

Focus ON ROJAVA



Photo Source: <https://pydrojava.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ypg-usa.jpg>

*The devastating effects of the lesser evil
and anti-imperialism in anarchist circles (II)*

FOCUS ON ROJAVA

Why a focus on Rojava in 2024? Both because of random discussions, but also because the most widespread form of military-revolutionary mythology about Rojava has reappeared as an ideological support for an “anarchist” commitment to the war in Ukraine, going as far as to valorize the career paths of people who have gone from one war to another. On this occasion, a military commitment in Rojava is “naturally” presented as an authoritative justification for joining the Ukrainian troops “in any case”, the case being understood as a leftist or “anarchist” cause.

Beyond this actuality, the range of issues raised by the “support for revolutionary Rojava” touches on all the essential aspects of this society with which revolutionary aspiration is confronted more than ever, such as the capitalist social relation, the nature of the State, the general course towards war.

The crux of the Rojava question and all its developments lies in its origins, hence the importance of reading again analyses from ten years ago. The presupposition of many supporters of “the Rojava revolution” is to conflate the contagion of the “Arab Spring” revolts in Syria in 2011 with its all-out burial, particularly within the Kurdish national framework. No, the “*Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria*” – as “Rojava” has been officially called on the international diplomatic scene since 2018 – is not the emanation of an emancipatory, revolutionary struggle, with its strengths and limitations; on the contrary, it is what has been organized *politically* to get control of this situation, within the State and capitalist framework. As Gilles Dauvé and Tristan Leoni pointed out in 2015:

“The so-called Revolution of July 2012 corresponds in fact to the withdrawal of Assad’s troops from Kurdistan. Having disappeared the previous administrative and security power was replaced, and a self-government called revolutionary has taken things in hand. But for what “self” is it acting? [And] of what revolution?”¹

By 2005, the KCK² had abandoned its goal of establishing a separate Kurdish State and argued instead for the famous *democratic confederalism* advocated in the writings of the founder of the PKK Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned for life by Turkey in 1999. This project came to fruition in 2012, when the PYD took control of a large part of northern Syria and signed an agreement with the Syrian government. The sleight of hand consists in presenting this transfer of political and military power as the founding event of a revolution, while in fact it was all about ensuring the continuity of the State, against any revolutionary inclination. Left-wing romanticism notwithstanding, all the progressive, liberal, environmentalist and feminist ingredients that adorned this transfer of State power are more a sign of a first-class funeral than an expression of the struggle that preceded it.

“We hear of a popular dynamic, admittedly paralyzed by war, but nevertheless one that could reappear again, later. We are told that it is necessary to remain hopeful and above all to believe that humanity (or the proletariat) will emancipate itself by making war first and only afterwards the revolution. This seems crazy to us. This is the choice allegedly made by the PYD, and which corresponds to the old ‘revolutionary’ schema (the classical transition phase that is limited to a ‘political revolution’). (...) In Rojava it is war that dominates — a popular war if you want — but war all the same.”³

¹ Gilles Dauvé & Tristan Leoni, “Kurdistan?”, DDT21, 2015, https://ddt21.noblogs.org/?page_id=324
English translation made by *Notes from the Sinister Quarter*: <https://thesinisterquarter.wordpress.com/2015/02/16/kurdistan/>

² The acronym KCK stands for “Kurdistan Communities Union”, a political structure emanating from the PKK, and serving as an umbrella group for Turkey’s PKK, Syria’s PYD, Iran’s PJAK and Iraq’s PÇDK, as well as a number of social organizations more or less linked to these sister parties. The KCK is led by a kind of parliament called *Kongra Gelê* or “Kurdistan People’s Congress”.

³ Excerpt from “A Letter to ‘Rojavist’ Friends”, signed TKGv, from the initials of its authors, in 2016, <https://paris-luttes.info/lettre-a-des-amis-rojavistes-5649>

English translation by Pete Dunn with help from Anthony Hayes, August 2016: <https://libcom.org/article/letter-rojavist-friends/>

Of course, we must always bear in mind, then and now, that this takeover, this crackdown, this national reconfiguration, did not eradicate all desire for struggle, for emancipation beyond the imposed frameworks. Keeping this in mind means first and foremost refusing to pass off the reconstitution of the State as a continuation of the struggle, or, in other words, that there are common interests or any possible convergence between both.

