Letter by Alfredo Cospito made public by his lawyer on 1st March 2023. He is an uncompromising anarchist in Italy that has been hunger striking since October 20th, 2022, against the very existence of the 41 bis prison he is held in.

My struggle against 41 bis is an individual struggle, I do not give or receive orders. It is simply that I cannot live in an inhuman regime such as 41 bis, where I cannot freely read what I want, books, newspapers, anarchist periodicals, magazines on art and science, as well as literature and history. The only chance I have of getting out of it is to renounce my anarchy and sell someone out to take my place.

A regime where I can’t have any human contact, where I can’t even see or touch a handful of grass or embrace a person I love. A regime where photos of your parents are snatched. Buried alive in a grave in a place of death. I will carry on my struggle to the extreme consequence, not for a “request” but because this is not life.

If the aim of the Italian State is to make me “dissociate” from the actions of anarchists outside I want you to know that as a good anarchist I don’t take orders. I believe that everyone is responsible for their own actions, and as part of the self-organising current I am not “associated” with anyone, therefore I cannot “dissociate” myself from anyone. Affinity is another matter. A coherent anarchist does not distance themself from other anarchists out of opportunism or convenience.

I have always claimed my actions with pride (also in court, that’s why I am here) and I have never criticised those of other comrades, much less when there is a situation like the one I find myself in.

The biggest insult for an anarchist is to be accused of giving or taking orders.

When I was in the High Security regime (AS) I also had censorship and I didn’t issue any “pizzini” [Spanish translator’s note: Slips of paper by means of which mafia bosses supposedly pass on their orders] but articles to anarchist newspapers and magazines. And above all I was free to receive books and magazines, write books, read what I wanted; I was even allowed to evolve, to live.

Today I am prepared to die to make the world understand what 41 bis really is; 750 people suffer it without protesting, continuously turned into monsters by the mass media. Now it is my turn, you turned me into a monster as the bloodthirsty terrorist, then sanctified me as the anarchist martyr who sacrifices himself for others, then turned me into a monster again, a terrible spectre. When it is all over, I shall have no doubt be raised to the altar of martyrdom. No, thank you, I am not for this, I will not play your dirty political games.

In fact, the real problem of the Italian State is that all the human rights that are violated in this 41 bis regime in the name of a “security” for which everything is sacrificed, will come to light. Good! You should have thought twice before putting an anarchist in here. I don’t know what real motivations and political manoeuvres are behind it. And because someone has used me as a “poisoned apple” in this regime. It was quite difficult not to foresee what my reactions to this “non-life” would be. A State, the Italian one, worthy representative of the hypocrisy of a West that continually gives “morality” lessons to the rest of the world. The 41 bis has given lessons that have been well taken up by “democratic” States such as Turkey (the Kurdish comrades know something about this) and Poland.

I am convinced that my death will be an obstacle to this regime and that the 750 people who have been suffering under it for decades will be able to live a life worth living, whatever they have done.

I love life, I am a happy man, I wouldn’t trade my life for anyone else’s. And it is because I love it that I cannot accept this non-life without hope.

Thank you comrades for your love.
Always for Anarchy.
Never bowed down.

Alfredo Cospito ★
January 21 - A vigil for Tortuguita, a forest defender killed by police in Atlanta, takes place in Clark Park. Some attendees march through West Philly, smashing windows and writing graffiti. "Even though Philly is far from Atlanta, Tortuguita's death has been deeply felt here."

Late January - Grafitti memorializing Tortuguita, against police and cop city, against cellulose valley, and against colonization is seen around West Philly and South Philly.

February 2 - Supporters write letters to arrested Atlanta forest defenders.

February 5 - Philly ABC hosts a letter-writing night for imprisoned anti-fascist Alex Stokes.

Early February - Fences at Bartram's North are broken and anti-cellulose valley grafitti is written by "your secret admiteer." MID February - Posters in solidarity with forest defenders are put up in West Philly.

February 12 - Comcast experiences a power outage in parts of Philly as fiber optic cables are cut right before the Superbowl game begins.

February 19 - A vigil and community skate event memorializes Tyre Nichoal at Palme's skate park.

February 21 - Demonstrators gather outside the offices of Greenberg Traurig, a sponsor of the Atlanta Police Foundation, in solidarity with the struggles to stop cop city. "- Jake Direct Action, and escalate against colonial developers, their funders, and the police everywhere to dismantle the industrial capitalist state death machine and defend the community and land."

Late February - An assortment of grafitti against cellulose valley, cop city, police, and other themes is written around Philly.

February 24 - A demonstration protests outside the offices of AAX for providing insurance to Cop City contractor Brasfield & Gorrie.

Late February - Norfolk Southern train tracks are sabotaged using copper wire. "NS is responsible for massive ecological and social devastation through disasters like the recent derailment but they are even more damage when they function with out derailments. So many destructive companies can not function with out NS and other shipping and logistics companies."

March 13 - Philly ABC writes letters to American Indian Movement prisoner Leonard Peltier.

March 14 - A 71-year-old man drives his minivan into the front doors of the Philadelphia Police's headquarters on Broad Street, mangling the front brass doors of the building.

March 15 - Grafitti against cop city and memorializing Tortuguita is written.

Conflicts between rival camps almost always benefit the authorities most of all. The more divisions in a movement, the more the police will try to target the most visible and organize effective currents within it; when rivals post on social media about each other's errors or vulnerabilities, this can assist the authorities in strategizing or building a narrative to justify repression. Often such conflicts needlessly polarize entire movements, as everyone is compelled to take sides.

