

We Can Be Worse Still

**reflections & thoughts on the month following the disappearance of Santiago
Maldonado**

Some anarchists in Buenos Aires

September 2017

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[ed. – Report by ‘Some anarchists in Buenos Aires’, concerning the rage unfolding in Argentina, a country haunted by the ghosts of 30,000 disappeared during the 1976–1983 military dictatorship, and more continuing into democracy... To update so far: one month to the day after Santiago’s disappearance, tens of thousands of people demonstrated on September 1st in Buenos Aires, with six cops wounded in the capital and more coming under molotov fire in Bolsón, Patagonian region. Across the Brazilian border, the Argentine consulate in Porto Alegre was paint-splattered, while barricades were erected and police attacked in Valparaíso, Chile. So far, aside from embassy rallies in a couple of capitals and attacks on Benetton stores (see below) in Milan and Madrid, there has been little reaction on the so-called ‘Old Continent’... This was also noted by some comrades posterizing “in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula: A Coruña, a port city from which hundreds of immigrant ships left for Latin America. But practically nil is the information on this side of the Atlantic[...] Nor did we expect it to be any different. Colonizing Europe has never ceased to be so, but little is said here about the devastation European multinationals and their allies carry out in South America: it is hidden behind the mask of NGOs and the most hypocritical and paternalistic charity.”

These events unfolded as part of the struggle of the Mapuche people (see Return Fire vol.3 pg59, also including a glossary of the Mapudungun vocabulary below), fighting against European colonisers more than 500 years (immediately before which they stalled and defeated the Inca Empire’s southward push). Wallmapu, their historic territory, is cut in half by the nation-state borders of Argentina and Chile, so they cannot move freely around their native land. The Mapuche are also no stranger to forced police disappearances, including under democracy; such as José Huenante, detained September 2005 in the Chilean city Puerto Montt, never to be seen again.

Especially in light of the history of colonists from the U.K. (famously from Wales) emigrating to Argentina, we’d like to add some words to counter the historical amnesia so many of us seem to find ourselves in right now. Following the British-funded ‘Conquest of the Desert’ genocides (see below), the Argentine President donated 900,000 hectares to the British company Argentine Southern Land, to construct a railroad for the country’s export system to better profit from the expropriation. Today, the case is not atypical of Joseph “Joe” Lewis (British business magnate among the 300 richest people on the planet,) whose massive purchase on Patagonian land included the Hidden Lake, a Mapuche site of high significance, to which he subsequently closed access. Last summer, Mapuche fighters burned his excavators preparing a hydroelectric dam along the Río Escondido, on Lewis’ private property, being built in cooperation with Edenor electric company, of which Lewis is the biggest stock owner. (That attack was also in solidarity with Facundo Jones Huala of the Cushamen community (see below), wanted for extradition to Chile over Mapuche land recuperation actions, in the end released only to be re-arrested and now awaiting transportation over the border to face ‘terror’ charges for arson on a colonist farm.)

Since 1991, Argentine Southern Land was acquired by the Benetton family of Italy, where it produces 10% of the wool for fashion chain United Colors of Benetton, in addition to the mining, deforestation, transgenic soy plantations (see Market Pressured to Temporarily Drop G.M. Product Lines After Contamination Campaign Claimed, Lombardy) and other extraction elsewhere on more than million hectares it owns in Argentine Patagonia (see Return Fire vol.3 pg66). In the Chubut province near the Chilean border has become a focus point for landless indigenous workers who since 2015 have set up the Pu Lof community on unused rural tracts around the town of Cushamen (Mapuche territory for over 1,400 years, which Benetton now holds the deeds for), and has seen an explosion of violence from authorities intent on breaking the recuperation movement, with the first brutal mass raids ordered by Benetton in June 2016. (Among the dwellings, clothes and equipment torched

by police have been stocks of organic autochthonous seeds; this is because Mapuche still preserve their seeds without genetic modification which stops multinationals from selling their own tailored stock and creating a dependence on copyrighted versions. Since the raids, others have pointed out Benetton's political relations with the Minister of Homeland Security, Patricia Bullrich.) A pamphlet distributed in Pontevedra (Spain) reminds us that "while exhibiting disgusting advertising where they show people of all colours and ethnicities smiling and so happy (but all following the racist and colonial stereotypes of Western civilisation, of course), [United Colors of Benetton] crush the Mapuche communities that try to recover their land, today bought by that company to pasture the 1,000s of sheep they have enslaved to produce wool."