Maintaining the confusion between the struggle and its burial, under the pretext of a “duty of solidarity”, is in fact the worst thing we can do with regard to any attempt of struggle that might be maintained or re-emerge against the current. This ideological matrix is as old as our defeats – particularly since the advent of social democracy, our gravedigger-in-chief – and it has always needed homelands to embody itself, from Bolshevik Russia to Maoist China or Castro’s Cuba, including national liberation struggles under various banners.

The struggle in Chiapas since the 90s was– and to some extent remains – a banner for this matrix, although this does not coincide with its complex and contradictory reality, a serious analysis of which would take up too much space here. Anyway, a superficial and left-wing vision of Chiapas is often provided by the zealots of “Revolutionary Rojava” in support of their theses, notably on these issues: autonomy, territory, civil society, democracy without a State, participative governance, armed struggle, gender. All these elements need to be critically examined, but the very nature of the ideological matrix is to make them unchallengeable, in a fearsome machine that has seen considerable expansion about Rojava. Instead of talking about the fate of the insurrectional struggle of 2011 and beyond, instead of seeing the Kurdish national movement as antagonistic to that struggle, we are being fooled with the people, militarism-feminism, collaborative economy and the glorification of “civil society”, as if the latter were not the space par excellence of class collaboration, the other face of the State, its guarantor and pillar.

International polemics on these questions, on the revolutionary or non-revolutionary nature of what’s happening in Rojava, on the meaning of solidarity to be activated with whom and what, against what, began in the first years after 2011, notably in anarchist circles (and beyond) and are still going strong today, when the issue is revisited.

We would sum up the important issues that are at stake as follows:

♦ What happened to the wave of struggle in the early 2010s against the constitution of the Rojava State (the “autonomous administration”), behind what they have been foisting up on us internationally?

♦ Similarly, how did this wave of struggle survive its militarization under international aegis, in a context of crushing the struggles and transforming them into a deep inter-imperialist mess, from the repression of the 2011 struggles in Syria to the international military reconfiguration “against Daesh”, at the cost of alliances with international oppressors?

♦ What is the social, political and emancipatory content and perspective of this “autonomy”, if it was anything else than a restoration of the State in a new form (popular democracy, community democracy...) and the arrival of new managers?

♦ In other words, what is the beginning of an attack – or even a critique – of the capitalist social relation and the State in the process we have been told about in Rojava since so many years?

The answers to these questions have been documented over the past decade, and unfortunately do not go in the direction advocated by the defenders of the “Rojava Revolution”. From a theoretical point of view, the reference to Murray Bookchin’s “libertarian municipalism” generally serves as a guarantee for anarchists, as if it was obvious that this self-management doctrine was revolutionary and that we could sign a blank cheque to the founder of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, who converted to it in prison thanks to a correspondence with the author and drew from it his own doctrine, the *democratic confederalism*. This ideological turnaround would ensure that what is being done in Rojava under the aegis of the PKK and its broader offshoot – the KCK – would no longer be part of the continuity of the classic conquest of the State by a Marxist-Leninist party, but would meet, even embody, the emancipatory aspirations of the 2011 movement. Here's what Gilles Dauvé and Tristan Leoni analyzed in 2015 behind this seductive veneer:

“The PKK has not given up the usual goal of national liberation movements. Even if it now avoids a word that sounds too authoritarian, the aim of the PKK is still today as it was yesterday, the creation of a central apparatus of management and of political rule over a territory — and there is no better word than State to describe this thing. The difference, apart from

its administrative designation, is that it would be so very democratic, so much more in the hands of its citizens that it would no longer deserve the name of State. Here is ideology.

In Syria, the Kurdish national movement (under the influence of PKK) has replaced the demand for a state of law by a more modest and more “basic” [basiste — from the base, lit. ‘base-ist’] program: autonomy, democratic federalism, the rights of men and women, etc. What is put forward, instead of the ideology of socialism led by a single workers and peasants party developing heavy industry, or references to “class” and “Marxists”, is self-management, the cooperative, the commune, ecology, anti-productivism and, as a bonus, gender.”⁴

Abdullah Öcalan’s democratic confederalism, implemented by the PKK and its avatars, found its first political transcription in January 2014 in the *Charter of the Social Contract*⁵, a veritable constitution defining the principles and overall architecture of the social and political organization of the territory, in other words of the State in Rojava. As any constitution, it is a democratic bulwark against any emancipation organized outside of the State and capitalist framework, and therefore against revolution. In its eloquent preamble, the text “*recognizes Syria’s territorial integrity and aspires to maintain domestic and international peace*”.