This is all well and good, but we can observe that there is no discussion in here of any of the differences that we actually have. This is understandable because this is a difficult question with no simple answers, and the authors are speaking here of ideological differences in particular. But if an ideology is itself authoritarian, is it going to be called divisive if anti-authoritarians try to separate ourselves from it? What about taking a stance on sexual assault, racism, or other instances of interpersonal harm that happen within our circles? It feels dangerous to approach conflict in such a way in which any stance on a matter of internal hierarchy or oppression within our struggles will be primarily received as damaging to our movements and beneficial to the federal government.

Those of us who operate in relative isolation from the Left and NGOs haven’t chosen to do that because it benefits us or is easier or more viable (although we personally believe that it is more fun). It’s because individuals and organizations from those tendencies have consistently shown they do not share anarchist goals (this should already be obvious from the self-description of many of those organizations), do work that is often in fact counterproductive to our goals, and in the worst of cases occasionally threaten us with repression. For example, Greenpeace might help with a particular aspect of an ecological struggle like the Atlanta forest defense, but it does not share many of our values and visions for the world. Additionally, legal frameworks are not going to fulfill our broader goals — they might help deter a particular project, but to call them an “offensive front” (as the article does) confuses what we’re all against. It’s certainly not wrong to file lawsuits or adopt other legal means to stop something especially bad from happening, but how can using the acceptable legal channels offered by the state be part of a war against the state? What is it that we’re at war against? The language of this article, while often militant, is somehow also so slippery and vague that it’s not really clear what we’re about or against.

When we tell the story of our struggles in this way — to include people working very much within the system — it might build popular support and reduce our isolation, but it also leaves a door open for dependence on the state and legal solutions to our problems, which are in fact problems that necessitate a total departure from the state.

In a recent interview for this article with a companion who participated in the occupation at Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016-2017, they warned specifically of the dangers of negotiating or building trust in any part of the state: "One effect of [President Obama’s announcement that delayed the pipeline’s construction] was that it made some folks more willing to negotiate with the state. The [state’s] tactic had given the impression, to some people, that there were actually some ‘good guys’ in the gas trying to work with and for us. This in turn led some people to feel the need to help them help us and the folks who took that bait started negotiating in seemingly small ways that essentially led to the slow raids and demise of our camps."

There is simply no good answer right now to the question of principled isolation vs. compromised populism. There’s no use pretending that any of us have one. In the meantime, we don’t think that anarchists who have evaluated the options and decided that compromise isn’t the most effective one should be called dangerous to the movement.
Anarchists and other radicals face a chronic dilemma when it comes to deciding who to align ourselves with in the course of a particular struggle. We have seen over and over again how much more susceptible we are to being utterly crushed by state repression when we’re taking up uncompromising action against the state and are isolated from popular support. We’ve also seen again and again that when we try to team up with various leftist and non-profit organizations with less radical goals, it ends up creating a much larger group than we’re capable of controlling and recuperating, for very different ends, what were once unguerrolvable struggles.

This historical problem is one of many that the authors of “The Forest in the City: Two Years of Forest Defense in Atlanta, Georgia,” published in February, shrug aside in favor of a compromised approach that they offer as though it were a self-evident movement strategy. While we appreciate the detailed information and reflections in the piece, there are extremely important ongoing campaign, we are also concerned by the ostensibly objective stance taken by the authors. The article seems to take for granted that their conclusions will be shared by all radicals and, in the worst case scenario, could set the stage for empowering those who might disagree with them from a more radical perspective. Since some of these conclusions seemed somewhat antithetical to us as anarchists, we hope here some thoughts and critiques in the interest of clarifying some alternative strategies that the article overlooks.

Taking for granted that the best approach for a campaign involves quantitatively assaying more people and building popular support, one of the essay’s major claims is that talking to mainstream media is productive and necessary in order to pursue that strategy. At some point, the authors go as far as to argue: “Because corporate media coverage is the primary means by which the authorities prepare popular opinion to accept the repression of protesters and poor people, it can be dangerous not to intervene in it.”

According to their own self-evaluation in this piece, it seems like the activists engaging the media for the Defend the Forest campaign managed to hinder and slow their intended messaging censored by the news outlets they’ve engaged with. This is a rare accomplishment for radicals. But what kind of messaging are we talking about here? The authors do not specify, aside from mentioning advocating for radical social change, a phrase that could mean a number of different things. While undoubtedly many relatively uncontroversial talking points about the importance of conserving forest and stopping further police brutality could be safely adopted by mainstream news outlets, it remains highly unlikely that mainstream media would ever approvingly repeat or express the core values behind most anarchists’ participation in the struggle to defend the forest. These values are unavoidably hostile to power, and therefore to the media that power funds.

Engaging with the press inevitably waters down anarchists’ ideas, whether we intend to or not, and obscures our larger larger goals beyond our opposition to this particular police facility. As is often the case, it’s the more conservative commentators who accidentally speak relatively accurately to our animosity towards the entire system - as the chief of the Atlanta Police Department commented after the most recent week of action, “This wasn’t about a public safety training center. This was about anxiety.”

If we care about building autonomy as a core aspect of the destruction of the state and capital, why not build autonomy from the state and capital’s media as well? If our goal is simply to stop Cop City, perhaps dialoging with power and the communication products it offers us will help accomplish this. But it contributes nothing to longer-term radical struggle to participate in the models of relating and informing provided by the corporate, statist Spectacle rather than developing our own. And while participants in the Atlanta struggle have done both, it is still preferable to focus on the latter. As is generally understood with regard to many of our other enemies, such as fascists, to engage in dialogue is to legitimate the opponent’s standpoint. Why should the media lackey of the state be an exception to this? Is it possible that those who are so keen to be liked by corporate media are a little too interested in power?

