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a response to “Goodnight Eurocentric Pride”
2026/07/29

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> “Just as we arm our hands to strengthen our blows, we must also fortify our minds. Our imagination, nourished by memories of resistance that has come before, bolstered by a precise projectuality, sharpened by critical thinking and corrosive insight, proves to be an arsenal of choice. […] Obviously there is no shortage of military and political campaigns against existing powers to inspire those who don’t concern themselves with ethical and practical coherence, dismissed as an excess of purism, but there is also no scarcity of revolts against the long conquest of domination over life. And while the tension towards freedom transcends all “isms,” for anarchists, the two-fold challenge is to both grasp the particularities of our contexts with realism and draw on historical experiences that resonate with our uncompromising ideals.”
> –History Drowned in Lethe

There was a world in which I was tempted to be charitable to the author of "Good Night Eurocentric Pride". The article in *Tinderbox #9* which it is criticizing certainly had a limitation. On the one hand, it calls us towards a profoundly difficult task: to separate ourselves from the heavy legacy of organized confusion in which revolt has been conflated with its enemies. As "History Drowned in Lethe" astutely analyzes, this confusion was an industry perpetuated by the commissars of the Soviet Union's departments of propaganda and the ethically and intellectually bankrupt armchair academics who penned various marxist cultural theories that continue to go in and out of fashion. The article suggests, instead and against all this, a project of permanent research, interwoven with all other avenues of struggle, to recover the memory of the rebellions which, wherever and whenever they erupted, left the political charades and armed party cliches behind. On the other hand, the references of "History Drowned in Lethe" itself were thin, and centered — out of a well warranted but perhaps naive enthusiasm — on the intransigent italian anarchist minority in the United States in the early part of the 20th century. There is certainly an incoherence here. Many, many, realities of struggle have contained an incalculable libertarian and informal fringe whether they have taken on the name of anarchism or not, and the article says little to demonstrate in practice how to go about making these inquiries that it argues are completely necessary. In opting for a single example furnished to us in a widely distributed book, *Plain Words*, the article contravenes the effort which it (rightly) invites all of us to begin making.

But contrary to how the response portrays "History Drowned in Lethe", at no point does it make the argument that anarchists should not seek to contribute to non-anarchist struggles, whether anti-colonial or otherwise. It's clear that the text is instead arguing, in light of a widespread tendency to romanticize authoritarian points of reference, that this romanticization doesn't serve us. To

ever they are located in time or space. A search for affinity which belongs to whoever takes it up, to the entire anarchist movement (and beyond), in which many others are already earnestly participating. Unfortunately, from the frenzy of displeasure at the idea that the sacred Organizations have seen their day, it seems that some are intent on returning to the ranks. To each their separate way then — parallel lines never meet!

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address this obstacle, it proposes making a greater effort to familiarize ourselves with the subversive currents of the anarchist heritage, as well as the "revolts against the long conquest of domination over life". It should go without saying that this is a far cry from the solipsism of claiming that only struggles characterized by anarchist participation are worth contributing to or learning from, particularly as situations characterized by mass-anarchist participation are also criticized (Spain '36). Rather, it's a question of nourishing and sustaining an anarchist dream of freedom while intervening in social reality — a reality which cannot be confused with the anarchist movement.

Reading on, I cannot make a reasoned engagement with "Good Night Eurocentric Pride". All such illusions quickly fall away given that the entire substance of "History Drowned in Lethe" — and despite its limitations, the exact danger it seeks to warn of — is evidenced clearly in the very fabric of this response.

The response alleges that "History Drowned in Lethe" ignores the "emerge[nce of the] Black Liberation Army from tensions with the authoritarian central leadership of the Black Panther Party". It is very difficult to evaluate a statement like this. The Black Liberation Army was an avowedly marxist-leninist armed organization which directly discouraged the idea and practice of a full autonomy within the black liberation armed struggle, as this section from the B.L.A. Study Guide (compulsory reading for all members by 1977) sums up: "[Regarding democratic centralism] some complain bitterly of the authoritarian aspect and prefer a loose federation of individuals and/or collectives, each free to pursue their own course, and none bound to the will of the majority. Such a mode of operation causes factionalism, disintegration, and often a spilling of blood of our own people. This rightest error stems from petty bourgeois individuals and opportunism and has no place in Marxist Leninist Organisation."

