# OT

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# Editorial

The evidence of climate change doesn't only rest in intricate atmospheric models, but in the material world around us: rising temperatures and sea levels, increased ocean acidification, desertification, etc. All impact on the basic necessities of life: land, food, water, shelter. These effects are typically experienced in the poorest regions of the world or among the poorest populations of rich regions.

Nobody realistically believes that the IPCC's warming target of 2°C to avoid 'dangerous climate change' will be met. Even institutions like the World Bank believe a 4-6°C increase before the century's end is already unavoidable. As certain changes become "locked-in" and feedback-loops take hold, the future becomes increasingly unpredictable. The effects of global warming will become progressively more devastating. Coastal regions will continue to disappear, more crops will fail, there will be a higher intensity and frequency of major weather events - all resulting in further conflict and mass migrations.

Capital's demand for continuous growth and accumulation is incompatible with continued human habitation on Earth. Global and state institutions have proven themselves incapable of reversing the warming (global emissions have risen 61% since 1990), opting for "solutions" from within the same controlling logic that created the problem in the first place. The end of humanity seems distant to a political economy whose horizon is the next quarterly statement. The desire to permanently postpone the future is revealed in places like California, where the irrigated deserts and watered lawns of Hollywood produce succulent fruit and perversely exhilarating moving images of collapsing monuments and plucky survivors so pervasive they have shaped the popular imagination of what The End will look like. Meanwhile, the Colorado River runs dry and the reservoirs empty.

It is also crucial to recognise that apocalypses are relative; human cultures, religions and political forms have continually faced their own annihilation. A world was destroyed when racism, religious bigotry and capitalist expansion wiped numerous indigenous American tribes, their cultures and histories off the face of the Earth. Today, cultures and populations continue to struggle for survival at the mercy of particular social forces so totalising and cataclysmic that they now threaten to destroy all worlds. Warning signs can already be seen within existing structures and social relations. Anti-immigrant, eugenicist and population control ideologies become further cemented in political and media culture while greater extremes of inequality and ever more repressive and securitised state apparatus become both by-products and "solutions". It isn't acceptable for members of the most oppressive groups to be considered the legitimate source of alarm of this latest wave of annihilation over and above all others (that didn't threaten them). And it's positively offensive for climate social movements and NGOs to attempt to flatten out racial and class struggles for the "greater good of humanity".

The Apocalypse we are faced with now emerges from the very existence of class society. All struggle against this social arrangement, therefore, itself *becomes* 'the environmental movement'. Anti-fracking and anti-tar sands movements, led by indigenous tribes and local communities, remain imperative. But equally central is continuing, bolstering and escalating struggles against prisons, racism, gentrification, state violence.

Overlapping endings leave ruins in their wake, which many communities appear to be able to sense the outlines of, attempting to build from the remains. The chaos left after disasters often allow for communities to reassert an almost innate sense of communism, where mutual aid replaces the centralised provision of "state aid". We only need look to the recent occupation on the Carpenter's Estate in East London to see this in action: where Newham Council saw only vacant remains on a piece of prime real estate, Focus E15 Mums saw instead homes - offering us a hopeful glimpse of a world ready to be rebuilt from the ruins.

**The Occupied Times of London**

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# SOCIAL HOUSING, NOT SOCIAL CLEANSING

by Focus E15 Mums

photo by Jack Dean

The Focus E15 campaign was established to challenge Newham Council's policies of expelling the poor and vulnerable of London to towns and cities hundreds of miles away. The Labour-run council claim that there is no housing in Newham. This is a lie. Thousands of properties lie empty and boarded up in this borough of east London. The campaign began in September 2013 after Newham Council withdrew funding from the Focus E15 young people's hostel and its mother and baby unit. East Thames Housing Association initially threatened to evict the young mothers and have since extended this threat to some of the single residents as well.

Focus E15 is a hostel in Stratford, east London, run by East Thames Housing Association to accommodate young people under 25. On 20 August 2013, mothers and their babies received eviction notices ordering them to be out of their flats by 20 October. The young mothers were referred to a Newham Council housing office and were registered as officially homeless. They were told to look for private rented accommodation, but soon found that almost none accepted people on benefits or that the flats they did find were already gone by the time the council could intervene to help secure the property. It became clear that the young mothers and babies would be offered properties in Manchester, Birmingham or Hastings and if they said no they would be deemed to be making themselves "intentionally homeless".

In the words of Jasmin Stone, one of the mothers who started the campaign: "This meant we would have no support network… our children wouldn't know their families. We decided to fight for what's right. We began an active campaign gathering signatures for our petition and wrote to the council. We met with Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! who have helped from the beginning, standing side by side with us every week at our Saturday stall."

The campaign is vibrant and exciting, making links with individuals and groups, housing activists and anti-austerity campaigners. We have occupied Newham Council's Bridge House housing office, held a party in the East Thames Housing association show flat, taken an open air bus to central London to deliver petitions to Boris Johnson and organised a march through Newham. We have repeatedly challenged Labour Mayor of Newham, Robin Wales; in his surgery, at a public council meeting and at the annual Newham Mayor's show (where he became very abusive at being challenged on his policies). Our message was loud and clear: that Newham's Labour council is operating a policy of social cleansing - which forces young vulnerable homeless people, including mothers and children, out of London, while council properties in the borough remain boarded up.

Since September 2013 the Focus E15 campaign has held a weekly Saturday street stall with open mic, petitioning and leafleting. We've collected stories from the hundreds of people who have stopped at the stall who are also facing social cleansing and the insecurity and unaffordability of the private-rented sector.

A big victory of the campaign has been that all the mothers and babies have been housed in Newham with not one family being sent out of London. However, these are all short-term tenancies in the private rented sector - insecure and expensive housing, and by February 2015 all the mothers will be faced with the possibility of having to move again.

Jasmin Stone says: "The campaign has grown majorly and we have noticed it isn't just mothers being affected. We have decided to widen the campaign for everyone. We are fighting for everybody with housing problems and offer our full support. We will fight for as long as it takes to stop the privatisation of London and stop social cleansing. We are fighting for social housing for all, a home that everyone can afford, where they feel comfortable and have the support network that we all need!"

Last year Robin Wales was in Cannes in the south of France where he attended the world's biggest annual property fair, MIPIM (Marche International des Professionels d'Immobilier – the International Market of Real Estate Professionals). Twenty thousand people attended this jamboree, at the cost of €1,600 each, where government representatives alongside multinational companies and property developers from all over the world come together to further their financial interests and work out how to make the most money out of housing with no regard for those who actually need somewhere to live. Robin Wales defends his attendance, claiming that "it's not costing the public purse a penny, it's all paid for by our development partners." Companies present included LendLease who bought the Heygate Estate in south London, where 1,000 council homes have been lost and just 71 of the new homes being built will be for council/social housing.

Newham has the highest overcrowding rate in the country at 25%, the third highest child poverty rates in London, the second highest unemployment rates and one third of its residents are in low paid work - the highest proportion of any London borough. Newham has been exporting their vulnerable residents for years. Prior to the Olympics in 2012, they attempted to move 500 families claiming housing benefit to Stoke-on-Trent. Meanwhile, housing built for the Olympics remains empty. This lengthy track record of anti-working class practices establishes the importance of Focus E15 continuing to pressure the council and make local Labour leaders accountable.

Jasmin Stone says: "Newham is becoming a place for only the rich! We need to stop this happening. Homes should be for living, not for profit. The council oversees the building of luxury apartments which not even working people on an average wage can afford. East London was originally a place for the poor, now the poor are being shunted out of London. Council homes are being deliberately abandoned and damaged by the council leading to demolition. Carpenters estate in Stratford is an example of this happening with decent homes being left empty for years on end."

Opened in 1970, Carpenters Estate occupies 23 acres of land in Stratford and constitutes 2000 houses and flats with a shop, a pub and lots of green space. It is a lovely place which has been home to generations of families, young people and elderly people, couples and single residents. Now, it is home to only a couple of hundred people as Newham Council continues its attempt to empty the homes, remove their residents and demolish the estate leaving thousands of empty flats in the tower blocks and boarded up maisonettes and flats in the low rise sections.

In May 2013, University College London was forced to withdraw its controversial plans, negotiated with Newham Council, to build a £1 billion campus overlooking the Olympic Park in Stratford on the Carpenters Estate site. The deal was defeated by a militant and dedicated campaign made up of residents from the estate called Carpenters Against Regeneration Plans (CARP), alongside students from UCL. Focus E15 campaigners met Mary Finch, central to CARP, who has lived on the estate since it was built. She told Focus E15 that the future remains uncertain. Carpenters Estate sits on prime land that Newham Council wants for commercial and money-making purposes and doesn't care about working class communities, their homes or their security.

People in hostels such as Focus E15, those in B&B accommodation, those falling into rent arrears because of soaring private rents and consequently facing eviction, are being forced out of London into insecure and expensive accommodation while homes lie empty and should be filled with those who need them. What an Olympic legacy after billions of pounds were pumped into the borough.

In one of the richest countries in the world, with an increasingly divided society where inequality is growing and the vulnerable and poor are treated with contempt, where apathy flourishes and fear is instilled in most people, the Focus E15 campaign is showing that collective inclusive action with an imaginative and brave agenda, weekly street events and regular public organising meetings can challenge the status quo and achieve results.

Join us!

Keep up the pressure!

Make common cause with all those fighting the cuts!

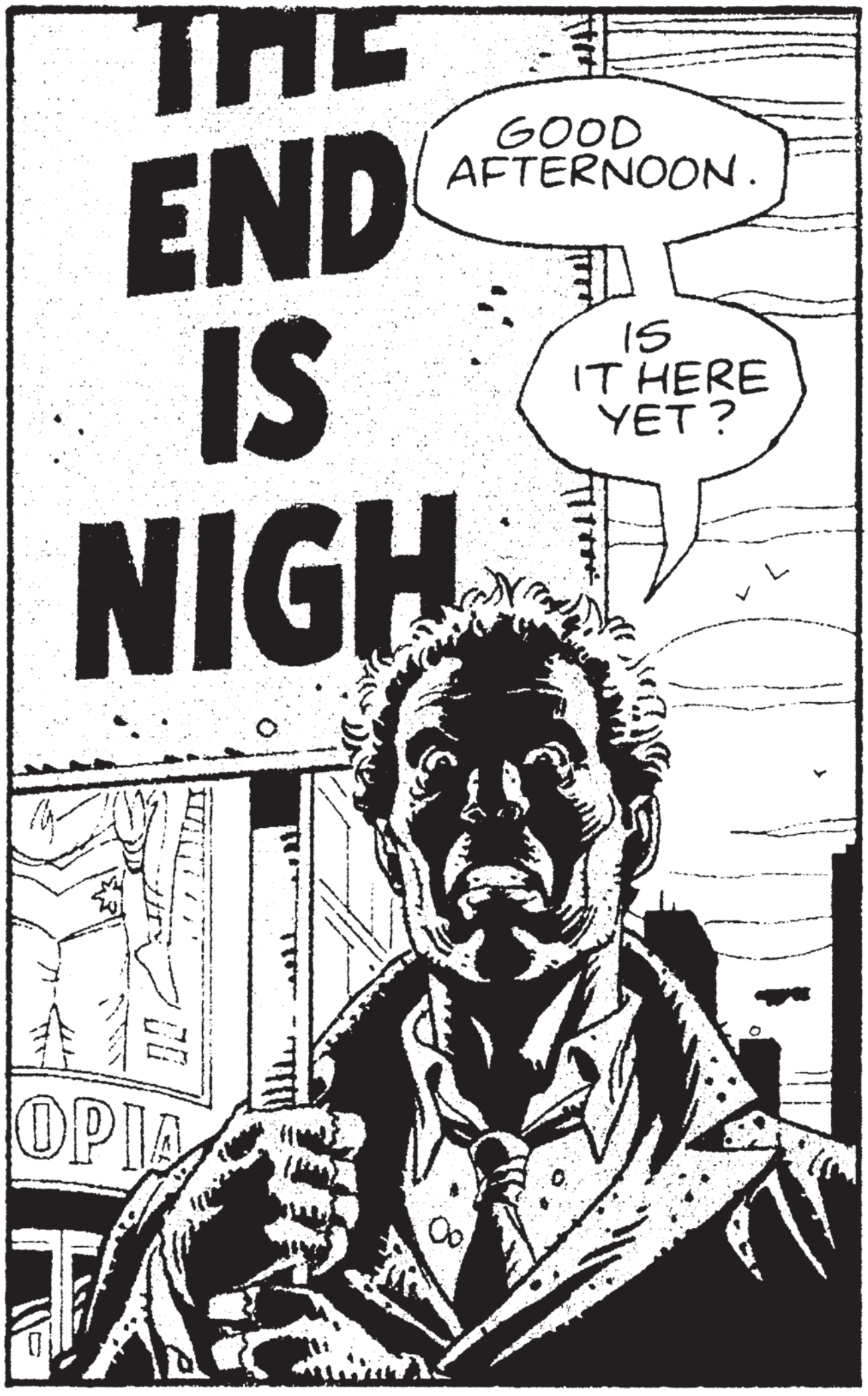
*Focus E15 recently made national news when campaigners occupied an empty property on the Carpenter's Estate in East London. They have since left the occupation which yet again revealed the abusive and anti-democratic behaviour of Newham Council and mayor Robin Wales. The group continues to campaign for the repopulation of the estate – Focus E15 Mothers on facebook.*

# Evangelical Individualism:
# Going It Alone at the End of Time

by Robert Glenn Howard

When we think of evangelical Christians today, we do not often imagine them forming small groups on the estates of their wealthiest adherents, reducing their reliance on infrastructure, and fostering a radical anti-establishment politics based on communal property. But the earliest Christians did just that. If you can forgive the anachronism, you could say they practiced a radical form of socialism characterised by common ownership. Today apocalyptic Christian believers might also eagerly await the return of Christ, but most of them aren't selling their possessions and moving onto farming collectives while they wait.

A text from 130 AD, "The Epistle to Diognetus," describes the "striking method of life" whereby diverse and dispersed Christians lived in the large cosmopolitan cities of Rome, "as citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners." Historians tell us that the early Christian churches were "*ecclesiae*" or loose networks of people who met or possibly moved into in each others' homes to wait for an imminent return of a god who would judge their enemies and unify their souls with the divine. While they waited, they sought to establish a communal social fabric that provided an alternate to that of the hegemonic economic and civil structures of the Roman Empire. With their refusal to pay taxes, which took the form of sacrifices to the pagan divinities including the Emperor himself, the Christians were persecuted by mainstream society. As their numbers swelled, they remained radical "foreigners" in every land until (their messiah still not returned) the Roman Emperor Constantine gave up getting rid of them and made their leaders judges in local courts in 313 AD. Then they largely gave up waiting for God in 426 AD when St. Augustine declared the doctrine of Christ's imminent return and judgment to be a spiritual instead of a political message. Christians became the hegemonic force instead of the resistance, and the rest is, as they say, history.