If we really believe in our hopes and dreams for the world, let’s have the courage to defend them. After all, we’re the only ones who are able and willing to do so. But this is also not the core of our struggle against the state. As Joseph Gardeneyes wrote in “A Wager on the Future” back in 2015, “Up against a prison society, anarchism will not be spread with better or more propaganda. It will spread if it can exercise force against the dominant structures, if it can put in practice — at least in a limited way — its ideas, and if these ideas are applicable to people’s daily lives.”

Elsewhere, “The Forest in the City” addresses the issue of difference and internal critique: “Clarity about differences is important, but drawn-out...”

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**I JUST FOUND OUT THAT ANALYTICAL THINKING IS A TRAIGHT?**

**SUBMISSIONS**

We accept submissions of material by, for and relevant to anarchists, from the so-called Philadelphia region and beyond. We accept material in works that say who only anarchists can say, making our project unique from the Left and even other anarchist projects. No more than 2,000 words please.

anathema.rublogs.org ★ anathemaphil@riseup.net

**2023, BABY!**

**Out:**

- hand drawn maps
- benefit events
- “terrorism until we win”
- dating people in other scenes & cities
- paths & trails
- bikes & bricks
- leaning into subculture
- miss matched camo
- paintballs
- networks
- fire to the prisons
- Punk houses
- non-hierarchical chaos

**Still relevant in 2023:**

- plain black bikes
- hoodie rain jackets
- TOM & TAILS
- phoneless walks
- paper fliers & zines
- paying with cash
- petty crime

**A SPACE: A POSTMORTEM**

A-space has been declared dead. Rumors about the autonomous social center’s imminent demise began circulating online in the closing weeks of last year. These rumors were recently confirmed by the official A-space Facebook page. Based on the reactions to this news, many local people are unsure whether the 32-year-old space died of natural causes or was choked out of existence by nefarious forces. It has become necessary, as a result, to examine the factors involved bringing about the end of this long-standing anarchist institution.

One thing is certain: A-space had a long life. It first opened its doors on Baltimore Avenue in West Philadelphia in 1991. Since then, a wave of similar autonomous social centers have spread across Europe, North America, and elsewhere. While some of these spaces continue to thrive, most have blunted out of existence long ago.

There is no simple explanation for A-space’s relative longevity. As a community resource, A-space was limited in many respects: its “kitchen” consisted of a kettle and a sink, its “library” was a pile of zines, and there was just enough room to fit three long tables and a couple dozen chairs. A projector was made available for movie nights. Otherwise, the neighbors asked that events end early and not use amplified sound.

Despite these limitations, A-space provided West Philadelphia anarchists with a social center and, over the years, countless other groups squeezed into the space
for meetings and events. It helped that the building is located on a popular, commercial street and is part of a community land trust with a remarkably low "cost share." This made it sway as a result, relative. Perhaps that was A-space's biggest strength: for decades, people could rely on it being there.

Like most places, A-space closed its doors in March 2020 in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in North America. No one, including the A-space collective, knew at that time that it would not re-open. In their official statement, the A-space collective points to the pandemic lockdowns as the beginning of the end of the space: "During the first time the A-Space was closed, our collective members moved away, started new projects, and just went on with other life priorities. As time went on, we knew we had to determine how to move forward, given our limited capacity. Under these circumstances, it seems, the ledger collective decided to call it quits."

Certainly, the COVID-19 pandemic created a crisis for autonomous social centers. A regime of social distancing and quarantining called into question the social center mode of organizing, at least initially. Many social centers have since cautiously re-opened their doors, following the lifting of lockdowns. But, for some, re-opening meant radically tinkering their operations.

LAVA, another West Philadelphia autonomous space, has shifted away from crowded events. Compared to A-space, LAVA was equipped for large events and had been a major music venue in the neighborhood. Lately, the collective has used the main floor to serve community meals and distribution on Mondays and Thursdays and a "Really Really Free Market" every second Saturday. Sources say that the collective has no plans to hold large social events in the future.

Some among the old guard have challenged the narrative that A-space has closed due to COVID-19. They point to conflicts between collective members and users of the space that took place before the pandemic. In this version of events, unsettled conflicts created ongoing problems that led to the eventual self-destruction of the social center. The early stages of these particular conflicts were covered in Anathema in 2019.

There has been no shortage of major conflicts and petty grievances dogging the social center over the years. Any social center with this much history — barring exceptional conflict resolution skills — will accumulate old feuds. But any attempt to attribute the end of A-space, overall, to a particular social conflict or even a singular cause will inevitably suffer from confirmation bias. What its detractors seem to miss is that, upon it closed, A-space was thriving as a community space for booking events. Community events cancelled in March 2020 included classes, crafting meetups, meditation sessions, film screenings, Shape Note singing, and a death café. There were also regular political meetings on the calendar held by groups including IWW, SRA, ABC, and others. In addition to outside groups, members of the A-space collective intended to hold their monthly volunteer meeting and weekly open hours.

If anything, the space was overbooked by regular events to the point it was hard to find free space. As a result, in the latter part of the time A-space was closed, our collective members moved away, started new projects, and just went on with other life priorities. As time went on, we knew we had to determine how to move forward, given our limited capacity. Under these circumstances, it seems, the ledger collective decided to call it quits."

