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Insurrectionary anarchists, Indigenous People, and Pipelines

Anonymous

September 10 2014

Describe and introduce your movement and your struggle. What are your claims and to whom do these approach? What are your aims? e.g. do you have some projects and what are the main points and contents?

I am an anarchist from Occupied Coast Salish Territories, known to most of the world as Vancouver, Canada. I come out of the anarchist movement which only really began in this city in the 1970's, but there is very little continuity from that era. I see the anarchist movement as being for an end to all domination and exploitation, now, and in the future.

The part of the anarchist movement I come out of is very influenced by the insurrectionary anarchist practices that were theorized in Italy in the 70's, the principal points that are applicable to our struggle are:

A) a break from the traditional worker's movements in favour of more fluid organizing, less tied to our roles in the economy.

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<https://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/blog/rafael-mart%C3%AD/3164>

The following two question interview was conducted in July 2014 for the German political prisoner magazine Gefangenen

Info (www.gefangenen.info).

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B) an emphasis on attacking the enemy in small easily reproducible ways, that allow more possibilities for these tactics to spread across the social terrain, and avoid some of the traps that the urban guerillas of previous generations fell into.

C) Most important of all, is informal organizing, this means that we do not want to create organizations that waste energy on keeping themselves alive, just for the sake of it, and instead to work on projects on a basis of affinity, whether that means a lived affinity with others who do not share our anarchist identity, or an affinity with others such as indigenous rebels who also desire the destruction of the Canadian state.

A very important feature of the anarchist struggle in this region of the world is our relationship to indigenous people who are always at the forefront of struggles. Some indigenous people are anarchists too, a great many others are not. This dynamic has a great impact on the type of projects we engage in.

One of the main tensions in the region is the struggle against proposed oil and gas pipelines that will cut across the region, pollute the land, water, and air, and further add to the global catastrophe of climate change. The lands that these resources will be extracted from and transported across, which is to say nearly the entire province of “British Columbia”, has no treaties around it between the Canadian Government, and the people who have lived there for time immemorial. This puts the rebels from those indigenous communities, the ones who want to keep their identities as indigenous people as it was before the intrusions of capitalism and the state, on the immediate front line; since hunting fishing and living in a connectedness to the land not polluted are of the utmost importance for indigenous survival.

These pipelines are connected to the highly destructive processes of fracking for natural gas and tar sands oil, which means that global capitalism is now going into the shale rock and sand for energy resources, since the vast majority of the

easily accessible fossil fuels are nearly gone. This puts these massive projects into the context of a last ditch effort for the capitalist system to stay afloat, in spite of environmental catastrophes and drying up resources.

Our methods for engaging with this struggle as anarchists, has primarily been one of building up subversive relationships against the state and corporations. This has long been a focus of anarchist organizing in the region, but has intensified and broadened since the struggle against the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver. “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” was the main rallying cry for an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial convergence which disrupted the party in the streets during the games, undermined the legitimacy of the Canadian State, and had small scale destructive attacks take place in the city on the first day of the event, and around the world in the years preceding.

The current organizing against pipelines and other resource extraction projects has been more intimate and longer term. Small attacks against banks and gas stations have also been happening as one can read about on the internet, but personal relationships between indigenous warriors and anarchists, which were there in some ways around the anti-olympics struggle, are perhaps more characteristic at this point. A prime example of this has been the Unist’ot’en camp up north, anarchists have been travelling to the camp in solidarity for quite some time. The camp sits in the way of several oil and gas pipelines, between fracking projects, and the Alberta Tar Sands in the east, and the also sensitive ecosystems of the pacific coast where the oil is intended to be transported in the west. The Unist’ot’en are a clan of the Wet’suwet’en people, the place of the camp that they have set up is the traditional hunting and trapping lines of their people.

The strategy for the camp has several points:

A) a physical blockade of the pipelines.

B) a way for their people to reconnect with their traditional lives and reclaim their territories, as well as an example to other indigenous people to do the same.

C) solidarity with those whose lands are being destroyed elsewhere by these projects, and those who are suffering from the effects of climate change.

As I said earlier, anarchists have been travelling to the camp, this works as a kind of mutual aid where anarchists are learning skills such as hunting and trapping, and Unist'ot'en people are free to go and do outreach and speaking engagements about the camp. Anarchists have also been doing solidarity demonstrations in Vancouver that combat the communication blackout about the struggle and camp in the media, and help broaden an anarchist analysis of the situation through propaganda. The Unist'ot'en camp is not the only place that anarchists have been building subversive relationships with indigenous rebels, but it is a particularly important one, given the urgency with which the state is pursuing these pipelines projects.