While doing the research for my study of how contemporary evangelical Christians are using the internet to form communities, *Digital Jesus* (2011 NYU), I was struck when one couple told me that by using social media to talk about the "End Times" they were acting "like first century Christians." With the help of today's digital network technologies, these Christians can virtually meet in their homes. They can study and practice their beliefs without the leadership of ministers or priests. They can foster a shared sense that the end is near and that the hegemonic forces of mainstream society are persecuting them. One big difference between the 1st and these 21st century Christians is, however, that while some specific groups probably do practice communal ownership, of the hundreds of individuals I have located and the many I have interviewed online over the last 20 years or so, I have not met one apocalyptic Christian believer who also practices the communal ownership of their ancient counterparts.

Why not? What is different? With the rest of us around here, contemporary apocalypse Christians are profoundly individualistic.

Believers today can use social media to locate hundreds of thousands of others who quietly believe the same thing: that they each individually possess special knowledge that mainstream society does not. Sharing advice and links to obscure websites and stores, they can help each other ready themselves and their families for the turbulent times before Christ's return when Christians will be persecuted by a one-world government. The apocalyptic believers of the 1st century seemed to believe the same thing, in the 21st century these believers can connect with each other individually without having to connect with anything collectively. Studying network communication technologies for more than 20 years now, I am struck by how these technologies possess the power to both connect and isolate.

On the internet, every node is designed to operate independently even if every other node ceased to operate. The basic technology of the internet, TCP/IP and its ability to deliver data in packets, connects us, but it also isolates us because it encourages us to imagine ourselves as radically independent from the social fabric in which we live. Radical activist and apocalyptic prepper alike rely on the corporations and governments that make digital networks work, and separation from them would make our individualism simply impossible.

Today, individuals can use social media to locate each other, share ideas, and even act communally. We can redeploy the mundane medium where we post pictures of our kids to create powerful political protests based on our ongoing engagement with like-minded others. In this sense, we are far more connected to each other than were the 1st century Christians. However, we are not, as they were, forced to engage our beliefs side-by-side with nonbelievers. The 1st century Christians couldn't order $8000.00 worth of nitrogen packed emergency meals from TheSurvivalPlace.Com and put them in their suburban basement. Living in the cosmopolitan cities of the Roman Empire, they would have to engage their neighbours to grow and store that food—often face-to-face; in this sense they were embedded in the larger communities of their times in ways believers today do not need to be. The early Christians chose communal ownership and cooperative labour as the only way to loosen the hold mainstream society had on their daily lives because they had no ability to connect with each other alongside but apart from their real-world neighbours. Apocalyptic believers today have an easier road because, with TheSurvivalPlace.Com as a resource, they can travel that road more or less alone.

The 21st century's surge of individuals thinking about and even adhering to apocalyptic ideas is no doubt partially a result of the increasing anxiety caused by a near constant bombardment with images and stories of a world ridden with political unrest and natural disaster, careening toward an assured destruction. Unlike the 1st century, however, today's apocalypticism is radically individualistic and characterised by a profound sense that we can go-it-alone at the end of time. And these believers today are not so different from our political activists--or even our daily lives. Today's radical individualism seems to be a product of our overall sense that we are not so much a collective as we are a collection of individuals; and this sense of individuality has been made available to us in very real ways by our 21st century technologies. Technologies to which the communal Christians of the 1st century had no access.

*www.rghoward.com*

by Kerem Nisancioglu

# APOCALYPSE THEN

A Tupi-Guarani tribe seeking the 'Land-without-Evil', a Mughal Sultan quizzing a Catalan Jesuit about the Last Judgement, a German theologian yelling 'omnia sunt communia!'; each in some way anticipated an impending finality to the world around them, an end of times. From the Americas, through Europe, to the Indian Ocean littoral, the long sixteenth century was peculiarly rife with artists, thinkers, states and social movements that constructed their politics around Apocalypse. What explains the prevalence of these apocalyptic expectations? Was there some connection between each instance? Might the common emphasis on the Apocalypse disclose some shared historical experience among these otherwise disparate communities?

The argument offered here is that Apocalypse and its associated ideas of catastrophe and salvation tend to arise 'in a historical context in which one mode of production and life is being supplanted by another'. In the case of the sixteenth century, this involved the breakdown of agrarian modes and the emergence of a process of primitive accumulation that would mark the origins of capitalism.

Such themes are anticipated in Albrecht Dürer's 1498 *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, in which the four harbingers of reckoning furiously rout all before them. Straddling the horses of 'pestilence', 'war', 'famine', and 'death', each signifies the choke points of feudalism: the bubonic plague, internecine military competition, the vicissitudes of agrarian production, and demographic fluctuations. Meanwhile, a diabolical monster drags members of the ruling class into hell, representing and demonising the widespread rebellions that would attack the institutions of serfdom, empire and papacy from below. The extensive reproduction of Dürer's *Book of Revelations* (there were 750 editions and commentaries from 1498-1650) suggests that his vision resonated throughout the sixteenth century, among the ruling and ruled classes alike, capturing the turmoil of a mode of production nearing its end.

The destruction of peasant life and subsequent reordering of social relationships was earth-shattering for many, generating in turn millennial hopes of a Final Judgement and salvation that informed rural rebellions and revolts. For Martin Luther, whose *95 theses* would trigger the religious revolts of the Reformation, prophecies of the Last Days functioned as a critique of Catholic and princely excesses. The eschatology of 'End Time' and messianic prophecy was also central to movements such as the Anabaptists, who pushed the Reformation in more radical directions, by calling for the liberation of 'The Elect' – the common people – and annihilation of private property. Most notably, in the German town of Münster, Anabaptists ousted the clerico-aristocratic elite and set about constructing an autonomous 'New Jerusalem' based on absolute equality, polygamy, mutual aid and the communal ownership of land and goods.

But it is instructive to also look beyond Europe. In addition to Tupi-Guarani migrations, the millenarian Taki Unquy movement emerged in resistance to colonial penetration in South America. Advocating Pan-Andean revivalism, they prophesied that a rejection of Spanish customs – clothing, religion, tributes, and labour services – would revive local gods that were present in the mountains, water, animals and rocks. Consequently, the Spanish would be destroyed in a wave of pestilence and floods. The eschatological emphasis on the sources of communal rights such as land and water demonstrate that Taki Unquy – like their European contemporaries – expressed more than other-worldly aspirations. Apocalypse was imminent and terrestrial, an event in which the 'living could participate'. In this respect, the economic and political aims of purging ruling classes and reasserting communal rights were seen as instrumental to – and functions of – apocalyptic hopes.

The social disorder created by these global movements confronted the ruling class as an existential threat – the coming of the Last Days. Dürer's Apocalypse thus neatly encapsulated angst among the rich and powerful, helping to render explicable a world that was increasingly uncontrollable and unrecognisable. At the same time, images such as Dürer's were summoned to articulate strategies for dealing with that world. Demons, monsters and witches – omens of cataclysm – would play a central role in the acts of colonisation, enclosure and plunder.

In the Americas, Franciscan millenarianism was central to the colonial project. The accidental discovery of the New World appeared symptomatic, an 'Earthly paradise' which offered colonisers the opportunity to construct a 'really existing' Garden of Eden. Here the conversion of indigenous populations appeared as 'a spiritual challenge afforded by God', and was regularly promoted by Spanish colonialists as the primary mission in the Americas. But undergirding this utopian project was something considerably more insidious since colonisers, belligerent or benevolent, saw the lack of Christianity as a marker of 'savagery' and 'backwardness' among local populations.

By formulating difference as absence, a hierarchy between the Spanish and indigenous communities was constructed that legitimised Spanish conquest and rule (a practice that prefigured 'the civilising mission' and 'white man's burden'). Insofar as movements such as the Taki Unquy and Tupi-Guarani resisted Spanish rule and conversion, they were seen as monstrous harbingers of a Satanic world. The demonisation of local populations led to the banning of local customs, destruction of idols and temples, and the hunting and mass slaughter of anyone who resisted – in short, what the Spanish called 'just war' (the logic remains today, now as 'humanitarian intervention'). Stripped of their autonomy and removed from any communal access to the means of subsistence, indigenous workers were thus subordinated to the reproductive requirements of the colonial system.

Simultaneously in Europe, the ruling class saw among the multitude of landless peasants, vagrants, servants, pirates, women, migrants and resistance movements bearers of the Last Days – demons, monsters and witches. As symbols and agents of chaos, they represented a threat to a ruling class grasping for stability. The latter would eventually turn to terror and coercion in order to discipline the common people by enclosing land, dispossessing peasants, punishing vagrancy and burning women at the stake. Each practice was built on the demonisation of certain sections of society – vagrants as monsters, women as witches. Here, anxieties of a forthcoming Apocalypse conveyed and legitimised the ruling class strategies of separating people from land, and separating people from each other – that is, the destruction of the commons as a sphere of production and communality as a mode of life.

These processes would eventually prove constitutive of the creation of a class of people with no direct access to the means of subsistence, and with nothing to sell other than their labour-power – that is, the creation of the modern proletariat, and capitalism as such. And as many authors have noted, processes denoted by 'primitive' accumulation remain integral to the continuing reproduction of capitalism, be it via forced evictions, IMF-led structural adjustment, or 'Shock and Awe' military tactics. It is perhaps for this reason why millenarian movements continued to sporadically arise in the process of capitalism's penetration into various communities in the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It may also explain why secularised versions of the End Times still capture our imagination. Where destructive methods of dispossession and 'creative' systems of accumulation persistently intersect, where capital supplants living labour with dead labour, where these 'moving contradictions' trigger economic crises, wars, ecological catastrophes, demographic disasters, and mass immiseration, the Apocalypse abounds.

# The Project of Making History

by Brian Tokar

Today it often feels as though we are hopelessly mired in apocalyptic thinking, both in our social movements and in popular culture. From Hollywood blockbusters to art house dystopias, and from hip-hop lyrics to "serious" literature, images of irreversible climate chaos, interminable warfare, and total societal collapse seem increasingly inescapable. Apocalyptic visions appear equally pervasive in current radical discourse, from Derrick Jensen's popular "end of civilisation" treatises from the US west coast to the more contemplative but perhaps equally despairing works of Paul Kingsnorth and the rest of the UK Dark Mountain group.

For some, such outlooks are simply the logical conclusion of even a cursory examination of current climate science. If we don't stop burning fossil fuels within the next few years – a prospect that seems unimaginable in the current political context – we could face global warming of 4-6°C by the end of this century, resulting in the collapse of the relatively stable patterns of weather and climate that have helped sustain human life on earth for thousands, and likely tens of thousands of years. In the absence of any semblance of a meaningful global agreement to curtail climate pollution, how can we possibly fend off utter catastrophe?

For some youthful radicals, the prospect of a civilisational collapse is invigorating: the more dire a future we face, the greater the urgency of revolutionary action and the more inviting the challenge. But for most people, facing the unthinkable is merely a path to despair and disengagement: If apocalypse is inevitable, why bother with activism at all? More people will prefer to just dig in, refocusing their energies toward the private sphere and the pleasures (or struggles) of everyday life. One recent study suggests that broad scientific literacy only correlates strongly with climate awareness in relatively progressive-minded circles; for most people, it appears far more important to fit in with the inclinations of one's own social group than to embrace any particular understanding of the truth.

A recent book, *Catastrophism: The Apocalyptic Politics of Collapse and Rebirth*, by four North American activist-scholars, describes in some detail how apocalyptic thinking has historically been a dead-end for the left, a chronic enabler for the right, and an outlook that radical movements embrace at their peril. "The politics of fear," they argue, "play to the strengths of the right, not the left," and best serve those interests that are "against equality and for war, hierarchy and state violence."

In contrast, as social movement historian Richard Flacks has shown, people will willingly disrupt the patterns of their daily lives to engage in the project of "making history" once they have a tangible sense that a better way is possible. This, for Flacks, is among the historic roles of democratic popular movements: to further the idea "that people are capable of and ought to be making their own history, that the making of history ought to be integrated with everyday life, that [prevailing] social arrangements … can and must be replaced by frameworks that permit routine access and participation by all in the decisions that affect their lives."

We now know that events over the next few years and the decades that follow will determine whether the destabilisation of the climate will be disruptive and difficult, or catastrophic and extreme. We know the world has both the technical and financial means to end the world's dependence on fossil fuels and transform our energy systems. We also know it's possible to enjoy a significantly higher quality of life at much lower levels of personal consumption than we are daily being sold on. This is largely because we now live under an inherently wasteful economic system that eschews any limits to its expansion and growth, a capitalist system that produces in opulent excess, even as a couple of billion people lack the means to satisfy their most basic human needs.

A large portion of the system's productive capacity mainly serves conspicuous consumption and advertising, or warfare and militarism. In the US, 40 percent of the food that is produced goes to waste every year. In this period of widespread economic stagnation, the expansion of US infrastructure to extract and distribute fossil fuels is expanding at its fastest pace since the economic boom years of the 1950s. This even as scientists affirm that at least three-quarters of known fossil fuel reserves need to remain in the ground to avoid utter climate chaos. At current oil prices, technologies for tapping "unconventional" sources of oil and gas, such as hydro-fracking, horizontal drilling, deepwater drilling, and oil extraction from tar sands—once seen as hypothetically possible but economically prohibitive—have become central to the fossil fuel industry's plans for the future. Fortunately, communities around the world that are faced with the most immediate consequences of "extreme energy" extraction are organising, helping to spark wider, reinvigorated global opposition.

The future of humanity, and indeed much of life on earth, now depends on the flourishing of those communities of resistance. From people facing threats from fracking or new oil and gas pipelines, to indigenous and other land-based peoples engaged in long term struggles against accelerated resource extraction – as well as urban communities that are highly vulnerable to temperature extremes and other environmental health threats – the call for climate justice is a potentially unifying message. In other settings, people are reclaiming the potential for localising food systems and creating community-owned energy alternatives. With proposed top-down solutions faltering – from climate diplomacy to corporate-owned solar and wind farms – the long-standing historical promise of a movement of movements may be our best hope for redeeming the future.

In the 1970s and early 1980s a very decentralised grassroots anti-nuclear movement in Europe and the US prevented the construction of hundreds more nuclear power plants, often embracing a prefigurative politics of community-based direct action rooted in an internal praxis of direct democracy. Many groups called not only for an end to nuclear power, but also offered a vision of a new social order, rooted in solar-powered communities poised to reclaim their political future as well as their energy future. Efforts to redesign buildings and public spaces, and to "green" entire cities, were among that movement's important offshoots, as was the emergence of Green politics on both sides of the Atlantic. Some activists drew inspiration from the writings of Murray Bookchin and other social ecologists who explored the social and political roots of environmental problems and offered reconstructive visions of a fundamentally transformed society rooted in popular power and confederated direct democracies.

Clearly today there is no single blueprint for social transformation, but rather a renewed culture of resistance and a search for new dynamic processes of social and ecological renewal. Peace studies scholar Randall Amster correctly states that our utopian projects "are properly viewed as ongoing experiments and not finished products." In the early 1960s (well before the wide acceptance of non-sexist language), the future studies pioneer Frederick Polak wrote that "… if Western man [sic] now stops thinking and dreaming the materials of new images of the future and attempts to shut himself up in the present, out of longing for security and for fear of the future, his civilisation will come to an end. He has no choice but to dream or to die, condemning the whole of Western society to die with him." This is equally true across boundaries of gender and social status, and is no longer limited to the West. While some may still cheer on the proverbial 'end of civilisation,' a liveable future for everyone depends on a far more challenging, but also far more hopeful project of ecological and social renewal.

*A newly revised and expanded edition of Brian Tokar's* Toward Climate Justice*, has just been issued by the New Compass Press (new-compass.net). He is the director of the Institute for Social Ecology and a lecturer in environmental studies at the University of Vermont.*

# FETISHISMS OF APOCALYPSE

**by Larry Lohmann**

To anybody who has ever gone around Europe or North America giving talks or workshops on environmental politics, the scene will be familiar. At some stage a person sitting in the front row will stand up to wonder aloud what the point of the discussion is given that the world is going to hell so fast. A list of terrifying trends will then be laid out. At least three "planetary boundaries" out of nine have already been breached. Humanity now appropriates between 20 and 40 per cent of nature's net primary production. The proportion of atmospheric carbon dioxide is now higher than it was 10 or 15 million years ago, when sea levels were 100 feet above current levels. If temperatures continue to rise and release even a small amount of the carbon still locked up in the soils and ocean bottoms of the Arctic, we're fucked. If any doubt remains about whether apocalypse is really on the way, just look at all those crashed civilisations of the past (Easter Island and the Maya are regularly invoked) who also failed to pay attention to "ecological limits".

The tone of the recital is that of a grim call to order. Those present have just not been registering the facts, and clearly the volume has to be turned up. Why sit around sharing experiences of financialisation, environmental racism, or the enclosure of commons when climate change is about to fry all of us? There's no time for social transformation. Ruling elites have to be persuaded to act in their own interest now. So obvious is all this to the person in the front row that at this point they may just get up and leave – not so much in protest at the triviality of the proceedings nor out of conscious disrespect for the other participants as from a sense that now that the people present have been alerted to the situation, it's time to take the message elsewhere.

In a meeting of the kind I describe, the front-row apocalyptician will probably get a respectful hearing. This is a person, after all, in possession of an impressive body of research and statistics – and more than justified in insisting that the *status quo* is untenable. Yet one or two things are likely, rightly, to raise a tremor of unease among those present.

One is the implicit dismissal of class politics. The apocalyptician's reasoning is as follows. We're talking about a catastrophe that could kill everybody and everything. Who could have an interest in bringing *that* on? No need now for the Marxist project of trying to understand how capital accumulation continually *recreates* human interest in destruction, because, *ex hypothesi*, no one could ever want destruction to that extent. Catastrophic climate change makes distinctions between hotel room cleaners and hedge fund managers irrelevant. "People" become the universal political subject. Climate politics moves out of the realm of, say, class struggle between workers in Chicago and the financiers of energy projects that pollute their neighbourhoods, or between indigenous bands in the Amazon and the oil companies despoiling their territories. Instead, it becomes – to quote the words of US climate movement guru Bill McKibben – a battle in which generic "human beings" collectively learn to submit to the Great Other of "physics and chemistry".

For the apocalyptician, the spectre of universal catastrophe may look like a good way of rallying a middle class who may not directly suffer from the impact of fossil-fuelled globalisation. But for many listeners, to flatten out existing social conflict in this way feels disempowering. If the threat of global collapse is supposed to spur us all toward concerted action, why does it seem instead to paralyse the political imagination, spook ordinary people into putting their rebellious instincts on ice, and deaden discussion among different social movements about the lessons of their struggles? Why does it lead so easily to despair or indifference – or even to a sort of sado-masochistic or death-wishy pleasure in the pornography of doom? And why do the remedies proposed – "we need a crash programme to keep atmospheric concentrations of $CO_2$ equivalent below 350 parts per million" – sound so parochial?

Indeed, instead of unifying political struggles, apocalyptic obsessions often seem to shrink transformative politics to the vanishing point. Slavoj Zizek has remarked that whereas it is precisely out of struggles against particular forms of oppression that "a properly universal dimension explodes ... and is directly experienced as universal", "post-political" campaigns against abstractions like "$CO_2$" suffocate movement expansion because they close off possibilities for people to see their own strivings as a "metaphoric condensation" of global class struggles.

Yet isn't the deeper problem with the appeal to apocalypse not that it is "apolitical", but that it is all *too* political in a pernicious way? Not that it is "disempowering", but that it is all *too* empowering of the technocratic and privileged classes?

Take climate apocalypse stories, which are currently reinforcing the old capitalist trick of splitting the world into discrete, undifferentiated monoliths called Society and Nature at precisely a time when cutting-edge work on the left – often taking its cue from indigenous peoples', peasants' and commoners' movements – is moving to undermine this dualism. On the apocalyptic view, a fatally-unbalanced Nature is externalised into what Neil Smith called a "super-determinant of our social fate," forcing a wholly separate Society to homogenise itself around elite managers and their technological and organisational fixes.

Thus disaster movies – not to mention the disaster stories broadcast on the news every evening – are not produced just to feed our sneaking joy in mayhem. They also present narratives of technocratically-minded stars responding on our behalf to "external" threats in which they are portrayed as having played little part. Books like *Collapse* by Jared Diamond, meanwhile, replace complicated political stories of long-term survival, struggle, and creative renewal among civilisations like those of the Easter Islanders or the Maya with fables of apocalypse and extinction in which one non-European society after another supposedly wipes itself out through its rulers' failure to "manage" the Menace from Nature. By "disappearing" entire peoples and their adaptations, this manoeuvre merely applies to the past the tendency of apocalypticism to hide the complexities of current conflicts involving imperialism, racism and capitalism.

The expert Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) follows the same procedure, avoiding collective inquiry into the ins and outs of capital accumulation in favour of a simplistic narrative pitting Society against a Nature consisting of greenhouse gas molecules. Except that unlike the apocalyptician visiting the activist meeting, who *chooses* to get up and leave after speaking, the IPCC is actually statutorily *required* to "present the global warming science" as if it contained a politics-free message from Nature itself, requiring no discussion, and then get up and walk out in order to allow the sanitised missive to sink into Society (a.k.a. the delegates to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change).

Although they can hardly be accused of drawing back from analysing the dynamics of capital, some flavour of this approach lingers on even among some thinkers on the left such as John Bellamy Foster and Naomi Klein, who, contemplating apocalypse, are tempted to fall back on creaking Cartesian slogans according to which not only does Capitalism act on a wholly separate Nature ("Capitalism's War on the Earth"), but Nature itself somehow acquires that long-coveted ability to overthrow Capitalism ("This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate").

Apocalypse stories are always about rule. Every community, perhaps, recounts its own apocalypses, paired with its own ideals of elite or revolutionary response. St. John's biblical apocalypse found its answer in God's infinite love. In early capitalist England, the threatened apocalypse of rebellion on the part of an emerging, uprooted proletariat was countered by, among other things, a new discipline of abstract Newtonian time that promised to keep everyone in line. Marxist visions of capitalist apocalypse are typically matched with projections of political redemption through revolution. Southeast Asian millenarianists gambled on a moral cleansing of the worldly order, as do some survivalists in the contemporary US, where doomsday religious rhetoric has often gone hand in hand with rampant extractivism and free-market ideology.

The prototype modern apocalypse story is perhaps that of Malthus, with his 1798 vision of uncontrollably breeding hordes whose ravening after land would "sink the whole world in universal night". Helping justify the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, Malthus's tale also energised murderous 19th-century famine policies in British India, powered Garrett Hardin's 20th-century polemics against commons and communism and serves as an unacknowledged foundation for countless World Bank economic reports and research projects in biology and "natural resource management". Finding an echo in Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" apocalypse speech, it also haunts the immigration policies of UKIP and other British political parties.

Of equally enduring influence has been the slow-motion apocalypse prefigured by 19th-century thermodynamics: heat death, when capital can extract no more work from the universe, all the lights go out, and the machines rumble to a halt. While this particular catastrophe story has ceased to be the object of the obsessive brooding that it was among North Atlantic intellectual classes in the 1800s, it too remains active today, hovering ghostlike in the background of every post-Taylorian drive to sweat labour and other resources, as well as every energy-saving programme or excited politician's appeal to the "white heat of technology" or "increased efficiency for national competitiveness".

In the global warming debate as well, apocalypse has come to be invoked mainly to tell us what will happen if we don't adopt innovative business practices. Al Gore's famous documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, heightened viewers' anxiety about global warming by enjoining them to think of themselves as frogs being slowly boiled alive, only to climax with a paean to capitalist competition and the "renewable resource" of US "political will". In *Carbon*, an August 2014 climate campaign video from the Leonardo di Caprio Foundation, cartoons of a rampaging, Transformer-like "fossil fuel robot" without a human face stomping around the planet laying waste to all living things alternate with interviews with bland, besuited North American and European technocrats and politicians drawling about carbon prices as the solution to all our climate problems. Which half of this composite vision is the more terrifying is, for me, an open question.

by Arran James & Michael Pyska

# FROM THE RUINS

**"Emancipation is for us the meaning of nihilism."**

**Gianni Vattimo**

What comes after nihilism? This question might seem impertinent given the actual state and trajectory of things. Everywhere traditional, reactionary, and localising ideologies compete, conflict and continue colonising and recolonising the discursive terrains of our political and personal lives. This scattered and unevenly distributed field of actualisation has made it increasingly difficult to maintain semblances of coherence at all levels. How then can we claim to grasp what comes *after* nihilism while our cultural-subjective fields are still littered by the decaying corpses of quasi-religious, religious and secular-romantic narratives that had previously promised us much but are delivering very little? Have we even begun to evacuate the spaces of reasoning which have led our species to the brink of social disintegration and ecological collapse? How can we be *beyond* something not yet fully actualised?

Despite the seeming lag in understanding our contemporary disarray, recent events – from the 2008 financial crash, the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, and the intensification of global climate change, to the ongoing international acquiescence of Israel's occupation and destruction of Gazan communities, and the handling of protesters in Ferguson, Missouri – have demonstrated the *hollowness* of even our most cherished and guiding Western sentiments about democracy, justice, human progress. Instead we have entered a phase in which the cultural-subjective condition of nihilism has exploded beyond any local philosophical manifestation to become the objective condition of the world.

Simultaneously, the hardly digested lessons of our sciences are leading in the direction of the realisation of the ultimate purposelessness of existence. Successive discoveries from Darwinism, the heat death of the universe, artificial intelligence and the limitations of human cognition, to the demotion of introspective and phenomenological accounts of the world to second-string players.

If nihilism is in large part an unraveling of traditional structures of meaning, accompanied by the collapse of certainty, then scientific suggestions about the limits of human knowability and its supporting unconscious operations can only serve to intensify the nihilistic tendency. Meaning, value, truth, agency, and consciousness are being exposed as ghost-objects dependent on imaginal associations, previously (mis) taken as ontological rather than functional singularities.

Even as we disentangle our brains and the secrets of cognition we begin to realise just how little we diverge from our most primitive animal cousins in basic functioning and perceptive prowess. We are not the ultimate purpose of creation we thought we were. And in many respects we can no longer claim to be ecologically necessary or special. Whether we look to ancestral pasts or posthuman futures we are confronted with the same seemingly terrible lesson: it has all been for nothing. We were not intended, and we may not even survive the next 100 years. Wherever we scramble for reassuring fragments of meaning being imbued in the fabric of the cosmos we are confronted with just-so stories that we cling to despite having seen them evaporate like the oceans of the future beneath an exploding sun.

It is therefore tempting to answer that what comes after nihilism is sadness. The transcendental nature of norms and values has been scorched; our rationality has been shown to be ridden with biases, systemic errors, and, as is beginning to be made painfully clear, is probably a functional delusion. It may be that this is partly why we see so much depression and anxiety today: by turning these affective relations to corrosive truth into pathologies, the denial allows the rest of us to go on. But to ask what comes after is also to ask: what remains?

The world after nihilism is populous. What rests beneath our zombie delusions and mythologies are countless sensuous bodies. What is revealed is a world composed of material entities in energetic interactions that exist within a vast mesh of ecological metabolism. Bodies jostle and exchange in, against, across and through one another in what we could conceive as *transcorporeal* ('across-body'). What is of value in this view is that while our cognitions are unreliable, shot through with myth-making, we nonetheless have our embodied sapience, the wisdom of bodies that are practically engaged in a world structured and coordinated by and as assemblages of other bodies.

The term transcorporeality is borrowed from feminist materialist philosopher Stacey Alaimo and is intended to help us frame the way the world is, to provide us with an ontology. Transcorporeal reality assembles all bodies as intimately implicated with one another such that the possibility of embodied contact between things, flows, relations and excitations - whether they are human or inhuman, geological or machine, animal or informational - remains the natural condition. The philosophical question of whether we can know reality 'in itself' is no longer our concern: materially and consequentially we are always already in corporeal contact with the real, even if our phenomenal experience and cognitive systems can never do justice to that contact.

In such a world bodies are thus choreographed activities rather than static objects, and they are always open to and composed of one another's activities. Your body is in part the expression of genes and their organic machine code, a morphology that has responded to natural and urban environmental pressures and a responsive pragmatic necessity, foreign bacteria, climatic conditions, the sun, as well as a host of other bodies of both microscopic and cosmic scales. They are rhythmic compositions that synchronise and become dissonant, penetrate and are penetrated, embedded in and emerging from the crowded complexity of hot and cold tempos, conducts, demands, and needs. They are as much spaces and habitats as they are spaced and inhabiting. Above all, this means they are plastic and vulnerable.

After nihilism, then, are embodied realisations of and exposures to vibrant ecologies of being offering an ultimately untameable wilderness which we participate in on an equal footing with all other bodies, even if we have an unequal ecological effect. In order to cope-with and cope-within the wilderness of being we must abandon the charnel-house of meaning and its theological tyrannies once and for all. As coping-beings we must leave our reifications behind in order to engage in *post-nihilist praxis*: an ecologistics of tracing these rhythms and activities, their multiple couplings and decouplings, and taking responsibility for our way of cohabiting in, with and alongside other bodies.

Such a mutant pragmatism also recognises the practicality of cultivating a carnal ethics and corporal politics of vulnerable bodies capable of abandoning all essentialisms, all magical thinking, and to attend to the naked, porous materiality of the world. The death of God is a profound liberation; this sadness is the mourning for a ruined world we must leave behind. We are Nietzsche's bastards.

We have suffered so much talk of 'living in the End Times' with its paralysis of thought and action. Post-nihilist praxis refuses the sadness of nihilism along with the myopic comforts of pre-Catastrophic ideological certainties. We have already lived through the collapse of conditions for the possibility of certainty, what RS Bakker calls "the semantic apocalypse", and the ecological collapse has already begun: in this sense we are already living after the end of the world. And so amid the ongoing debates on how to resuscitate a disintegrating world that refuses to die we begin to sift through the ruins – as it is only from the ruins that we can rebuild.

This is only a sketch of what a post-nihilist praxis might consist. The post-nihilist tendency remains less a worked out position as it is a point of taking-leave. Variations of this tendency continue to be generated. See, for example, the Out of the Woods Collective, also in this edition, who have independently concretised the demand for a post-nihilist praxis in their discussion of the tactics and strategies of Disaster Communism. Theirs is an ecological politics that shares a family resemblance with our own position. Alternatively, and at the same time a transpessimism would equally be a post-nihilist praxis: the idea that the human species must become extinct by becoming something truly posthuman.