Rather than isolate the A-space's fatal flaw, I want to account for a more limited problem: how did A-space drift so far from its role as an anarchist social center? In this regard, the old guard are right to point beyond the horizon of the pandemic. A-space's weaknesses as an anarchist social center have been apparent long before COVID-19.

This is not simply a problem of a pandemic, social conflicts, an overbooked calendar, or limited resources. The major problem was the lack of involvement in the space among neighborhood anarchists. Ideally, the collective would have recruited new anarchists during the lockdown and reopened the space after addressing the obstacles created by the pandemic. However, most anarchists in Philadelphia have shown little interest in using A-space in recent years, let alone running it.

This is not to place blame on local anarchists. At least two global factors contributed to this local conundrum: 1. The availability of electronic forms of communication that simply did not exist when the space opened in the 90s and, with apps like Signal, became easy to use somewhat securely 2. The relative lack of security available to an indoor space in an age of increased surveillance. Surveillance culture has driven many anarchists away from public spaces, which they no longer depend on for social networks. Along with the problems with the A-space already covered, it would be understandable if anarchists came to the conclusion — consciously or not — that this social center was, for their purposes, obsolete.

Nostalgia for an old autonomous space is equally understandable, but it can also blind people to the factors entity (the party, the assembly, the collective, the people, the movement of struggle).

Beyond the question of whether so-and-so is likable or not, composition is a logic that fundamentally banishes all ethics in favor of the calculations of politics. It is an alternative management technique of order and the organization of spaces that attempts to neutralize the irreducible antagonisms which can smolder within struggles: between the adjustment of the existing or its destruction, between negotiation with power or direct action; between expertise and counter-expertise; between participation and refusal of specialization such as delegation, between acceptance of parties and trade unions or self-organization without mediation, between the presence of journalists or the refusal of any representation, between authority or freedom. It is therefore probably no coincidence that the mode of composition suits authoritarianism particularly well, with their quantitative notion of a concentrated and more maneuverable force rather than a disseminated and more autonomous one, with their tactical sense of keeping up with changing winds, and above all with their obsession with decoupling means from ends (which explains, for example, their lack of scruples concerning using professionals of mass lying to deliver their message; or their belief that a thing is only bad in front of the courts and its opposite in front of their supporters; or their competence at making contact with the institutional left). In other words, it is no longer a question of defending autonomous perspectives and subversive ideas here and now by incarnating them in one's own life, but only of strategic situations to be organized and managed, indeed to be disciplined and made governable, in the name of the efficiency of the struggle, to which a few newly enlightened beings hold the keys. In the logic of majority decisions, tactical compromises and superior communists, there is, of course, even less thought of vast constellations of affinity groups self-organized in an informal way, giving force a qualitative and dissonant dimension. This dimension is capable of fully expressing the fantastic "and its world" from an anarchist perspective, with a style that is not at all revolutionary criticism that tries to encompass everything that allows the project being fought against to exist, and, on the other hand, a methodology that nourishes hostilities so that from the initial front of the struggle—a particular project of power—insurrectionary moments can explode that go beyond it.

Despite the influx of victorious communiques promising the entry of the occupied lands into the streetjacket of the law, no one can forget that from the offensive beginnings of the struggle, many attacks and acts of sabotage have flourished against the world of the airport (not to mention the dozens of solidarity actions elsewhere or the periods of confrontation with the police).

This was the case with the opposition to the preliminary works (staking and geotechnical drilling, construction of access roads) and the battles as early as 2010; with the occupation of the runway of the airport of Atlantique airport in Bouguenais in July 2011; with the sabotage of the construction site for the extension of the Stairons/Vigneux-de-Bretagne dual highway in May 2012; with the burning of train equipment in Nort-sur-Érdre in November 2012; with the arson of the Vinci security guard's car in Fay-de-Bretagne in November 2012; with the sabotage of seven electric poles with a sledgehammer on the route of the future road corridor in March 2013; with the sabotage of the mobile telephone relay station in Vigneux-de-Bretagne on three occasions in July, September and October 2014; and with the ransacking of the Total station in Temple-de-Bretagne in February 2016. More recently, these possibilities have also spread their wings to attack biologists (who came to study the marbled newt in Vigneux-de-Bretagne, in April 2016), local collaborators (the shed and straw storage of a hostile farmer burned down in Vigneux-de-Bretagne in November 2012, the family house of the Lamine couple which was ransacked in January 2016 at Notre-Dame-des-Landes), journacors (cars of France 3 smashed with iron bars in October 2016), and politicians (cars of France Bleu Loire Ocean and Ménichenou smeared with shit in March 2017).

Reformism is undoubtedly the best option for arranging niches within the existing, and the partisans of alternate conflictuality have a historical head start in terms of the integration and recuperation of struggles. As for the others, there is still a whole world to be attacked, in which autonomous and affinity-based possibilities remain alive, experimented with to the great displeasure of the leaders of composition and their allies in the struggle against this airport.

At Notre-Dame-des-Landes lies a corpse: that a proper composition that has definitively made clear, once it has been put up against with the State (and from the State) and against humans (the uncontrolled) it wishes to build its opportunistic little world. Also, we know what the price is for letting the more or less visibly organized authorities do their politicking in peace. This is good news, because the increasingly unbearable smell of this corpse opens up a thousand other paths. Towards freedom in action, this time.★

4
struggle from being reduced to simple territorial defense, instead nourishing a critique against everything that would allow a nausichua such as the proposed airport to exist in their midst. Despite their successful defense of their land, the community's struggle continues.

One of the classic problems that arises in any occupation struggle is that of its very project; the tension between an ephemeral occupation intended to self-organize attacks on the surrounding world in the midst of a thousand other decentralized initiatives, and a permanent installation that endures beyond the occupation's temporality, is inherently incompatible, by projecting itself as an experimental island of more or less radical alternatives. Sooner or later, this untenable contradiction between alternative visions of the same place gets some part of the project or the whole project bursting open, either when the police pressure increases (with the traditional mediatization of some distancing themselves from attacks and denouncing radicals), or conversion of the nongt of the negotiated possibility of normalization (with the traditional cleaning out of uncontrolled elements).

What is remarkable about recent events in the struggle at Notre-Dame-des-Landes is not so much that the citizen Sunday did not even wait a week to literally toast with the prefect and the army general director of the entire gendarmerie, nor that it was precisely the staunch partisans of corporatizing force with everyone who just the day before zealously partook in destroying one of the two camps and evicting its occupants from the roof. When composition means negotiating with the state alongside trade-union and ecologist action, and composition means choosing the side of order at a crucial moment of the struggles when those in the minority resist any legalization, this only reveals the true meaning of this elastic word: collaboration with the power in charge. This kind of de facto convergence between power and counter-power, between constituents and destitute, is not the simple result of an emergency or panic situation, but the product of a more complex and long-standing process of composition. Allowing authoritarian al stripes to arrange things among themselves whenever necessary, it naturally also works at the expense of anti-authoritarian whose qualms are too demanding and not realpolitik enough.

Structurally, the concept of composition is in fact nothing more than the internal application of the military principle of alliance with the enemy. When the latter applies between enemies who were irreconcilable yesterday and who will be at war again tomorrow, the former concerns adversaries within the same camp, capable of cohabiting without destroying or by playing off their opposing visions in order to temporarily concentrate their forces in the face of a common enemy. In both cases, this presupposes a remarkable capacity to eradicate the uniqueness of each individual and the singularity of their ideas, as well as the multiplicity of their possible associations, in order to train varied troops that they march in lockstep in the service of a superior that cause A-space’s disappearance. It is sad to see A-space go. However, it is important to recognize when a project has outlived its function and avoid defending an institution as a base in itself. After all, autonomous spaces were conceived as alternatives to the formality and permanence of traditional institutions.

There is, on the other hand, some continuity. In closing its doors, A-space handed off its project to the organization that booked the space: the most: Books Through Bars (BTB). For the past 30 years, BTB has, as their website states, sent "books to incarcerated people in six mid-South states." For years, they have shared the building on the ground floor of A-space and will expand to take over the social center.

It is unclear at this time to what extent BTB will use the space for public events. Sources say that their main use of the space will be storage and research, but they are open to programming that fits with their mission.

If anarchists in Philadelphia were hoping to continue to use the building for anarchist projects, it seems like the best avenue would be to get involved in RTB. The space is still there, under the stewardship of an anarchist-friendly project. It seems possible that they would be open to BTB members operating the space like a social center as long as it doesn’t interfere with their main activities. A future article will follow up with BTB once they have settled into the space.

TAG YOURSELF

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer there has been widespread use of fake license plates in the city. Temporary paper plates from Delaware, New Jersey, and even Texas are seen on the cars and trucks of many a privacy enthusiast. Let’s take a look at this practice, how it works, the privacy benefits, and how it’s being dealt with by police.

As more forms of social control and surveillance come about and creep further into everyday life, people find ways to maintain privacy, autonomy, and anonymity. The spread of red light cameras, automated toll collection, and other vehicle-specific policies has lead to a rise in new ways of circumventing these new forms of technological dominance. The article said elsewhere " dvolutionary technology comes with an accompanying threat—or perhaps promise—of new crimes."

Okay, sure, but how does the paper plate thing work? Some states allow car dealers to sell cars faster by print out temporary plates. Delaware and New Jersey are two nearby states that do this, but other states further away also allow this practice. Once a car dealer sells a car with temporary plates, the new owner can go to the DMV for a permanent license plate. If a used car is sold off, the previous owner also needs to take the temporary plate to the DMV. This means more cars on the street with temporary paper plates.

Someone probably took notice of all these paper plates and decided to make their own. After all these paper plates are common enough that they don’t look suspect, but are unfamiliar enough that they aren’t coming under as much scrutiny. Counterfeit plate producers have been seen for sale online, and are certainly also circulating via word of mouth offline. Some online ads for counterfeit printed plates offer registration to match. Other people have taken the simple and straightforward approach of stealing paper plates off of other cars. Aside from stolen or counterfeit paper plates, people have circumvented vehicle controls by using tinted plate covers or cutting their plates up entirely. For the more industrious and bureaucratically inclined it seems Texas’ particularly lax system was used to register a bogus car dealerships and print out $50,000 license plates, though their seem to have updated their system since the incident.

Using fake plates provides both financial and privacy benefits. The city and highways are becoming more and more surveilled, red light cameras, automated toll systems, tracking enforcement, electronic speed traps. Using plates that don’t point back to your personal information means that drivers are saving money at camera operated tollbooths and dodging fines for running red lights. The Philadelphia Parking Authority operates 146 red light cameras in the city, and they say that 680 paper plates were logged as fake, unreadable, or absent between summer 2020 and summer 2022. Their failure to identify plates has saved drivers $6 million. Counterfeit plates have also been useful for saving money while doing title transfers and avoiding getting registration, inspection, or inspections. Aside from saving money, drivers are preserving their privacy, it’s harder to track their location through surveillance when their anonymity is protected by the use of counterfeit plates.

So far it seems that police haven’t used the practice of counterfeit plates seriously. The Philadelphia Police Department has twenty-five car mounted license plate reading devices, only two of which are in working order. Currently PPD has no unit or task force focusing on the
THE FATIGUE OF NOVELTY?
Disruptive Control in Techno-Dystopia

An early January 2023 paper published in Nature found that the percentage of published peer-reviewed scientific articles labeled “disruptive” is dramatically decreasing.

“The average CDF index, a measure of disruptiveness ranging from 0 (least) to 1 (most), declined by more than 90% between 1945 and 2020 for research manuscripts and by more than 76% from 1980 to 2010 for patents.” (“Disruptive’ Science Has Declined — and No One Knows Why.” Nature 613, 225 (2023)).

Data from millions of manuscripts show that, compared with the mid-twentieth century, research done in the 2000s was much more likely to incrementally push science forward than to veer off in a new direction and render previous work obsolete.

...with by far the costliest degree of all, simultaneously pushing so-called STEM (Science Technology Engineering & Math) fields, where much like other degrees, there is nowhere viable for these graduates to use their knowledge and skills. This pushes more people to extend their studies in graduate programs, flooding the job market further with competent technologists. Much like with any other profession, this increases competition in order to lower salaries and increase profit. To combat them, the natural universe or Capitalism is colloquially called “publish or perish.” That is, publish papers, no matter their quality, or leave a field you have devoted upwards of a decade to.

The religion of categorization that is science aims to entrench itself as the arbiter of ontological certainty and, as such, the driver of the “progress” of human civilization. Science is used to make coherent, interpretable, discrete, and predictable the infinitely chaotic universe in which we inhabit. Within this simplification, information is lost in the name of coherence and domination. Science and technology become unlikely bedpartners as the myth of infinite growth predating capital seeks to maximize the ability of humans to consume the natural universe. Capitalism is concerned with profit and efficiency; science on the other hand is nothing but a costly, time-consuming, and often fruitless process. However, capitalists dump money into research in hopes of extending the time it takes for human resource extraction. Natural resource extraction in the forms of oil, lumber, coal, metals, gems, etc., is continually shown to have devastating effects on the natural world, creating increasingly uninhabitable conditions for humans and the creatures that are present. Resource extraction is shifting into the microscale and smaller as the above resources become less tenable to extract. The new resources inhabit the realm of biotechnology and computational technology, as well as their marriages.

“This expansion into the cybernetic realm is the continuance of civilization’s colonial desires into the (sub)technical level.”

Long past the dawn of transgenics, the molecular scissors that is the CRISPR-CAS9 system allows for easy genetic alterations, to the point where the first transgenic children (twins) have been birthed. Embryos would make no sense to assume that this was definitely carried out by white supremacists because of any similarity to the aforementioned polled plot. This would be the case with the majority, but just as likely be purely an anonymous insurgent aiming to disable CCTV, open up more possibilities for looting, or maybe just taking out their hatred on the system. Speculating only damps insurrectionary potential, feeds liberal non-violence framing, and adds a helping hand to state investigations. In the absence of undeniable far-right involvement, an action must be judged on its own terms – what was attacked, how, and what were the impacts?

Taking aim at the grid itself in a less precisely targeted way could be a very relevant intervention at certain moments; the machination of repression (and literally all infrastructures of domination) simply cannot function without electricity, and if insurgents are already in the streets tearing city infrastructure, such a black-out would be a cherished and invaluable gift.

This is not to suggest, however, that attacks be confined to times of uprising. These riotous moments with the potential to precipitate insurrectional ruptures present a very narrow time window. The events of the first night will often spell whether the revolt is extinguished or overflows. An insurgent active minority has almost no chance of effectively disabling the grid in a substantial way during a moment like this if they have not previously experimented with what works in terms of tactics as well as with the informal coordination that enables it to scale.

Thinking through how targets and timing might inform the range of local responses to the immediate prospects of black and white. However, if we wish to advance the social war and avoid unwittingly defending the apparatus of order that holds this nightmare together, the most difficult questions are also the most important. The current Resource extraction is shifting into the microscale and smaller as the above resources become less tenable to extract. The new resources inhabit the realm of biotechnology and computational technology, as well as their marriages.

Here Lies a Corpse
From Avis de Tempêtes (Storm Warnings) #3 2018

After years of struggle, on January 17, 2018 the French state officially announced that they were about to proceed to build a nuclear waste storage facility near Bure, signed “Autonomous Tortuguilla Revenge Committee”: together and informally we are stronger!
As electrical infrastructure expands, so does our dependency on it. It goes without saying that countless people depend on electricity to stay alive, and this is not just at the personal and domestic level of occupation and colonialism. Stealing people’s land and with it their means of subsistence, poisoning it with mines and pipelines to produce energy, and then forcing them to work in order to buy back the electricity sucked from the same stolen land or freeze to death — these are the rules of the game that holds us all hostage. As extraction crosses new frontiers, both externally in terms of deep-sea drilling, and internally in terms of digging deeper into our minds and spirits to extract the raw material to power their algorithm, we face a choice: to rupture the cords feeding industrial society or allowing them to continue feeding the deepening cycle of dependence unimpeded.

The novel Almanac of the Dead depicts an Indigenous insurgency in the U.S. that is set off by taking out the national grid. Looking internationally, anarchists have sabotaged electricity since the time of Caraquemada, and this was also an initial impetus during insurrectionary upheavals like the Hamburg uprising of 1929. During the ‘70s, the years that anarchists in Italy first developed an insurrectionary perspective, hundreds of pylons were felled, and Insurrection Magazine subsequently published instructions on how to reproduce these actions. Just last year, anarchists in France burned a transformer to cut the power to a municipality that housed the country’s largest semiconductor factory, and anarchists in Chile blew up high-tension pylons.