As a final point, the indigenous influence on anarchist struggles is important beyond any strategic evaluation, it has the power to change how we view anarchy as a whole. The anarchist movement was born in Europe as a negation of the capitalist system and the state which rules over the lives of all. It is important then for us also to have a positive project as you cannot make a revolution with only destruction. The classical Marxist and anarcho-syndicalist view, where we are only able to see ourselves as producers, and all we must do is seize the means of production to begin self-management, is problematic if after we free ourselves from the bosses all we can do is self-manage our own exploitation under a new economy. An indigenous influence on anarchy would say that we are all people of this earth, the earth belongs to no one, and so we as free individuals and communities can make what we want of our own lives in balance with our surroundings.

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How does the apparatus of the state react to the movement? What kind of techniques and methods are the state and assistants using? Tell something about the experiences you had, what is happening to the people and what is your strategy to protect?

The state has reacted in various ways, in various periods, depending on who you are. Most important to note is the way that the state reacts to indigenous resistance. In the past there have been indigenous struggles that have been met with particularly intense repression.

In 1995, the Canadian Military gave the RCMP (Canadian Federal police) arms and equipment to put down just a few people who were taking back traditional sun dance grounds at T'sepeten, even blowing up their cars. More recently, in 2013 on the other side of the continent, the Mik'maq people were building allegiances with local settlers in a physical blockade of exploration trucks belonging to a Texas based oil company who intended to do fracking for natural gas, which would devastate the ground water in the area. This campaign also involved a fair amount of sabotage. Eventually there was a court injunction and raid by the RCMP, this was met with resistance by people at the camp and a massive response from the local community. Solidarity demonstrations and fundraisers for legal support were organized across the continent. There are currently Mik'maq warriors facing prison time as a result of this raid.

What was also very interesting about this situation was how Chief Aaron Sock, the local band council government representative of the Mik'maq people, was later discovered to be making negotiations with the police prior to the raid, about how the camp would end. The same chief was symbolically arrested after the raid, while Mikmaq Warriors were singled out for more extreme charges and repression. It is examples like these that we need to be watching very closely here on the

other side of the continent as it is often those within the movement, or who claim to be within the movement, who can do us as much harm as any police tactic.

On June 3rd of this year there was a raid on a house in East Vancouver, the house is lived in by indigenous people and settlers, involved in indigenous resistance and anarchist projects around the city. The raid was ostensibly over anti-pipelines graffiti that can be seen all over the city, however it seems like it was a response to recent anti-pipelines organizing as mostly what the raid targeted was organizing tools such as computers, cellular phones, usb sticks, banners, and pamphlets. A few days later the police formally charged and arrested one member of the household with several counts of mischief, they would not release them also until they gave a blood sample.

In response at least one prominent environmentalist against the pipelines came out to voice their differences with those doing the graffiti, a typical dividing move for those who want to stay in control of a movement especially for reformist interests. This also fits into the context of a defensive position from the larger environmental movement. Some time ago the government came out with a report that they regarded environmental extremism as a very high threat to national security, and the mainstream environmental groups and politicians have been busy ever since trying to prove that they are the good environmentalists: legal, well behaved. This also has to be viewed in the context that numerous security advisors to the Canadian State have expressed deep fears of a native uprising. Recuperative apparatuses are being set up to deal with native discontent, initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which claims to “address” atrocities that the Canadian State committed against indigenous communities in the past. This politics of apology is being set up to show that there are legitimate channels for natives to express their anger, this coming at a time when new waves

of development and environmental destruction threaten their lands, and direct action will be the only way to stop it.

So it appears that there is somewhat of a strategy of isolation coming from the state and corporations. We have yet to see what they have in store for those of us they manage to isolate, but you can kind of see what they are trying to set up. Our response to all of this is developing as the situation develops.

In May Day of this year there was an anarchist demonstration in Vancouver, against the pipelines, in solidarity with the Unist’ot’en camp, and with an anarchist critique of work. On “Canada Day”, July 1st, there was another anarchist organized demonstration to denounce patriotism, nationalism, and the continued pillage of the land. These demonstrations are perhaps one strategy to prevent isolation, by creating a public space for those of us from the most radical end of the spectrum, anarchist, indigenous, and other rebels. The police too are developing their street tactics. They have been training with international police forces, and you can see the difference in the way they move and their forms of organization. The May Day demonstration had about 4 arrests after about 10 minutes. The presence of police crowd control units is markedly higher for anarchist demonstrations than for mainstream environmental demonstrations with a much higher turnout.

Some of the other strategies going back to the Olympics and continuing into the no pipelines struggle has been house visits by police, attempting to question people, usually radicals with a higher public profile, usually question about direct actions that have taken place. The strategy here is obvious, people usually start calling each other by phone to let them know that the police have been visiting people, and not to forget to keep your mouth shut.

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