*For more see syntheticzero.net, archivefire.net and attemptsatliving.wordpress.com*

# GONE BEFORE THE WAVE

**by Summer Gray**

A few years ago, the Maldives was the poster child of climate change. Scarce in land, abundant in natural beauty, and hovering dangerously close to sea level, this archipelago in the middle of the Indian Ocean provided an urgent image of a sinking nation. It appealed to the popular imagination and made a splash in the media. Today, the Maldives is largely forgotten. It is yesterday's news.

Although the Maldives has not yet disappeared under water, there is a slow and structural violence at work—an everyday apocalypse that evades recognition. Rob Nixon points to the representational challenges of "slow violence" in its incremental and long-term unfolding. It's simply not as sexy as catastrophic events, and thus harder to draw attention to. Similar to the concept of "structural violence," coined by Johan Galtung, its source is often invisible, woven into institutions of power that span across many generations. Time renders change invisible, preventing action.

The Maldives, one of the countries least responsible for climate change, once played a critical role in saving the UN climate negotiations from outright failure. In late 2009, President Mohamed Nasheed and his environment minister, Mohamed Aslam, arrived in Copenhagen with a small army of activists and a list of scientifically-backed targets to seal the deal for a just and binding climate treaty. They were greeted by a process doomed to fail.

"There were only two possible outcomes in Copenhagen," Aslam explained after reflecting on his experience: "that the whole conference would become a complete failure and all the leaders of the world would go back home in shame, or that they would have an agreement to move forward and the process would stay alive." The Maldives was instrumental in keeping the process alive, and Nasheed and Aslam went home eager to return and fight for a better deal in the coming years.

Instead, they discovered a process rigged in favour of the powerful and polluting countries. Unlike the democratic process, the climate negotiations require unanimous consensus making it all too easy for the United States and other big players to block amendments that would protect those most vulnerable. For Nasheed, "it was becoming an endless talking shop without any substance." Aslam agreed, equating it to "a never-ending story."

Two years later, at the 2011 UN Climate Conference in Durban, Aslam joined forces with civil society activists like never before. Frustrated and fed up, they occupied the conference space and demanded that world leaders take action. "I honestly believe," Aslam argued, "that unless we have the right level of pressure from civil society, nothing will happen." Echoed by the "People's Mic", Aslam shouted into the crowd: "*You need to save us! The islands can't sink! We have our rights! We have a right to live! We have a right for home!*"

That would be the last time that Nasheed and Aslam would attend a UN Conference on behalf of the Maldives. In February 2012, they were stripped of their titles in a coup that was deemed legal and constitutional by a coup-backed commission, for which the global community gave the benefit of the doubt. This generated an outcry met with police brutality. In a matter of days, the country's first democratically elected president was ousted along with his struggles for climate justice.

Nasheed acknowledges that "the coup has had a strong impact on climate change issues." It launched the country into political turmoil, causing the Maldives to lose its influence. Mark Lynas, author of *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet*, spoke to *Minivan News* in 2012 and said: "The country is no longer a key player, and is no longer on the invite list to the meetings that matter."

Sadly, the Maldives was set to sign into existence a solar plan that would have launched the country onto a path of carbon neutrality the very afternoon of the coup. The Scaling-Up Renewable Energy Program, driven by Nasheed's energy advisor Mike Mason, was never signed. Now, five years after Copenhagen, the Maldives is making plans to drill for oil.

The Maldivian people have worked tirelessly to bring democracy back to the country. At every corner they have encountered resistance from those loyal to the dictator who ruled the country for the thirty years prior to 2008, and who continues to rule the country after Nasheed's ouster. With Nasheed and Aslam no longer in power, the country has succumbed to a religious fundamentalism that is threatening the human rights of the Maldivian people.

The slow violence of the Maldives is not only constituted by the rising seas to come and the return of authoritarianism, but also by a political culture that requires evidence of catastrophic events to understand the plight of a people and to take action. The Maldives is a place where apocalypse is not a matter of the future, but a matter of everyday life.

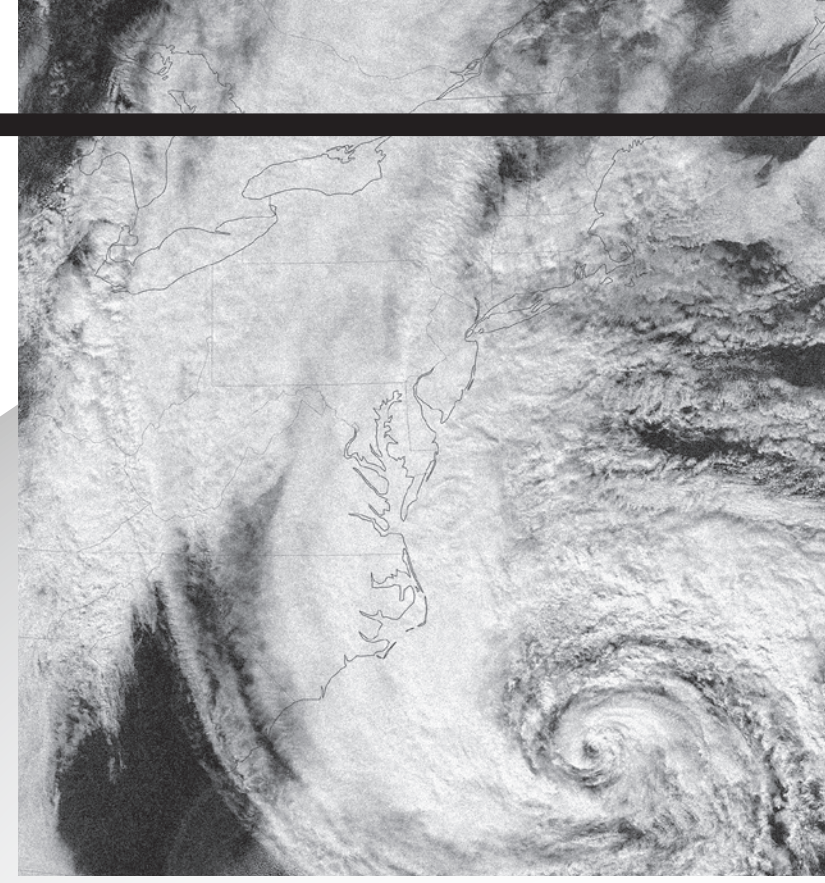
Walter Benjamin once wrote: "A storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." The Maldives is both the victim and manifestation of the paradise Benjamin alludes to in his critique of modernity. The capital city of the Maldives contains one third of the country's population, its towering buildings jet out of its circular surface. Today, it is one of the most densely populated islands in the world.

As the Maldives now joins hands with fossil fuels, it takes part in its own slow violence. Shauna Aminath, a young Maldivian who worked closely with Nasheed, is outraged by such a shift: "It is the most bizarre and illogical thing I've heard for the Maldives to drill for oil." She goes on to acknowledge that while catastrophic events like the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami are indications of a country's vulnerability, "climate change is a slow process, and it's going to slowly make these islands uninhabitable. People are going to leave before the wave hits."

photo by Hani Amir

by Out of the Woods

# DISASTER COMMUNISM



Climate change is already here, although the effects are unevenly distributed. Last winter saw a series of storms of record-breaking wind speeds, rainfall, and intensity hit the UK. California's current drought has seen lakes disappear into parched earth. Giant craters have begun appearing in Siberia, as methane explodes out of thawing permafrost. This year Australia has seen wildfires the size of cities, clearly visible from space. The theoretical possibility of the glaciers of West Antarctica crossing tipping points into irreversible decline is now an observed scientific fact.

According to author Christian Parenti, climate change is contributing to conflicts in Kenya, Uganda, Latin America, central and south Asia. Furthermore, many analysts believe a severe drought was among the major contributing factors of the revolt-turned-civil war in Syria. The Pentagon has begun planning for catastrophic climate wars and social collapse, dovetailing the global counter-insurgency war machine constructed under the 'War on Terror' with the prospect of worldwide social unrest to come.

It is the outstanding achievement of capitalism to have exponentially increased production while maintaining poverty amidst plenty. Scarcity is maintained even amidst abundance. Tens of thousands of impoverished residents of Detroit have recently experienced this, as water supplies are cut. Detroit sits on the Great Lakes and has no shortage of fresh water. If the richest, most powerful nation in history forces its poor to go without essential services even amidst abundance, what grim prospects underscore climate-induced scarcity?

Climatic disasters are proliferating at an accelerating rate. The capitalist response is already clear: imposition of scarcity on the poorest. Insulation of the rich. A militarised policing of the class lines, themselves always racialised, wherever they threaten to spill over into social unrest. The Gaza Strip serves as a monstrous illustration of the militarised humanitarian management of surplus populations at a threshold just above genocide. The ideology of reactionary ecology is also well-honed: expect talk of overpopulation, natural famine, and anti-immigrant 'lifeboat ethics' to grow in step with the climate catastrophes.

But disasters also bring to the fore the latent social forces of mutual aid and self-organisation. Extraordinary crises give rise to extraordinary communities. In the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, it was the beleaguered citizens who organised relief while the state sent in the National Guard to suppress what it saw as disorder. A similar repressive state reaction followed Hurricane Katrina. But even when the state doesn't send in the troops, it still can't compete with the effectiveness of self-organised mutual aid.

The Department of Homeland Security even praised the efforts of Occupy Sandy in organising disaster relief. Occupy Sandy was only a more media-savvy and overtly anarchist form of the kind of spontaneous anarchism found among disaster survivors everywhere. The psychologist Charles Fritz, after studying a number of disasters, set out to dispel the common myth of a descent into 'every man for himself':

"Even under the worst disaster conditions, people maintain or quickly regain self-control and become concerned about the welfare of others (...) much more is given away than stolen. Other forms of antisocial behaviour, such as aggression toward others and scapegoating, are rare or non-existent."

Disasters, while producing undeniable misery, also bring to the fore the latent power of reciprocity, which always remains submerged, fractured, and inchoate in the capitalist world of exchange. In this way, the kind of improvised, spontaneous mutual aid which characterises disaster communities points to latent potentials for radical social change. Fritz, again:

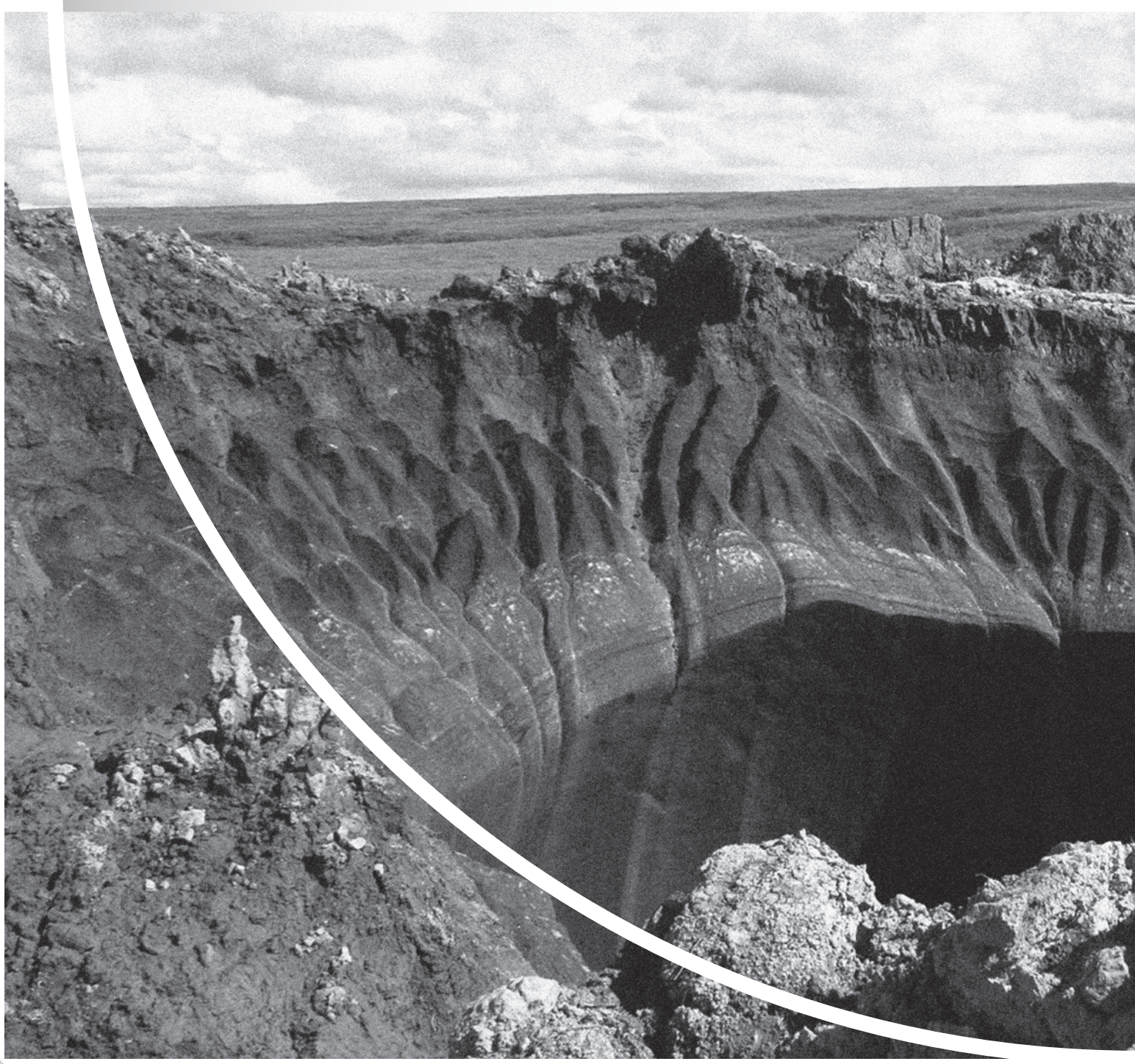
"People see the opportunity for realising certain wishes that remained latent and unfulfilled under the old system. They see new roles that they can create for themselves. They see the possibility of wiping out old inequities and injustices."

The immediacy of climate change is producing a multitude of distributed disasters, not to mention localised struggles against fossil-fuel capital. What links indigenous pipeline resistance in North America to fracking protestors in Balcombe to anti-pollution riots in China is capitalist development itself. As capitalism attempts to open new areas for exploitation, it generates new connections. If these can be weaponised into relations of solidarity and reciprocity, the beginnings of a movement adequate to meet the disaster of capitalist climate change may start to take shape.

The needs-based reciprocity of disaster communities and the militant solidarity of those who put their bodies on the line to block the further development of fossil capital point to an anti-capitalist movement against climate catastrophe. Capitalism is in no more of a hurry to mitigate and adapt to climate change than it is to end world hunger. But the technological possibilities exceed what counts as economically rational under capitalist criteria.

From the point of view of the market, there's no point producing for the needs of those who can't pay. But disaster communities show an alternative logic can prevail even in the most appalling circumstances. A decision to leave fossil fuels in the ground is an ecological necessity but an economic stupidity, under capitalist reasoning. Yet the technology for a rapid shift to renewable energy already exists. Desalination plants can provide potable water as rising sea levels salinate coastal aquifiers, something which is already happening in Mediterranean towns like Beirut. But capitalism already cuts off the water for the poor, and desalinated water would be dearer, and unlikely to be profitable.

The urgent challenges of climate change suggest we stand at a fork in the road between two diverging developmental paths. Social unrest seems inevitable. The only question is whether the demands for bread and freedom which shook North Africa and the Middle East can generate the force to break the hold of capitalist development. Will the 21st century see such movements fading quietly into the dystopia of capitalist climate change? Or the blossoming of a real utopia of self-organisation, reciprocity, and ecological production for human needs? State and capital stand together in the first camp. The second is the prize for those who would liberate the Earth from such monsters.



# Business as Usual

The most recent reports from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) make use of 'Representative Concentration Pathways' (RCPs). These are tools to represent possible future world greenhouse gas emissions. There are four RCPs. Only the most aggressive, RCP 2.6, gives a chance of keeping global average temperature rises below the 'dangerous' 2°C threshold. Even under this pathway, there's still a 1-in-3 chance temperatures may rise above 2°C.

This may all turn out to be academic. Current world emissions are tracking just above the highest of the four RCPs, RCP 8.5. This pathway leads to global warming of somewhere between 4 and 6°C by 2100. Around 1,200 new coal-fired power plants are currently planned worldwide. These facts alone make the three words 'business-as-usual' among the scariest in the English language.

Above 2°C, global warming starts to exhibit highly non-linear effects. In other words, each additional bit of warming generates consequences out of all proportion to the temperature change. This is largely due to a number of 'tipping points', which activate feedbacks that accelerate the warming. These include sea ice loss - whereby the sea absorbs more sunlight than reflective ice, so the more ice that melts, the faster the warming, and the more ice that melts.

Another feedback in the news recently is thawing permafrost. At northern high latitudes, permanently frozen soil traps greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide. As the permafrost melts, the gases escape - sometimes spectacularly. The sudden appearance of large craters in Siberia - thought to be the result of explosive methane releases - is a dramatic example. The jury's still out on the significance of the Siberian craters, but they serve as a vivid reminder of the proximity of climate tipping points.

According to author Mark Lynas, basing his analysis on the IPCC reports, 3°C of warming could lead to the total loss of the Amazon rainforest, destroying one of the Earth's largest carbon sinks and introducing chaos into the world's weather systems. Melting glaciers will stress the water supplies of half the world's population, triggering mass migrations. Agricultural yields will also suffer, as grains in particular fail under sustained high temperatures.

Another degree, and Lynas writes that "it's difficult to avoid the conclusion that mass starvation will be a permanent danger for much of the human race in a four-degree world". The Sahara desert's northward march may see it jump the Mediterranean - threatening Europe's agriculture and displacing North African populations. At 5 degrees, Lynas suggests we may have to stop talking in terms of zones of uninhabitability, like the Sahara, and start talking about zones of habitability. This is a world unlike any humans would have seen before.

Worse still, climatologist David Archer has warned that:

"The IPCC forecast for climate change in the coming century is for a generally smooth increase in temperature, changes in rainfall, sea level, and so forth. However, actual climate changes in the past have tended to be abrupt."

Seeing a choice between avoiding climate chaos and maintaining business as usual, the world's policymakers seem to have made their choice. That leaves climate movements with a lot to do in very little time.

# NO FUTURE

***"We've got to look after our children; we have to look after our future; and we have to grow the economy and create jobs. We can do all of that as long as we don't fear the future; instead we seize it."***

**Barack Obama**

About twenty years ago someone wrote a speech about the environment. 'It wasn't a very complex one. There was a problem, the problem was big, and unless we did something about the problem it would cause other, bigger, problems. It was not a particularly good speech. Indeed, the only thing rescuing it from mediocrity was a single, memorable petition. "Think of the future" the speaker pleaded, "think of the children." This line was judged such a success that the great and the good decided no more speeches needed to be written on the subject, instead they would just deliver this one, again and again, until the problem was solved or got sufficiently severe to preclude speech-making.

Thus the phantom future and its legions of unborn children became the logic of environmentalism. Every thinker, writer or speaker found it almost impossible not to invoke their presence, to plead on their behalf with a present seemingly ambivalent to their fate. Indeed this ambivalence has become the great enemy of the environmental movement, which tears its hair and beats its breast over its continual failure to overcome it. The vitriol directed at the masses for failing to care and the movement for failing to make it care, is, however, pointless.

The environmental movement makes a dismal promise. In return for personal and collective sacrifices, we are greeted with a series of abysmal rewards. "You may not starve!" "You may not lose your homes!" "You might not even suffer more than you do already!" People are not stupid. They know this is a bad deal.

The future is a nebulous and complex thing. It is a tangle of potentialities and causalities, a construct of chance and luck, a mess of the plausible and implausible. Most of us struggle to imagine the world in five years time, let alone fifty. The future is a terrain on which we are all blind, to attempt to fight our battles there is madness.

The invocation of the future, however, is merely delusional. The invocation of the child, on the other hand, is dangerous.

The world most often promised to the children is not even possible. The relentless search for surplus is not compatible with the preservation of our planet. "Green capitalism" is a myth that can only survive in the fog of the future. In 2012 Exxon Mobil had net profits of $44.88 billion, its total assets amounting to $333.795 billion. For some perspective, the world's largest wind turbine manufacturer, Vestas, reported net profits for 2010 of €156 million and total assets of €7.066 billion. The assets of the oil firms are based in the vast resource reserves they have accumulated over the last century. By the end of 2007, Exxon Mobil's reserves were 72 billion oil-equivalent barrels. In 2013, Mobil announced it was replacing these reserves at a rate of 115%. Some have proposed that corporations such as Mobil would willingly leave these resources in the ground for a notional payment of half their value. Such an idea betrays both optimism and a total ignorance of capitalism. Even if such a thing occurred, many other industries would need to be utterly reformed. The industrialised harvesting of Earth's bounty, be it via mines, fisheries or forests, would have to be greatly limited. Given the amount huge companies have invested in the means by which these processes are carried out, it seems highly unlikely this will happen anytime soon.

Let us not forget this extraordinary exercise would have definite deadlines. The 2 degrees rise in global temperatures needed to trigger "dangerous climate change" may happen as early as 2040. It is hard to imagine the future, but perhaps we don't need to if we look at the carnage already being wrought by rising temperatures, and then remember this isn't even "dangerous climate change" yet. In addition to this we have the looming global disintegration of integral ecosystems. As early as 2006 a third of the world's fisheries had collapsed, by 2050 it is eminently possible that every single fishery on Earth will have followed suit. Up till now humanity has been cowering from a bullet we thought was speeding towards us. It turns out, however, that we're in shock. The bullet isn't in flight, it has already hit us.

As an utter necessity we must abandon the future, for we cannot win there. No future, for we will never convince the majority to fight for the sake of a time they cannot imagine. No future, for capital will always defeat any strategy based on a "next-ness", for against airy notions of tomorrow's world, they can posit the cold hard facts of today materialised in wages and jobs. No future, because, right now, there is literally no future, right now we are condemned to collapse.

But "no future" alone is a nihilistic thing to cry. To survive we must couple bleak reality with the utopian impulse and shout instead: "No Future, Utopia Now." Let us jettison the notion of gradual change. There is no time for a transition. Let us pledge ourselves unflinchingly to a utopia, but not a distant one, not an imaginary thrown out into the future, but one we can build right now. One in which work is all but abandoned, in which the liberation of every minority is a priority, in which collective well-being is the only ideology. The movement is already there, in Elsipogtog, in the Xingu River basin, in Balcombe, however it will never grow if we continue to base the struggle in terms of survival alone. Instead, we must promise the earth to all those who will commit to the fight to save it.

*libcom.org/outofthewoods*

# Preoccupying:

# Silvia Federici

**Silvia Federici is a New York-based scholar, teacher, and organiser. She is a professor emerita and teaching fellow at Hofstra University, where she previously worked as a social science professor following many years of teaching in Nigeria. Amongst her many roles, Federici co-founded the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa and the International Feminist Collective. She has organised with the Wages for Housework campaign, and was involved with the Midnight Notes Collective. Federici's best known work, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, argues that primitive accumulation is a fundamental characteristic of capitalism.**

**OCCUPIED TIMES**

**Your work has drawn focus to the emergence of the nuclear family as a construction of nineteenth century capitalism, when it came to be seen as the optimum unit of production and reproduction, especially under the factory system. Do you see the nuclear family as being irredeemably regressive and irrevocably tied to capitalist relations? If so, how do we extricate ourselves from these normative social structures?**

SILVIA FEDERICI

The nuclear family is a social form built on a contradiction. It reproduces us but as workers, in view of our future or daily exploitation. This is one reason why it is so oppressive. It is the place where as children we are taught to accept the capitalist work discipline. It is also a place of unequal relations. Domestic work and domestic life are built on women's unpaid labour and the male supervision of it. As I have often pointed out throughout my work: by means of the wage, capital and the state delegate to men the power to command women's work, which is why domestic violence has been socially accepted and is so widespread even today. Beating your wife because she does not do her work and, for instance, refuses sexual advances has always been condoned as a condition of housework. Until feminists fought against it, battering your wife was not considered a crime, in the same way that beating of children is not considered violence, it is condoned as part of their socialisation process, for as non-workers children do not have the right to control over their bodies and bodily integrity. It also took a long mobilisation to convince the authorities that rape can take place in the family. The nuclear family has been an instrument of de-socialisation. In the course of the 20th century the working class family has become more and more isolated from the rest of the community. Housing politics, with the creation of suburbia, have accelerated this process.

How do we extricate ourselves from the family? First, today the working-class family is already in crisis, because unemployment, the precarious character of work and the collapse of wages are leading many young people to postpone or to renounce building a family, or are sending parents to different places in search of an income. The right to have a family, which is the right to a certain level of reproduction - marking the difference between slavery and waged labour - is more and more under threat. But at the same time, we also have a return to more extended types of families, built not on blood ties but on friendship relations. This, I think, is a model to follow. We are obviously in a period of transition and a great deal of experimentation, but opening up the family - hetero or gay - to a broader community, breaking down the walls that increasingly isolated it and prevented it from confronting its problems in a collective way is the path we must take not to be suffocated by it, and instead strengthen our resistance to exploitation. The denuclearisation of the family is the path to the construction of communities of resistance.

**You have written critically of the Women's Liberation movement of the 1970s, in regards to its class and race biases, while others such as Selma James and bell hooks have exposed the movement's erasure of the lives of women of colour, trans-women and working-class women. As disputes and battles within feminism today often focus on similar divides, are there practical lessons you can share from organising around these issues? What approaches do you think would be most effective at ensuring that revolutionary movements recognise and act upon the diverse and overlapping oppressions affecting different women's lives?**

The best approach is to realise that as long as we are divided along racial as well as gender lines we will not have the power to create a more just society. More specifically, we cannot obtain any significant social change unless we fight against the totality of women's exploitation, and as long as we fight for policies that only benefit a limited group of women. For instance, identifying control over our body with the right to have an abortion and thereby ignoring the plight of women threatened with sterilisation or unable to have children because of their economic conditions, has weakened the feminist movement, so much so that today even legal abortion is in question and in many states is out of reach for low income women.

Similarly, not having made a strong campaign in support of maternity leave (when the issue went to the US Supreme Court in 1976), and not having fought against the denigration and criminalisation of women on welfare - above all, not having mobilised against the destruction of welfare by Bill Clinton in 1996 - has also been a serious mistake which has affected all women.

If we assume that housework is not real work, which is the premise of the shift from welfare to workfare, then no one is entitled to any institutional support for raising a family. Then, the state is correct when it claims that raising our children is a personal responsibility and if we want daycare centres, for instance, we have to pay for them. In sum, the approach is to insist that any demand and strategy that does not benefit all women and, first of all, those who have been most exploited and discriminated against, any approach that does not undermine the hierarchies that have been constructed among us is bankrupt, and in the end it undermines any gains we may momentarily obtain.

**In Caliban and the Witch, amongst other factors, you point to the institutionalisation of witch-hunt trials, burnings, and torture at the centre of the concerted subjugation of women and appropriation of their bodies and labour. Are there parallels for the historical witch hunts in today's world? We have, for example, seen witch-hunts in sub-Saharan Africa where similar processes of enclosure and accumulation operate.**

Yes, there is a continuity between the witch-hunts of the 16-18th century and those that are taking place today in many parts of the world. The differences between are also great. Today's witch-hunts are not conducted by governments and state-nations, they are not supported by legislation and are not defended as those of the past were by the contemporary intelligentsia. The continuity lies in the fact that, like the witch-hunts of the past, those of the present are connected with developments typical of the process of 'primitive accumulation', in this case the increasing process of land expropriation and privatisation which result in efforts to restrict women's access to land and in attacks on women (especially older women) who own land and/or resist expropriation. Both in Africa and India, where thousands of women have been killed on charges of witchcraft, widows who struggle to maintain their land, after their husbands die, have been among the victims. A further element of continuity is the use of witch-hunting to re-define not only women's economic position but their social identity and to undermine their social power. Women who are combative, who resist, have been reduced to unpaid helper of their husbands, and (in Africa, for instance) are also seen as witches. Not accidentally, witch-hunting in India today (as in the past) is especially widespread in the tribal areas, where women have traditionally been more economically independent. But on these questions I refer to my "*Witch-hunting, Globalisation and Feminist Solidarity in Africa Today*" that was published in the Journal of International Women's Studies (October 2008).

**You have argued that the subjection of women in Europe and the Americas was crucial to the making of capitalism. Was this solely an "Atlantic" phenomenon or did colonialism in Asia play a similar role?**

It did play a similar role, although in most regions colonialism came at a later date (than e.g. in Latin America) and could not have the same impact on social relations. In China, moreover, colonial rule was limited to the coastal area. And there were regional differences in the degree to which gender relations were transformed by colonial rule. As a general tendency, however, colonial rule deepened gender inequalities as both British and Dutch colonialists supported patriarchal customary provisions and instigated a process of land privatisation that increasingly excluded women from access to land and even grazing rights.

In India, for instance, the British formally supported the Hindu restrictions on widows' inheritance of their husbands' property and in tribal areas cooperated with the local chiefs to undermine women's independence. Both in India and Indonesia colonial domination marked the end of matrilineal societies, which had flourished in several regions - e.g. in Northern Kerala in India, and in the Minangkabau communities of Western Sumatra in Indonesia, where women had collective ownership of land, inherited through matrilineal lines.

**In Caliban & the Witch you say that: "Marx never acknowledged that procreation could become a terrain of exploitation and by the same token a terrain of resistance. He never imagined that women could refuse to reproduce, or that such a refusal could become part of class struggle." Would you advocate a collectivised application of this refusal?**

It would be great if women across the world went on a procreation strike not to bring any more children into this world until it is made a friendly place for them, in the same way as Athenian women presumably decided to refuse men sex as long as the war continued. But I am not suggesting we do this. It is not a viable strategy because it is hard to imagine how it could be organised and it would end up benefiting the supporters of population control. It is also important to realise that there is already a subterranean procreation strike taking place. Women in African countries where wars have become endemic try not have children or to abort, as women did in slavery. In the US too, the birth rate is declining, and so is it in Europe, with the exception of France. Behind these demographic statistics we have to see a process of struggle that undoubtedly affects capitalist development.

**In an important section of Revolution At Point Zero you point to the fact that social movements have continually neglected the issue of elderly care. In fact, a lot of arguments are made by some left-leaning commentators about**

**"intergenerational injustice". How would you like to see the inclusion of issues such as the isolation and neglect of older people, especially in the US and parts of Western Europe, into social movements' political practice or demands?**

If we are concerned with poverty, degradation, loneliness, we have to realise that all these problems are suffered in an egregious way by elderly people, who are among the most invisible and forgotten populations in our society, unless they have significant financial means. Even feminists, with a few exceptions like Nancy Folbre, until recently have generally ignored the elderly. The interest in elder care as a political issue is a recent phenomenon.

There are many issues social movements should address. For instance, the fact that women in the US who have not held waged jobs but have worked all their lives as full-time housewives are not entitled even to Social Security except through their husband, after nine years of marriage and even then she would be entitled to the equivalent of half of his paycheck. Also, social services for the elderly have been decimated, so that it is increasingly difficult for older people today to have access to a seniors' centre or have some nurse-aid come to the home to help them with their chores. Yet, no group has fought against this increasing degradation of elderly peoples' lives. Similarly we have not seen in the US the kind of intergenerational protest that developed in France when the government proposed to increase the pension age. Building a movement against the attempt to eliminate or reduce Social Security would be a good starting point, especially since Social Security is being used to create the impression that the wealth of the nation is being wasted on the elderly, limiting the possibilities of the new generations. This blatant attempt to divide young and old is something that should be of great concern to all social movements.

**Land and space are continually being treated as empty frontiers: colonised, restructured and reinstated in an ongoing process of accumulation. David Harvey's theory of 'accumulation by dispossession' offers a compelling description of the gentrification process, extending the idea of primitive accumulation; a continual process that you have also identified in divergence to Marx. Do you believe that there are limits to these continued cycles of primitive accumulation and if so, are we reaching them? Are there restrictions on the spatial, temporal and technological fixes that capitalism has always found, allowing it to reproduce itself?**

I do not see these limits, not on our horizon. For years (for instance) we have heard about peak oil, and now fracking and drilling at depths previously unimaginable have shown how misplaced those predictions were. It is also bad politics to concentrate on the limits that capitalism may encounter in its exploitation drive. It fosters the illusion that capitalism can destroy itself and it detracts from the need to place the construction of a non-exploitative world on our agenda. Obviously the world is finite, but from the point of view of building an anti-capitalist strategy the material limits of capitalist development should not be our concern. We should be more concerned with people's fascination with capitalist technology that contributes to fueling extractivist politics and the destruction of our environment. As long as so many people worldwide are addicted to capitalist technology, capitalism will manage to overcome the limits it may encounter.

**You've written about the commons as both a historical and contemporary site of struggle. But can't Capital live with and even recuperate attempts at commoning? What gives it the potential to be a genuine threat?**

Clearly as long as the construction of commons remains an isolated, limited activity it can be recuperated and today this is certainly a serious consideration. But if commons are not conceived as islands in a sea of capitalist relations but as communities of resistance giving us the power to escape exploitation, then their creation can be a challenge to the capitalist system. A population determined to refuse the logic of competition and wanting instead to live according to the principle of cooperation is a great threat to capitalist society.

**Work is decreasingly mediated via the wage relation, what with forced workfare programs and the unpaid creation of social capital in a new media age. Does this erosion of waged labour strengthen, or weaken, demands for a wage for housework?**

I think it strengthens it. The precarisation of work and the catastrophic consequences of the shift from welfare to workfare show the failure of the feminist strategy that identified waged labour as the path to women's liberation and to end the sexual division of labour. It also forces us to find new terrains of struggle. It is significant, in this context, that the demand for a basic income has revived the interest in wages for housework. People now ask me what I think of this demand, and how it compares with wages for housework as far as its organisational potential goes. Not last, the abolition of many benefits once attached to waged labour and the constant reduction of wages make the struggle against the capitalist devaluation of our lives a central issue of radical politics. Unpaid domestic labour is only a part of it, but a crucial one.

**The consequences of climate change are forcing humanity to contemplate its own destruction in ways it hasn't since the proliferation of nuclear weapons during the Cold War. Considering the possibility that we may be living on the edge of history, and drawing from the cultural memory of the Cold War, how might we continue a struggle for justice within this seemingly fatal context?**

The prospect of annihilation is a relative one. For many communities in the US – black communities whose children are murdered by the police in the street, indigenous communities like the Navajo that have to coexist with uranium mining, communities where unemployment is skyrocketing and the list goes on – apocalypse is now. In this context, we struggle for justice by refusing to separate the struggle against the destruction of the environment from the struggle against prisons, war, exploitation.

You cannot worry about climate change if your life is in danger every day, as is the case for so many people in this country.


seeredwomensworkshop.wordpress.com


by Sami Çapulcu, London Palestine Action

# FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA

London Palestine Action (LPA) is a non-hierarchical group - created a year ago to solve an issue of sustainability - which is engaged in creative and participatory Palestine solidarity actions and campaigns. In London, Palestinian solidarity groups have spontaneously coalesced in times of urgency (e.g. Operation Cast Lead in 2008) or around specific projects (e.g. Palestine Place). However, in recent years neither of these forms had been successful in transferring the energy and links built up by these outbursts into longer-term action. Even where they *did* provide some longer-term plans, even a simple action planned with these informal networks would take a disproportionate amount of time and energy. LPA was formed to pick up and carry those bursts of energy, to convert them into constant and sustained action.

In its structure, LPA also tried to address another issue - which doesn't just plague Palestine solidarity groups! - that of hierarchy and group structure. Existing Palestine solidarity organisations in the UK use tactics that align with a few theories of change (parliamentary lobbying, big marches to 'put pressure' on governments) but in recent history there's been a definite gap at the radical social change / direct action end of the spectrum. More than a few people wanted a more participatory alternative after getting disillusioned by other organisations, feeling like their ideas weren't respected or their priorities weren't the same as those around them.

When it comes to issues around Palestine, enough people in the UK understand how abhorrent the actions of the Israeli state are. What's really important is for people to then take local action to resist it. Media coverage of Israel's occupation and the Palestinian struggle is problematic for many reasons, most notably because it absolves our responsibility in the UK and creates an impression that there's nothing that can be done to change things. Both of these are flawed ideas.

The UK profits from Israel's ongoing colonialism, from the selling of Israeli fruit and veg, to multi-million pound arms deals, to pension funds investing in settlement building. This "conflict" isn't eternal and unavoidable. It's not an abstract clash of races or religions or cultures. On one level, it's a colonial fight over land and power, fuelled by racism and zealotry, but on another more material level, it is fuelled by international support for an apartheid state. It had a clear start date, and it will definitely have an end date. This support creates a massive power imbalance, and a just solution can only be achieved once those support lines are cut.

Even in the face of overwhelming international state support for Israel, Palestinians do not simply continue to survive, ekeing out a living, despite the occupation and dispossession. Impressively, there's a broad, multi-faceted spirit of resistance, and a constant steadfastness in the face of ongoing Israeli abuses. Given this, the least we can do is offer our solidarity. As with all support given as allies to liberation struggles, we need to be permanently vigilant to not fall into demeaning patterns of 'white saviourhood'.

We need to make sure we never misrepresent the Palestinian struggle as being over religion, or over a 'clash of civilisations', or over anything other than colonialism, occupation and apartheid. We need to be careful not to fall into lazy orientalist tropes in our materials, ideas or attitudes (e.g. noble Palestinian warriors, disembodied woman's eyes, Palestinians as sad and desperate). We also need to be careful to not be infected by societal antisemitism (e.g. comparing Israeli policy to Nazi policy, equating Jews with Israel). Most importantly, we need to always take the lead from Palestinians, both those living directly under Israel's occupation and those in the diaspora.

If we do our work well, our solidarity should strengthen and support the ongoing Palestinian resistance. If it doesn't, then we need to stop and seriously re-evaluate if we are devoting our energy effectively. As non-Palestinians, our responsibility is to seek guidance from those under the boot of oppression about how we can help cut those support lines. The message from Palestinian civil society about how to give solidarity is pretty clear: boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against the Israeli state. When our money is funding apartheid, and when companies in our areas are profiting from ethnic cleansing, we have to act.

The tactics we pick to achieve BDS have to be selected critically and consciously, looking at what's been effective recently, and what has a chance of winning based on the situation we're in right now. It can be super useful to differentiate between symbolic tactics (e.g. photo stunts, most marches) and more direct tactics (e.g. those that cause economic damage to apartheid profiteers). To be clear: this doesn't mean that direct action that intervenes in the process of production or consumption is a more valid tactic than indirect action. Both have their uses, and both can form part of a wider strategy or campaign. But, on balance, it's important that direct action should form a greater part of the toolkit than it currently does in the UK. It's pretty common here to see a lot more media stunts and awareness-raising than the movement needs.

Regarding consumer boycotts specifically, there are two main facets: making sure consumers are aware of it, and making shops stick to it. The former is well addressed by the work of a lot of local PSC (Palestine Solidarity Campaign) groups and some Muslim communities. This is where awareness-raising (e.g. flyering) and media stunts really come to the fore. It's not always that glamorous, but it's really important work to do! The latter involves making shops aware of the boycott, and shutting them down if they don't adhere to it. This is where more often than not LPA sits, largely because fewer other groups do (and it makes sense to attack on all fronts at all times if we can).

Boycott campaigns are often viewed with scepticism by the anti-authoritarian radical left in the UK. Even the word 'boycott' alone, regardless of the strategy around it, can draw derisive claims that "that's not how capitalism functions"/"it's ineffective", or that "it's just an individualist approach". The reason for this boycott isn't for abstract reasons of moral purity (though "you don't want your money to go to this, right?" can help as a persuasion tactic).

This boycott has a clear aim (concrete financial damage) and a clear demand (stop profiting from occupation and apartheid). This demand forces an inclusion of tactics beyond solely working on individuals' consumer choices, and using those to inform about Israeli policies. This campaign goes further, targeting shops that sell Israeli goods and wholesalers that shift produce. This boycott is also producing clear results: from sinking wholesalers like Agrexco, to recent industry lamentations about Israeli produce being hard to shift.

This boycott won't bring about the end of Israeli settler colonialism on its own. It will be effective as a tactic if it isolates Israel, creating a better climate for divestment and sanctions.

Since the ceasefire, media coverage of the Israeli occupation and assaults on Palestinian life have virtually disappeared from the UK mainstream media. However, for us to be a truly effective movement, we can't rely on media cycles. The rage built up in the UK can't be allowed to dissipate. A big chunk of responsibility for that falls onto existing solidarity groups, to foster the massively growing consumer boycott movement and open up channels from that into other tactics and strategies. We have to organise training to give people space to think about what tactics are appropriate, and how to address any gaps in skills or technical knowledge.

The London solidarity scene is in a far better position than it was a year or two ago. There's an awareness of complicit targets. There's the energy to act, and the desire to escalate past marching. And, if you've read this and you agree with the points, then it's on people like you (the one reading this sentence) to spare what energy you can. See you at the next meeting?


photo by Wasi Daniju

# BOYCOTT ISRAEL

**London Palestine Action**

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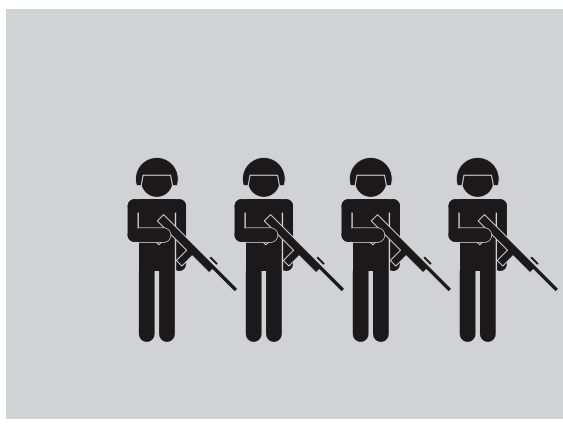
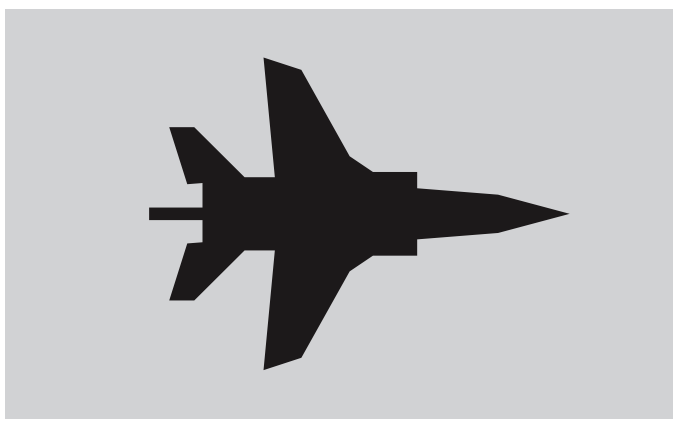
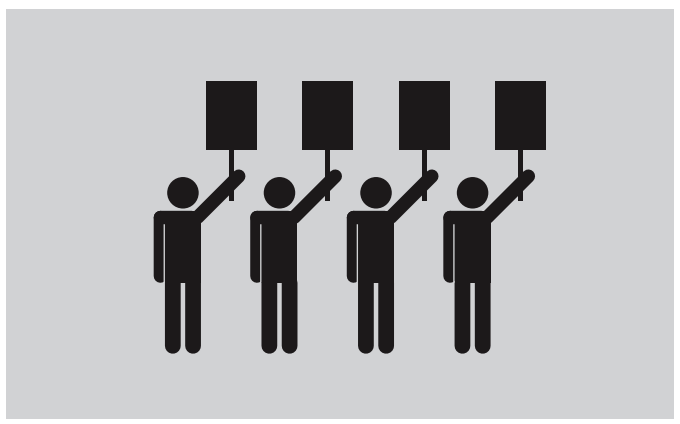
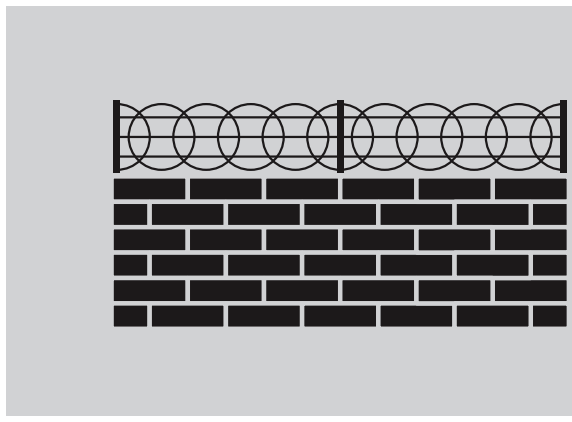
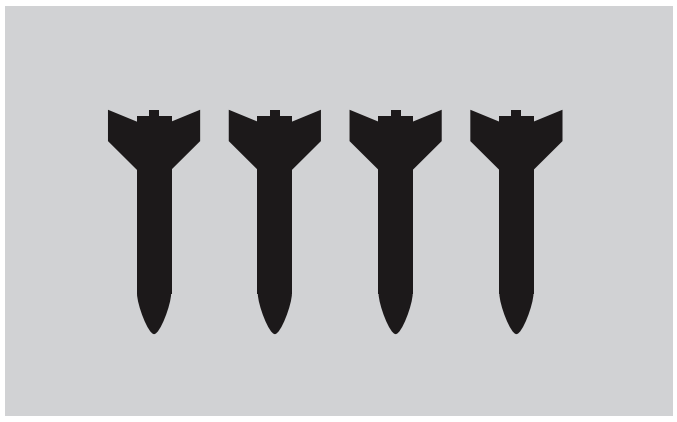
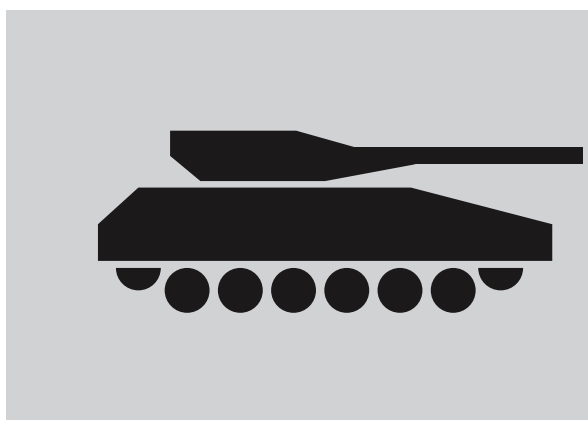













## BOYCOTT

**MANY COMPANIES ACTIVELY FACILITATE ISRAELI APARTHEID. BOYCOTTING THEM ALL WOULD BE A DAUNTING TASK. INSTEAD, FOCUS ON A FEW OPTIMAL TARGETS. CONSUMER BOYCOTTS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN PART OF A BROADER CAMPAIGN AGAINST A PARTICULAR PRODUCT OR COMPANY.**

### HEWLETT PACKARD (HP)

Involved in various Israeli violations of international law by providing Israeli occupation forces with vast range of IT services / infrastructure solutions. **Don't buy HP laptops, printers or ink cartridges.**

### CATERPILLAR

Caterpillar bulldozers regularly used in the demolition of Palestinian homes and the 2008-09 attacks in Gaza. **Don't buy Caterpillar products such as shoes, bags and tools.**

### SODASTREAM

SodaStream operates in illegal Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim in occupied West Bank. **Don't buy SodaStream products and call on retailers not to stock them!**

## DIVEST

**CAMPAIGN FOR G4S / MEKOROT / VEOLIA TO BE EXCLUDED FROM ALL PUBLIC CONTRACTS BY YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY. CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY / COUNCIL AND DEMAND A JUSTIFICATION FOR THEIR CONTINUED RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE COMPANIES.**

### G4S

G4S provides wide range of equipment and services to the Israeli government and military including to Israeli checkpoints and to prisons where Palestinians, including many children, are held without trial and subjected to torture.

### MEKOROT

Mekorot is Israel's national water company and illegally appropriates Palestinian water, diverting it to illegal Israeli settlements and towns inside Israel.

### VEOLIA

Veolia provide a number of services for illegal Israeli settlements, including landfill, sewage processing and bus services.

## ACTION

**ENCOURAGE AN ORGANISATION YOU ARE A MEMBER OF TO ENDORSE BDS.**

Persuade a union or association that you are a member of to endorse the call from Palestinian civil society for a targeted BDS movement.

**ORGANISE A BOYCOTT ACTION AT A RETAILER THAT SELLS ISRAELI GOODS.**

(1) Build awareness/support for the boycott of Israel.
(2) Pressure retailer to stop stocking Israeli goods.

**GET INVOLVED IN YOUR AREA.**

You can find a local group here:
www.bdsmovement.net/find-local-bds-campaign

### DO NOT RELY ON THE BARCODE ALONE

Whilst a barcode which starts with 729 is a good indication that the product has been made by an Israeli company, not all Israeli goods have 729 barcodes. Look on the packaging for the country of origin. Avoid "Produce of...": Israel, West Bank and Jordan Valley

# 10,000

**by Siraj Izhar**

I am in a small loft space, accessed by a ladder, carved out of a room used as printing press. The headroom is not there to stand up but perfect for sitting on the floor. By Mumbai's standards, a generous workspace, relatively tranquil. A man on a cardboard rectangle completes the final stage of making company envelopes, folding them perfectly, so perfectly they look as if they are factory-made. The technique is faultless. He folds them, not in hundreds or thousands but in tens of thousands. In fact, the quota for each week is ten thousand, thus the title of this piece.

I came here as part of a personal exploration of printing workshops in this business district of Mumbai. The Fort neighbourhood still largely consists of Victorian buildings from the days of the British Raj. Sensex, the Bombay stock exchange, is located close by. There are many of these little printing houses servicing the financial district with their stationery needs. I wanted to explore the material conditions of such production, how they connect with the broader economic reality of emergent global India. Around here, property prices per square foot are about the same as Manhattan, approximately $200 per sq ft; so each and every bit of space has to work to justify itself.

These envelopes happen to be for L&T Mutual Fund, one of India's largest mutual funds. It's an offshoot of L&T, Larsen & Toubro, India's largest engineering and construction company - a company with a curious history, having been founded in 1938 by two refugees from Nazi-occupied Denmark. L&T's Mutual Fund handles about 150 billion rupees worth of investment (around £1.5 billion). The mutual fund is an old form of financial speculation that emerged at the very start of the colonial times; in fact the oldest one, appropriately named Foreign and Colonial Investment, is still running in the City of London. In essence, a mutual fund is a way for a group of people who don't know each other to pool their money together in order to invest. It could even be seen as a sort of 'cooperative' form of financial speculation to enable those of 'modest' means to play the investment game. As another of India's fund brokers, IDFC, puts it: "If you have even as little as a few hundred rupees to spare, you can start your investment journey with mutual funds."

Whilst I watch the hands at work here, I imagine the L&T investor receiving information in one of these envelopes. He or she would never know it was handmade in this fashion. That would simply be detrimental to the image of finance and investment. It's not only that the handicraft involved is discarded and made invisible in the process, as significant here is a reverse mimicry at work. We have a situation in which the 'aura' of the unique object, which Walter Benjamin had described as being eradicated by mechanical reproduction, is reversed. Here, artisanal labour, the handmade, is in fact employed to mimic the aesthetic of mechanical reproduction. If that's a cultural reading, economically we can explain such work somewhat more simply in terms of the comparatively cheap labour available in Mumbai. The wages would be around 6000 rupees (£60) a week, which makes it viable to use the human hand instead of investing in machinery. If that would be the rationale for the use of such work, then in Marxist terms it can be attributed to 'uneven development', a concept introduced by Marx in Capital Vol 1 and the Grundrisse only fleetingly but greatly elaborated on by others in the late 20th century.

Uneven development was a way to integrate all forms of labour into the dialectical process of progress, the historical rite of passage that over time will release us from alienated labour. The essential thing that mattered, in Orthodox Marxist terms, was the universality of the dialectical process beyond that it was possible to, as George Lukacs claimed, "dismiss all of Marx's theses in toto." To this end, uneven development describes the way through which different societies and cultures develop in different ways to a universal future "where labour time is no longer the measure of value, where the surplus labour of the masses is no longer the condition for the development of social wealth" (Neil Smith, Toward a Theory of Uneven Development 1).

I get to know more of the envelope-maker's family life: a migrant from northern India who came to Mumbai in search of work, as do much of the city's population. The commute from his home in the suburb of Chembur to the business district takes an hour. And that's how it is, 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. Once here, he is on the cardboard mat. It's a ritualistic repetition. One could see patterns in it akin to what Siegfried Kracauer saw in the *Mass Ornament* of assembly line factory work, the regimented poetry of "necessary motions with lines, rotations, repetitions". But this isn't the same rhythm of "formal operations on meaningless parts" of mechanised production. The work I see here both eludes that and is somehow a refuge from the new forms of extractive work in advanced late capitalism in this century. The artisanal work here retains its qualitative relation between the product and its maker, a contained virtuoso space with a steady meditative dimension. But the beauty of the work, its choreography, stays bound up within this space.

But within the cardboard rectangle, the economic, the cultural, and the political, as well as informational capital and the work of

a pair of hands, all converge on the same mat. It's the space, the theatre in which the antagonisms of what work is today play out: the divisions between mental labour vs. manual labour, alienated work vs. creative work, active labour vs. passive labour, cottage scale labour vs. mass industrial labour. As we move beyond the industrial era into the information age, there was a window for the collapse of these divisions. New social movements began to rephrase the relation between labour and capital. With them, new slogans came into the public domain from different contexts (such as 'aam admi' - meaning 'the common man' - or 'we are the 99%' etc) which assert common rights through work. Such slogans also create new symbolic distinctions between forms of work.

In this space, the differentiation would be between the unproductive labour of the Mutual Fund and the productive labour of the envelope maker's hand. Along with such differentiation, there is a clear ground-shift in language relating to forms of labour that were considered 'politically' dead-weight, which would have found such description in Capital Vol 1 as "the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living, but from the dead". In the 21st century, such work now finds a renewed identity as work uncorrupted by corporate or bureaucratically produced work, and at the same time as work that does not align into old class categories or notions of the proletariat.

The reality is that it's such antiquated modes of production that still provide the livelihood for the majority of the world's population, both rural and urban. In demographic terms, at least, uneven development has been the rule. All this does not synchronise with

a narrative of labour's progress from the commodification of labour for the formation of the proletariat to a vision of work freed from all material necessities, and work as a means to put food on the table. Or, as Marx puts it in Capital Vol 3: "The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends: it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper."

Instead, the new political movements' notions of 'productive work' rewind to the early Hegel of work as the social glue, work that contributes to the totality of work through which the collective consciousness or spirit evolves through its historical phases. As he writes in First Philosophy of Spirit: "The ethical work of the people is the being-alive of the universal spirit (geist); as the spirit it is their ideal union, as work it is their middle, the cycle (of men) cutting themselves off from the work as a dead (thing), and positing themselves as singular agents, but positing itself as universal work…''

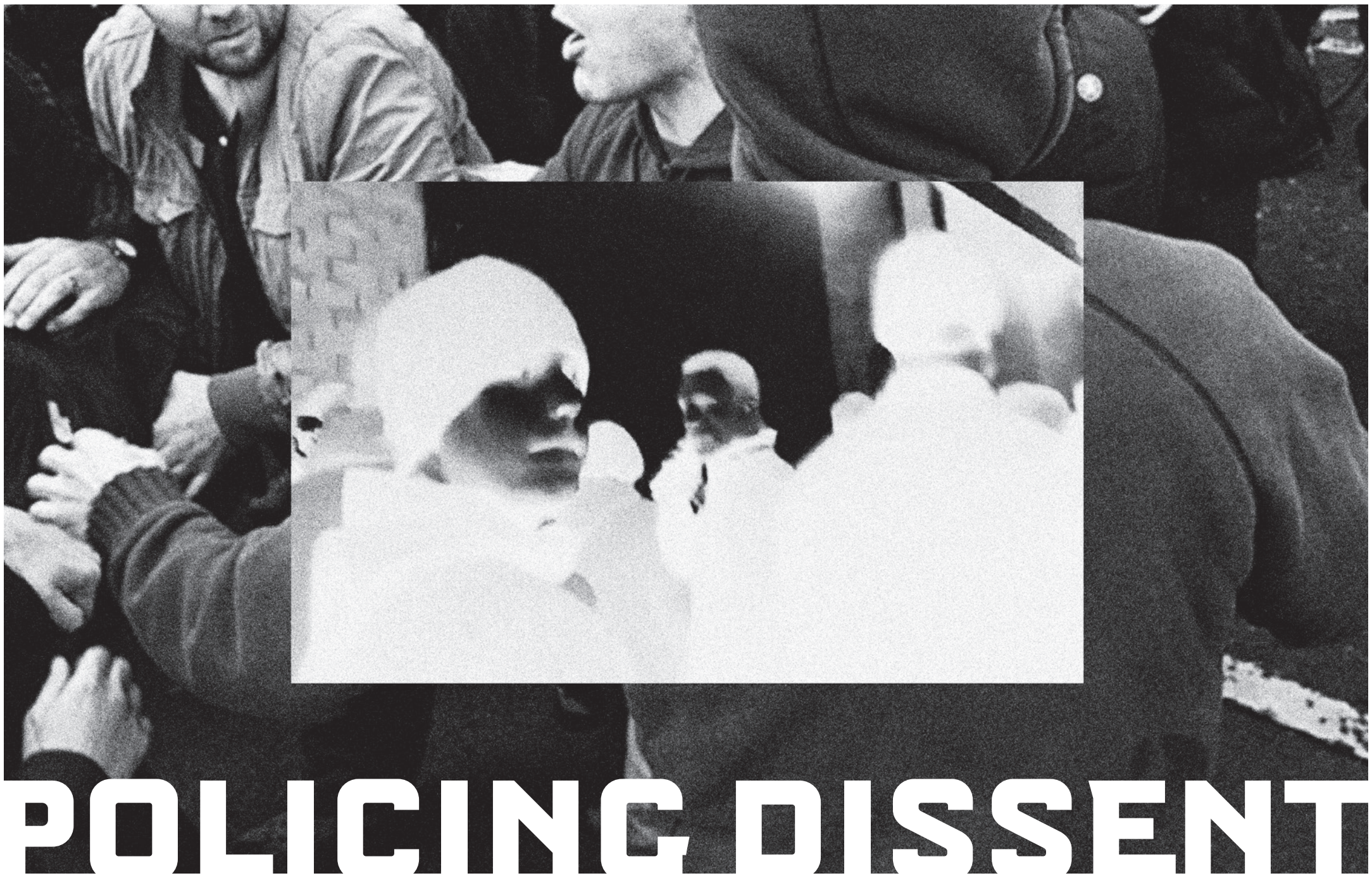
It might be ironic but in the information age, the dialectical clock of labour's progress is being unwound - from late Marx through to early Marx and onto late Hegel. It's a process of re-opening dead space in the political imaginary, unpacking the inherent hegemonies in the 'standard models of social power' as Langdon Winner puts it in Do Artefacts have Politics? Politics was seen as the domain of social forces; objects were mute. But not in new ways of looking at politics. Whilst Winner's essay deals with artefacts using advanced technology, the same questions apply to the artisanal.

Practices emerging from ecological movements, in particular, try to recover the relation between us and our artefacts, as part of the same ecological chain. They unpack the autonomy of the commodity. In this process, it's not only that objects or artefacts are no longer inert and have political agency; but also that politically marginal forms of work find a new place. This two-fold recovery of space for political agency comes from the understanding that we no longer buy into the narrative of Modernity's promised escape from alienated work. It seems an empty promise that has worn its course and has only served capital's apologists and accelerationists. That's why new political movements are reorienting. Otherwise, whilst the elephant in the room remains capital's inventive ways to dominate labour, we have given ourselves no option but to create more technologies that promise to liberate us only to realise too late that they literally draw the life out of us and lead us to even more alienated work. So to imagine a future with *decreasing* forms of alienated work, to work towards an emancipatory way of working, there is a reconnection with vast swathes of work excluded from a progressive imaginary by Modernity.