“This type of tactic is not solely the domain of our opponents, then, and the question becomes how to target electrical infrastructure to advance the social war against domination, rather than the civil war desired by accelerators.”

If both reactionary and liberatory revolutionary movements recognize that social control is highly dependent on electricity, then it’s important that we do not accept the state’s version of “security” against a common fascist enemy in our discussions of these matters. As we can see from the various struggles elsewhere, it’s possible for anarchists to bring liberal methods and goals to these kinds of ruptures with social control, while opposing reactionary ones. An anarchist method necessarily involves taking ethical considerations seriously—the possible impacts of power outages for people whose lives depend on electricity should not be minimized or ignored. Neither, however, should the violence inherent in the grid and the order it feeds, though it is usually naturalized and invisibilized.

A commune claiming one of many attacks on a substation in France this year offers an important analysis of the violence of this dependency on state infrastructure, calling it “the ideological blackmail that the research of the techno-industrial world is subjecting us to”:

“It seems curious that contemporary Western morality, while it has never ceased to build itself on a series of mass murders and individual enslavements (slavery, colonisation), while it has treated entire populations as nuclear guinea pigs (Polymeria, Algeria,...), while it organises servitude for the majority of people, barely disposed by consumption, while it knows without discounting that its entire standard of living is the fruit of the enslavement of living beings and other out of sight humans, treats as terrorists any individuals who would question the general level of dependency on infrastructures...” Unplugging this electrical world is an attempt to create a chain reaction, affecting all the infrastructures and the things that function thanks to electricity (telecommunication, banking, state, industry and business networks, military and police infrastructures, etc.).

This type of tactic is not solely the domain of our opponents, then, and the question becomes how to target electrical infrastructure to advance the social war against domination, rather than the civil war desired by accelerators. This February, two Nazis, including Atomwaffen Division founder Brandon Russell, were entrapped by the FBI for plotting to attack a ring of substations around the city of Baltimore in order to “completely destroy this whole city”, specifically because if its majority Black population. What distinguishes whether an action pushes towards civil war or social war, other than the intentions and motivations of those responsible?

Target selection and timing seem to be the most relevant aspects to take into consideration. This could be very straightforward, like targeting the power feeding a prison before a scheduled execution, or the substation feeding a military production hub, such as the one that was targeted in a Belgian suburb in 2020.

Back to Baltimore, if, hypothetically, anti-police riots broke out in the city as they did in 2020 and before that in response to the murder of Freddie Gray in 2015, and unknown individuals decided to cut the power, it were modified in vitro by He Jiankui’s lab at SUSTech in Shenzhen, China to eliminate a gene called CCR5, promoting resistance to HIV, smallpox, and cholera. This an aced into a human uterus to be brought to term. Proteins can be designed to modulate bodily function using open source software, their movements simulated, synthesized in yeast or bacteria media. Alphafold, the AI algorithm from Google, has “solved” 200 million protein structures, expanding the known structural proteome by a factor of 10x. The so-called protein folding “problem” is a common test for AI algorithms predictive power. Meta (formerly Facebook), built a competing model predicting 600 million structures. Cataloging at the individual microscale is also increasingly common, as people send their DNA to the likes of ancestry.com to be sequenced and build a genetic lineage for them; who knows who has access to this genetic information.

This is not presented to alarmistically stoke fears of biotechnology from the perspective of some form of “pure” life and living; plainly, the resources of our very bodies are a new frontier for capital extraction. This expansion into the cybernetic realm is the culmination of civilization’s colonial desires into the (sub)molecular level. After our labor, our ever-diminishing time and energy is continually extracted from us for the privilege of barely scraping together an existence, the forces of capital seek to extrude things even more fundamental from our wretched bodies.

David Graeber addressed scientific stagnation a decade ago in his piece “Of Flying Cars and the Declining Rate of Profit” for The Baffler. Graeber juxtaposes the techno-semi-utopia of the Jetsons, the impressive technology of Star Trek, and other science fiction fed to children of the 60’s. He locates this popular projection in the dramatic increase in technological advancement brought about by the Cold War. However, as the technological advancement eventually petered out, along with the actual pace of technological advancement. As Graeber puts it, referring to the new visual effects in the new Star Wars films of the time:

“They [people in the 50’s] thought we’d be doing this kind of thing by now. Not just figuring out more sophisticated ways to simulate it.”

Graeber is correct in naming technologies of simulation being one of the few research areas improving. AI technologies of surveillance are beginning to be used to identify people (even in real time). One such company is Clearview AI, a facial recognition company with ties to far-right figures Tom-That and Chuck Johnson (“The

Graeber further comments on systematizing technological stagnation by quoting:

“...but if you want to minimize the possibility of unexpected breakthroughs, tell those same people they will receive no resources at all unless they spend the bulk of their time competing against each other to convince you they know in advance what they are going to discover.”
This reality of science in stagnation, of scientific “progress” being controlled so as to hinder disruption, speaks to the crux of how science is done. Where does the money to do this time-consuming and often fraught process come from...the government and capitalists. This fact alone drives what research can get done.

An article in CEPR by Claudia Steinwender in 2019 cited the DOD’s R&D budget at $80 billion, while the NSF and NIH dole out $8.5 billion and $44 billion, respectively. With this in mind, it is obvious that the science that gets done, at least in the US, is that which benefits the colonial empire of the US. This piece is much too long already to go into any appreciable detail of scientific and technological importance to the colonial project of the US, but science has always been a bedrock for this project and the appeal to ontological certainty of the method has underpinned the foundational white supremacy of the US.

