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‘Today, March 8th’

2023

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‘Today, March 8th’

Mónica Caballero Sepulveda, Mawünhko, Itamar
Diaz

2023

*[ed. – Written in 2023, re-translated and annotated. For more on the intertwined nature of Mapuche struggle for the liberation of their Wallmapu – their traditional territories – and insurgent anarchism in those lands, see *Rebels Behind Bars; Between Weichan & Social War.*]*

Today, March 8th [*ed. – International Women’s Day*], as millions of women fill the streets of large cities around the world, we gather here again in this space of commemoration and struggle. We wish to keep alive the flame that those rebellious women decided to ignite hundreds of years ago and that today comrades continue to embody day-by-day from different trenches.

Over the years the struggle against heteropatriarchy¹ has sprouted, resisted and persisted in many territories. Heteropatriarchy is present in multiple areas of our lives, both in our interpersonal relationships and in ourselves; we are constantly

¹ ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg56

learning and unlearning, inhabiting new experiences that make us question and reflect from different realities and environments.

The heteropatriarchy strikes hardest to those who resist the subjugation of their nature, that subjugation which the system defines as normal. As indigenous people, intersex, trans, gay, non-binary, pan-sexuals, lesbians, we do not live the same experience. Above all, it is not the same for those who decide to attack every bastion that seeks to dominate and destroy us. For the same reason we do not raise the banners of passive victimhood, on the contrary, we aim at constant confrontation against everything that seeks to subdue us.

Today we want to remember different comrades who, with their struggle, have nurtured the antagonistic path that we have decided to embrace. Herminia Concha,² Luisa Toledo,³ Cláudia López,⁴ Aracely Romo,⁵ Jill Phipps,⁶ Guilly Peachy.⁷ We also wish to emphasize those comrades who have fallen in confrontations or have been assassinated for their fervent commitment to the defense of land and water, and to animal liberation. Nicolasa

² ed. – A comrade participating in the workers struggles in 1950s Chile, the homeless movement building self-organised neighbourhoods, expelled from the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) guerrilla which she was part of forming due to deviations from the party line, exiled to Sweden before joining struggles in Nicaragua, healing wounded fighters and undertaking sabotage against Pinochet's dictatorial regime (see 'The Position of the Excluded'); still active supporting revolutionary and Mapuche prisoners around the turn of the century.

³ ed. – Well-known and much-loved figure in the resistance to the dictatorship (to which she lost three of her children, becoming emblematic of their March 29th Day of the Youth Combatant) and then to the following democracy.

⁴ ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg62

⁵ ed. – Killed in an accidental detonation along with one of the Vergara brothers (see footnote 3) while preparing attacks; possibly the premature explosion was provoked by Pinochet's agents.

⁶ ed. – Second-generation animal rights activist, anti-fascist and anti-vivisection saboteur, crushed under a lorry she'd broken through police lines to try to stop during a campaign against the live export of UK calves for veal.

⁷ ed. – British anarchist/animal liberationist, passed 2015.

Quintreman, Macarena Valdes, Emilia Baucis: the three Mapuche *weychafe*⁸ comrades. Nicolasa fought hard against the installation of ENDESA's Ralco project⁹ in Pehuenche territory. At the age of 74, she was found dead in the artificial lagoon of the same project. Macarena Valdes, seed guardian, defender of water and forests in the Newen-Txagil community, was found dead in her own home at the hands of hired killers from the companies RP Global and SAESA at the age of 32.¹⁰ Emilia Baucis, defender of water and territories, anti-speciesist,¹¹ part of Lof Llaskawe,¹² was murdered at the age of 25 by hired killers from the Riñimapu condominium in the context of a retaking of traditional territory in Riñiwe Lewfu.

We remember every *compañera/e*¹³ who has been killed for fighting against the killing of animals and the devastation of their habitat. Because we recognize speciesism and patriarchy as two oppressions that form part of the same system. One seeks the subjugation of other species, considering them inferior, despite their capacity to feel. And the other seeks the oppression and invisibilization of women and of dissidences from gender norms, considering them inferior beings that can be violated and commodified. Therefore, we believe that it is not possible to fight for the liberation of human women and gender dissidents and ignore the violated females of other species.