This can be considered nothing other than a profound slander on the unnamed elements who used these free associations to wage

their armed struggle against the United States. For obvious reasons (and this is what makes it a challenge), information about the activities of these unknowns is not so easy to come by, but we could cite, with "Subterranean Constellations" *Tinderbox #7*, the example of William Lee Brent, who was expelled from the Black Panther Party for the "crime" of "banditry" and was implicated in a series of bombings of the Californian electrical grid in the late 60s, acts for which some Motherfuckers in Berkeley were eventually convicted (William Lee Brent had already hijacked an aircraft out of the country by the time the charges were handed down). In any case, we can see that it is the centralizers who are always the opportunists par-excellence by the fact of positioning themselves as the managers of offensive campaigns and determining when they start and stop. As for the "spilling of blood", this is always more or less assured by the kind of policy exemplified by the "pain of penalty" the B.L.A. study guide promises to inflict on those who disobey the "central authority whose word is law". Despite this, it is clear that some more libertarian elements within the broader "black underground" — exactly the kinds of comrades who recognized themselves in the proposal of a "loose federation of individuals or collectives" — collaborated on various levels with individuals in the B.L.A. and sometimes with the organization itself. *Movement for No Society* points out that the real experience of many individuals even within the B.L.A. was not of a hierarchical organization but something far closer to the "loose federation of individuals and/or collectives" which by '77 the B.L.A. is explicitly denouncing. But this is why it is all the more important to make these distinctions. There are individual experiences of revolt *against the grain* which departed from and were repressed by the hierarchical structures that try to discipline all of this back into a militarized and politicized form. The two are not the same thing.

When "Good Night Eurocentric Pride" alludes to this fact as an argument for *maintaining* exactly that kind of political-military organization as a point of reference *because* of the presence of exceptheorists (critical or otherwise) well and truly in their place. "Warlike, Howling, Pure" (2024), in a more esoteric register, teases out the most outlandish aspects of millenarian revolts like the "black clad Boxers" of the 1900 Boxer rebellion who are said to have made a spiritual rift with patriarchal magical practices that scorned the insurgent participation of women due to the risk of "female impurities" undermining the "invulnerability rituals" which were relied upon for fearlessness in battle. These "black clad" warriors however "did not fear this yin energy [emanating from female impurities]" and transformed the forbidden into a source of subversive strength, with the result that it was said "gunfire is unable to get near their bodies". The text goes on to suggest "if they had leapt out of rumor into widespread action, the Boxer Rebellion could have gone differently". These longer-form efforts have been echoed by countless short articles in the offline papers and journals that insurrectionalist anarchist comrades on this continent have recently rejuvenated. In all these cases, there is an effort to *decompose* authoritarian referents, to vindicate the libertarian and experimental fringe, to rescue their subversive logic from the miasma of recuperation and disciplined authoritarian mythology — all so that our unruly heritage will not be drowned in the waters of oblivion.

If indeed there is a split in the combative anarchist movement, it is not between "eurocentrists" and "anti-imperialists"; it is not between the autonomous anarchist press causing headaches for European police investigators and the martyrs-to-be of an internationalist guerrilla. Rather, and more modestly, it is between those who are determined to take responsibility for realizing autonomous interventions in social reality, and so are laboring to find the examples of historical exceptions to the authoritarian monologue to expand their vision, and those who worship, enlist in, and bow before the masked reformists of the moment rather than taking the trouble to think in detail about this.

It seems unlikely that *Tinderbox* will retreat in its obstinate search for affinity among the most insane lovers of freedom wher-

sifts through social reality with the singular aim of its total subversion.

A profound invitation is contained in "History Drowned in Lethe": the task of the *total overthrow* in our language, minds, hearts, and acts of any trace of authoritarian referent. This is a lifelong task for intensive study and penetrating discussion: to rescue the memory of those who would not bend their heads in front of *any* authority under *any* pretext. The moments when this fever is taken up by indiscernible multitudes in the carnival of revolt, as always, must be given special attention, but particularly to identify exactly the points at which the uniforms came back on, work was rescheduled, and the new, interim, provisional, holy, "revolutionary" government started to have its commands obeyed, in order to make it possible to sabotage all these traps now, before it's too late.

