups, we developed our federation-wide awareness concept at the beginning of 2021. It is now part of everyday life in our organisation to ensure that we identify problems within our organisation at an early stage, find solutions together and can all learn from them.

In March 2021, the Leipzig local group announced its founding. An important signal of progress in difficult times and a further affirmation of our claim to grow into an organisation that is present and anchored throughout our region. Our regularly held federation congresses are always important places for discussion for us.

As always, our spring congress was planned for March. Due to the conditions of the corona pandemic, this could not take place in person as planned, but had to be moved to the digital space at very short notice. The restrictions that this brought with it were painful to feel. Ultimately, this format prevented us from entering into a closer personal exchange with our comrades.

On different days of the Congress we spoke about expanding our work in the social movements, networking with other organisations in our region and different aspects of organisational building. We intensified the discussions from the spring Congress at our autumn Congress, which fortunately our local Ruhr group was able to organise again in Dortmund. It was a great pleasure to be able to gather so many new and old comrades in one room again. We talked for hours about the elaboration of our basic program as well as about detailed questions of the work in the movements of our time. As a result of these discussions, we have now started to work out our basic programme, which will certainly take many more months. In addition, our new name was announced at the end of the autumn Congress. The 'anarcha-communist organisation' became the 'anarcha-communist federation' to publicly underline that the platform works on a supra-regional level and on the basis of the principles of federalism. For us an important symbolic act, with which we tie in with the traditions of the anarchist movement.



Unfortunately, we were not able to continue our series of publications '*Collective Intervention*' this year. But new, exciting editions are on the starting blocks.

However, we have not been idle in releasing new materials. With themes related to caregiving, feminism and climate justice, we have begun developing a comprehensive range of stickers. Here, too, there will be new things to expect in the coming months. This year, our materials could again be found on information tables throughout the country, because we were drawn to very different places for a number of lectures on various topics: from the small East German town to Vienna, from climate camps to online podcast appearances. Here we discussed our ideas and goals with probably several hundred people. We were particularly pleased that we were mostly asked to give our lecture on anarcha-feminism. You can also find our lectures on our YouTube channel, which we continue to actively use.

Activities in social struggles

However, a Platformist organisation does not exist for its own sake. We organise ourselves in The Platform as anarchist communists because we consider it a helpful tool for our work in progressive social struggles and movements from below. For us, 2021 was the year in which we could verify whether we have created an organisation that lives up to this claim. Like the previous year, 2021 was again characterised by the fact that the corona pandemic severely restricted the possibilities of progressive social movements. Some positive developments from 2020, such as the large anti-racist 'Black Lives Matter' mobilisations or the Corona mutual aid networks, could not be "saved" into the next year and were cancelled again. This is unfortunate, but cannot hide the fact that 2021 was

nonetheless a year of intense social struggles. Just think of the strong revolutionary mobilisations on May 1st, the fragmentary revival of Fridays-For-Future on the streets, the many labour disputes of the Freie Arbeiter*innen-Union (FAU), the fight against the new assembly law in North Rhine Westphalia, the Berlin campaign 'Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co.' and the demos against the destruction of the village of Lützerath in the Rhineland. Class conflicts have simmered in many places in our region this year. At the same time, we must state soberly that the involvement of the anarchist movement in these conflicts continues to be more than unsatisfactory. We cannot exclude ourselves from this, because the development of our practice is also progressing slowly. Nevertheless, we can look back on a successful participation in different social struggles in different cities:

This year, various local groups of the Plattform have not only, but especially, participated in trade union, feminist, neighbourhood and climate struggles. Above all, we have tried this year to move our work in battles from isolated commitments towards long-term and strategic interventions. In some cities we have succeeded in doing just that. For example, our local group in Trier has continued to work on building a feminist network in the city and thus creating an open contact point for people who want to take action against patriarchy. Our local group in the Ruhr area has followed a similar approach. In Dortmund we took part in building an open and class-struggle organisation in the climate movement. In the meantime, our local group in Berlin supported the further development of the local 'Kiezkommunen'. In Leipzig, the new local group participated primarily in selective mobilisations and in the local

syndicate of the FAU. The members of our national group were also mainly active in various FAU syndicates and their operational work. All of these battles will stay with us in 2022 and we will continue to evolve them forward! And we will throw ourselves into new struggles and try there, together with other people of our class, to build up revolutionary countervailing power.

International networking

This year we have continued to deepen our relationships with other Platformist and especificist organisations from around the world. In the first half of the year in particular, a number of joint declarations emerged from this cooperation, which mark a common position of international organised anarchism. We exchanged greetings at our respective congresses. Above all, we are pleased that we were able to strengthen relationships with our European sister organisations at different levels. We shared information about the social realities and struggles in our respective regions and learned from each other. We will intensify this exchange in 2022 as well. At this point we send combative greetings to our comrades all over the world! Whether in the barrios of Santiago, in the squares of Sao Paolo, in the streets of London or in the cities of so-called Australia: we are an anarchist movement! Long live organised anarchism!

Looking forward

We look back on 2021 with mixed feelings. We have made good steps forward and come closer to our vision of a revolutionary anarchy-communist federation active throughout the German-speaking world. But at the same time there were of course setbacks: plans that didn't work out or got stuck, comrades who left the federation for personal or content-related reasons. At this

point, greetings to you, wherever you are! And we know that in 2022 none of this will be any easier. The living conditions for our class here and worldwide are aggravating; through the pandemic, the increasing precariousness of living and working, the murderous patriarchy, the climate crisis or racism, which remains a social reality. The struggles of the wage-earning class against the increasingly unbearable living conditions in this world will and must intensify in the future. Class conflicts will increase.

It is time to stop watching these conflicts from the sidelines of society. Instead, as revolutionary anarchists, we must join the struggles of our class and fight for our interests with other wage earners.

In order for our actions to be more than just a drop in the ocean and for us to be able to look at the perspective of another, an anarchist-communist society, we need an organisation through which we can coordinate our activities.

In the past three years we have laid the foundations for such an organisation. In 2022, too, it will be a question of continuing to build the federation from these foundations and further strengthening our commitment to social struggles.

In order to be able to do that, we want to grow and become more, whether in the big cities or in the small villages! So, if we've piqued your curiosity, just send us an email to kontakt@dieplattform.org!

In the next 365 days we will tirelessly continue the fight for a society free of domination. In view of the prevailing conditions, there seems to be no alternative to this.

**Even 2022 is not the end of the story:
Forward to the social revolution
together!**

BrewDog Leaves a Bad Taste

“Put your conscience and morals in a drawer, lock it, throw away the key and join the revolution. Because at a certain point you’ll have to do things you know you shouldn’t. We certainly did. But by doing so we were able to grow our business ...”

James Watt,
CEO and co-founder
of BrewDog



In the beginning...

In 1971 four friends on holiday in Ireland discussed how the big businesses that increasingly dominated the beer market were producing dull and characterless products. On their return to England they started what became the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), a grassroots organisation opposed to bland industrial beer and in favour of traditionally served *real ale* or cask beer. The Campaign achieved great success in raising interest in better quality beers, forcing big brewers to make more available. This in turn encouraged the growth of small microbreweries dedicated to producing them.

Over in America it did not go unnoticed that there was more to beer than mass produced lagers. Small breweries also started forming, often by people coming from a home brewing background. That brewing in America was further down the road of industrialisation than Britain meant Americans had less of a brewing tradition to defend, but did mean they were

more innovative. And in contrast the main driver was not grassroots campaigners, but entrepreneurs.

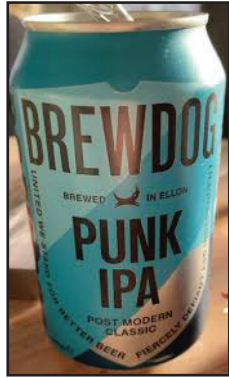
The beers produced are often strong in alcohol content and made using modern hop varieties that bring a new level of flavour intensity. These beers gained a great deal of customer loyalty and some brewers and brewery owners achieved a status similar to rock stars. The most successful breweries grew to be big businesses, some now worth billions. The term *microbrewery* no longer worked to describe these large companies. Instead *craft brewery* was adopted for companies producing the bigger, bolder and more characterful *craft beers*.

These companies influenced what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic, most prominently in the Scottish company BrewDog. Founded in 2007 by two men, then in their twenties, James Watt and Martin Dickie, they have long been the standard bearers of craft beer in Britain. Their American inspired beers were

aggressively promoted, often copying the brash and irreverent marketing strategy of the US Stone Brewery. Comparing the text found on the bottles of BrewDog's flagship brand Punk IPA when it was launched with Stone's Arrogant Bastard Ale shows how strong the influence is:

Punk IPA:

This is not a lowest common denominator beer. This is an aggressive beer. We don't care if you don't like it. We do not merely aspire to the proclaimed heady heights of conformity through neutrality and blandness.



It is quite doubtful that you have the taste or sophistication to appreciate the depth, character and quality of this premium craft brewed beer. You probably don't even care that this rebellious little beer contains no preservatives or additives and uses only the finest fresh natural ingredients. Just go back to drinking your mass marketed, bland, cheaply made watered down lager, and close the door behind you.

Arrogant Bastard:

This is an aggressive beer. You probably won't like it. It is quite doubtful that you have the taste or sophistication to be able to appreciate an ale of this quality and depth. We would suggest that you stick to safer and more familiar territory—maybe something with a multimillion-dollar ad campaign aimed at convincing you it's made in a little brewery, or one that implies that their tasteless fizzy yellow beer will give you more sex appeal. Perhaps you think that multimillion-dollar ad campaigns make a beer taste better. Perhaps you're mouthing your words as you read this.

This was in marked contrast to most real ale brands that were usually promoted on the

basis of being traditional. That they were copying from another company was not mentioned, as being as original as Ryanair doesn't exactly project a punk image. Instead BrewDog's creation myth talks of two men and a dog making beer in a garage determined to shake up the beer world and struggling to get a bank loan to launch commercially. The fact that of the two founders Martin Dickie was an experienced and university trained brewer and James Watt's parents are multimillionaires puts their DIY rebel image in a rather different light. In the world of marketing image is much more important than boring old reality.

Rather than being the groundbreakers they claim, BrewDog followed a well-trodden path. Over a decade before they were formed Tom Frank wrote in the article "Why Johnny can't dissent" about how counter-culture, rebellion and rule breaking were used in marketing everything from Burger King to Levi jeans and Toyota cars: "consumerism is no longer about 'conformity' but about 'difference' ... We consume not to fit in, but to prove, on the surface at least, that we are rock 'n' roll rebels, each one of us as rule-breaking and hierarchy-defying as our heroes of the 60s, who now pitch cars, shoes, and beer. ...The problem with cultural dissent in America isn't that it's been co-opted, absorbed, or ripped-off. Of course it's been all of these things. But the reason it has proven so hopelessly susceptible to such assaults is the same as the reason it has become so harmless in the first place, so toothless ... it is no longer any different from the official culture it's supposed to be subverting". BrewDog's punk rebel image provides a thin cover for the company simply being business as usual for modern capitalism. They are in no way revolutionary or rebellious in any meaningful sense of those

words, only in that as new market entrants their brand has disrupted the existing beer market.

The growth of BrewDog has in many ways been marketing led, with the company using stunts to generate publicity cheaply. Often the two company founders have been involved in them, as they are the face of the brand and their creation myth about the founding of the company plays a big part in the marketing. They even had their own “reality” TV series showing them travelling around undertaking contrived challenges. At times their stunts have backfired, generating unwanted negative publicity. The usual response to this was a brief apology from the boss, with the excuse that they’re young and inexperienced, before moving on to the next stunt.

To live up to their rebel image and appeal to a young progressive demographic they’ve often had a political angle to their stunts. When these have backfired it’s shown that they have little genuine understanding of the cause they are claiming to support and are in fact trying to create a false image.

Publicity stunts

Don’t make us do this

For example, a cringeworthy video released to promote their business’ crowdfunding showed the owners in a range of humiliating situations that people desperate for money might find themselves in. These included begging and being dressed up as female sex workers in a shop window and utilised the hashtag **#DontMakeUsDoThis**.

This crass behaviour was seen by many as mocking homeless people, trans women and sex workers. An online petition against it was set up that thousands signed and the video was quietly dropped.