Devastation is advancing by leaps and bounds. Without land, there is no life. Simply, there is not much to add nor more to think; as Emilia used to say, "The defense of the land and of bodies on the territory have never been and will never be contradictory strug-

⁸ ed. – Mapuche warriors

⁹ ed. – Hydro-electric dam flooding a Mapuche graveyard.

¹⁰ ed. – Both companies involved in a hydro-electric project.

¹¹ ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg10

¹² ed. – A *lof* is a Mapuche village community.

¹³ ed. – The form of *compañeros* (see 23 Theses Concerning Revolt) specifically in the feminine and the gender-unmarked forms, respectively.

gles”. Heteropatriarchy pretends to be loving, fun, to captivate with cute slogans, with chatter, to disguise itself as environmentalism, sisterhood, even intersectionality.¹⁴ It will not stop the devastation of the earth through state policies, nor governments of the day; they only seek to mitigate or slowly kill the *itxofil mogen*.¹⁵ Billions of hectares of native forest have become ashes, rivers, lagoons, lakes, springs, waterfalls, have disappeared, are about to become extinct or have irreparable damage, as the oceans live daily. Hundreds of animals have seen their habitats violated or usurped in the name of progress,¹⁶ by mining, forestry and oil companies,

¹⁴ ed. – This concept was intended to recognise interconnectedness of different forms of oppression and, therefore, solidarity; often devolving, however, (especially when combined with social-media-level analysis and performativity) to a checklist of oppressions, or, worse, a hierarchy. Of course some kind of analysis along these lines is vital when faced with the very real hierarchies imposed by patriarchy, race, ability, etc., but in many of its applications intersectionality has been of questionable use in dispelling essentialism. As written in ‘So Fucked Up: Guilt, Disempowerment, & Other Mistakes of an Anti-Oppression Practice’, *“The result is the sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit assumption that one’s place in the hierarchy (differently abled queer female-bodied latina) can tell you more about them and their history than any individual differences. [...] I think awareness of history and socialization is critically important. But the set of nuances and emphases that anti-oppression activists choose encourages personal identification with systems of oppression rather than mutiny, in the case of those in the privileged box, and victimization by systems of oppression that are perpetuated by allies as much as by enemies, in the case of those in the oppressed box. [...] An individual who echoes oppressive behaviours he has been trained in shares very little in common with an institution that can both generate, model, and evolve those behaviours. Emphasizing that commonality can be useful, with an indispensable caveat, in understanding how the system works, but if we place our new understanding in a revolutionary framework – with the desire to actually abolish these institutions – then this knowledge points directly to the strategic necessity to undermine and sever this commonality or identification with power, not to reinforce it.”* However, people fighting to be recognised on their own terms and self-defining their struggles is still vital; one alternative framing to intersectionality that has been offered is an application of assemblage theory: see Follow the Fires.

¹⁵ ed. – Mapuche term for general biodiversity.

¹⁶ ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg11

and decisions become more vital than water or oxygen.” Let not our differences with the vegan comrades (see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; ‘A Web of Relations & Tensions’, or some of the positions taken in the claim for the action) stand in the way of the urgent demolition of the industrialised food system in all its cruel forms.

While still locked up, shortly after co-writing the above article, Itamar participated in a strike on her wing, expounding on various abuses and deprivations by the guards. As part of that, she and a friend were disciplined for advising fellow inmates that the kind of strip-searches described above were violations not just in an ethics but also a legal sense; both were moved to the punishment module for “attempted mutiny and threats to other inmates.” In the Santiago 1 prison, those who showed solidarity with Itamar were also dispersed to different wings.

fish farms,¹⁷ etc.. *Compañera/es* from different territories plan, act and attack against the devastators of the earth, lurking from the forest, the mountains, the jungle, the desert; in the dim light, waiting for progress to show its face because sooner or later they come to exterminate. We send much *newen*¹⁸ to all those *compañeras/es* who actively participate in networks in defence of seeds, waters and territories and for animal liberation; and to those who – despite all the exhaustion – continue to protect their roots,¹⁹ in the face of all the consequences. No matter how many times the hired killers persecute you, we know that you more than anyone know the forest, desert, jungle and mountains like the back of your hand, the *püllü*²⁰ of each fallen *compañera/e* accompanies you and each *geh*²¹ protects and shelters you.