Recent contributions to this "challenge" have not been in short supply, a fact which is an indication by itself of the tentative regeneration of combative anarchy in the "United States" more generally. "Movement for No Society" (2018) stands as a standard for these inquiries, meticulously deconstructing the unity of organizations like the R.A.M., exposing the failures of the authoritarian tendency and the successes, against the odds, of the "loose coalition" which sprang up and went their own way both within and without organizations like this, *in spite* of the predominance of these forms. "Dixie be Damned" (2015) is a monumental work — in a particular chapter, it explores how chauvinist militancy that combined certain aspects of Black power was used just as readily to police as it was to inspire rebellion. It also uncovers the uncontrollable aspect which lay behind the lullaby told by the official movement about the Birmingham rebellion. "Resilience, Disaster, Elusion" (2021) dives into the rebellions and mutinies cooked up between members of the underclass, from pirates to enslaved and native people, tracing these eruptions from early northeastern colonies to the swamps of West Africa, putting the moronic morality tales of the academy's race

tions which came to life only by disobedience and insubordination within the ranks, we are reaching bewildering levels of cynicism. The attempt of "History Drowned in Lethe" to question the relevance of the Comandantes of the Zapatistas and the bureaucratic Cantons of Rojava (which the response conflates with questioning the relevance of these experiences of struggle in their entirety) is declared to be "unserious". Clearly, the historical observation of a tension towards freedom, against government, against bureaucracy, armies, patriarchy, and religion is then being used to venerate the very political and armed structures which have always sought to restore these holy orders of authority in all their forms. The same political and armed structures which have always tried to smother these gasps of freedom in the cradle.

These are examples of the systematic confusion of revolt (both mass and individual) with the politicians and armed parties which "History Drowned in Lethe" was clearly written to expose. On the one hand, the leadership of the armed parties are often the spectacular vanguard of struggles — a place they doggedly pursue because it is their only hope of one day attaining social control. On the other, these same entities are a total brake on the momentum of any *real movement* which, with its own blood and will, in a thousand ways, continually searches for means to create what has never happened before.

Let's consider, first of all, the admission of this "former editor" (of an anonymous publication) that it is now acceptable (from an "anti-imperialist" standpoint) to criticize the government of Rojava for its decision to ally with the US. Perhaps I can take a mile from this little inch and suggest that the decision to kiss the butcher Assad on the cheek in order to obtain a joint *cough* decentralized *cough* administration of Northern Syria in the middle of a revolutionary storm should perhaps have given some pause for thought at the time. And this, even more than a decade before the imprisoned patriarch Apo — whose opportunism is equaled in comical exaggeration only by his cult of personality — stated that he had

the "personal and historic authority" to call a unilateral cessation of the armed conflict with the Turkish state…

It could be said that my western assessment of what these politicians and political alliances, militaries, and prisons mean in practice in somewhere like Rojava is prejudiced. How many times have we heard that the "people's prisons and armies" can't be compared to those in the "imperial center"? By an incredible linguistic conjuring trick the blood is washed away, and the governmental catastrophe wins sworn allegiance from subversives, provided they are sufficiently far away.

The fact of the matter is that there has been, and continues to be, a reality of self-organized rebellion against the Turkish state, one branch of which continues to have the characteristics of a national liberation struggle of the Kurdish people. But after three decades of disastrous unilateral ceasefires, abandonments of guerrillas and rebellions for the purposes of political wrangling with the West or with Turkey, alliances with literally everyone from the Soviet Union to the USA, Assad to Sadam Hussein to the EU, we can see that the organizational machinations of the PKK and its proxies fit very well into Kuwasi Balagoon's critique. This is the searching question he dared to ask about the Black Panther Party organization and its "ministers": "How could a few jerks divert so much purpose and energy for so long? How could they neutralize the courage and intellect of the cadre? The answers to these questions are that the cadre accepted their leadership and accepted their command, regardless of what their intellect had or had not made clear to them."

How then is it possible to *refuse to accept leadership and command* which means, in practice, to refuse to be "cadre" anymore, when all of the symbols, many of the points of propaganda, and the entire way-of-seeing of authoritarians is preserved, and, to crown all, irretrievably mixed up with how the struggle itself is conceptualized? Under the banner of fidelity to Kuwasi Balagaoon's contributions to the struggle, this challenge he gives to all of us is

be what they are: armed, authoritarian and vanguardist political groups for the seizure of Power."