Beer for girls

Ostensibly to highlight the gender pay gap and mock the woefully bad beers aimed at women other brewers have brought out,

BrewDog launched their own woefully bad beer aimed at women.



“Pink IPA beer for girls”. Apparently copying exactly everything they say they’re against counts as satire. Predictably this didn’t go down well either and attempts by BrewDog to explain that they were being sarcastic didn’t impress anyone.

Beer porn

Despite their previous apologies it became clear that they had learnt nothing from their mistakes was shown only six months later. When they launched a streaming network of their videos they branded it as “beer porn” parodying pornhub. Laddish jokes were used for beer porn titles, which were rightly criticised for their sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. The site was dropped.

Rebels without a cause

To go with their punk image Brewdog have often railed against the corporate world and promoted an undefined “anarchy”.

As their website put it: *“say goodbye to the corporate beer whores crazy for power and world domination ... Ride toward anarchy and caramel craziness. Let the sharp bitter finish rip you straight to the tits. Save up for a Luger, and drill the bastards”*. This fake radicalism led to a particularly bizarre stunt as the multimillionaire owners hired a helicopter to fly over the City of London so they could parachute out stuffed cats, supposedly as some sort of protest against fat cats...and to promote their own *Equity for Punks* crowdfunding.

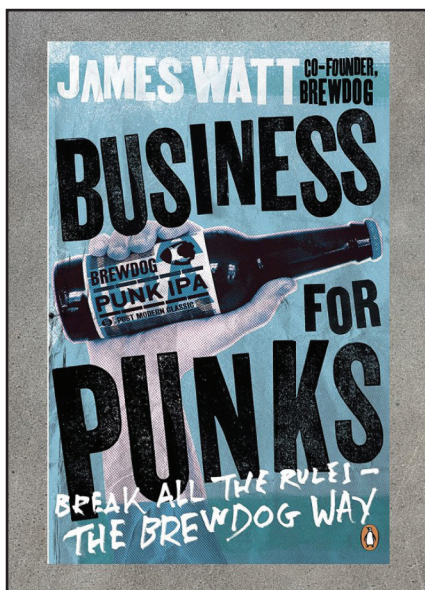
Equity for Punks

Speaking of which, nothing sounds less “punk” than promoting share ownership, but selling off minute portions of the

company to fans labelled *Equity Punks* has been highly successful for BrewDog in raising money and building an army of supporters. They even pretend the company is community owned due to the large number of shareholders with very small holdings.

The reality is that two founders are still the largest shareholders owning 46% of the company, with venture capitalists TSG Consumer Partners owning 22%. TSG were sold shares at a cheaper rate than the BrewDog fans were offered and also got a seat on the board. Obviously business for punks is just like business for any other capitalists.

The Brewdog company AGMs are open to their equity punks and look more like rock concerts than anything else (indeed bands play at them). As the founders and their venture capitalist partners can easily outvote all the thousands of Equity Punks combined they might as well be treated as a social occasion rather than business meetings. The company founders gleefully take on the role of rock stars at these events. This cult of personality has helped fuel the rampant egotism of company boss James Watt. He's even penned a woefully written business book which is full of the psychopathic rants you'd expect from a ruthless capitalist:



*“make sure you’re focused, ruthless, driven and motivated from day one”
“The biggest mistake is actually caring what people think. To hell with*

opinions, conventions and consequences. It is all just a game”

“Put your conscience and morals in a drawer, lock it, throw away the key and join the revolution. Because at a certain point you’ll have to do things you know you shouldn’t. We certainly did. But by doing so we were able to grow our business ...”

While the real ale revolution was about grassroots campaigning the craft beer revolution has been about business owners and shareholders. Unsurprisingly, rapidly growing companies led by egotistical chairmen are not good for the workers.

Punks with Purpose

But the workers are fighting back! Some of the many problems that workers face was publicised following a post on Instagram by American brewer Brienne Allan asking if other women had experienced sexism in the brewing industry. This got a flood of responses from a huge number of women working at breweries and bars about the abuse they had suffered. Once again influence crossed the Atlantic and when a similar question was asked of women working in the drinks industry in Britain more reports of sexist abuse were posted. Incidents involving BrewDog and James Watt were mentioned several times. Following this ex-BrewDog workers formed the group Punks With Purpose and published an open letter (<https://www.punkswithpurpose.org/dearbrewdog/>) outlining the lies behind BrewDog’s publicity machine and detailing its toxic workplace culture: *“Put bluntly, the single biggest shared experience of former staff is a residual feeling of fear”*. They called for workers to unionise and encouraged donations to a charity supporting workers from the drinks industry.

The response of punk rebels BrewDog was straight out of the corporate playbook: denial followed by a mealy mouthed apology

and promises to change, including the creation of a “Employee Representative Group” whilst continuing to resist unionisation. From the workers’ side the response has been more positive and the growing support for unionisation led to revolutionary union the Industrial Workers of the World launching the Brewery Workers Union “to create a network of support, workplace organising, solidarity, training and legal advice and aid” (<https://iww.org.uk/>).



Though it’s said that all publicity is good publicity even BrewDog seemed rattled that the revelations about the company led to the BBC making a Dispatches documentary called *The Truth about BrewDog*. An hour long programme, it detailed many of the problems people working there have suffered, the lies behind many of the claims the company makes and the hypocritical

and sleazy behaviour of boss James Watt. The response this time was more aggressive: threats of legal action (which to date have never materialised) and hiring private detectives to investigate the people who have criticised BrewDog. Such heavy handed tactics have not gone unnoticed and more bad publicity followed with articles about it appearing in the national press. Businesses sending in private detectives to target workers has a long and sordid history. The increasingly desperate sounding Watt justified it by claiming he is the victim of a criminal conspiracy, though again no evidence of any legal proceedings has been revealed. It is blatant victim blaming for a multimillionaire boss to say he is the real victim and the workers that complained about his behaviour and the culture at his company are criminals.

The hipster capitalists of today offer nothing more to the working class than the hippy capitalists of previous decades did. The thin veneer of radicalism covers a company that profits from the exploitation and oppression of its employees. The only real change can come from the collective action of workers themselves uniting to promote their own interests.



Industrial Workers of the World announces new Brewery Workers Union

**We are proud to announce the formation of the Brewery Workers Union!
After years of organising in breweries we thought it was finally time to make it official.**

What is it?

**Bringing together current and ex-brewery workers to create a network of support, workplace organisation, solidarity, training and necessary legal advice and aid.
As part of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union. The Brewery Workers Union will build on skills and experience gained from the IWW's members and officers, whether they work in a brewery setting or not.**

Why do we need a union?

As the interest in and sales of craft beer has risen significantly in the past 10 years it has also meant more workers are being exploited, suffering harassment and abuse, working in unsafe conditions, working long and unsociable hours leading to serious injuries all on insufficient pay, leading to physical & mental strain, burnout and fatigue.

We have seen the ongoing issues with BrewDog and a wealth of other breweries in the UK, as well as active organising from other trade unions, in the US and across Europe.

We feel the time is right to form the Brewery Workers Union in line with the aims and code of the IWW. We have organised in breweries and supported brewery workers in London for many years and we are sick and tired of seeing workers being exploited.

Now is the time to act!

How are we going to make breweries better places to work?

We aim to build on the networks we have – workers, reps, officers, legal teams and activists whilst working alongside other trade unions and activist groups to support and build solidarity with brewery workers. We will be organising workplaces, providing training on your legal rights including health and safety, contracts, grievances & disciplinaries as well as organising social events, running rep training sessions and so much more.

The London IWW meets weekly at our offices in May Day Rooms for drop-ins, planning, organising and more. The Brewery Workers Union currently meets once a month.

We are a member-led union and rely on the mutual support and input from our members, officers and activists.

If you have any issues at work or would like to find out more:

Email us at breweryworkers@iww.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter [@BreweryUnion](https://twitter.com/BreweryUnion)

‘Green Landowners’: profiting from the ecological emergency

Governments and corporations have at least acknowledged that there is a climate emergency and looming ecological disaster. However, they will not take actions that will negatively affect economic growth or capitalist profits. Whether it is electric cars or ‘green’ energy, the stress is on keeping up production and consumption rather than actually addressing the fundamental problems caused by capitalism’s need for continued growth.

Conveniently, a solution has been found for companies to continue with business as usual whilst claiming to be doing something against climate change. Rather than reducing CO₂ emissions, they can instead offset their emissions by doing things such as plant trees. The idea of carbon offsetting has been around for some time with trees being planted in the Amazon or similar, but recently corporations have found the UK an idea place to offset carbon emissions and make money at the same time.

Upland Britain: From Grouse Moor and Hill Farm to Rewilding

Much of upland Britain consists of land that has had little value in economic terms. Moorlands make up most of this land and were traditionally used by farmers to eke out a living with cattle and sheep. This changed in the 19th century with the railway and the invention of the breech loading shotgun. The moors became a playground as driven grouse shooting became an obsession for the rich both in Britain and abroad. Land that had been next to worthless in terms of market value became very valuable as the rich scrambled to purchase what became known as a ‘sporting estate’. There are 150 grouse moors in England and about the same in Scotland. These are usually part of even larger estates that might also incorporate deer stalking, farming, and forestry.

Recently, however, there has been a decline in grouse shooting. This is partly due to



problems with grouse numbers- the 'grouse bag' is not as big as it once was due to climate change and other factors. The political situation has also put a damper on the desirability of owning a grouse moor. Campaigners have succeeded to an extent in raising awareness of the problems caused by grouse moors, including the frequent illegal killing of birds of prey, degradation of peatland caused by heather burning (used by gamekeepers to ensure new growth for grouse chicks), and the health dangers of lead bullets used in both grouse and pheasant shooting. Though pro-grouse shooting groups such as the Moorland Association are fighting hard to retain the sport they feel passionate about, the general situation has led to less interest in maintaining grouse moors. Owning a grouse moor has never been a big money earner. They are usually bought by those who see themselves as part of this traditional elite culture, more as a way of life and status symbol than as an investment. With less interest in maintaining this traditional culture, a new breed of land owner is emerging. They are equally rich, but now more interested in transforming the land by restoring habitats and degraded peatland, planting trees, increasing biodiversity, often referred to as rewilding. However, there are distinct differences between different types of 'green' landowner.

'Good' Landowners?

Many of these new 'green' or 'conservation' land owners are sincere in their desire to address the serious ecological issues we face. The Dane, *Anders Povlsen*, is now the biggest landowner in Britain. He has been buying up land mainly in Scotland for decades and his estates are considered models of good environmental practice. There has been considerable progress in tree regeneration and peatland restoration.

He has started up a company called Wild Scotland (<https://wildland.scot/>) and his ideas are increasingly being taken up by other similar landowners.

Many are inspired by the Knepp Estate in Sussex whose farming gentry owners decided that it was a struggle to keep their farm going so decided to rewild, hoping to make an income from grants and other public subsidies that exist to promote ecological restoration. Their project has been hugely successful, both ecologically and financially.

Camille and Christopher Bentley from California are an example. Christopher made loads of money as a property developer and now he and his wife are keen to salve their consciences. They have bought a grouse moor in southern Scotland and are investing a lot of money in various projects beneficial to the environment.



There are issues with such a model, the general inequality of landownership is maintained (These issues will be discussed later). These land owners are similar in some ways to those who own sporting estates. They made their money elsewhere and the estate is more of a hobby. Many are passionate about the land and care about it even if the sporting estate and conservation estate have quite different objectives. However, looking at Real Wild Estates (www.realwildestates.com), a new

company set up, it is obvious that investment opportunities and financial returns motivates most of the new landowners. The website says it all: “We provide investors with access to large UK landscapes of 1,000+ acres which are suitable for nature restoration with viable natural capital potential. We are aware of multiple exciting opportunities so please contact us for further information. We search for property across the UK with a focus on: Traditional Southern English Estates, Scottish Farms and Estates, North England Moorland and Upland Farms”.

Land as Natural Capital

The recent climate summit (COP26) achieved very little apart from spurring interest in achieving net zero admissions without actually reducing emissions. Rather than reducing their emissions, companies can offset these emissions by either taking carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it, or by investing in projects that stop release of carbon in the first place.

“Although there is much hype around the promise of impressive Negative Emissions’ Technologies (NETs), such as carbon capture and storage, to date the only proven NET is the restoration of forests, peatlands and other natural carbon sinks. In order to scale up investment in ‘nature-based solutions’ many governments are embracing the so-called ‘natural capital’ approach to conservation, which involves assigning monetary valuations to natural assets such

as forests and then enabling investors to extract financial returns for managing these assets sustainably” <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/scotland-is-on-the-global-frontlines-of-the-great-net-zero-land-grab/>.

Note how any discussion of ‘sustainability’ is linked to “extracting financial returns”. Like mining, green energy, and other extractivist industries, natural resources are being used by capitalism to make profits, despite the green rhetoric. The outcome may be preferable in that the environment should be restored and enhanced, benefiting both the climate and ecosystems, but the motivation for doing this is a serious problem,

Land, especially in the uplands of Scotland, is the main source of natural capital because of the quantity and type of rural land available. 98% of the country is classified as remote rural or accessible rural. Peatland, covering 20% of the country, is a major carbon sink (something that retains carbon). A market has developed- a market of carbon credits. This has created a huge increase in the demand for land that before was bought mainly for the status of owning a sporting estate. Savills and other agents have noticed a big increase in interest. Galbraith have a special department devoted to those seeking to offset carbon. Speaking from Savills: “We are perhaps on the cusp of [grouse shooting estates] being repurposed for more climate-efficient purposes,” says Ms Channing, and Mr

Watson adds: “What I think we’re seeing is the enthusiasm for buying wild upland land is high. One reason is that you can plant trees, but there’s also the peatland and the

NATURAL CAPITAL: AN EMERGING ASSET CLASS

“...an untapped investment opportunity that will deliver strong returns for investors over the long term.”

Lombard Odier



‘A game changer in terms of direct, sizable, environmental and social impact, the concept of Nature-Based Solutions being a tremendous opportunity for investors.’

Mirova



‘...an asset class that can help combat climate change and build biodiversity, whilst also generating long-term returns for institutional investors.’

HSBC



carbon. There's a new demand for these types of assets, which underwrite the asset value, and which gives more confidence to owners that there is an asset value without the sport. There are new revenue streams". John Williams, an associate in the rural asset management team at Knight Frank, agrees: "We went to the market at £650,000 for 2,700 acres of moorland in the south-west. It's in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and contains a Site of Special Scientific Interest. We had a huge amount of interest, both locally and from the green investment funds and multinational companies looking to offset their carbon footprint. "It's a whole new side of the market, especially with the Environmental Land Management scheme coming down the line, and carbon sequestration through tree planting and peat. The demand and offers we have received are well above the guide and people are still calling as it's not technically under offer" (<https://www.shootinguk.co.uk/grouse-shooting/who-buys-grouse-moors-122158>).

Many ways to profit

There are several advantages to companies of this new land grab. One is as a marketing tool, making the company look good to shareholders and the public. They can carry on their normal activities and still claim to be carbon-neutral. One example is Brewdog, who have come under scrutiny recently because of their employment practices and sexist culture. As the CEOs

of Brewdog have always said, "Everything is marketing". Their recent purchase of the 3767 hectare Kinrara Estate near Aviemore in the Cairngorm National Park is a great marketing ploy with the talk of planting a "Lost Forest" on the traditional sporting estate, helping them to raise their profile as a 'green' company which they will capitalise on in their marketing campaigns, thus indirectly generating profits. They are also going to be able to attract grants from the Scottish government and have been accused of overstating what they are doing. (See: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/05/lost-forest-why-is-brewdog-green-scheme-causing-controversy>).

Another company that has bought land in the Cairngorms is Standard Life Investments:

"Standard Life Investments Property Income (SLI) is backing moves to reforest part of Scotland's Cairngorm national park in a bid to become a 'net zero' emitter of greenhouse gases. In a marked departure from its normal holdings in industrial properties, offices and warehouses, the generalist UK real estate investment trust (Reit) has spent £7.5m on 1,447 hectares of upland rough grazing and moorland in the heart of the Scottish Highlands (<https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/citywire-news/standard-life-reit-buys-big-highlands-plot-in-net-zero-drive>)".

Capitalism takes advantage of environmental crisis: the market in carbon

Carbon offsetting is linked to the production of carbon credits. Capitalism has always managed to assign a monetary value to carbon. By reducing carbon through activities such as planting trees, a landowner, farmer or even a community will produce carbon credits which can be used to offset their own emissions or be sold on



to others. So companies do not have to buy land themselves and plant their own trees. Instead they buy carbon credits to offset their emissions.

“A carbon market allows investors and corporations to trade both carbon credits and carbon offsets simultaneously. This mitigates the environmental crisis, while also creating new market opportunities. New challenges nearly always produce new markets, and the ongoing climate crisis and rising global emissions are no exception. You can think of carbon credits as a “permission slip” for a company to emit up to a certain set amount of CO₂e that year <https://carboncredits.com/>”.

These are some of the companies in the US who are amongst the top buyers of carbon credits: Alphabet (parent company of Google), Cemex (concrete producer), Microsoft, Delta and JetBlue (airlines), General Motors (cars), Shell, Unilever, and Disney (www.perillon.com/blog/12-companies-that-are-buying-carbon-offsets).

To facilitate the buying of credits, companies are springing up all over. Here is an example of one in Britain: <https://carbonneutralbritain.org/pages/become-a-carbon-neutral-business>. The website pushes this on the basis of marketing.

“In 2019, a YouGov study of over 9000 consumers found that they were 67% more likely to choose a product or service from a business that is taking action on climate change and the environment. In 2020, a Nielsen study also found 66% of all consumers



are willing to pay more for sustainable brands. This figure is even higher for millennials (73%) and Gen Z (72%)”.

Shell is an example of a company that is heavily involved in carbon offsetting. It has engaged in carbon offsetting in Peru, Indonesia, and now Glengarry in Scotland. Their website looks like something from the Scottish Wildlife Trust as they paint a picture of themselves as the champion of forests and wildlife. Their support for projects is used as a way of acquiring carbon credits which are part of a promotional campaign aimed at attracting drivers to their petrol pumps.

“Shell is supporting the Glengarry forest scheme because forests and ecosystems such as these can play a vital role in helping tackle climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This work will generate independently certified carbon credits. Carbon credits allow Shell to offer an option for customers to offset CO₂ emissions from their fuel purchases in the Netherlands and, most recently, in the UK” <https://www.shell.com/inside-energy/scotland-highland-forests-rewilding.html>.

Shell may not make money directly from carbon credits- it is more of a marketing ploy to make drivers feel less guilty because they are gaining carbon credits by buying fuel from Shell. However, there is a lot of money to be made by those who do not just want to offset their own emissions. The reason for companies such as Real Wild Land Estates being set up is that there is money to be made by selling carbon credits to companies like Shell, Easyjet and British Airways.

“Our cutting edge proprietary software tool can be used to assess any viable landscape for nature restoration, and includes all natural capital, commercial and conventional income streams to generate

long term monetary yield. To justify any sustainable impact investments in large landscape acquisition for solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss, we have to assess the risks and returns of long-term investments” <https://www.realwildstates.com/wildncat-tool/>. Like other products in capitalism, the value of something goes up with demand. The carbon credit market has seen a continual increase in the value of the credits because of the pressure on companies to appear to be doing something about climate change without having to actually reduce emissions (<https://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/articles/press-release-voluntary-carbon-markets-rocket-in-2021-on-track-to-break-1b-for-first-time/>). It is this that has led to the current land grab as well as changing of land use by traditional landowners, including farmers.

False Solutions

Apart from the sickening hypocrisy of carbon offsetting and the carbon market, these much-vaunted solutions are not solutions at all. Neither models of tackling the ecological crisis- the genuine green landowner or the profit-driven natural capital investors- are solutions to the problems faced whether in terms of the ecological crisis or social justice. As with everything else they do, corporations are able to create an illusion that masks the underlying reality. There are some certification schemes to ensure that a certain standard has been met, e.g. the Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) and the Voluntary Gold Standard (VGS) but there is no regulating body to make sure that the carbon credits earned actually do offset emissions. In addition, there is no way of knowing whether the project being invested in would have happened anyway. For example, closer scrutiny suggests that, in some cases at least, Shell’s claim may be

at odds with reality. “A joint investigation by SourceMaterial and Unearthed, Greenpeace’s investigative journalism unit found that forests Shell says it’s protecting in Peru and Indonesia may not be in immediate danger, while benefits from a Scottish tree-planting project are apparently being counted twice” <https://www.source-material.org/blog/shell-drive-carbon-neutral-claims-in-doubt-after-forest-scrutiny>.

Heather Rogers, author of *Green Gone Wrong*: “visited a number of offset schemes in India and found all kinds of irregularities. One VGS-certified biomass power plant refused to allow her around, though staff there reported a number of concerns such as trees being chopped down and sold to the plant, which was designed to run on agricultural wastes”

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/sep/16/carbon-offset-projects-carbon-emissions>.

Even if the companies were completely accurate in their assessment of how much carbon emissions they have offset, there is still the crucial question of whether carbon offsetting can actually solve the climate crisis without an actual drastic reduction in emissions.

“In particular, experts have criticised reforestation projects as a way for companies to justify producing huge amounts of carbon emissions. Alia Al Ghussain, a digital campaigner at Greenpeace wrote: “A newly-planted tree can take as many as 20 years to capture the amount of CO₂ that a carbon-offset scheme promises. We would have to plant and protect a massive number of trees for decades to offset even a fraction of global emissions” <https://www.bigissue.com/news/environment/carbon-offsetting-can-it-help-solve-climate-change/>.

The same goes for the other rewilding

projects of the 'green' landowners. Either they are getting carbon credits for doing nothing, i.e. not chopping down trees, not digging up peat, or their reforestation and peat restoration plans will take decades to have an impact on climate change.

“Selling Indulgences”

As stated above, carbon offsetting is nothing but permission to emit. George Monbiot compares it to the selling of indulgences. You can carry on sinning but buy your way into heaven

<https://www.monbiot.com/2006/10/19/selling-indulgences/>.

Bill Gates of Microsoft and Amazon boss Jeff Bezos are big buyers of carbon credits. Around the time of COP26:

“Gates celebrated his 66th birthday by hosting dozens of guests, including fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos, on a mega-yacht in the Mediterranean Sea near Turkey’s coast. Some of the guests were reportedly flown to the yacht on helicopters, according to Turkish newspaper Daily Sabah. Just days later, Bezos faced similar backlash for flying his private jet to the COP26 climate summit in Scotland — a particular sort of irony. Ultra-wealthy people often argue that their high profiles and busy schedules require them to travel via private planes, helicopters or yachts” <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/05/why-bill-gates-and-jeff-bezos-buy-carbon-offsets-how-they-work.html>.



Not only does this seem completely illogical reasoning, it shows the gross inequality of the consequences of climate change, with the rich able to carry on business as usual. Another problem is that as demand goes up for carbon credits, the price goes up. This means that companies will have to fork out more and more money, something of course they will be reluctant to do, in order to offset emissions. It is good news for those owning land who can sell the carbon credits but not so good for those companies who are buying carbon credits. It seems that if the trend continues, with competition for carbon credits increasing, there will not be enough credits to go round (https://sustainablereview.com/carbon-offsets-should-be-more-expensive/#:~:text=Carbon%20offsets%20don't%20work%20because%20if%20every%20company%20chose,decarbonize%20the%20global%20economy%20anyway.)).

Scientists and climate justice campaigners agree that though many of these offsetting projects are worthwhile, they should be happening anyway and not be a substitute for companies actually reducing emissions. Tackling climate change requires that carbon stays in the ground and that current forests are not chopped down.

The only real solution is to get rid of capitalism. However, even environmental campaigners are reluctant to take the bull

by the horns:

“If we’re serious about tackling climate change, there is only one answer to the problem: these companies and industries need to put people and planet over profit by completely overhauling their business models”

<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/the-biggest-problem-with-carbon-offsetting-is-that-it-doesnt-really-work/>.

Business models cannot be overhauled, they are an integral part of capitalism.

Green landowners and social justice

Whatever the motivation for buying up land for environmental objectives, there are certainly benefits. Planting native species, restoring peatland, and enhancing habitats for biodiversity are all positive steps.

However, not only are they not enough to stop climate change, partly because of the long-term nature of such projects, they also have some very negative social and economic consequences.

The main limitation is the fact that green landowners perpetuate the private landowning system, dominated by powerful, wealthy individuals and corporations.

Great Britain, especially Scotland, is noted for its incredibly unequal land distribution. The big names in private land ownership in Scotland, e.g. The Duke of Sunderland, the Duke of Buccleuch, Duke of Westminster, are part of a UK-wide tradition of aristocratic ownership. This traditional aristocratic owner is now joined by wealthy foreigners and corporations as well as conservation organisations (<https://www.sundaypost.com/news/scottish-news/aristocrats-tycoons-and-billionaires-the-people-who-really-own-scotland-2/>).

The foreign landowners take advantage of the fact that it is so easy to buy large tracts of land in places like the Highlands. They can then indulge in whatever their hobby happens to be whether rewilding or shooting. Corporations and other institutional investors have other motivations all linked to making a profit. As with other aspects of capitalism, money breeds money. So, if you have money in the first place it is easy to buy up resources such as land and make more money. This means that land ownership, and the economic benefits and political power that goes with it, continue to be dominated by a few.

Peter Peacock, a land rights campaigner based in Scotland says: “Wealthy institutions can afford to spend millions buying up bits of Scotland and are then expecting the taxpayer to pay for the planting of the trees they plant, all enhancing their existing wealth”.

Peacock and other land justice campaigners such as Andy Wightman fear that this current land grab will make it even more difficult to advance the cause of land reform and increase the amount of community and public ownership of land.

Peacock: “This is likely to see, once again, the Highlands being sold from under the feet of local people to external forces who can out-compete other interests for land, forcing up land prices, and undermine communities in their ability to take a lead in tackling the climate emergency while also promoting wider social and economic benefit under local democratic control” (<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/politics/scottish-politics/3100564/peter-peacock-green-lairds/>).

Wightman is concerned that this “gold rush” for land in Scotland will push land prices up and make it even more difficult for communities or other public interest owners such as the John Muir Trust to purchase land (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-59592218>). The Langholm Initiative in southern Scotland had to raise millions of pounds to buy land from the Duke of Buccleuch who insisted on selling part of his large landholdings at market prices. The community managed to raise the money to purchase part of the land they wanted with the help of the John Muir Trust but it was very difficult. If land prices go up even more such community buy-out initiatives would be impossible.

Why does it matter that land ownership is unequal? The Scottish Land Commission has done research on this issue and has

found that having a system dominated by large land holdings has a negative impact on local communities as well as society as a whole. (See: <https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/our-work/ownership/scale-and-concentration-of-land-ownership>). Large landowners have both economic and political power. Many have a direct line to key figures in government, some of whom will be in the House of Lords, and also have a number of lobbying bodies such as the Scottish Landowners Federation. Local government is also heavily influenced by large landowners in the area, seen as major sources of income and employment. According to the Land Commission Report: “Perhaps most worrying however, was the fear of repercussions from “going against the landowner” expressed by some people. This fear was rooted firmly in the concentration of power in some communities and the perceived ability of landowners to inflict consequences such as eviction or blacklisting for employment/ contracts on residents should they so wish” (https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/5dd7d6fd9128e_Investigation-Issues-Large-Scale-and-Concentrated-Landownership-20190320.pdf). Bonnie VandeSteeg in her book *Land for What? Land for Whom?* found a similar situation in the Cairngorms of Scotland. Local landowners dominated consultations on key issues during the formation of the National Park. They, or their representatives, sit on key boards and make sure they are a major ‘stakeholder’ whenever an important decision has to be made. Meanwhile, ordinary people’s voices are not heard. Local residents told her that they were often afraid to speak out. It will be interesting to see what role the new local landowners in the Cairngorms, Brewdog, play. They have already been criticised by the local paper for not taking into

consideration the local community. They made members of staff redundant when they took over the Kinrara estate. There is also a problem for agricultural land. Environment Secretary George Eustice has announced some new measures which will replace the EU subsidy system. Farmers will be paid under the Landscape Recovery Scheme for making space for nature by planting trees, making ponds and creating wildflower meadows on unproductive parts of their land. Corporations are not just buying up moorland but also productive agricultural land with an eye to getting their hands on some of this money. Though negotiations are still going on, it looks as if land holdings will have to be of a certain size to benefit. It is also very difficult for small farmers to find the time and the expertise to wade through the necessary bureaucracy and paper work in order to qualify. Agroecological farmers are also concerned that money will not be made available to grow good quality food and instead land will be used for carbon offsetting schemes. Jyoti Fernandes, the Landworkers’ Alliance Campaigns and Policy Coordinator, says: “The danger of this approach is that many of the holdings of this size will be land owned by corporations or landed gentry, which means our public money will continue to flow to the very richest in society, while access to land will become increasingly more difficult for new entrants to farming”.



<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/response-to-landscape-recovery-scheme/> James Dyson, known for the invention of the bagless Hoover is an example of the kind of landowner who will most benefit. He has been buying up land all over England, including farm land (<https://whoownsengland.org/2017/09/19/why->

is-james-dyson-hoovering-up-land/). He is now the biggest farming landowner in Britain (<https://www.fwi.co.uk/business/dyson-farming-empire-now-worth-more-than-500m>). Though supporting a hard Brexit, Dyson has argued for the UK to keep up its subsidy payments to farmers. He has already made millions out of these subsidies and is set to earn more with both carbon offsetting and environment subsidies.

Top-down approaches lead to increased inequality

Despite claims that it doesn't really matter who owns the land, the political and economic power associated with landownership cannot be dismissed so easily. One example is Jeremy Leggett, ex-Greenpeace director who made millions with a solar energy company. He has



bought up several estates in the Scotland, Bunloit on Loch Ness and Beldorney near Huntley in Aberdeenshire. He has formed a company called Highland Rewilding Ltd. Looking at the website for Bunloit (<https://www.bunloit.com/>), one could easily be persuaded that this is the way forward- tackling climate change, enhancing biodiversity, and providing green jobs. The company is referred to as a “mass ownership company” (<https://www.highlandsrewilding.co.uk/>). On the website:

“Highlands Rewilding will begin with a founding-funder round involving high-net-worth individuals, family offices and impact-investment organisations. We will follow with a mass-outreach crowdfunding

campaign, once we have identified or formed a platform that can handle many small investments involving co-ownership of land”.

This highlights the dangers. There will necessarily be a hierarchy of decision-making if there are different levels of investors. You need to be well-off to even think of investing in such a project. You cannot help but have a hierarchy of decision-making if there are people like Leggett who are the owner and a group of others who are part of an inner circle. Community ownership of land is problematic at the best of times; how can you ensure equality of decision-making when there is income and social inequality within the community itself. So trying to argue that the community will be truly involved in a model that is still dominated by a landowner, is good PR but not realistic. Oddly enough, the biggest critics of green lairds from the point of view of the community are the traditional landowners, who argue that green lairds represent a new elite. Jamie Williamson of Alvie Estate, the neighbour to Kinrara, owned by Brewdog, has been particularly scathing, stressing the importance of the shooting industry to local employment. The rise of the green lairds is being compared to the Highland Clearances. (See: <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/scotland-environment-green-lairds/>). The traditional landowners' views do resonate with many in the local community. Landowners such as Jamie Williamson have been in the area for generations and their staff of land workers - keepers, stalkers, etc - will most likely also be from the Highlands with connections to local communities. The green landowners are seen as outsiders, just like many conservation organisations are. VandeSteege in her research in the Cairngorms found an incredible amount

of hostility among people she met towards the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPVB), even amongst those who expressed a great appreciation of nature and were keen bird watchers. The RSPB and government organisations such as Nature Scotland are seen as ‘southern’ organisations who have “parachuted in” from outside.

However, traditional landowners attacking the new breed is a bit like the pot calling the kettle black. Those landowners who were themselves responsible for the Clearances do not really have the credentials to become champions of the local community. Additionally, VandeSteege found that much of the hostility towards conservation organisations was often whipped up by the landowners themselves. As Roy Dennis, a leading conservationist, said in an interview with her: “I think what you’re picking up as well is that a lot of it is nothing to do with nature conservation; it’s to do with power”. Traditional landowners are finding their power challenged by an alternative elite - and they don’t like it, so they are playing a common game of attacking others to protect their own privileges.

Nevertheless, there is an element of truth in the accusations of the new landowners being outsiders and not knowing or understanding the local community. In Scotland, the vast majority are from abroad, England or from the Central Belt of Scotland. They have come in from elsewhere with a mission, armed with loads of money and bringing along many ‘experts’ to help manage the estate. In mid- Wales, Rewilding Britain, was forced to withdraw from the Summit to the Sea project because it managed to alienate many in the community. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has now taken over and has said “We’ll be working closely with both land and sea stakeholders. It is essential

that any project delivers for local people as well as wildlife” (<https://www.countytimes.co.uk/news/18526360.rspb-cymru-takes-mid-wales-summit-sea-project/>).

The question is will they succeed?

The jury is out as to how much the new breed of landowners will win people over by actually employing locals and involving them in decision-making, but this basic hierarchical model is riddled with flaws that make it inherently elitist.

Neither traditional nor green: community land ownership as an alternative?

Many land justice campaigners look to community ownership as an alternative. This idea is being widely promoted by the Scottish government. This is a popular idea because instead of having a landowner, it would be those who live in the area who would make decisions about how the land was used and managed. The Langholm Initiative is one example that seems to have the potential of providing a real alternative. The impetus and organisation for purchasing the land from the Duke of Buccleuch came from the community itself. They have now invited in others to help and offer advice but these did not dominate decision-making. They have many exciting plans to both transform the degraded grouse moor and provide for increased local livelihoods. (See: <https://www.langholminitiative.org.uk/>).

However, within the current capitalist system,

based on
social,
economic,
and political
inequality,



**The
Langholm
Initiative**

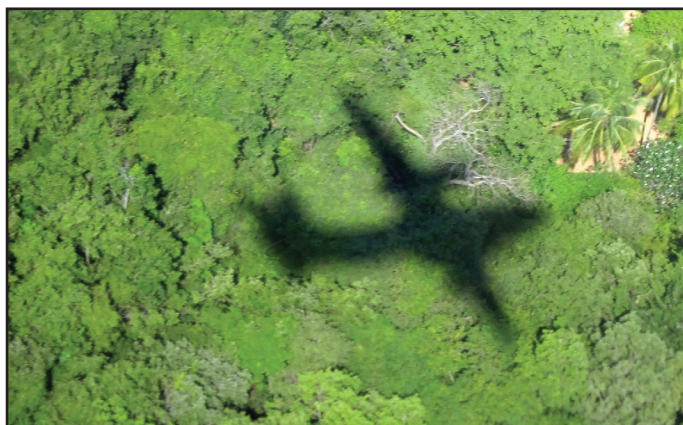
the model of community land ownership will struggle to be fully participatory with involvement of all. In Langholm, experienced land managers have been

employed to run the estate and they themselves admit that participation is often limited to those with more time on their hands. Any community will necessarily have those with more advantages than others whether that be in terms of economic or social and cultural capital. And, communities are not monolithic - there will be a range of views and perspectives and unless mechanisms are put into place to resolve conflict, community buy-outs will not live up to their expectations. Nevertheless, they are certainly a step forward from the current land ownership system.

Ground-up self-organisation: Land as Commons

The green landowners, even those out to do more than cash in on the market for carbon, will have a very small impact on the overall problem of CO2 emissions. And those who pay lip service to community involvement in decision-making about land are either being deliberately misleading or else misguided. The system of private property itself is at the heart of both ecological and social injustice. As long as land is owned by those whose aim is profit, or by those who became wealthy because of making their millions somewhere else in the capitalist system, then we will not resolve the serious issues facing us.

The only way that both the ecological crisis and social inequality will be tackled is if



land is owned, controlled and managed for and by the people. This does not mean State control but a system in which no one actually owns the land - land as a common inheritance. We in the ACG believe that we need a completely new system, one that breaks completely with capitalism and the profit and growth driven economy. In addition, we need to take over the land, organising it collectively with true, direct democracy, to ensure that land is being used for the benefit of both people and planet.

Further Reading and Sources

Landworkers Alliance:

<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/>

People's Land Policy:

www.peopleslandpolicy.org

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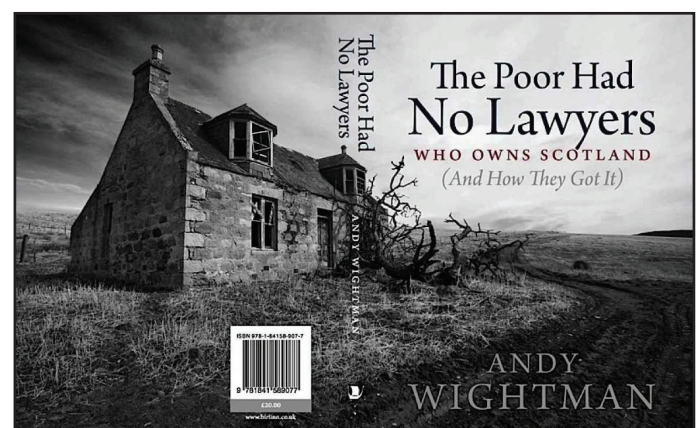
Bonnie VandeSteege (2021): Land for What?

Land for Whom? Senses of Place and Conflict in the Scottish Highlands

Andy Wightman (2015):

The Poor Had No Lawyers- Who Owns Scotland (And How They Got It).

Website: <http://www.andywightman.com/>



Mailbox

Dear Stormy Petrel,

First of all, I would like to say that Issue Three of Stormy Petrel was the best yet with a really wide selection of top-quality articles. And, in particular, the Land, Food and Revolution one was really welcome. Discussions of 'rural' issues, of land ownership and use are generally absent from English language socialist journals. It is as if nothing exists beyond the city for much of the left, including the libertarian left, in the UK. So it was, therefore, good to see such a serious and well researched piece, which was complemented by the reviews of books on land ownership and rewilding and biodiversity! However, although I found the Land, Food and Revolution engaging and informative, I finished it with more questions than answers in some areas. Perhaps that was the purpose of the article.

The article outlines the consequences of capitalist agriculture and particularly how it manifests in the UK. Land has become concentrated in smaller and smaller numbers of hands and those who are engaged in agri-business are generally integrated into capitalist markets which are dominated by the big retail outlets i.e. the supermarket chains. Smaller farms struggle against these agricultural giants and tend to miss out on the government subsidies that the mega-farms benefit from. The article states that a "...revolution will need to transform this system, taking over the land and growing food for need not profit..." (p.22). But that is followed up with "We do not need, however, to wait until the revolution in order to begin the process of transformation of the food system" (p.22).

The article then goes into some depth on the People's Land Policy, a campaign to bring in something called an agroecological farming system of "land stewardship" that is at odds with the dominant agri-business, monoculture-favouring system. But, by the author's own admission, activists who support the People's Land Policy are "reluctant" to even use the term capitalism and seem to envisage an agroecological movement developing alongside the capitalist model despite little assistance from the government and in the face of opposition from their big competitors. Presumably during this period of rivalry eco-

friendly businesses will still be catering to niche middle class markets. But I think that whilst most working class people, particularly in the austere months and years to come, will struggle to pay the extra for organic, locally and 'ethically' sourced fruit and veg, this is only one side of the problem.

Most working class people in the UK have no link to the land, organic or otherwise! Many people have never spent any time in rural areas, never mind had any experience of growing their own food. I used to have an allotment myself and I really enjoyed growing (a fraction, to be honest) of my own vegetables. Now, I don't even have a garden and I think I'm probably in a majority. So, although there is this interest in land stewardship, re-purposing small bits of urban land, it is very much an activist pursuit now and I'm not sure how that will change. Certainly, there are initiatives like Alternative Estuary that see reclaiming land as a form of community activism that is linked to a bigger vision of revolutionary change and more power to them, but, it doesn't seem like a model for mass involvement, mass engagement by working class people, particularly given how, as the article states, land in urban and peri-urban areas is at a premium. Who will be able to get involved? How will it become a mass movement rather than either a hobby or something that just remains a campaign by middle class greens and is possibly co-opted into a 'specialised' part of agri-business, particularly when most of its partisans don't have an anti-capitalist perspective in the first place? Can an organization like the Landworkers Alliance, for example, attract rural labourers, who are ultra-exploited and generally unorganized? The article ends by saying that "...the worsening of conditions, fire and rehire, and austerity and cuts..." (p.30) may force workers to turn to community food growing, but is this likely? Are many workers going to be able to put time, effort and money into creating urban farms when they have completed their minimum wage working week? It is brilliant that a conversation about the possibilities of a new way of producing food is happening and I think the article was fascinating, but there remain very important questions still to be answered.

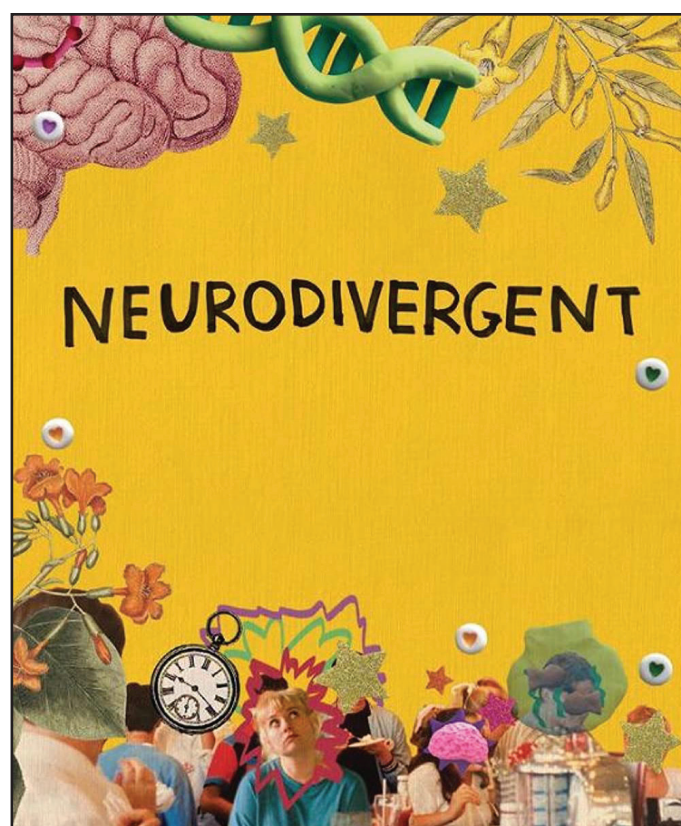
Reader from Glasgow

Pathologising Resistance

Not just as an anarchist, but as a gay man and psychotherapist, I've spent most of my life either not fitting in, or working with people who feel for some reason that they don't. My work initially was with sexuality, identity and gender dysphoria, focusing over the last 20 years on complex trauma and more recently, neuro-diversity and 'spectrum disorders'.

If there is one overwhelming insight I've gained, it is the state's obsession with pathologising difference, generally described as dysfunction or disorder. Differently functional is seen as 'abnormal', sick or deviant. Whatever the politico-medicalised framing of well-being intervention: medication; supervision; care in the community; case management etc, the end product for the individual is generally repression.

Government itself doesn't walk round slapping people and nor do the bosses. At work this is left to HR algorithmic management methods, on the street it's left to the police and mental health services, economically, the slap is disenfranchisement and poverty, and in childhood, to schooling and discipline. At home, the nuclear family struggles from the start by its own experience of this machine, neither educated nor supported in how to respond. But how did these conditions - unreferenced until the industrial era, suddenly appear? And what is this supposed 'normal' neurotypicality that these deviations are supposed to threaten? It's no accident that we don't have any attempt to define psychological disorder until the advent of industrial revolution. The Industrial Revolution made being human more complex than it had ever been. Until the 18th century there had been no shared concept of universal time, time could vary



from village to village and county to county. Science didn't just create the technology of accuracy but did it to meet the need for the new class of exploiters to utilise it. Many misinterpret dating inconvenient change to the Industrial Revolution as imagining a fantasy longing for primitive times past. That fundamentally misses the point. Nobody craves a return to painful dentistry and toilets that don't flush! But the experience of being human fundamentally changed with the clock, the factory, wage labour and profit. Henry Stanley Miller's study of pre-Industrial peasant working conditions (*Life on the English Manor 1987*), concludes that a day's work was considered to be the period from morning to lunch. This averaged about 6.5 hours of work during the peak of summer. Even for the self-employed proto-capitalist artisan class, it rarely exceeded 8 hours. Certainly life may have been hard, but it took place in the context of settled communities where each was known and

mutually essential to survival. There was no such thing as an Asperger's midwife, a dyslexic baker, an ADHD blacksmith or an autistic ploughman. Instead, differences were the character components of a community, some the wise, some the truth speakers, some the visionaries, some the listeners and so on. Then, the advent of capital, the creation of credit, investment, land clearances and mass impoverishment feeding the factories in which waged labour replaced craft and occupation. It also brought the discipline of the factory clock and its overseers. Functionality became redefined



for financial necessity and social control: clock in on time; permitted breaks only; stay to the end of the working day defined neither by self nor season. Demand nothing, eat, sleep, repeat, until squeezed dry. In addition to the generational trauma caused, and the need for standardisation in labour practice (or at least behaviour and expectation), difference became subversive and characters to be judged dysfunctional. The refuseniks, habitual malcontents, fantasists and dreamers. Ultimately the outcasts, anti-socials and unemployables.

In preindustrial society communities were historically rural and geographically stable. In industrial society, the experience of community at least reproduced itself in the form of industry and (re)location. Post-industrial society however has presided over its virtual abolition where almost all collective concepts of community, whether it be clan, extended family, geography, trade or work have ceased to exist.

Thatcherism made material the experience that there is “no such thing as society”. This has further atomised the human experience to a point where many feel excluded or at the edge of exclusion. Struggle for belonging and community has more and more expressed itself in individual terms, in identity often in isolation. In some ways our natural human instincts to make communities where we can have left us transient with a lack of permanence with those we feel have shared interests. While understandable it is desperate and economically without power.

It makes us more easily dividable and targetable setting one to go against the other. The democratic construct necessities the acceptance of this ‘individuality’ whilst pointing the finger at those who refuse to accept. The angry black man; the hysterical woman; the troublesome Unionist; the selfish gay; the ‘safe-space’ threatening trans, the crazy anarchist.

The reality is that diagnoses often serve to blame the individual for psychological dysfunction. That dysfunction being essentially distress. This is the new norm - deep unhappiness and the necessary cognitive dissonance of telling ourselves a story about our lives to make our experience sound acceptable despite what we actually feel. This incongruence, the suppression of our emotional life, is the universal price we pay to stomach our imposed existence in capitalist society.

Professionally I'm unsure if I've genuinely encountered normal or authentic 'neurotypicality'. Instead, I see people forced to change shape to conform, those who struggle less consequently defining functional, and those for whom changing shape can be unmanageable and traumatic defining the dissident. The temperamentally unsuited to capitalism at an advanced stage of social decomposition!

Increasingly I am seeing people diagnosed with PDA (*Pathological Demand Avoidance*) or ODD (*Oppositional Defiant Disorder*). The latter, mostly diagnosed in childhood are defined as uncooperative, defiant, and hostile toward the demands of peers, parents, teachers, and other authority figures. The former describes those whose main characteristic is to avoid everyday demands and expectations to an extreme extent. Refuseniks of externally applied order.

None of this is to underplay the reality that some people are significantly vulnerable and debilitated by some aspects of neurological divergence from birth, but most falling into the diagnostics are simply different.

For liberalism it is expedient to demonstrate acceptance, though generally in the form

of toleration, itself an insidious form of oppression. This acceptance doesn't sit easy with them - witness the somersaults over conversion therapy. Where diagnoses occur, consequences follow. Neuro divergent activists point to the 'Triad of 70': People living with these diagnoses are 70% more likely to attempt suicide; 70% more likely to be unemployed and 70% more likely to die before the average age of mortality. Difference is manipulated to lead to exclusion and creates vulnerability and a sense of powerlessness. An experience shared across marginalised or minority communities, it is the lived experience of racism, sexuality, gender and identity, and class.