We take this opportunity to make a special mention in solidarity with Alfredo Cospito, a comrade with an indomitable soul, who is today imprisoned in the 41bis regime,²² which seeks to subdue

¹⁷ ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg24

¹⁸ ed. – Mapuche term for force or strength, of the kind that flows from nature.

¹⁹ ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg87

²⁰ ed. – Mapuche term for the soul of a living thing such as a human (that which survives death is the *am*).

²¹ ed. – Spirits of different places known to the Mapuche.

²² ed. – To continue from where we left off with our notes introducing ‘Our Anarchy Lives’: Alfredo’s hunger strike lasted 181 days, causing an explosive situation in Italian society. Recall that he was striking against his confinement under ‘41 bis’ conditions (the most political charges in Italian law, requiring signing by the Minister of Justice), and his life sentence for actions hurting no one and which he did not claim. It seems that the administration under technocrat Mario Draghi – all too aware of the powder-key of tensions from his experience as head of the European Central Bank overseeing the carving up of Greece for its debts – aimed for the sentence to coincide with a general crackdown to scare dissenters; for example, around the same time six trade unionists were charged with extortion simply for demanding wage increases. Alfredo’s sentencing (once visibilised by the strike and many actions in solidarity with him; see ‘The Terms of Life & Death’) caused controversy in Italian media and civil society, but unlike with many other issues where anarchists mobilise, the initiative was solely in the hands of the

his mind, body and spirit. Despite this, Alfredo remains firm and

anarchists, with the reformists and democrats tagging behind. In this way, the anarchist movement regained momentum and presence, leaving the State in embarrassed silence as it waited (and no doubt wished) for Alfredo to die, speaking up only to say accuse the comrade of an “instigatory” role in the disorders during his fast. For example, 101 days into the strike some comrades reported holding a demonstration in Rome, “*which the police forces decided to surround and provoke. However that evening the plans did not go as foreseen in the offices of the police, with a part of the demonstrators remaining outside the encirclement and the police forces ending up in the grip of those whom they wanted to provoke. There was a riot and a wild procession through the streets of Trastevere, determined to hold the streets for a few hours, ending with 42 demonstrators arrested...*” Two weeks later it was Milan’s turn, with damages to ENI-Enjoy cars (see ‘The Ecological Transition is a Hoax’), estate agents, supermarkets, banks and a few cops, while Alfredo was undergoing transfer to the hospital there. (The next month, Turin: 630,000 euros in damages during the rioting, ending in a siege of anarchist Radio Blackout’s premises.) As comrades wrote in ‘The State is Weak’, “*the warning that the Italian state intended to give to the anarchist movement has been returned to sender with determination and consistency. In these six months of hunger strike, the isolation of Alfredo and all the imprisoned comrades was prevented.*” This was not his first hunger-strike (that having been when he refused conscription in the ‘80s and was jailed), even during this spell in prison, but consequences this time were heavy: by the time he stopped, when the Constitutional Court reduced his life sentence to 23 years (and his co-defendant Anna’s to 17 years and 9 months) in a partial win for the strike and solidarity movement – although he remains under ‘41 bis’ until at least 2026 – he’d experienced presumably permanent neurological damage, losing feeling in one foot, has reduced feeling in the other one, and the start of similar symptoms in one hand. As we previously recounted, seven months after the end, he and various others were charged with terrorist incitement over the interview which ‘Our Anarchy Lives’ was drawn from; happily, this January all charges against Alfredo and all 11 others were dismissed. The hearing at least gave Alfredo an opportunity to hear the voices of the other comrades and see their faces, albeit via videolink (see Return Fire vol.5 pg90), and to speak. From his statement: “*Even if remotely, even if for the brief time of a blink of an eye, today I can tear off the gag, the medieval bridle of a 41 bis that a moderate left-wing government applied to me years ago to silence an uncomfortable voice, for however minor and irrelevant, however surely an enemy of your democracy. [...] Today in this courtroom we are undergoing an inquisitorial trial based on an interview given through regular prison mail and not through a conversation with my sister in a prison visit as the prosecution wants us to believe, dragging her to the courthouse only for the mere fact of continuing undeterred to attend prison visits with her brother. It is a classic strategy*

(from which two others escaped unidentified): accused of carrying a weapon and ammunition, and attempted double homicide against the police. Some months after writing this joint letter, she was released after received an abbreviated sentence accepting the charges handed down by the prosecutor; Tomás got 16 years for having fired on the cops to make an attempted escape.