Some will argue that none of this is through choice. Twenty years of globalism and neoliberalism have forced labour across all continents onto a common terrain. In no way does this imply a level playing field but with the increasing mobility of finance capital, with advances in policies of geographic investment and disinvestment to maximise profits, forms of manual work culturally naturalised into 'anthropological difference' (as described by Etienne Balibar) in the global periphery are now surfacing in technologically advanced countries. In the process, there emerge uneven affinities with the forms of precarious labour created by the information age based upon new methods of extracting profit, new models for administering labour and new forms of alienation that dissolve the boundary between personal life and working life - whether it's call centres, online shopping warehouses and so forth.

To illustrate, consider the realities of a picker working for Amazon.com, where a company handset monitors your each and every second fetching online orders in a giant warehouse. With 33 seconds allocated for a pick-up, a picker has to walk an average of 13 miles in a ten hour shift. Or indeed a packer for Amazon, who has to complete 100 packages per hour (packaging that is ripped open upon arrival). Such working realities dismantle the fait accompli readings of "an advanced industrial age where material production becomes automated to the extent that all vital needs can be satisfied while necessary labour time is reduced to marginal time", as outlined in Herbert Marcuse's One Dimensional Man.

On the contrary, necessary labour time is increasing rather than decreasing whereby - thanks to new technology - we see "the crudest modes of labour return" in unexpected ways, the return of "the treadmill of labour as a form of barbarism" (Marx and Engels, Collected Works, vol 8) in capitalism's new century. But with this advancing present day reality in the 'uneven convergences' between precarious and subsistence work from opposite ends of the technological spectrum, the next chapter in the ongoing contest between capital and labour will have far less to do with technology per se than with the way the work itself is produced - the production of the means to work and the necessary politics to progressively take these means back into our own hands. It's that political question that plays out on the metre square cardboard between the Mutual Fund envelope and the envelope-maker, between capital in the information age and the labour of a pair of hands.



# POLICING DISSENT

## A Brief History of Undercover Cops

**by Drew Rose**

On a cold October night in 2010 Mark Kennedy admitted to his partner of six years and a group of close activist friends to being an undercover cop. This event cracked the dam of secrecy that had allowed the police to infiltrate and undermine social movements and campaigns for decades with impunity. It led to a trickle and then a torrent of revelations about other undercover operations which, five years on, still show no signs of abating.

As such, it is worth remembering that it was only through the investigative work of those activists close to Kennedy that led to his capitulation. Likewise, Helen Steel, who had already exposed McDonald's corporate spies in the longest-running legal case in English history, spent years uncovering the truth that John Dines, her former partner, was also an undercover cop. In the most prominent case concerning undercover officers deceiving women into relationships eight women have been fighting to expose the truth for three years. Several other cases are under way, some just beginning. The strength and dedication to confront the power of the state and corporations by those most damaged by undercover policing continues to inspire. It is a battle that is as old as class struggle itself.

E.P. Thompson in his *The Making of the English Working Class* illustrates the ways in which, even before the formation of a police force, the state deployed a two-pronged approach to maintaining control of the population. Firstly, local magistrates (Justices of the Peace) offered rewards to informers if their slander resulted in the conviction of Jacobins, Luddites and later Chartists. If this failed to undermine the organising of workers and mass protest spilled out into the streets then the army was used to violently demonstrate what happened to those who sought change. The most famous example being the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester on the 16th August 1819, in which the cavalry charged into a demonstration killing 15 and wounding over 400. Nothing has changed much. Infiltration by police spies combined with mounted police charges into mass demonstrations are still two of the state's preferred tactics to maintain social control.

The Thames River Police Act of 1800 established the first official police force in the UK. As its name suggests it was created to control the trade and workforce of the London docks. Tony Bunyan, in his excellent *The History and Practise of the Political Police in Britain*, quotes the human rights lawyer Ian MacDonald on this point: "From the very outset, therefore, there was nothing impartial about the police. They were created to preserve for a colonial merchant and an industrial class the collective product of West Indian slavery and London wage labour." The Metropolitan Police was created by the Police Act of 1829 and a few years later a Select Committee of the House of Commons was investigating the case of plain-clothes officer William Popay, who had spent a year infiltrating the National Political Union of the Working Class.

Special Branch was formed in 1883 to formalise information gathering, especially dealing with militant Irish nationalism but within five years it turned its attention to European immigrant anarchists. By 1954 the then Commissioner of the Met was describing the remit of Special Branch as "to keep watch on any body of people, of whatever political complexion, whose activities seem likely to result sooner or later in open acts of sedition or disorder." This is effectively the definition of 'domestic extremism' which the police use to justify undercover operations today.

Bunyan's detailed study of Special Branch published in 1976 fails to mention the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) established eight years earlier in 1968. This is no surprise. The SDS was created as a small secret unit of officers who, rather than conduct an undercover operation then return to uniformed duties, lived long-term within the cultures of those groups they were infiltrating. The complex genealogy of political police units and secret services tasked with preventing radical social change is due in part to the state being forced to develop new tactics to control shifting social movements. The SDS is no exception. Chief Inspector Conrad Hepworth Dixon developed the idea of the SDS in direct response to escalating protests against the Vietnam War in March 1968. As the radical left mobilised in Paris and across Europe the authorities in London needed a way to gather intelligence to undermine this increasingly anarchic movement. Demanding "take me to your leader" was no longer an option.

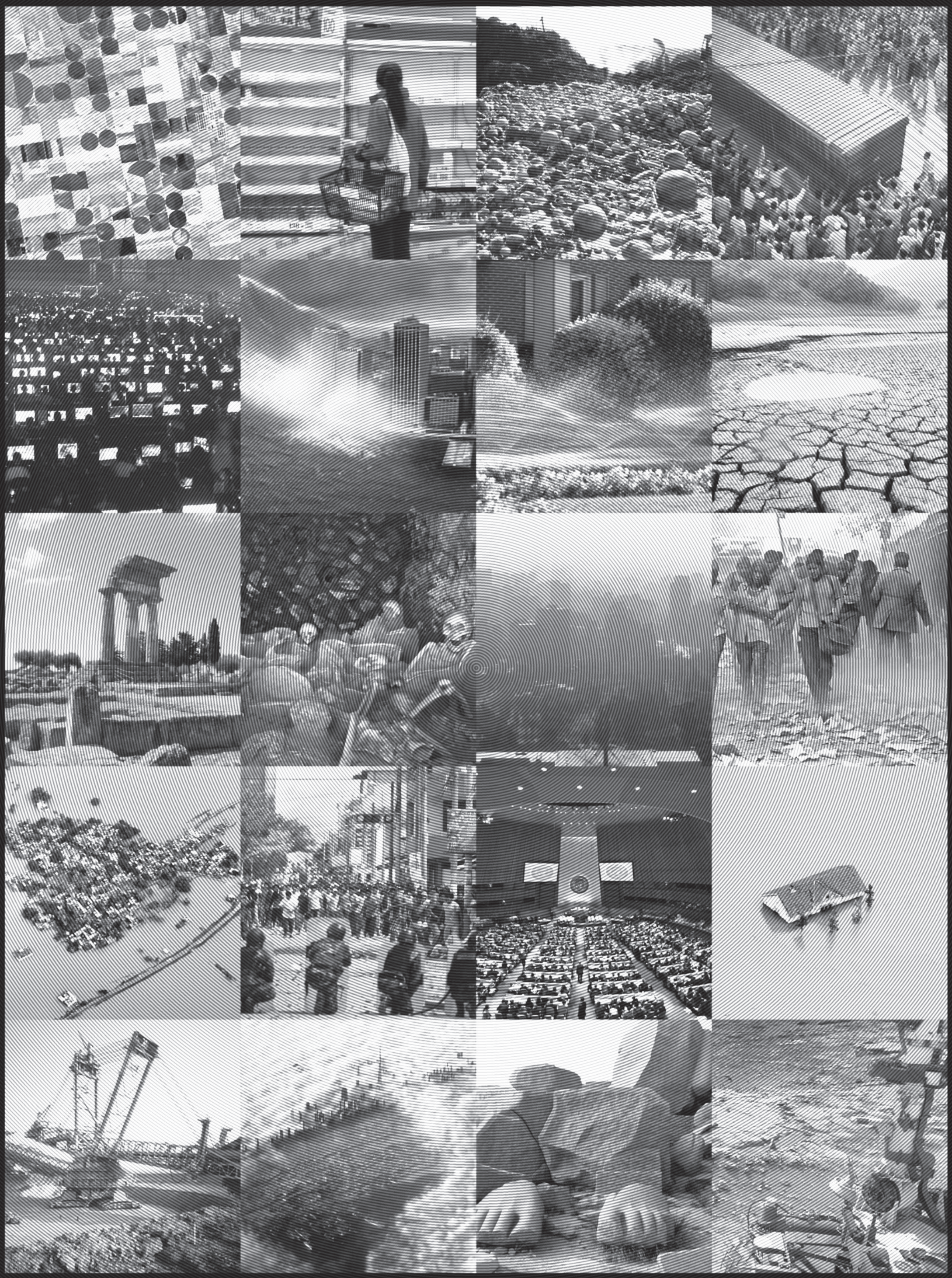
Undercover SDS officers Bob Lambert, John Dines, Mark Jenner and Andrew James Boyling, it has been revealed, formed long-term intimate relationships with female activists in order to embed themselves within movements and gain the trust of fellow organisers. This was a widely used tactic because activists were far more trusting of a respected woman's partner than a lone stranger. There are probably many more who we will never know about. Rob Evans and Paul Lewis in *Undercover* estimate that between 100 and 150 police spies worked for the SDS and its successors. Fellow SDS officer, turned whistleblower, Peter Francis has given further damning testimony concerning the use of dead babies' names, the infiltration of anti-racism campaigns and the monitoring of at least 18 families seeking justice for family members murdered by the police or in cases where the police obstructed justice.

Despite some recent media reports focusing on the 'now disbanded' SDS, which was wound up in 2008, several new units had already taken over and have actually expanded upon the work of the SDS: The National Extremism Tactical Co-ordination Unit (NETCU) was set up in 2004, and Mark Kennedy spied for the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) formed in 1999. Both of these were run by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), a private company. In 2010 they were amalgamated and brought back under the Met's SO15 Counter Terrorism Command as the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit which continues to place undercover officers in groups advocating for social change. In June 2013, the Guardian reported that a Freedom of Information request had found that this unit had files on 8,931 individuals.

Over 15 official inquiries by the police and government bodies have failed to hold any undercover officer or their bosses accountable for the damage they have wreaked on individuals and groups. The largest of these is the Operation Herne inquiry which has produced three reports - the last of which especially seems more concerned with public perceptions of the police than getting to the truth. This is what happens when the elite are left to judge each other. Theresa May has stated there will be a public inquiry into undercover policing, probably to begin in 2016, but hasn't stated what will be included in its remit.

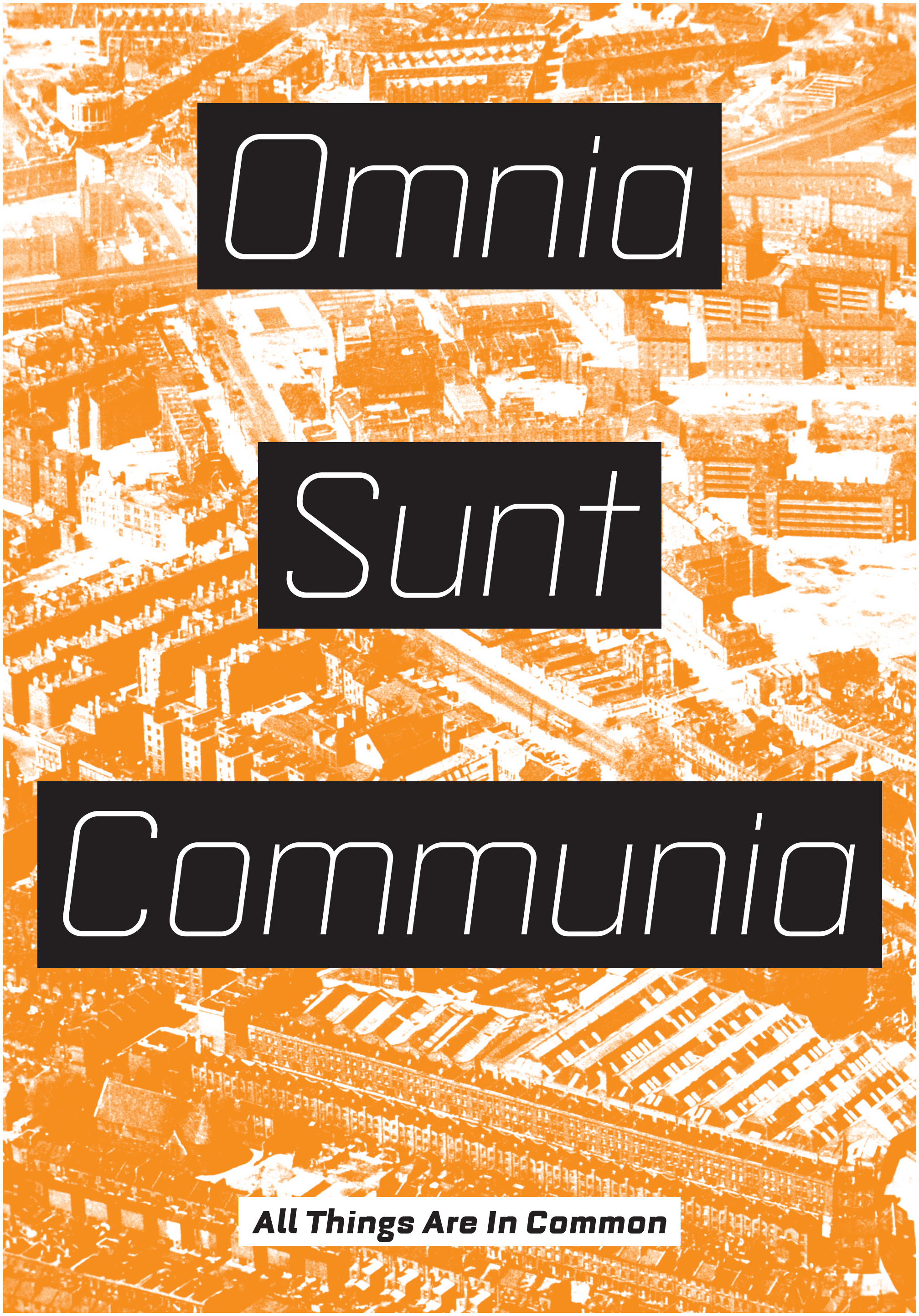
The women continue to battle for justice. After three years they have forced the Met, via the courts, to admit Lambert and Boyling were undercover officers but the police have been able to maintain their stance of 'neither confirm nor deny' regarding Dines and Jenner. The case against Mark Kennedy will be heard by the secret Investigatory Powers Tribunal unless the women are able to appeal the decision. The CPS recently announced that it wouldn't be bringing criminal proceedings against the undercover officers who deceived women into relationships. But the women continue their fight for truth in the civil courts.

*Visit policespiesoutoflives.org.uk to find out how you can join the campaign*.



Echoes of Relics

by Jack Dean


Omnia
Sunt
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All Things Are In Common