Science is not a utilitarian process through which human life is improved. Technological advancements are controlled so as to not disrupt civilization’s construction and to drive colonization. This speaks to both the colonization of land and people by the state and power in step with capital’s attempted colonization of every imaginable resource in the quest of infinite profit. The world that technologists want is one where AI tracks each individual’s moves at every turn, every identification of who about people is cataloged in some database. Through the failed “Metaverse” project, they aim to meld the digital escarpment with the world of wage labor, expanding capitalist dystopia into the cybernetic dream realm. They dream of robotic police and drones. They design a totally controlled and surveilled world, safe for them and the wealth they’ve stolen, one in which they do not have to interact with the “underclasses” of people. The world in which we live is already a technocratic dystopia, built on the false promise of techno-utopia for all.

"POWERING DOWN DOMINATION"

In the past few months, attacks on electrical substations in Florida, Washington, Oregon, South Carolina, and North Carolina have made the news. The media, while acknowledging that all of these acts of sabotage were unclaimed and could have been carried out by any number of “extremists” groups, have pointed at the far-right. Articles linked these recent acts to fascist accelerationist literature and social media activity which promotes such attacks and provides instructions for carrying them out, and cited other instances where far-right actors were arrested for conspiring to attack the grid.

Not only are these recent actions unclaimed, but, according to the electrical companies themselves, they are also far from the only sabotage taking place against the electrical grid. Similar actions are allegedly quite common, but they are rarely publicized to discourage copycats. Whether or not these particular attacks were carried out by reactionaries (it is notable that the much-publicized blackout in North Carolina in December coincided with a drug show in the region), anarchists should not allow the construction of the narrative that turning off the power feeding industrial civilization could only possibly serve fascism. Indeed, the same corporate media articles go on to compare recent events to an attack on a California substation almost a decade ago that “could’ve brought down all of Silicon Valley” and caused $15 million in damages, demonstrating that substation sabotage is a tactic that could induce a major blow against technological domination.

In December, Unicorn Riot put out a report titled “The Far-Right’s Fascination with the US Electrical Grid,” illustrating a dangerous line of reasoning that has come to be accepted as common sense among leftist anarchists. After recounting the news about the North Carolina substation attack, the article cobblest together snippets from the Department of Homeland Security and other organs of the federal government about the threat of white supremacist violence to national security, while bemoaning the state’s failure to take “appropriate steps to combat far-right domestic terrorism.” The authors go on to outline the ideology of accelerationism and cite instances of far-right individuals promoting attacks against the grid to members of the white supremacist infrastructure of several planned by his company’s “carbon-free future.”

In May 2020, three self-proclaimed Boogaloo Boys were arrested for allegedly conspiring to attack a Las Vegas substation as part of an attempt to incite riots amid Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the city. Meanwhile, mass media focused disproportionate attention on the participation of a handful of Boogaloo Boys in the riots in Minneapolis. Liberal talking heads went on to parse the narrative that the riots were being instigated by white supremacist acclerationists to start a race war. The masses of Black rioters and looters were not the true protagonists, but actually being exaggerated, possibly even invented, by Right-wing media as a means of discrediting the “legitimate” non-violent Black-led protests. In this liberal delusion, the rioters are reduced to pawns unwittingly feeding the flames of the civil war desired by white supremacists.

Of course, these two situations — an uprising and a disparate string of attacks — differ in many significant ways. The relevant point is that far-right actors will attempt anything to bring the state to its knees that should not lead us to fall into this trap and defend the status quo. “Radical media” outlets, echoing Leftist perspectives more generally, often reproduce state or corporate media narratives while simply intensifying many attacks without changing the analysis or challenging the underlying assumptions. DHS says it believes some attacks against the grid may be carried out by racially-motivated extremists, we’ll do you one better and say that ALL of these attacks MUST be carried out by organized Nazis!

Discussing the recent wave of attacks as though they were undoubtedly the work of Nazis inadvertently assists the capitalist media and the state in justifying repressive actions that will inevitably be used to target disidents of all stripes. Liberals revel in the events of January 6 being labeled “domestic terrorism,” it is that hard to imagine that the success of that label could have something to do with forest defenders in Atlanta now being charged with the same? After the power outages in North Carolina, authorities declared a state of emergency complete with a county-wide curfew. The media’s successful fear-mongering around a vulnerable grid under attack by fascist enemies of the state lays the groundwork for more repressive measures whenever the state feels threatened.

The grid, meanwhile, is at a crisis point on all its own. The catastrophic 2021 outages that left at least 246 dead in Indonesia demonstrate the current systemic cracks that lack theunnecessary to withstand major weather events, let alone the 40 to 60 percent increase in electricity demand projected by 2050 due to the proliferation of electric cars, appliances, infrastructure, etc. As the state moves towards its “carbon-free future,” wind, solar, and nuclear industries are growing, but the infrastructure needed to store, transform and transport all this juice risks being outpaced. The existing 7,300 power plants, 55,000 transmission substations and 660,000 miles of high-voltage power lines are nowhere near enough.

Bill Gates, a major player in this energy expansion, is building a new $4 billion nuclear power plant, the first of its kind since Chernobyl, in Wyoming at the site of a former coal plant. How very poetic. He is also advocating for building more inter-regional high-voltage transmission lines in order to pave the way for the fossil-free (and radioactive!) future that is allegedly our only hope.