Itamar: Then imprisoned following the September 2022 action against the Susaron facility in Santiago, by Animal Response Group. In that attack, armed persons stormed that meat industry central branch, evading the electric fence, scaring off the security guard and torching almost the whole enclosure; the packing plant, sales and marketing office, events space, the entire fleet of 10 trucks, documentation and the safe, and the refrigerated distribution point along with its seven tonnes of beef, chicken and pork, in a major blow to critical infrastructure of an internationally-importing business. Sadly, surveillance footage caught the car they used, and triangulated the signal of their phones in the house where they had gathered before and after the action, and they were arrested two weeks later.

Briefly released pre-trial before being re-called to prison on the appeal of the prosecutor, Itamar was sentenced in March 2024 to five years on tag, so is now out on supervised ‘freedom’. Her three comrades – Ru, Tortuga and Panda – got between four-and-a-half to five years; only Tortuga was also allowed to serve this on tag. In March 2024 (before Tortuga got out), the three of them wrote that “[i]n prison it is difficult to deal with sorrow and anguish, because you have no room to let yourself slack. You can’t, for example, apply the classic ‘today I won’t get up’, ‘today I will rest and give myself a day to think’. Here the wheel doesn’t stop and you have to know how not to show weakness in front of screws and prisoners.

“Here you either grow stronger or you melt into the mud that covers everything around you, and for that great flow of energy that is required; conviction in our idea and pride in our actions

the chain of production and merchandise, for the bosses killing workers will always be the most economical and effective option, there is plenty of poor people.

“That March 8th is commemorated today is thanks to the effort and persistence of many who do not forget what happened that day, so for those of us who are committed to building antagonistic paths to the logic of the heteropatriarchal system, it is crucial not to stop remembering those who fertilized with tears and blood the ways of confrontation, thus we learn from those who were before us, from their successes and mistakes. In this way we give more accurate blows to this system of terror.”

The switch to March 8th relates to the old Russian calendar; by that system of counting, ‘our’ March 8th of 1917 marked International Women’s Day with a thousands-strong uprising in then-capital Petrograd against the ravages of the First World War and wide-spread hunger. Despite the ire of male ‘revolutionaries’ like Leon Trotsky (who wanted them to wait until May 1st – see Return Fire vol.3 pg87 – reduced by men like him to a male-centered annual worker protest), their rebellion grew into daily mass strikes against the autocracy of the Tsar, and, within a week, the abdication of the latter, ending his dynasty.

Naturally, none of these events are commonly celebrated in the recuperated March 8th events today.

As cited in Return Fire vol.6 chap.4, Mónica’s co-accused, Francisco Solar, had already assumed responsibility for the attacks of which he was accused – upon trial in November 2023, with a solidarity demonstration outside the court, he was sentenced to 86 years, and the prison authorities seem determined that he spend the maximum of that possible in isolation. Mónica received 12; she was charged with being accomplice to one of the actions only, the Tánica one (see Rebels Behind Bars; Francisco Assumes His Part in the Charges Against Him).

Mawühko: Arrested along with her comrade Tomás González in May 2022, after a confrontation following an identity check

determined, even when his jailers do not allow him to receive a hug, letters, or to touch and appreciate nature in the midst of these walls of grief and concrete. Alfredo daily shows us the strength of his conviction, his daily struggle for life, after more than 4 months [ed. – at the time of writing] of hunger strike. For those of us who are lovers of life, we know that there is no patient way to live locked up and isolated from our loved ones, from looking to the sky, from feeling the wind against our faces or from sitting under the shade given to us by a tree. He would rather die than be repentant and dominated.