Anarchists, for almost as long as they have called themselves such, have a history that in its better moments has always included solidarity with anti-colonial insurgencies; while in 1850, in New Orleans, Joseph Déjacque (see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg29) dreamed of slave rebellions and the dissolution of racial boundaries, Louis Michel embodied these dreams quarter of a century later by joining her force with rebels of so-called New Caledonia and Algeria (see 'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'). Likewise today, as in other parts of the world, in Argentina anarchists and Mapuche find themselves side-by-side facing the enemy, as was the case when Diego Sebastián Petrisans and Leandro Sebastián Morel went to prison (with a third comrade of the Anarchist Black Cross of Buenos Aires forced underground) after Leandro robbed a TV. production company owned by a host, media producer and businessman known for evicting Mapuche from their own land to build vast tourist complexes. Rather than an expression of an updated third-(fourth?)-worldism, "allyship" (see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg67) or common Western fetish for indigenous culture (see *Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing*/'The Invention of the Tribe'/Q), the facet we find vital in anarchist involvement in such struggles is the survival of other ways of being in this increasingly monocultural and totalitarian world, as imagination itself becomes an endangered species; and lessons we could learn along these lines from engaging with indigenous examples that Chilean agitators of *Sin Banderas Ni Fronteras* describe as "[o]ffensive actions of resistance that, combined with the propagation and implementation of ways of living and relationship modes contrary to those imposed by the state, capitalism and civilisation, build an antagonistic reality that preoccupies power and keeps it busy with its eradication, isolation and extermination."

October 20th, the Argentinian State announced what we had intuited already with heavy hearts; the body of Santiago had just been "found" (i.e. planted) in the icy waters of the Chubut River, 300 meters upstream from the place where he was seen being captured, an area that had been raked multiple times by family and friends. "Santiago Maldonado who fought on the barricades of Chiloé [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg24], defending the sea. Santiago Maldonado who fought for the immense southern land. Every time the strong Patagonian wind blows, he will be there. Whenever the rebels of the world try to storm the heavens, he will be there. Rest comrade, the sea, the land and the forests for which you gave your life are waiting to provide you shelter" (statement by comrades of the Ghirardo Library). They have taken the comrade away from us, but we hope all that remains in their hands is the compost that will fertilise a thousand more rebellious roots, nourished by the ash of this genocidal, ecocidal system and its components. And indeed, within 24 hours of the expert's proclamation on the body, the municipal Casa de la Provincia in Rio Negro was trashed and left with a banner for the freedom of Facundo Jones Huala, the Argentine Military Attaché's office facade in Montevideo (Uruguay) was badly fire damaged, and we imagine more by the time this reaches you...

In the broader context, (by surely conservative figures) in 2017 so far almost four people a week (largely indigenous) are killed worldwide defending the land, especially from mines, plantations, wild

animal exploitation and infrastructure projects, and particularly in Latin America. Agribusiness has comparatively come to the fore compared to the composition of these figures in recent years, as industry demand grows for soy, palm oil, sugarcane and beef (which, besides the aforementioned wool, Argentina is famous for). However also in the 'richest' countries, defenders of the earth are increasingly under the gun as the scrabble for 'resources' heats up further; for example during the Standing Rock mobilisation in the U.S.A. (see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg16) North Dakota legislators only narrowly decided against a bill allowing drivers to run over and kill protesters without being jailed (similar laws have in fact passed in other U.S. States in response to confrontational road, dock and airport blockades), while on its heels in that colonial territory 66-year-old James "Jim" Leroy Marker died in Florida in defense of the Withlacoochee River after firing on the protested Sabal Trail pipeline and its construction equipment and getting into a fatal high-speed chase by County Sheriffs. (He may have chosen the date and location to coincide with a call "to honor the anniversary of the 1973 Wounded Knee Stand-off on the Pine Ridge Reservation [ed. – see the companion piece to *Return Fire* vol.3; Colonisation] and to stop the pipeline from going in the ground through the wetlands and endangered species habitat of Halpata Tastanaki Preserve (a site named after a Seminole leader of the armed resistance that fought U.S. invasion of indigenous communities in the mid-1800s).")

Finally, just in these last days of autumn, young Mapuche warrior Rafael Nahuel fell to Argentinian police bullets on November 25th in Río Negro as the eviction of the mountain-top Lafken Winkul land recuperation, which he had travelled to join along with his aunt and cousin, ended in a shoot-out.

Enough being said, let's hear the words of imprisoned anarchist Marcelo (see *Rebels Behind Bars; Concerning the Juridical Situation of Our Comrade Marcelo Villaroel Sepulveda*) about his relation with Santiago. "Since we were taken prisoner in the region dominated by the Argentine state [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg72], our paths crossed. There were us, the prisoners in the province of Newken and there was Santiago, in the city of La Plata, next to us in a universe of active comrades, sharing complicity and standing in solidarity... It's been more than 9 years since our footsteps have crossed the continuous path of the brotherhood, this path that sets both of us on the same side of the trench[...] The rebellious and ancestral fire is incinerating the machines of predatory capital, the insurrectionist blood spilled from our fallen comrades is among our war rituals..."]

On August 1st, members of the *Pu Lof* Mapuche community in resistance in the province Cushamen barricaded National Route 40, along with allies in solidarity. They cut off traffic in solidarity against the legal proceedings confronting *el Lonko* Facundo Jones Huala (for the second time). Minutes later, cars and trucks arrived carrying about thirty border police armed with rifles. The *peñis* (Mapuches) began throwing rocks, responding to the presence of the bastard forces of order. The Gendarmerie advances to the shots, burning the precarious houses and belongings of the *Lof*, forcing the occupiers to retreat across a river. Santiago Maldonado ("Lechuga" [*Lettuce*] or "el Brujo" [*the Witch-Doctor*]) fell behind the rest. Some of the inhabitants of the *Lof* saw that the Gendarmerie grabbed Santiago; others testified as to hearing the police say they "got one."

Afterwards, images and testimony began to circulate about how Santiago was missing, and that it seemed the Gendarmerie had taken him away in a "unimog" all-terrain military vehicle. The authorities were silent through this whole process.

On Friday, August 4th, various anarchists and individuals in solidarity entered the seat of government in Chubut province, demanding Santiago's return. The place was ripe for destruction. Computers, notebooks, windows, and decorations were all viciously destroyed, and fliers and graffiti were left behind referring to the repression in Cushmanen.

On Monday, August 7th, a gathering was called in the Plaza del Congreso, bringing various organizations and groups together with Santiago's family. The gathering ended up being quite large, and many comrades showed up. Enraged not only because of what had happened, but also because the political apparatus – getting ready for their elections – had been distributing fliers for their Leftist Front. On the same day, after the gathering, Entre Ríos street was cut off, and the occupiers threw rocks and firecrackers at the infantry, fending off the two city police and one National Congress guardsman who had been stationed nearby. Afterward, two police motorcycles were set ablaze. In the end, the group dispersed, without any arrests or injuries on our side.

On Friday, August 11th, marches and actions were coordinated throughout various parts of the country: Bolsón, Bariloche, Rosario, and Buenos Aires. In the capital, human rights groups (including a section of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the mothers of individuals disappeared during the period of dictatorship), gathered alongside family members and friends of Lechuga's, with more leftist organizations bringing together a "peaceful" gathering in the Plaza de Mayo, in front of the Pink House, the seat of government. In front of the multitude, one of Lechuga's brothers read some of his writing, leaving his anarchist, anti-police position completely clear.