About this *Charter of the Social Contract*, let’s quote the text “*Rojava: Fantasies and Realities*” by Zafer Onat (2014)⁶:

“On this point, it is helpful to examine the KCK Contract that defines the democratic confederalism that forms the basis of the political system in Rojava. A few points in the introduction written by Ocalan deserve our attention:

“This system is one that takes into account ethnic, religious and class differences on a social basis.” (...) “Three systems of law will apply in Kurdistan: EU law, unitary state law, democratic confederal law.”

⁴ Gilles Dauvé & Tristan Leoni, “*Kurdistan?*”, op. cit.

⁵ The Contract can be read in English here: <https://civiroglu.net/the-constitution-of-the-rojava-cantons/>

⁶ This English-language critical text is taken from the now-defunct Turkish-language blog *Servet Düşmani* (“Enemy of Wealth”): <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/zafer-onat-rojava-fantasies-and-realities/>

In summary, it is stated that class society will remain and there will be a federal political system compatible with the global system and the nation state. In concert with this, article 8 of the Contract, titled "Personal, Political Rights and Freedoms" defends private property and section C of article 10 titled "Basic Responsibilities" defines the constitutional basis of mandatory military service as it states "In the case of a war of legitimate defense, as a requirement of patriotism, there is the responsibility to actively join the defense of the homeland and basic rights and freedoms." While the Contract states that the aim is not political power, we also understand that the destruction of the state apparatus is also not aimed, meaning the goal is autonomy within existing nation states. When the Contract is viewed in its entirety, the goal that is presented is seen not to be beyond a bourgeois democratic system that is called democratic confederalism. To summarize, while the photos of two women bearing rifles that are frequently spread on social media, one taken in the Spanish Civil War, the other taken in Rojava do correspond to a similarity in the sense of women fighting for their freedoms, it is clear that the persons fighting ISIS in Rojava do not at this point have the same goals and ideals as the workers and poor peasants that fought within the CNT-FAI in order to remove the state and private property altogether."

To say that the CNT, from 1936 onwards, was fighting to "remove the state and private property", is a step that's historically unacceptable, given its abandonment of libertarian communism, its compromise with the Republic and its submission to the logic of war as opposed to that of revolution. In the case of Rojava, as now in the case of Ukraine, as soon as "the society", "the country", "the people" and its variants such as tribes, ethnic groups, etc. become subjects in their own right in the discourse, this means that they have already agreed to give up the essentials, namely the class demarcation and the demarcation with the State. "The society" and "the people" are abstractions from the underlying capitalist social relation, from the class struggle and the oppressive nature of the State, but they take shape and materialize as concrete ideological forces through social peace, citizen servitude, national union...

If we analyze the propaganda in favor of war under the anarchist flag, we get the impression that war is not at all understood for what it is, a paroxysm of our defeat, but as a social circumstance like any other in which it is possible to participate "as an anarchist" or even as an

extension of the struggle by another means, bringing emancipation, at the price of sacrificing our lives but not our principles. Consequently, the crucial issue of insubordination, refusal of conscription and revolutionary defeatism is removed, since in this view it doesn't even arise, in a kind of total inversion of any subversive point of view. Once "some comrades" have decided "to go in as anarchists", we should respect their "free will" and support them, otherwise we could be accused of "lack of solidarity" and "lack of internationalism"! Faced with the real antagonism between class war and imperialist war, between fighting against the State and borders, and fighting on the borders for the State, any evasion or wavering opens the way for the bourgeois-democratic horizon and its non-choices between war and peace, between military engagement and pacifism, between misguided, incantatory solidarity and resignation.

To succeed in this monstrosity of justifying war and national defense in the name of struggle and anarchism, it's necessary, at the cost of remarkable contortions, to evade both the State and what would really be a class-based anti-war struggle, namely revolutionary defeatism, class war against the exploiters, against the war machine, on all sides. The fact that this struggle does not *automatically* erupt is no justification for joining the front. In Rojava, as in the Ukraine, we are assured that no comrade is fighting for the State, either because the State is virtually non-existent, as in Rojava, or because we are acting "alongside" the State and not "beside" it, as in the Ukraine, where the government and NATO are coping with the actions of black-flag armed groups who do not take orders from any General Staff! Both is supposed to be a vast movement of "resistance" and "self-defense". The word "self" tends to indicate that comrades are fighting directly for their own collective interests, without the mediation of the State. However, the State is indeed at work, because by fighting against the onslaught of surrounding armies or Daesh under this or that flag, the proletarians enlisted are actually fighting for a new local management of Capital. We were talking about tactical flexibility, and a lot is needed to match the inter-imperialist mess, when "self-defense" has to go hand in hand with military alliances with local and international imperialist powers.

Thus, talking about "the struggle in such-and-such a region", "such-and-such a region in struggle" or, in a more exalted way, "the revolution

in such-and-such a region” is totally equivocal until the above is clarified. In October 2014, at the time of the attack on Kobane, the left-wing American economist David Graeber declared in an interview with “The Guardian” that it was indeed a revolution, as in Spain in 1936, and he urged international solidarity, reviving the model of the “international brigades” (in which his father volunteered in 1937), while obscuring in passing that they were organized by the Stalinist counter-insurgency, in parallel with the fatal militarization of revolutionary militias. Nothing new under the veiled sun of Capital, between communication and parallel diplomacy:

“In December 2014, while lesser Rojavan officials were meeting with US activists Janet Biehl and David Graeber, the top PKK/PYD official, Salih Muslim, was discussing military collaboration with the US ‘neocon’ Zalmay Khalilzad.”⁷

On this point, let’s take the following from “A Letter to ‘Rojavist’ Friends”:⁸

“With regards to their diplomatic agenda, the representatives (sic) of the YPG are regularly sent to Western countries with the goal of establishing new contacts. The days in which they were represented as totally isolated, as victims of their revolutionary position (despite their commander being received at the Élysée Palace) have passed. Their presence at the negotiations in Geneva was prevented by the efforts of Turkey, whilst Russia’s presence there was favourable. Since then the government of Rojava opened a diplomatic representation in Moscow in February [2016], which was the occasion of a lovely little celebration (ditto in Prague in April).

From a political, diplomatic and military point of view the leadership of the PYD /YPG (wooed as much by the United-States as by Russia) has known how to opportunistically play its cards right, that is to say, reinforce its political weight by obtaining military support and quasi-international recognition.

With respect to media support, it is very widespread and particularly positive. In France, the combatants of the YPG (and above all those of the

⁷ “‘I have seen the future and it works.’ – Critical questions for supporters of the Rojava revolution”: <https://libcom.org/article/i-have-seen-future-and-it-works-critical-questions-supporters-rojava-revolution>

⁸ “A Letter to ‘Rojavist’ Friends”, op. cit.

YPJ) are presented as models of courage, of feminism, and of democracy and tolerance. Such is the case with 'Arte' to 'France 2', passing by 'LCP'. Likewise with the Radio, where from 'Radio Libertaire' to 'Radio Courtoisie' and 'France Culture' one hears the praises of the combatants of freedom."

While the PKK itself is still considered a "terrorist organization" by the so-called "great powers" (and which are indeed terrorist organizations), its Kurdish avatar the PYD and its armed branches the YPG & YPJ do exist on the international diplomatic and military scene. The reason is simple: beyond the rhetoric, the powers seek allies not on the basis of their capacities to implement liberal democracy (let alone "local" or "popular" democracy), but on their ability to control their region and to discipline the proletariat who lives in it. And yet, despite the clichés we hear, it's not the neighborhood assemblies or the production cooperatives that represent the political force in Kurdistan (at most, they serve as an ideological smoke and mirrors), it's the PYD and its armed branches. In the words of Gilles Dauvé and Tristan Leoni, "*we have never yet seen a State dissolve itself in local democracy*".

This is what the partisans of the "Rojava Revolution" claim, particularly under the anarchist banner, echoing what the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan summed up in 2005:

*"Democratic confederalism of Kurdistan is not a state system, but a democratic system of the people without a state. [...] It derives its power from the people and in all areas including its economy it will seek self-sufficiency."*⁹

Talking that way about "democracy without a state" (a subtle oxymoron) or a "society without a state" in Rojava frankly doesn't make much sense politically, institutionally or militarily.

Rojava does have a State "*with a government led by the "single party" PYD, ministries, a multitude of mini parliaments, courts of justice, a "Constitution" (called "Social Contract"), an army (the YPG/YPJ militias*

⁹ https://web.archive.org/web/20160929163726/http://www.freemedialibrary.com/index.php/Declaration_of_Democratic_Confederalism_in_Kurdistan

increasingly militarized), a police force (the Asayish) which imposes internal social order.”¹⁰

More generally, as the other text in the same brochure reminds us:

*“The State is also – mainly – the result of specific social relations. This means that it is based on the dynamics of the relation between social classes and their relation to property. Thus, where classes and private property are preserved, there is a State.”*¹¹

It also denounces the fact of “*giving up the vision of a social revolution as a global process and clinging to the idea of the revolution in one country*”. The fact that Rojava’s democracy is “popular”, assemblyist, councilist... in no way detracts from its bourgeois character, which is quite simply conservative of existing social relations. This is where the question of *radicality* takes on its full meaning, neither as a self-assumed title nor as a value judgement. If we consider that the cause of our misery stems from a lack of equality, from a democratic deficit in the business management, from a problem of governance, then any progressive bourgeois project can pass as a revolution. If, on the other hand, we consider that the cause of our misery is the capitalist social relation itself, not how it is managed, and that the State and politics are merely its appendages and not a neutral tool to be seized... then it will become more difficult to recruit us under these flags.

“Some anarchist texts only evoke Rojava in terms of local achievements and neighbourhood assemblies, almost never speaking of the PYD and the PKK, etc., as if they were only spontaneous actions. It would be a little like if, in order to analyse a general strike, we only spoke of the self-management of strikers and of strike pickets, without considering the local unions, or the manoeuvring of the union management, or their negotiations with the State and the bosses...”

The revolution is increasingly seen as a question of behaviour: self-organization, interest in gender, ecology, creating links, discussion, affects. If we add here disinterest or carelessness regarding State and political

¹⁰ “‘Rojava Revolution’? ‘Anti-State’? ‘Anti-Capitalist’? Or a new mystification?”, in *Class War* 13/2021, <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/class-war-13-2021-rojava-revolution-anti-state-anti-capitalist-or-a-new-mystification/>

¹¹ “A View of Rojava or Criticism as an Opportunity for Growth and Development”, English translation in *Class War* 13/2021, op. cit.

*power, it is logical to see well and truly a revolution — and why not “a revolution of women” in Rojava. Since we speak less and less of classes, of class struggle, does it matter that this is also absent from the discourse of the PKK-PYD?”*¹²

This is a very interesting point, which deserves to be developed further. The crucial question of affirming our community of struggle against all the false capitalist communities (political, social, cultural, religious, “ethnic”...) fully includes the dimension of emotions and behaviors (which are far from being collectively accepted), and to affirm this is to highlight what we have to reappropriate on this devastated terrain, by reinforcing ourselves and struggling together against individual and relational alienation, against the collective reproduction of all forms of alienation whose matrixes are racism, sexism and ableism.

The violent diversion of this vital need consists, on the other hand, in making the no less crucial question of the *content* of the struggle disappear by using that of emotions, behaviors and formal signs as a substitute, an artifice, a cover-up. That is the case with Rojava, with a profusion of highly emotional testimonies contributing to this ideological offensive. Not that these testimonies are necessarily false, but they are isolated from their general dynamic to make us forget that the true – the beginnings of liberation from certain social shackles – can be a moment of the false, in this case of the so-called “Rojava Revolution”. As a moment of the false, the true is then realized in the egalitarian performance of patriotic sacrifice. You can’t assault the sky with national lead in your wing.

This is the starting point for our analysis of the phenomenon of *jineology*, the “science of women” advocated as a component of democratic confederalism in Rojava, as the other side of the widely promoted “martial feminism”.

As Gilles Dauvé and Tristan Leoni rightly remind us:

“The subversive nature of a movement or organization cannot be measured by the number of armed women — nor its feminist character either. Since the 1960s, across all continents, most guerrillas have included or include numerous female combatants — for example in Colombia. This is

¹² Gilles Dauvé & Tristan Leoni, “Kurdistan?”, op. cit.

even truer amongst Maoist-inspired guerrillas (Nepal, Peru, Philippines, etc.) using the strategy of “People’s War”: male/female equality should contribute to the tearing down of traditional structures, feudal or tribal (always patriarchal). It is in the Maoist origins of the PKK-PYD that one finds the source of what specialists call “martial feminism”.¹³

It should be added that this confederalism is not at all about an overcoming of false capitalist communities (particularly “ethnic” ones), but as their reasoned arrangement, in an organized and systematic denial of class contradiction. By way of comparison, in Iran in 1979, even the Muslim leaders in opposition to the Shah’s regime spoke of class struggle, obviously in order to better bury the movement that was beginning to take an insurrectionary turn.

In the broad spectrum of “support for Rojava”, Marxist-Leninist organizations such as the *Parti Socialiste de Lutte* and *Secours Rouge* play an active role. The latter is supported in Brussels by quite complacent “libertarian” allies used as non-dogmatic, anti-authoritarian stooges, and it campaigns for “*Support for the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of Rojava and elsewhere, against the Islamists, the USA, NATO and reactionary states*.” and implicitly invites us to turn a blind eye – a tried and tested Marxist-Leninist habit – to all the military and geostrategic alliances that have belied this rallying banner. The “old disagreements” are thrown away, they are raising money for plasters and they spread their propaganda. Less naïve than the “anarchist” supporters, these organizations are perfectly aware (and even feel secure in knowing) that there is indeed a State in Rojava, a fortiori with their local counterparts at the helm. The strategic opportunism of these Marxist-Leninist organizations naturally mirrors that of the PKK, which, along with the PYD, they also consider to be “progressive”, in opposition to neighboring “*reactionary States*”, an old anti-imperialist platitude, while endorsing the eco-feminist-libertarian facelift as an ideological paradigm shift. If refusing the very foundations of such a support front is being purist, as we often hear, then yes, let’s be resolutely purist, more than ever and right to the end!

The question, as always, is not to be fooled while confusing social democracy with revolution, not to be recruited in a campaign of support

¹³ Gilles Dauvé & Tristan Leoni, “*Kurdistan?*”, op. cit.

for any kind of State, economic or even social restructuring under the guise of revolutionary internationalism. In the case of Rojava, as in the Ukraine, the argument that what is being done locally – including by “comrades” under “our” banner (the poverty-of family!) – is more valuable than what we can think about it here, or the assertion that over there we *act* while here we *theorize*, is the very negation of the internationalist solidarity, its dissolution in the myth of free will and confinement in national camps. Any entry into the war has the potential to make social contradictions burst out, but there is no determinism, and what prevails, at least initially, is the obliteration of struggle and ideological subjugation. Being exposed to shrapnel doesn’t offer any extra clairvoyance.

These attempts at hierarchization, separation and atomization in the name of the status of “being concerned” actually have a very trivial origin. Whenever anarchism gives up being revolutionary, it loses its substance and degenerates into a zealous variant of leftism, while ignoring itself as such and rushing headlong into its most hackneyed clichés: self-determination of peoples, anti-imperialism, national liberation, separate armed struggle, minimum (“realistic”) and maximum (revolutionary rhetoric) programs, worldwide support for all class-collaborationist fronts.

Yet, to assert that the revolutionary movement is internationalist is to assert that *“comrade criticism must flow in all directions in order to be a constructive part of the process of creating a common theory and practice.”*¹⁴

It's one thing to analyze and understand the social dynamics that lead to demand or defend a “more cooperative” (market) management style against one more directly dictated by the imperatives of the global market, in other words, production that allows for a certain margin of subsistence against an economy that totally uproots us and chains us to industry... It's another thing to accept it as a “revolutionary” program or a “step towards revolution”. Yet another thing is to promote the political transposition of this illusion, by defending a more “participatory” politics, and more concerned with social peace, against a more vertical and

¹⁴ “A View of Rojava or Criticism as an Opportunity for Growth and Development”, English translation in *Class War* 13/2021, op. cit.

frontal politics. And finally, another thing is to defend a national union more accomplished as a “revolutionary self-defense”, without seeing how the State, and therefore capital, remain master of the situation. Because it is precisely in this way that we are repeatedly led back into the same catastrophic quagmire, back into the fold of politics; it is also in this way that the authoritarian character of the commodity and *value* reigning over our lives is fundamentally denied, as is any prospect of radical and definitive emancipation from them. This is what the “Rojava revolution” is all about, this is the lie we are supposed to swallow, either by political opportunism or by the need for exoticism as a palliative to a total loss of revolutionary meaning.

It’s also important to see that these programs of “popular democracy”, direct and participatory democracy or community of “good governance” play much more of a role of ideological mobilization, of propaganda, as a pseudo-revolutionary model to be defended to keep the ideological matrix of *socialism in one country* under perfusion (updated with ecologic, feminist, inclusive, anti-authoritarian tints...), than they would represent a significant real alternative for capitalism in terms of maintaining social peace around the world.