We send a fraternal embrace to the mothers, sisters and daughters of all the prisoners who, on a day like today, died in the San Miguel prison fire.²³ To all those who make visible and continue to fight against femicides or hate attacks against their loved ones or friends, for Nicole Saavedra,²⁴ Ana Cook,²⁵ Mónica Briones²⁶ and so many others murdered for being women and/or gender dissidents. We also send a loving embrace of solidarity to all those who are fighting at points of confrontation in different territories;

of all authoritarian regimes, used regularly in the 41 bis regime, to burn all bridges with all emotional bonds outside of the prison.” Struggle goes on.

²³ ed. – see Rebels Behind Bars; Ten Years Since the Massacre in the San Miguel Prison

²⁴ ed. – 23-year-old student kidnapped, tortured, raped and murdered in El Melón, Chile, probably because she was a lesbian, by a man who also raped 9- and 12-year-old girls.

²⁵ ed. – Chilean DJ killed in her room in 2017, who became an emblem of feminist struggle against macho violence.

²⁶ ed. – Painter and sculptor whose 1984 murder during the dictatorship is considered the first documented case of a lesbophobic hate crime in Chile.

comrades of Wallmapu, Puelmapu,²⁷ Kurdistan,²⁸ Iran,²⁹ Wayuu,³⁰ Murui-Muina,³¹ Asháninka,³² Guaraní Kaiowá,³³ among many others: who today cannot be less than an inextinguishable fire in our minds and hearts, to continue striking, attacking and destroying every strand of this rotten system.

In relation to our prison, we will not tire of publicly denouncing the jailers who carry out humiliating practices against fellow inmates. It is common to observe in this prison that most of the prison guards reproduce practices prohibited in their own internal regulations. Day by day, the prison guards make the prisoners lower their trousers and underwear, as well as to open their legs, do squats and hold the squat for at least 30 seconds to perform body searches. They also make the inmates pull up their shirts, raise their bras and show their breasts, all to ensure that the *compañeras/es* do not carry “prohibited items” on their bodies. Many of these searches are carried out in front of corridors where male officers, interns, civil servants, etc. circulate, or are forced in the view of other prisoners. Months ago we denounced the application of this protocol in the visiting area; however, it continues to be applied to those deprived of liberty. Illegitimate pressures that are carried out constantly; when the inmates refuse to submit, they are threatened

²⁷ ed. – The parts of Wallmapu east of the Andes, today claimed by Argentina; see Return Fire vol.5 pg56

²⁸ ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg97

²⁹ ed. – see Iranian Anarchists on Protests in Response to Police Murder of Mahsa Amini

³⁰ ed. – Home of the Wayuu people (the largest indigenous group living under the Colombian and Venezuelan states).

³¹ ed. – Indigenous inhabitants of a reserve in Colombia.

³² ed. – The largest and most widespread indigenous group in the Amazon, straddling Peru and Brazil.

³³ ed. – One of three Guaraní sub-groups; their territory is crossed by Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina.

with the with-holding of their visits, deliveries and/or *venusterios*.³⁴ In addition there is never a lack of jailers who, when faced with complaints, only mock contemptuously and proceed to tighten the protocol with even more humiliating practices. Jailers are not comrades; no police are and never will be.

*Fire to the cis-tym[35] and to the whole prison society!*³⁵
Freedom to all subversive, anarchist
and Mapuche prisoners!

– Mónica Caballero Sepulveda, anarchist prisoner.

– Mawühko, anarchist prisoner.

– Itamar Diaz, anti-speciesist prisoner.

(some context on the imprisoned comrades:)

Mónica: [*continued from Return Fire vol.6 chap.3*] She has written multiple texts from prison on the occasion of previous March 8th commemorations, which stem from thousands-strong female garment-worker strike in New York City in 1908, lasting more than a year and seeing the first International Women’s Day dedication on February 20th 1909, spreading around the world.

As Mónica recounts in her March 2021 statement, “*There are those who have fragile memory, others simply ignore and there are some who better forget it. [...] In 1908, a group of workers organized themselves autonomously to confront and demand that the bosses end the conditions of misery in which they barely survived, this daring and courage was punished with a great massacre.*”

“*The powerful sought to end the strikes and sabotage with an amplifying measure so that no one would again try to break or obstruct*

³⁴ ed. – An allowance in the Chilean prison system is that in these spaces a prisoner can be intimate with a visiting partner, including sex: reserved for the “best behaved.”

³⁵ ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg7