ANATHEMA
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W ar on Christmas  A fter Aleppo

One of the mechanisms through which the violence and misery of the U.S. nation-state is obscured is through the recurring seasonal catharsis of Christmas. Traditionally, the state has used this time period to produce a brief illusory respite from madness and misery, reassuring its citizens that our society is okay despite all evidence to the contrary. The state reminds us of its originary role as the sole guarantor of peace, joy and goodwill, and solidifies its monopoly on these concepts.

During the holiday season, we’re heavily encouraged/coerced to temporarily show our capacity for generosity, but only in ways that are convenient for the state and capitalism. Ironically, this mostly just enhances the daily indignities and stress of people who can’t afford to buy the kinds of gifts that will confirm, in the very specific ways that society requires, their ability to care for those they love.

Meanwhile, it is the only time of year that the upper/middle classes are encouraged to temporarily experience pity and compassion for the houseless and suffering, whose bodies they usually just step over on the way to work every day. This brief window of generosity is highly controlled, mostly in the form of consumer purchases for other people in similar class scenes. Charity is usually channeled through non-profits and churches that ensure the donors do not develop real relationships with the people they’re helping out. Christmas allows people to discharge their needs for communion and compassion, which they will ultimately let go of as soon as the ruthless resilience of the new year kicks in and we go back to normal.

There are definitely ways from within Christian/European traditions to recover principles of expropriation and mutual aid that challenge the state’s recuperation of these practices. According to some, the original St. Nicholas of 4th-century AD Myra (now Turkey), known as Santa Claus, gave up his fortune and redirected his wealthy family’s resources to the poor, becoming an infamous defender of the oppressed. This legend has inspired subsequent Christian myths that distort St. Nicholas’s actual practices and help obscure social reality. (continued on back page)

There are no unbroken windows in besieged Aleppo. An aerial view reveals the collapsed lung of Syria’s most populated metropolitan area, its barricades still smoking, its streets empty. Putin has vowed to kill anyone who remains after Assad’s regime forces enter and secure the territory. There is nothing anyone can do about this. Donating to organizations like the White Helmets might be useful in other urban areas, but no relief efforts currently operate in East Aleppo. If there is any work left to do, it is to bear witness to history. Many will forget the years of bombing raids – Syrians will not.

Over the years, I have found that in organizing spaces, people often do not know what to say on the subject of the Syrian Civil War. This makes sense in a conflict where the good guy/bad guy dichotomy doesn’t quite fit the narrative. We understand Assad to be a murderous dictator. We understand Putin provides the Syrian Army’s air power in order to prop up his only ally in the region. But the narrative grows complicated when we consider *who* Assad is fighting in the back alleys of Aleppo.

There is no denying that the FSA (Free Syrian Army) existed in 2011 when the war began, and continues to exist in some rebel-held regions (including besieged Aleppo) today. But the challenge is distinguishing these fighters from the Islamists of Nusra, Fatah, and other factions affiliated with Al-Qaeda, who have been receiving weapons from the West in Aleppo, and who, about 300 miles north in Mosul, Iraq have been the subjects of repeated American and Western air bombardment by the western funded Iraqi military. There is a fundamental contradiction in the West’s repeated coverage of the atrocities in Eastern Aleppo, and its neglect of the civilian population getting massacred in Mosul.

But Aleppo is also meaningful because it signifies the loss of the last opposition-held stronghold in a major city. Without Aleppo, the opposition has no hope of topping the regime. Thanks to the Russian air force, Assad has adopted a few square miles of rubble, which in my childhood held the most beautiful souls and mosque in all of Syria. But as footage of desperate people fleeing East Aleppo floods the internet, (continued on page 3)
November 25 - Masked individuals vandalized OCF office at Washington Ave and 20th St.
November 27 - Anti-pipeline graffiti spotted in North Philly.
November 28 - Anti-nazi graffiti spotted in West Philly.
December 5 - Fasist and anti-fasist stickers torn down in Northeast.
December 9 - OCF office vandalized again.
December 17 - Anti-fascist local nazi Joey Phl with posters, covers fascist graffiti with anti-fasist stickers and posters, and disposed of gentrifier ads.★

10 REASONS TROUBLEMAKERS SHOULD WELCOME CHRISTMAS

1. Free tree ornaments everywhere provide the would-be paint bunker with ample supplies.
2. Shopping chaos creates environments conducive to productive liberation.
3. Home Alone, done right.
4. Free Amazon.com packages litter the porches of absent-minded collars.
5. Joyfully escaping the scene of crime into a crowd of similarly dressed Santas (probably for light-skinned people only)
6. No, you don't need a new outfit or computer from your parents. No gift cards. Cash money to re-direct into bail funds, community firearms training, spray-paint and cash-paid boltcutters.
7. Xmas tree booms after the fact, or during the fact.
8. Turning unfortunate gifts into cash because no cashes desperate people are making returns around now.
9. A silent night guaranteed to have way less people on your street for your privacy.
10. A clear opportunity to flex those mutual aid and free association muscles by choosing who you wanna be around and choosing (or not) to give gifts.★