At the end of this brief update, we’d like to return to an issue that’s as much mistreated as it is vital: the solidarity. However valid our arguments may be, haven’t we put them up like a wall between ourselves and those towards whom we were called to show solidarity? Do we have the right to call to turn away from an “experiment” which, despite its weaknesses and ideological misleadingness, needs our support in the face of its enemies who will show no mercy? Wouldn’t it be better to endorse a solidarity front that’s a little too broad than to risk that we will miss, as David Graeber urged, a historic rendezvous with a need for revolutionary solidarity? However sincere the intention, these remarks nonetheless reflect a truncated, distorted vision of what our class solidarity should be.

Let’s embrace the fact that we have a rendezvous with History, even in the smallest events, but it all depends on which current – or counter-current – of History we intend to follow. From a revolutionary point of view, the alternative to which this question of solidarity confronts us is the following: either we resign ourselves to the seduction of “fronts of struggle”, by tarnishing our principles, or we start afresh from the

content of the struggle and its perspectives, by affirming not only with what ruptures we are in solidarity – whether these are embodied in sporadic actions or are carried by a broader movement – but also *against* what. Contrary to what is spread by the prevailing relativism and cynicism, principles, from a subversive point of view, are not what dispenses from thinking; on the contrary, they are the way in which we think our own struggle in the historical thread of its antagonism to *all* the parties of Order that have succeeded one another in the course of History throughout the world, since the beginning of class societies, these societies of appropriation, exploitation, domination and alienation.

We spoke earlier of the shift of a certain impoverished and disoriented anarchism towards the most caricatured leftism; the question of solidarity is no exception. From an internationalist point of view, solidarity with any radicalizing rupture anywhere in the world is embodied above all in the struggle wherever you are, against “your own” exploiters, against “your own” State, against any sacrifice. In Rojava, as in the rest of the world, the supreme stage of leftist conception and practice of solidarity boils down to proxy recruitment and support: serving at its best “the cause” (here, or even there) and garnering “support” (fund raising and propaganda outlets) after having first accepted the frontism, the flags and the blurring of essential demarcations (class, State).

A quotation whose scope can be extended to the rest of the world will help us to conclude:

“(…) in order for the events in Rojava to become truly revolutionary, it is necessary to move beyond the existing content, which represents self-defense of lives, culture, language, ethnicity, territory, local economy, jobs, civic and religious rights. Events would have to move on. To the content that represents the offensive phase. It will not be about civic activism and mere democratic administration, but about proletarian class struggle.”

“Events would have to move on”, but above all in a completely different direction to that taken in Rojava.

“In practice, this presupposes expressions of struggle subverting the pillars of Capital, such as classes, property, exchange, labor, money, the market, the State – and at the same time the creation of not only different organizational forms, but above all of a different social content. This is not yet happening in Rojava. (...) The point is not to turn away from Rojava,

*but also not to accept the uncritical support of everything that is happening there. Neither rejection nor romanticism. Just keep a sober, non-propaganda view.”*¹⁵

Reconnecting with class, struggle and internationalist solidarity starts with refusing the ideological injunctions and non-choices that are presented to us as inescapable, and breaking with complacency towards catch-all support fronts in order to confront the crucial, delicate questions that are often also “the questions that make people angry”, especially when criticism of content, positions and practices is experienced or reversed as an “attack” or as a “betrayal”. It’s part of the struggle to highlight and try to help to resolve the deviations and contradictions experienced within our community of struggle. The targets of criticism, behind all this, remain those who knowingly use us in their “militant” political calculations and, beyond that, the State and the social order to which these calculations ultimately benefit. ★

¹⁵ “*A View of Rojava or Criticism as an Opportunity for Growth and Development*”, English translation in *Class War* 13/2021, op. cit.

Read also

**Contre toutes les
guerres... sauf les
guerres « justes » ?**



*Des ravages du moindre mal et
de l'anti-impérialisme en milieu anarchiste*

Novembre 2022 ★ waragainstwar@riseup.net

ENGLISH EDITION OUT SOON

"In order for the events in Rojava to become truly revolutionary, it is necessary to move beyond the existing content, which represents self-defense of lives, culture, language, ethnicity, territory, local economy, jobs, civic and religious rights. Events would have to move on. To the content that represents the offensive phase. It will not be about civic activism and mere democratic administration, but about proletarian class struggle."