This experience breeds rebellion and is consequently described as such and pathologised (*Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder* currently popular). Despite the fact that over time the target groups and diagnostics may change with changing context and political need, the establishment concepts of normality, mental health, work and functionality remain the platform from which dissidence and resistance is diagnosed and the rebellious dealt with.



Transhumanism is Anti-Humanism



What is transhumanism? The term “transhumanism” was coined by the biologist *Julian Huxley* in 1957. He wrote: “The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.” However the transhumanist movement itself did not emerge until the late 1980s, appearing in Silicon Valley in the United States. In fact it is the worldview of leading lights in Silicon Valley, including Natasha Vita-More and Max More, Nick Bostrom, David Pearce, James J. Hughes, Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil. All of these were founders of the *World Transhumanist Association*, which became *Humanity Plus*. These individuals are all heavily involved in founding, funding and managing many foundations and institutes that are connected to the transhumanist project. As such, they are not marginalised cranks, but central in the fields of biomedicine, security and defence and they have a real influence on decisions and policies of researchers and governments.

Indeed, transhumanism has notable advocates within both the defence agencies and the tech giants. Transhumanism itself is an aspect of advanced capitalism. As Alexander Thomas, a critic of transhumanism, notes, the transhumanists see this technology: “as a controllable, malleable tool that, with the correct logic and scientific rigour, can be turned to any end. In fact, just as technological developments are dependent on and reflective of the environment in which they arise, they in turn feed back into the culture and create new dynamics – often imperceptibly”.

More and Vita-More in their book *The Transhumanist Reader* believe that “inclusivity, plurality and continuous questioning of our knowledge” are needed within transhumanism. However, as Thomas notes these three principles are incompatible with developing transformative technologies within the prevailing system from which they are currently emerging: advanced capitalism. Transhumanism’s intimate connections to the defence agencies can be seen in the attempts by the *Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency* (DARPA), a research and development agency of the United States Department of Defence, to create “metabolically dominant soldiers”. This is where the greatest transhumanist potential in the area of research and development is at the moment.

If we get to the point where biotechnology makes human nature something that can be drastically revised, then whose



designs and revisions will these be? Under capitalism, it would be market forces that decide and drive any such revisions.

The transhumanist programme

Transhumanism believes that humans can transcend their present state, in which they are plagued by disease, aging and death, by the use of technology and that self-directed human evolution should be welcomed. Humanity Plus states that “We believe that humanity’s potential is still mostly unrealised. There are possible scenarios that lead to wonderful and exceedingly worthwhile enhanced human conditions”. In reality, this means genetic engineering. The newly emergent technologies that will make this possible include nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science, known collectively under the acronym NBIC. Transhumanism believes that these technologies will lead to the enhancement of humankind. Many current transhumanists want to merge humans with technology, including the use of microchips. They advocate nanomedicine, robotics and brain-computer integration, to alter the human body to ‘improve’ both brain and body. Natascha Vita-More has stated that “Our bodies will be the next fashion statement; we will design them in all sorts of interesting combinations of texture, colours, tones, and luminosity”. Another part of the transhumanist programme is cryogenics, where a body is frozen with the aim of bringing it back to life later. At the moment this only works for human embryos. One anonymous transhumanist reported that the late unlamented financier and paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, an enthusiastic transhumanist, when talking about cryonics, said that he would want his head and penis frozen! His interest in the transhumanist project reflected his elitist ideas. He told various scientists in the

2000s that he wanted to “seed the human race” with his DNA. He said he would do this by impregnating 20 different women on his ranch in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

He obviously believed that his DNA was better than that of most humans. He also told Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz at a lunch how humans could be improved genetically (Dershowitz was to represent Epstein at a 2008 court hearing where Epstein faced charges of prostituting a minor). Among the scientists he gathered around him were Harvard geneticist George M. Church, and evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould. He was able to do this via his promises to outlay large sums of cash. The scientist Jaron Lanier told the New York Times that he met a NASA scientist at an Epstein lunch who revealed that Epstein had shown great interest in the Repository for Germinal Choice, an “elitist sperm bank” which had been set up in 1980 with the aim of strengthening the human gene pool with the sperm from Nobel Prize winners. Indeed, 200 babies were born as the result of the Repository’s activities, though none of them were the offspring of Nobel Prize winners. The Repository shut down in 1999. Lanier went on to say that he thought that Epstein used his dinner parties of the great and famous to ‘screen’ female guests as bearers of the Epstein seed. Epstein also channelled \$100,000 in salary to the vice chair of Humanity Plus, Ben Goertzel. Similarly, he bankrolled other transhumanist related projects, the Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation pledging \$30 million to Harvard University to establish



the Program for Evolutionary Dynamics and the OpenCog project which develops software “designed to give rise to human-equivalent artificial

general intelligence”.

Dershowitz felt that his conversations with Epstein reminded him of the Nazi use of eugenics to justify its genocidal policies (elimination of ‘inferior’ peoples like the Jews and Gypsies, homosexuals, the disabled and chronically ill).

Eugenics

Critics of transhumanism have compared transhumanism to eugenics. Eugenics is a discounted theory, popular not only with the Nazis, but within ruling class circles. When Winston Churchill was Home Secretary (February 1910-October 1911) he was in favour of the “confinement, segregation and sterilisation of the feeble minded”, something which the Nazis actually carried out. Eugenics is, the ‘science’ of deliberately breeding humans to increase the likelihood of certain characteristics, and eliminating others seen as undesirable.

The only difference between transhumanism and eugenics is that transhumanism does not explicitly encourage controlled human breeding, nor the propagation of a particular race. Nevertheless, both theories look towards an ‘improved’ and ‘superior’ race. Instead of racial purity as advocated by the eugenicists, transhumanists have substituted the perfection of human health and the perfect child.

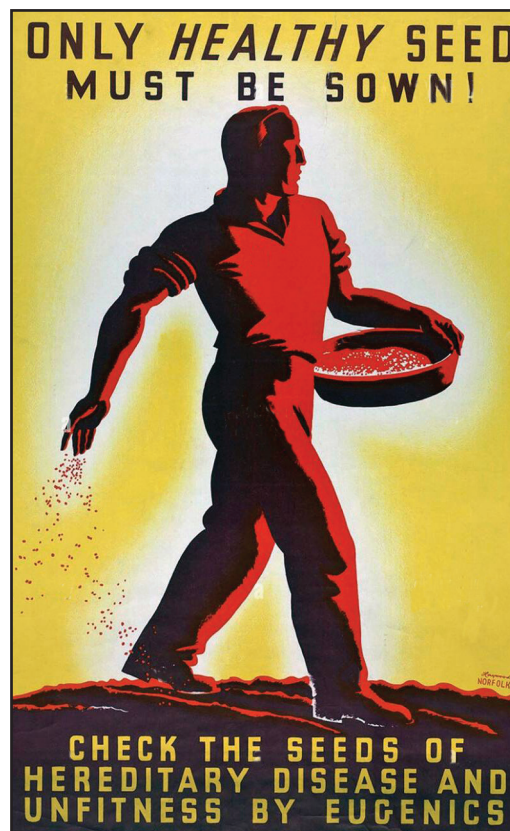
It wasn’t just the right wing that supported eugenics though. Fabian socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Bernard Shaw, Harold Laski and John Maynard Keynes were also enthusiasts. William Beveridge, one of the architects of the

post-1945 Welfare State wrote: “those men who through general defects are unable to fill such a whole place in industry are to be recognized as unemployable. They must become the acknowledged dependents of the State... but with complete and permanent loss of all citizen rights - including not only the franchise but civil freedom and fatherhood”.

During the American presidential election of 2016, Zoltan Istvan, running for the Transhumanist Party, told the magazine *Business Insider* that people had been conditioned to think that death “is just a natural part of existence...and so our job is to uncondition that. To tell them actually it was the program until we reached the 21st century and now all of a sudden we realise that with genetics and bionics and robotics that we have a real chance of stopping death and treating it as something much more similar to a disease than some natural phenomenon.”

Zoltan Istvan was to say that “Transhumanists must favour the free world and free market to make its movement as

powerful and successful as possible,” and that they had to be “on guard” about socialism. Istvan is a ‘Libertarian’, an advocate of the free market. Other ‘Libertarians’ or ‘Anarcho-Capitalists’ who advocate transhumanism include Max More, with his particular current of transhumanism, which he calls Extropianism, although now More has moved away from that position towards a defence of liberal democracy.





Another liberal democrat and supporter of transhumanism is the inventor and futurist Ray Kurzweil. Humanity Plus itself is an overt defender of liberal capitalism. In Italy there are fascistic supporters of transhumanism, the ‘overhumanists’ or ‘sovrumanists’.

Just as eugenics had its advocates on the left like the Webbs, Shaw, Beveridge and Keynes, you can now find defenders of transhumanism amongst the left. People like B. J. Murphy, a member of Democratic Socialists of America, for example.

Writing on his blog he states:

“I’m not ready to concede that socialism is a dying ideology of the past, failing miserably as it tries to keep up. I want to believe that socialism still has that spark which made it great for so many years and willing to drive forward positive social change coupled with modern science and technology. I still wish to consider myself a Transhumanist Socialist. But I’m growing tired of the bullshit. Sooner or later, if these so-called socialists (not all, but many) cannot come to grips with reality and take on the torch passed onto them by the great socialists before us, then one of the two will have to go. Transhumanism or socialism. My sight and aim is to the future, not the past.

Sooner or later, modern day ‘socialists’ will have one less ‘comrade’ and one more enemy”.

Murphy has worked with the asteroid mining company Planetary Resources as a member of their Planetary Community Vanguard. Writing in issue No.1 of this magazine on Fully Automated Luxury Communism, and its supporters Aaron Bastani and Paul Mason, we noted the dangers

of accelerationism and technological determinism. Bastani himself, like B.J. Murphy, is an advocate of asteroid mining.

Another leftist, James Hughes, wrote in 2001 that “for transhumanism to achieve its own goals it needs to distance itself from its anarcho-capitalist roots and its authoritarian mutations, clarify its commitments to liberal democratic institutions, values and public policies, and work to reassure skittish publics and inspire them with Big Projects”.

He advocates “a new technoprogressive synthesis of egalitarian millennialism and technoutopianism, with promises of universal antiaging and cognitive enhancement, a basic income guarantee and shorter work weeks, a postgender transhuman social democracy with world government”.

Elitist

Unfortunately, the elitist thinking behind much of transhumanism points to elites of Over-Humans, immortal or of great longevity, supported by robotic armed guards, lording it over a mass still suffering from sickness, death and aging. Indeed if that mass is still allowed to exist and robot

workers have not replaced the proletariat. In a free market, it will be the rich and powerful who will be able to acquire bionic organs. Also worrying about the genetic engineering of transhumanism is the possibility of independent thinking and rebellious tendencies being bred out of most of the human race.

People with disabilities are rightly disturbed by the transhumanist concepts of 'perfectibility', with its chilling likeness to eugenics. Of course technology should be used to help us tackle disease and aging; we are not primitivists opposed to any technological discoveries that better our lot without having disastrous consequences for the planet. But who decides what this 'perfectibility' is?

An anarchist communist society would be a society of equals, where people are not judged on their looks, age, gender, or their supposed intelligence quota. And what about the joy of diversity, whether biological or social? Do we want a world where homo sapiens continues to exist or one where the 'better', 'the much improved human', the 'posthuman' has replaced it? Is survival worth the transmutation of our species?

Gene therapy and nanorobots may well pose hazards not just to humans, but to plants and animals. Obviously some genetic inherited traits, like a disposition towards acquiring cancer, are undesirable but should all disabilities be eliminated?

Transhumanism is imbued with the values of advanced capitalism, an obsession with progress, innovation, and efficiency.

It is driven by the ideology of the market, in its search for continuing progress and productivity.

Istvan in his novel *The Transhuman Wager*, describes the violent coming to power of a global transhumanist party and the ensconcing of a global dictator who then implements genocide and "humanicide".