INVITATION TO SUBMIT TO ANATHEMA

Anathema welcomes submissions and aims to include a range of contributions from an anti-authoritarian perspective. The editors do not necessarily agree with the viewpoints published in this newspaper. We intend instead to provide space for internal dialogue, sharing information and analysis and feelings that are rarely legitimated by other forums. The paper's content tends to be published anonymously, in order to provide a more secure space under the current conditions of state surveillance and repression.

We accept local news stories, poems, political analysis, letters to the editor, reports, criticisms of us, and any other style of writing you feel moved to contribute. You can email submissions to anathemaphiladelphia@riseup.net.★

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Open hours at LAVA (4134 Lancaster Ave.) have started up again for informal organizing and zine distribution on Wednesdays from 5-8.

Keep an eye out for an Anti-Authoritarian Assembly on January 14th.

Announcing the PHIL Autonomous Anti-Repression Fund

In today's increasingly dark political climate, it is more important than ever to directly support people taking risks and going on the offensive against the misery of everyday life, whether as part of a broader political strategy or for reasons of everyday survival and self-defense. The PHIL Autonomous Anti-Repression Fund aims to offer a safety net for people in Philadelphia who are limited in their ability to act because they lack resources for bail and other fees if something goes wrong.

This anti-repression fund is part of a broader project of building informal networks of care and resistance outside of non-profits and other organizations, which all too often have their own constraints about what they can and can't support. We aim to support people and activities that are criminalized by the state while also unsupported by formal activist organizations and the mainstream public. The actions we support will not necessarily be planned, "political," or contain a palpable message.

All donations to the anti-repression fund will go directly towards paying bail, legal aid and/or medical fees following arrest. Your contributions will encourage and embolden people to do what they need to do to stay free, knowing that other people have their back.

Please donate if you can, and spread the word!!
Donate directly via paypal: philaflhnd@gmail.com
Donate at our rally site: www.rally.org/philafri

[AFTER ALEPPO CONTINUED]

I'm not thinking about the architectural wonders of a world that now seems like a dream. I'm wondering how we can mourn what was ultimately a military defeat of one side over another in a brutal civil war, how we can change the language of this narrative to encompass the enormity of the pain felt by people who have just fled homes they will likely never return to. I, like many other Syrians, struggle to feel the loss of an opposition whose constituency might realistically consist of insurgents from abroad, of Islamists who hold sacred the practice of slavery. But the loss of the people of Aleppo? I struggle to assign it words.

It is very possible that this language does not exist. War, like all traumatic events, tears and distort[s] language, leaves its victims silent and empty. The people of Syria do not deserve what they have been dealt—a proxy war played out by countless foreign powers, a murderous regime that cares little for its dissidents, an opposition whose legitimate cohort has become difficult to distinguish. Maybe this is the best way to remember Aleppo, and more broadly, Homs, Raqqa, Milb, and all the other Syrian cities bloodied by the events of the last five years—to consider how legitimate revolutions can be co-opted and interpolated by power, whether it be in the form of foreign dollars or repressive ideologies—to denounce the cowardice of a regime that only knows how to speak through the barrel of a gun, to acknowledge that no language can resolve the loss of the Syrian people, which is expansive and knows no borders or bounds.★

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH WAS

A lot of people talked about their fear of a Trump presidency, and how if and when he becomes president the country will become fascist or a dictatorship or some sort of authoritarian regime. The situation that’ve seen in so many movies and international news broadcasts is here, and it’s not the result of a dramatic coup like many other authoritarian regimes before it; this one was elected democratically. If you count yourself among those who feared this shift to the right, now is a time to ask yourself seriously: how much is too much? Does the sanctity of democratic government outweigh the need to get rid of oppressive government? Where do you draw the line? What are you willing to tolerate and what will you actively fight against?

Too many who have expressed that if they lived under an unjust fascist, authoritarian state they would rise up and fight, only to turn around and begrudgingly accept the regime change. This is a challenge to everyone who said “Bermie or bust,” or “anyone but Trump,” to everyone who said they wouldn’t be complacent in an oppressive situation when they learned about fascism in history class, to everyone who thought the characters in Star Wars or The Hunger Games or Harry Potter were doing the right thing: revolt against the government.

Think hard about what you can do to stop Trump from taking power, and, failing that, how you can unseat him from power. What do you know that can be put to use? What will you have to learn? Who can you trust and rely on to fight alongside you? Begin answering these questions for yourself and go do it.★

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