One of the things that makes us quite angry is the way these events have been used by political parties – the PO, the MST, the MAS socialist convergence, and Kirchnerist parties¹ – as well as NGOs, and unions like the CGT [*General Confederation of Labor*], with its dark history during the Peronist period,² involving the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance and para-police groups.

¹ ed. – A political group formed by supporters of the late Néstor Kirchner, president of Argentina from 2003 to 2007; and of his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, president 2007–2015.

² ed. – "Peronismo, largely the invention of [Juan Domingo] Peron's brilliant wife, Eva, was the nearest thing to perfect fascism that ever existed. Forget about all the propaganda and foolishness that has encrusted around the word "fascist." Forget about Nazi-fascism and the clerical fascism of Franco [ed. – see Who Is It?] and [António de Oliveira] Salazar [dictator of Portugal 1932–1968]. By fascism I mean the true essence of that was a revolutionary movement – or left-wing fascism. True pure fascism, as envisioned by Mussolini [ed. – see Who Is It?], grew out of the militant left-wing of Italian Socialism. It was an attempt to impose the Social Democratic program through dictatorship and armed force. The movement dispensed with the sterile positivism and evolutionism of Orthodox Marxism, substituting romantic emotionalism, extreme nationalism, a cult of the will and of the "man of action." The goal was to nationalize industry and subordinate all classes to the needs of the State. The working classes were to benefit from this revolution – but only so long as they remained subservient to the Fascist State. Mussolini's problem was that he never had the support of the working class and thus had to turn to the traditional middle classes. Thus much of his revolution only remained on paper. This was not the situation which faced the Perons. More than 15 years before they took power, the generals smashed the powerful anarcho-syndicalist trade unions and only small remnants remained. [...] Eva Duarte-Peron was able to build a labour movement by filling an organizational vacuum (and where necessary smashing her weakened opponents). Thus Peronism (Argentine fascism) had a solid base among the workers. With prodding from the ever-energetic Evita, the movement nationalized the banks, insurance companies, mines and railroads. As a result, Argentina had probably the largest state-capitalist sector outside of a Stalinist regime. Wages were forced up by decree and a host of social benefits introduced for Los Descamisados (literally "the shirtless ones," the working class followers of the Perons). Even the Church was attacked. The "anti-imperialist" game was played to an excess, alternating between violent anti-Americanism and anti-British sentiment. The foreigner was made the scapegoat for all of Argentina's problems" (Larry Gambone). The Peróns gave their name to the political movement known as Peronism (a political phenomenon that draws support from both the political left and political right), which in present-day Argentina is represented mainly by the Justicialist Party.

They use partial images and histories of our comrade to give themselves a few more kernels of legitimacy in the middle of an electoral process. The kidnapping of Lechuga is *not a political campaign*. These scavengers would never feel strange defending private property, the border police, or even the same governments that repress them and bury them in the misery of everyday life – because they themselves desire to obtain that same power, and exercise that same authority. We have nothing to do with them, or with their conciliatory responses to our comrade’s kidnapping.

On Thursday the 17th, a march was called in Córdoba Capital, where a great multitude demanded that Santiago be returned, alive and whole. The police deployed a massive riot-control apparatus. That same night, in the early morning, some anonymous deployed a rudimentary device that burned out the doors at the entrance to the Association of Non-commissioned Officers of the National Gendarmerie in Córdoba. No one claimed responsibility. Days later, a national march against trigger-happy cops resulted in confrontations and destruction throughout the center of Córdoba. Later, various anarchist, platformist, and political spaces were raided, including a dining hall, as well as the homes of mothers whose children were murdered by the police. Here, they only left with posters, flags, and fliers that had to do with Santiago’s case (as well as the milk from the dining hall). A few people were detained, but they were released after a few hours.