This dictator sees most humans as "cowardly idiots". He fulminates against "the greater good of humanity at the expense of the most singularly talented" and states that "all levels of society must be subject to the sanctity of the individual," that is the most "talented".

The elitism of Istvan and Epstein is apparent, but what of the left transhumanists? Like the Webbs and their ilk, who supported the supposedly wonderful experiment of social engineering in the Soviet Union under Lenin and then Stalin, these apologists are heavily anchored in the managerialist and Statist positions of the bulk of social democrats, and as we have seen, have little time for the agency of the working class.

If immortality or vastly increased longevity are achieved without radical changes in present society how can this be of use?

We need to look towards the creation of a new society, a new civilisation, one that is just and egalitarian. The agent of that change must be the vast mass of humanity, the working class. It cannot be supposedly neutral technologies.

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Taking From the Pile

The anarchist communist theorist Petr Kropotkin advocated that all food, clothes and houses in areas won by the revolution should be put into a common pool to which every member of the oppressed class should have free access according to their basic needs.

“The words Kropotkin used for “free access” were (in French) “pris au tas”, literally “taking from the pile” or, colloquially, “help yourself, take what you need”. If this wasn’t done, said Kropotkin, then the Revolution would have failed”.

From Adam Buick, What Marx Should Have Said to Kropotkin

The following text is a translation from the French from *Alternative Libertaire*, the magazine of the Union Communiste Libertaire.



Initially theorised by Kropotkin, “taking from the pile” was one of the economic watchwords of libertarian communists. This way of distributing the goods and services produced by communities after the fall of capitalism has been discussed, debated and tried from the end of the 19th century until today.

If the formula of ‘pris au tas’ or ‘sur le tas’ were to be attributed to someone, historians would say that it appeared at the very end of the 19th century under the pen of a geographer and Russian



explorer in exile in London, notoriously committed to the junction of anarchism and communism, namely Petr Kropotkin. This colourful formula, with a wide and lasting dissemination at least within the anarchist movement, can be linked to a no less well-known aphorism: “To each according to his needs. From each according to his abilities”[1], formulated about half a century earlier by a few early socialists such as Étienne Cabet (or Louis Blanc). This aphorism, taken up by all those who aspired (and still aspire) to go further than mutualism and economic collectivism, will impose itself to lastingly symbolise what communism can be, what must be from the economic point of view.

Thus Karl Marx will also take it up on his own account to characterise a “higher phase” of communism: “In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving

subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!" [2].

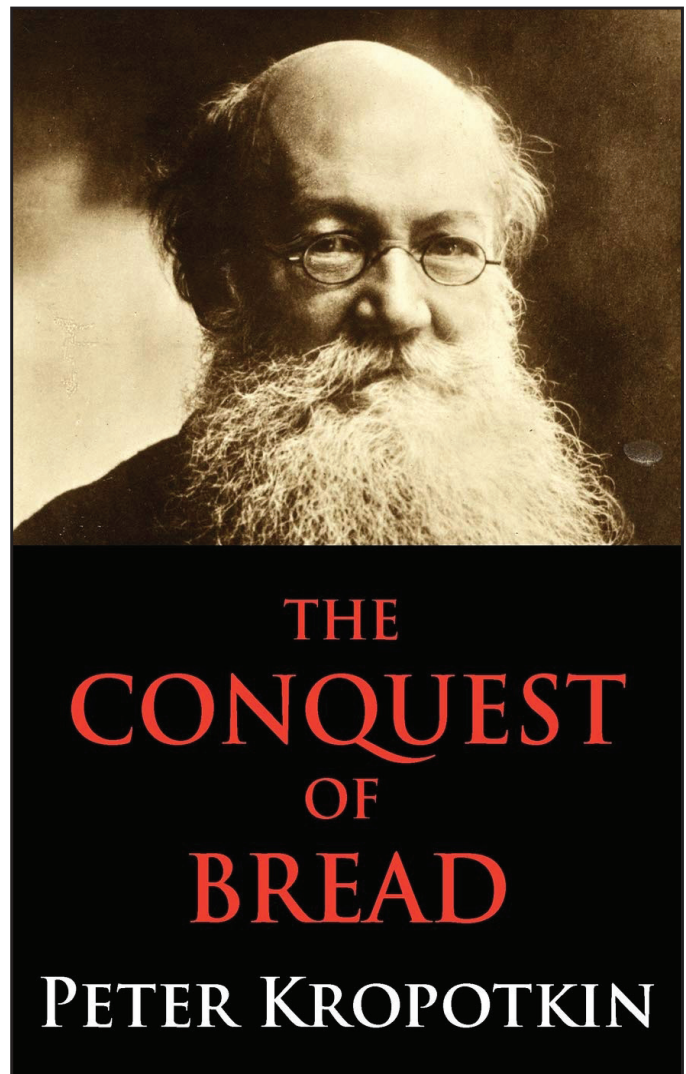
In the same way, the anarchists, who, from the last third of the 19th century, in greater and greater numbers began to adopt the communist economic perspective, will make of it one of their apophthegms [3].

But, to come back to the formula of 'pris au tas' and its connection with the communist aphorism, and while the two terms or principles of it must be understood as intimately linked to each other, and they were for Kropotkin, it is the second, specifically, which is highlighted in the enunciation of 'pris au tas'.

This second term, "to each according to his needs", synthesises the imperative goal of a certain vision of economic communism: that everyone in society can henceforth receive everything that allows them to satisfy their fundamental "needs", even their and even their desires. As for the taking from the pile, it then appears to be a means of making it possible to concretise this satisfaction for all, in other words a modality of distribution (or assignment) to all of the resources, essentially produced. Thus, taking from the pile completes this distributive requirement by giving an indication of how resources should be accessed. And, a modality among others obviously, 'pris au tas' means precisely that access must be free.

Everyone, individual or group, must be able to come and help themselves, freely, without restriction, in order to be able to satisfy their needs if not their desires: self-service (which is also found in the capitalist system, such as all-you-can-eat buffet restaurants...) but which is here associated with an imperative: the absence of a direct counterpart to taking, taking the form of free resources (which is less the case in a capitalist system...), in other words a gift to all.

This is how Kropotkin understood it: to ensure the satisfaction of basic needs but also, quickly, that of desires which he describes as "infinitely varied luxury needs" that "the anarchist Commune ...understands and seek to satisfy...at the same time as it ensures the production of all that is necessary for material life [4]...



But as we must recognize that man has other needs besides food, and as the strength of Anarchy lies precisely in that it understands all human faculties and all passions, and ignores none, ... Everyone would be the happier for it” [5].

Added to this is a third requirement, underpinned by the first two: the economic abundance of the various goods and services made available to all, since it is absolutely necessary that the quantities offered for taking sustainably cover, if not exceed, everyone’s needs, even desires, so that they can be fully satisfied over time.

Distribute Abundance

These last two conditions, gratuity and relative abundance (that is to say in relation to the demands), are so strong, and primordial, that Kropotkin himself immediately nuanced one of them.

Although often tempted by an optimistic vision of the economy to come (for which he was later reproached, in particular by Errico Malatesta, like him a follower of anarchist communism), Kropotkin was nevertheless aware that at least initially, this abundance could only be partial, that is to say limited to certain goods or services, it being up to the libertarian society and economy to focus primarily on goods and services making it possible to satisfy the socially considered fundamental needs of human beings: food, clothing, housing...

For the others, satisfying non-fundamental needs, as well as the great variety of desires more or less derived from needs, the pile would not be possible (at first), and would then be replaced by rationing by quantity (and not by a tariff, to preserve free access): “But upon what basis must society be organized in order that all may share and share alike? This is the question that meets us at the outset... If the commune possesses woods and copses, then, so long as there

is plenty of wood for all, everyone can take as much as he wants, without other let or hindrance than the public opinion of his neighbours. As to the timber-trees, which are always scarce, they have to be carefully apportioned... In a word, the system is this: no stint or limit to what the community possesses in abundance, but equal sharing and dividing of those commodities which are scarce or apt to run short”.[6]

Streamline resource distribution

This rationing would also be combined with the desire to serve first and foremost those who would experience the greatest need for it: the last rations will be reserved for those who need it the most. “Say, in a word, that if this or that article of consumption runs short, and has to be doled out, to those who have most need most should be given. Say that and see if you do not meet with universal agreement” [7]. However, although quantitative rationing deserves a fine and critical analysis just as much as the heap, we will leave aside its analysis because it is not the subject of this article ...

Ultimately, communist distribution thus thought out by Kropotkin would combine, depending on the situation, ‘pris au tas’ (free) and, failing that, quantitative rationing. And this mixed form of distribution will not be just a hypothesis... Indeed, during the 20th century, many applications of it were implemented, on a more or less large scale, over longer and shorter periods: libertarian agrarian productive communities (often called ‘colonies’) mainly in France and South America, agrarian revolutionary collectivisations in Spain after the fascist coup of 1936, kibbutzim in Palestine-Israel, etc. However, a control of the distribution of products was, most of the time, put in place, including in the case of products deemed “abundant”, thus deviating somewhat

from the original freedom called for by Kropotkin.

The Aragonese example

One example among others, a testimony from an Aragonese municipality from the period 1936 to 1938:

“On winter’s eve, the pig is slaughtered, and we came up with the idea of a fair distribution of pork ...For example, we calculated that we had 20 kilos of pork per person. Well, the fascist widow, the fascist or the republican had their 20 kilos like the others. ...All the products were free, the money didn’t disappear: we didn’t use it! ... Not using money is not only a collective choice but also an individual decision, and the proof is that no one came to touch his savings. ...None! And they were entitled to it!

For distribution, you still had to know because there is a responsibility. You still can’t give away a pair of shoes without recording who you gave it to. Therefore, if you didn’t keep the accounts, you risked giving another one to the same guy. Thus, at the beginning, there were vouchers distributed by the supply service. Afterwards, we printed a card which contained I believe thirty-six items. And everything was free.

For things in short supply, for example milk, we didn’t have enough for everyone; neither before. It had been reserved for children, the sick and the elderly. And, for the others, no one drank milk. Not even me [one of the three board members of the second community] who was very fond of milk.” [8]

A strong example which, in itself, would tend to make one think that apart from a few adjustments to the initial idea, which nevertheless reduce freedom, few obstacles would be imposed on an immediate establishment of the taking from the pile for

all that would be in excess. However, this is not the case, because several important questions have been raised, and continue to arise. They will be discussed and developed in a forthcoming article to be published in *Alternative Libertaire* .

Frederic Antonini (author of *Pour une économie libertaire. Pistes et reflexions*, published by Nada Editions in 2019)

[1] Étienne Cabet, *Journey to Icaria*, 1845.

[2] Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* .

[3] Memorable words of well-known people, having the value of an aphorism or a maxim.

[4] in the sense of physics

[5] Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* , 1892.

[6] Ibid .

[7] Ibid .

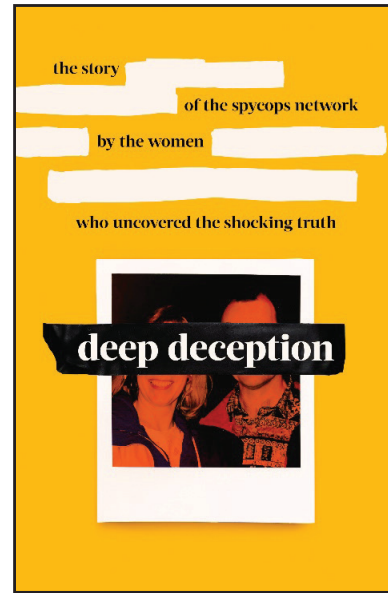
[8] « La révolution sociale dans un village aragonais. Le témoignage de Miguel Celma », in Collectif Equipo Juvenil Confederal, *La Collectivité de Calanda 1936-1938*, CNT, 1997.



Book Reviews

Deep Deception

Author: Alison, Belinda, Helen Steel,
Lisa and Naomi (2022)
Publisher: Ebury Press
Price: 20.00



That the role of police is not to protect the public but to defend the existing capitalist order comes as no surprise to anarchists. Nor that undercover cops will infiltrate protest groups and political organisations to disrupt them and gather intelligence. But it is still shocking to read first-hand accounts of the brutally callous behaviour of the spycops that deceived women activists into long term relationships.