The confusion of the rebellions brought on by national liberation struggles, and much more besides, in Turkey, Syria, or Palestine with the organizational dominance of national liberation parties, is to *betray subversive memory.* It is to darken the bright avenues for thought and action in the present into something mournful and overcast. By abandoning the *search for affinity* and instead settling for political and military pomp and pageantry, we abandon the uncontrollables of elsewhere, and this indicates a willingness to do so right here. Let us never forget the thousand warnings from the voices who found themselves on the outside of the great "qualitative reference point" of the Spanish CNT, in its eagerness to turn anarchist bandits and proletarian rebels into soldiers of the great Antifascist-Popular-Front. The mythology of "Spain '36", which artificially fuses the former with the latter, is one "qualitative point of reference" we might want to evict from our imaginations: "I don't know how we shall live now. I don't know whether we shall be able to accustom ourselves to abuse from corporals, from sergeants, and from lieutenants. I do not know whether, after having felt ourselves to be men in the fullest sense of the word, we shall get used to being domestic animals, for that is what discipline leads to and what militarisation implies."

Even if it was done somewhat clumsily, it is this search for affinity which "History Drowned in Lethe" is trying to defend against the decades-long infatuation with superficial symbols which destroy reflection and obstruct our ability to comprehend both the authoritarian and the truly wild elements of past and present struggles. But rather than being a critique which shares this project of uncovering those realities, it is clear that "Good Night Eurocentric Pride" consists in a spirited defense of the logos and memorabilia of God(s) and the State. The difference here is between a desire for mythologized symbols and a utopian desire which pulls apart and

courses which frame any form of black radicalism as inherently revolutionary. Many dazzled by any semblance of black militancy will rush to uncritically — and I might say racistly — back and platform any group with no critical evaluation of the content of their ideas and practice."

"Interest" in these cliches — the tattered scarecrows of the armed party — are waning, nearly three decades after their headline-grabbing exploits started to be substituted for perspectives of prison relief (in cases of defeat) and high office (in cases of "victory"). Comrades today are looking for perspectives which can afford them the tools to refuse the stupid narratives they've been given that say that revolt always finds its terminus one way or the other in their enlistment into the ranks of a liberation-barracks or a hymn to the divine leaders of the moment. The subversive, generalizing, irreverent quality of revolt which breaks with patriarchal social discipline — with recourse to insurrectionary methods to create and augment these personal and social ruptures — is decidedly back on the table.

In its most vital epochs, anarchism has been *insurrection-centric*. It has simply refused to contemplate anything other than the material, moral, strategic, and psychological questions which are relevant to the overthrow of existing regimes in such a radical way that life and land become difficult for anybody, under any pretext, to tame. In contrast to this, the desire to put flags and medals in the place of upending social relations through subversion and attack, available to all, has always been a sign of stagnation. As a consequence, the substitution of the multifarious struggles of the landless and urban-unemployed of Mexico in the late '90s and early 2000s with the name and logo of the Zapatistas has been thoroughly denounced by anarchist comrades in "Mexico" long before the Zapatismo chicanery set its sights on the presidential office in 2018. This episode merely confirmed to the comrades of Rebelión Inmediata "…for the thousandth time that guerrillas never cease to

forgotten. While there is an ongoing debate to be had about *how* to do this, it is unmistakable that if these symbols, points of propaganda, and perspectives are not thrown out — right away, before the pressure to fall back on these suicidal-yet-familiar forms is entrenched — then it becomes inevitable that the struggle will tragically re-enter the eternal repetition of the same, with the return of generals, bosses, presidents, and priests in new costumes. One of the main ways that authoritarian revolutionary structures function is to put themselves "above" the conflicts that arise between the base and the leadership. In the same way that the state, the eternal mediator, can never itself be held responsible for any of the specific travesties which light the fuse of revolt, and in the same way that the kings and emperors are never to blame but only ever "badly advised". "Good Night Eurocentric Pride" is participating in these absurd tricks when it claims to recognize the "spark" which "heightens tension within hierarchical organizations", but then pours derision on the attempt to draw the necessary conclusion from such conflict: that the "hierarchical organizations" are a noose around the neck of the revolt. The response resorts to exactly the same perverse logic as the state-functionaries of all time when it takes such conflicts as a sign of the indispensability and universality and all-encompassing relevance of the organizations themselves. And this is why I cannot take "Good Night Eurocentric Pride" seriously. It is not a contribution to this necessary debate about *how* the throwing-out and replacement of authoritarian referents is to be accomplished. Instead, it *gestures* to this debate in order to reaffirm the necessity of this abysmal preservation of Lenin's Mausoleum of authoritarian calamities.

The kind of argument which is often leveraged to make it impossible to evaluate the oppression and infamy of authoritarian revolutionary parties runs so often like this: "you can't apply your own ethics to the situation over there! The context is different!" As others have noted before, this reflex, although very common, is outrageous and offensive. It has more in common with the arguments de-

fending sex tourism than it does with any concept of international solidarity. While visiting somewhere like Thailand, Mexico, or the Philippines, sex-tourists permit *themselves* to do what they would not be permitted to do in their own countries. However, some so-called "anti-imperialists", in all their generosity go even further: they permit *for others* in *other countries* what they would not for a moment tolerate for *themselves* in their *own*.

That must be why a certain "abolition media" which professes to stand in "stark contrast" to the "disastrous agenda of nation states" and which makes a heartfelt dedication of itself to "all those inside and outside the prison walls who continue to put their lives on the line" is able to contemplate boundless subtleties and shades of gray. Apart from this "communiqué" [?] by a former editor of *Tinderbox*, the entire website is saturated with adulatory praise for the jailers, generals, presidents, and comandantes of the "Global South".

If this is the kind of fan club for industrialists, secret policemen, archbishops, and television spokespeople of the various *regimes* of "national liberation" which this "anti-imperialist" split encourages us to join, then perhaps they can forgive me for having reservations about the quality of the "real insurrection[s] against the American State" which they aspire to. If these "real insurrection[s]" cannot make distinctions between the jailer and the jailed, between managers and bosses and the exploited, between the pens of patriotic swine and the outlaw swamps of banditry then it seems doomed to exchange "hydras" for "dragons" at the first push of pressure. Such perspectives, as Russell Maroon Shoatz understood perfectly, would be the death of any "real insurrection[s]" today.

It is quite true that some of the sharpest critiques of identity politics are emerging from comrades "committed to the destruction of white supremacy". However, these "sharpest critiques" today are often precisely targeting the identity-based "interest" in bureaucratic and oppressive organizations, exactly like "History Drowned in Lethe". To give one such example from mtlcounterinfo.org a few months ago:

"So we are shushed in times of peace and in times of war. Sometimes, I get to be shushed by random white people for not committing to Hamas revolutionary doctrine (the *thawabet*). To be clear, th[e] history [of] women organizing the Intifada and the contradictory outcome of authoritarian governance is needed to imagine a revolt or to claim the abilities to resist and fight, beyond the anti-insurrectional powers of Hamas — or other political parties who came to rise by negotiating on the back of what the Palestinian movement and Palestinian resistance managed to establish. Since their fight is for authority over Gaza, their first enemy is not Israel, but the people, just like any wannabe state. Acknowledging how political parties use resistance movements to claim authority is not a dismissal of affinity for freedom fighters, for those that show us how to resist from the bleakest of places. The spirit of rebellion does not emerge from Hamas or the PA and will exist beyond them and oftentimes despite them. To critique the authoritarians is to increase the capacity for the fight. Freedom cannot come to be by practicing what you are fighting against. Authoritarians are not the voice of the rebellion, they are the leeches that steal its soul."

What is at stake in a seminal critique like this (a critique of identity politics authored by one committed to the destruction of white supremacy, that is) is precisely the idiotic praise lavished on political and armed entities at the expense of any appetite to discover, defend, and extend the embers of revolt which all sides seek to extinguish in order to establish their special brand of theocracy over everyone. It is far from alone, and it speaks volumes that this "former editor" believes that a critique of "identity politics" which nonetheless allows for some level of veneration of formal armed and political structures is the sum and total of what comrades committed to the destruction of white supremacy have to say.

Another example, from just this month, found in the street paper *Fugitive* based in so-called "Olympia": "Many non-black people get swept up in the image and rhetoric of middle class black power or nationalist groups — certainly not helped by certain popular dis-