Deep Deception is a book written by five of the women that were targeted by the police in this way. Taking it in turn the women narrate how they slowly learnt what had been done to them, that their boyfriends were paid state spies, and how they came together to fight back.

When the spy cop revelations came out the police denied, delayed and continued to deceive. To this day they are dragging their heels in the public enquiry. But the similarities in the stories of women show that this was not the behaviour of a few bad apples or rogue officers but a deliberate strategy that treated the lives of the women involved with contempt and without a single

thought for how they suffered.

The police involved would actively pursue women they thought would help them with their cover and as well as pretending they had shared politics would fake common interests to build rapport. They would be helpful and generous and get involved in every area of the women's lives. One of the women details how a spycop accompanied her to her father's funeral. Then when the cops' deployment ended, they would withdraw in a way that served to maximise the trauma the women suffered. Typically, rather than make a clean break, they would claim they were stressed and depressed, become withdrawn, start disappearing and then pretend to move abroad before ending contact. This left the women not knowing if the relationship had truly ended and thinking their partner was potentially suicidal. Some spent a lot of time and money trying to track down the person they had been tricked into loving.

The spycop scandal goes back several decades and at least 50 women were deceived into relationships. Reading the pain these women went through and the

long term effects it had on their lives is horrifying. But learning how the spycops were exposed is informative and how they were held to account is inspiring.

This book is highly recommended.

More information on the spycops scandal is available at:

Police Spies Out of Lives
policespiesoutoflives.org.uk

Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance
campaignopposingpolicesurveillance.com

Undercover Research Group
undercoverresearch.net



We Will Not Cancel Us: And Other Dreams of Transformative Justice

Author: adrienne maree brown (2021)

Publishers: AK Press

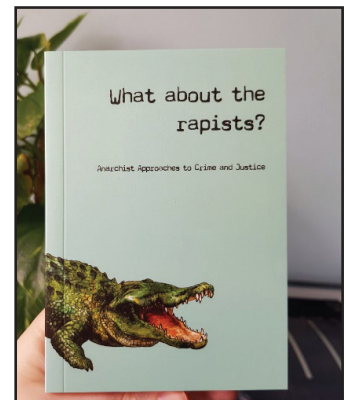
Cost: £10.00

What About the Rapists?

Author: Collective (2020)

Publishers: Active Distribution

Cost: £3.00



The idea of Transformative Justice animates both these publications. *We Will Not Cancel Us* has its origins in the ‘abolitionist’ wing of the North American Social Justice movement whilst *What About the Rapists?*, originally published in 2014, comes out of the anarchist, or more specifically the anarcho-punk counter-cultural scene of North America. Both books tackle, from different angles, the issue of dealing with intra-personal issues and abuse within political movements which can be described as antagonistic to the state and which seek alternative models of justice to that of the punitive and carceral.

What About the Rapists?, whose title comes from one of the most common objections to a world without police, consists of a number of related essays which cover two

main themes: Transformative Justice and Retribution. The intention of the booklet is to specifically address violence and abuse, not just of a sexual nature, within activist ‘communities’ and, when considering the nature of crime, to sidestep “the dogma of radical discourses” (p.9). It is not, however, made clear which “radical discourses” are being sidestepped.

Transformative Justice, as understood by the booklet’s authors, is a “technique” with an “accountability process” at its centre (p.16). This process facilitates a “perpetrator” formally and voluntarily accepting responsibility for their actions and ultimately committing to changing their behaviour and taking steps to repair the harm to the “survivor”.

The authors admit that it is an approach which faces many potential challenges, the obvious one being the possible lack of acceptance of responsibility on the part of the “perpetrator”, without which Transformative Justice, as generally understood, struggles.

Even when the perpetrator agrees to co-operate, finding and keeping people together to facilitate the process is difficult when “...few anarchists on our scene follow through on long-term commitments to even our most fervent passions” (p.55). And when the facilitators of processes don’t like the perpetrator in the first place, that can be deeply problematic in terms of sustaining the process itself. The author suggests that remaining involved in an accountability process for “some scumbag they don’t even like” (p.54) is unrealistic.

The booklet also notes that a form of “identity politics” has emerged around the labels ‘perpetrator’ and ‘survivor’ which have been used to “leverage power, dispense or deny legitimacy, and erase difference in experience” (p.48).

What does emerge from this publication is that, despite ongoing attempts to introduce a Transformative Justice approach into various ‘scenes’, the problem of sexual assault and abuse remains a significant problem within “our subcultural bubbles” (p.58). Perhaps as the authors admit, in anarchist counter-cultural (mainly punk) environments where a culture of “intoxication” dominates and “highly sexualized spaces” are common (p.60), this is almost inevitable, particularly given the common lack of political education and awareness in such places. Open to everyone who self-identifies as an anarchists (at best) these communities often struggle to create cultures where responsibility and

accountability exist even before abusive behaviours even emerge.

In part, this leads to another focus in *What About the Rapists?: Survivor-led Vigilantism or retributive justice*. Good old fashioned revenge served hot or cold. As the author says “vigilantism is not a form of accountability, at least not one based on transformative justice as it’s generally conceived in anarchist circles; it’s an explicit rejection of it. It’s not a pseudo-judicial process; it declines both state-based and non-state methods of conflict resolution in favour of a direct, unmediated response.” (p.70). And this approach, the booklet argues, “subverts the social order” (p.94), is “less amenable to dogma” (p.95) and helps abusers “understand the risks” involved in abusing (p.96). Survivor-led Vigilantism is compared to the “revenge attacks” carried out by late 19th and early 20th century anarchists (the era of so-called Propaganda of the Deed) which, it is claimed “inspired” anarchists and helped keep the idea alive (p.95).

However, organised ‘vigilante’ violence is perhaps one of the fears people have about a future ‘anarchist’ society where a chaotic form of mob rule replaces any administration of justice. Indeed, there may be some self-described anarchists for whom this seems attractive. But, whilst vengeance has been and continues to be part of the arsenal of the oppressed, can it be a model going forward? Anarchist communists think not. The authors of *What About the Rapists?* seem to realise that there are inherent dangers in “retaliation and punitive action” (p.97) and conclude with a discussion of the two essential outcomes to any process – reconciliation and expulsion from the group/space/scene and provide some pathways for both eventualities.

But words will never harm us...

We Will Not Cancel Us and Other Dreams of Transformative Justice does not deal with the world of anarcho-punk counterculture but rather the North American Social Justice movement and specifically the abolitionist wing of that movement. adrienne maree brown self describes as a “Black biracial queer fat survivor, witch, movement facilitator and mediator” (p.3) and enjoys a high profile in that movement. Their insider status means that this is in some ways a brave book but also one which might be well received. In short, they have become very anxious that cancel/callout culture (for want of a better term) is increasingly highly toxic, debilitating to the movement, and potentially self-destructive. Whilst they believe calling out bad behaviours and abuse remains important, brown feels that the Social Justice and Abolitionist movement has developed a culture of “knee jerk collective punishments” (p.40) and that this has led to call outs being used “to shame and humiliate people in the wake of misunderstandings, contradictions, conflicts and mistakes” rather than as a way of holding to account those who use “power” to harm and abuse (p.41). Online, call-outs rapidly escalate into a “feeding frenzy” (p.42). And, brown suggests, this potentially puts people, survivor and harm doer, on the radar of the state, to the detriment of the movement itself.

Importantly, when people are so fast to take punitive action, very important questions may not have had enough time to be asked. Amongst these are:

Have there been any private efforts for accountability or conflict resolution? Is/are the survivors being adequately supported?

Has the accused already begun the process of taking accountability? Is there enough time between the accusation and the call for consequences to make sure we know what’s going on and what’s possible? (p.47-48).

Rather, they argue, failure to rapidly join in the attack runs the risk of being seen as complicit with the accused. Group-think and then group-act must be affirmed when failure to do so may lead to suspicion of support for the accused. And this culture, brown suggests, is profoundly ineffective in addressing the real problem of harmful behaviours as the accused often simply drop-out of the movements or “double-down and return with even more egregious acts of flagrant harm and/or unprincipled struggle methods.” (p.54).

As an alternative to the punitive call-out culture, brown has some tentative suggestions. These include being “discerning”, creating a movement where causing harm does not result in immediate exclusion from “healing, justice, community or belonging” and where oppressed people’s accountability is not able to be used for the benefit of the oppressor, i.e. the state. Like *What About the Rapists?*, brown’s book offers more questions than answers. Both books address issues particular to particular ‘scenes’ but which also have a strong resonance beyond those scenes, where some of the same behaviours and responses to them are a real and common issue. How we deal with harmful behaviours in movements for social revolution must reflect, as much as possible, how we would like to see such behaviours dealt with in a future society. And for that reason alone, these two publications are worth reading.

The Kronstadt Commune

Author: Ida Mett
(2021 - originally in 1938)
Publisher: Active Distribution
Price: £2.00

Active Distribution have published two pocket sized booklets to commemorate the Kronstadt uprising of 1921, when sailors, soldiers and workers rose against the Bolshevik government. The important and groundbreaking work by Russian anarchist communist Ida Mett makes a welcome return at a pleasing price, whilst Remember Kronstadt is a republishing of the text produced by the long defunct British group Wildcat UK from 1991.

Mett's booklet consists of ten articles, written in a passionate and committed style, the words of a militant rather than an academic. She counters all the Bolshevik lies and slanders against the Kronstadt insurgents, using extensive quotes to back her case. This is a reprint of the Solidarity edition of 1967, complete with an introduction from Maurice Brinton, alias Chris Pallis, a leading light in the libertarian socialist organisation Solidarity. Its return to print should be welcomed.

The Wildcat booklet adds additional information on the uprising. It takes issue with groups like the Bordigist International Communist Party (ICP) who fudge the issue of where they stand on Kronstadt, and accuses them of not just sitting on the fence, but trying to stand on both sides at once. Whilst admitting that the uprising was a revolutionary event, these apologists for the Bolsheviks then say that they, the Bolsheviks, had plenty of reasons to justify



Remember Kronstadt: One Hundred Years On

Author: Wildcat Book Collective
(2021)
Publisher: Active Distribution
Price: £1.50

their suppression of the revolt. As Wildcat comments, the Trotskyists are at least honest on which side they stand. Wildcat is clear on the counter-revolutionary nature of the Bolshevik government. Wildcat think that the extravagant and luxurious lifestyle of Bolshevik leaders at Kronstadt like Raskolnikov and Larissa Reissner, whilst the mass of the Russian population was on meagre rations, had nothing to do with feeding the revolt. In fact, there were several instances of Kronstadt sailors expressing their disgust with this, and discontent over these privileges was simmering. Similarly, the anarchist communists at Kronstadt are somewhat flippantly described as a “piratical group” appearing at meetings “bristling with guns and ammunition”, when in fact the majority of Kronstadters were carrying arms. Wildcat also think that bending the rules and packing meetings in order to achieve a step forward in the class struggle is “a fine thing”! This is exactly the rationale used by the Bolsheviks in their manipulation and gerrymandering of the soviets, unions, and other bodies.

Apart from this the Wildcat pamphlet reads as a stout defence of the Kronstadt revolt, and together with the Mett booklet are useful starters (don't forget our own ACG pamphlet on Kronstadt!) before examining the detailed books on the subject by Avrigh and Getzler.

Anarchist Communist Group (ACG)

Preamble

We are a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation made up of local groups and individuals who seek a complete transformation of society, and the creation of anarchist communism.

This will mean that the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment.

To contribute to the building of a revolutionary anarchist movement we believe it is important to be organised. We are committed to building an effective national and international organisation that has a collective identity and works towards the common goal of anarchist communism, whilst at the same time working together with other working class organisations and in grass roots campaigns. We do not see ourselves as the leaders of a revolutionary movement but part of a wider movement for revolutionary change. In addition, we strive to base all our current actions on the principles that will be the basis of the future society: mutual aid, solidarity, collective responsibility, individual freedom and autonomy, free association and federalism.

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

- 1. The Anarchist Communist Group 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. Oppressive ideas and practices cause serious harm to other members of our class, dividing the working class and benefitting 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 through climate change and 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 that put faith in outside forces. We work towards a world where religion holds no attraction.

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Anarchist Communist Group

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