On Thursday the 24th, the group H.I.J.O.S. (made up of children of the disappeared) and other leftist groups called for a gathering and march in the Plaza San Martín in La Plata. Quite a few people attended, including a black bloc of anarchists. During the march, there was vandalism on some of the central streets of the city. The march ended in the same plaza where it had begun, across the street from the Buenos Aires Senate. Under the astonished gaze of several indignant citizens, the street was cut off, a well-placed truck was destroyed, and the senate was attacked with rocks and a pair of molotov cocktails, resulting in some destruction and burning the facade of the building. Two hours later, two individuals left large cans filled with naphtha³, burning two cars parked next to the senate. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. Several days later, the intelligence chief of the Buenos Aires police was fired.

In some of these gatherings and marches, as well as in the streets and universities, and above all on social networks, we have seen that the a majority of the public has empathized with Santiago, and a smaller part has supported violent actions. It is true that in Argentina, to speak of forced disappearances is to speak of the military dictatorship and of histories that have been engraved in social sensibility. The vast majority of politicians try to hide the continuation of the repressive apparatus – hide the similarities between the dictatorship and the current democratic government. Repression, torture, and forced disappearances never really ended...

We believe that it is necessary to expand this conflict. From the first moments, comrades and allies creatively demonstrated around the world, first in Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru, but then in the U.S., Spain, India, France, Syria, Colombia, Mexico, and many other corners of this worn-out planet. These demonstrations have spread not only the news of what happened to Lechuga, but the fact that solidarity must be internationalist and without borders other than the limits that we set for ourselves.

³ ed. – A flammable oil containing various hydrocarbons, obtained by the dry distillation of organic substances such as coal, shale, or petroleum.

The Press Takes Aim & the State Pulls the Trigger

What to say about the news articles and journalistic investigations by mercenaries like Jorge Lanata, Mauro Viale, Eduardo Feinmann, and other information lackeys in the press? They put forward the name of the Mapuche Ancestral Resistance (RAM, a separatist guerrilla group), crediting them with more than thirty actions from one day to the next, from flyering to the burning of ranches, the death of a border policeman in San Martin de los Andes, and the sale of weapons and drugs. They pass along images of possible future Santiago Maldonado's – individuals who could face the same fate – in Mendoza, Entre Rios, and Buenos Aires; they put together theories that Santiago was a hostage of the Mapuches, that he had died in an attack on a ranch, that he was never in the Lof, or that he was a simple artisan or hippy backpacker.

After the attack on the seat of government in Chubut, the press attributed the attack to a cell of the RAM, stating that the attack “alarmingly” took place two blocks from the obelisk, and that they went in shooting; but if we look at the place for two seconds through the photos that were released, we can see clearly that there were several circle-A signs painted up, and that the damage was not done by bullets. Their exaggerations really are limitless...

The state needs to vindicate its own authority – it needs to create internal enemies. The unemployment crisis and the general economic crisis have resulted in an emergent malaise that can be felt clearly in the streets⁴; what could be better than blaming the economic collapse on non-Argentine students, like Jorge Lanata's news program argued? Or blaming the destruction of the formal economy on pirate disc vendors, like the América 24 news channel tried to do? What could be better than the president Mauricio Macri saying that the workers have to stop messing around with all of this about blocking roads, have to going over their bosses heads – because this discourages foreign investment?

Declarations from Patricia Bullrich (the Minister of National Security) have said that she won't allow the Gendarmerie to be crucified (“...I'm not going to throw the Gendarmerie under the bus...”), claimed that the Maldonado case is not a forced disappearance, and declared through clenched teeth that she thinks it's impossible that thirty border police would conspire to kill and disappear someone. As she says, this police force is not the same as it was 40 years ago, always playing the same game of “bad dictatorship, good democracy [*ed. – see Who Is It?*]”

The Bullrich family has always known how to defend their ideological and economic interests. Adolfo Bullrich headed a business that auctioned land off after the disastrous Conquest of the Desert – a campaign pushed forward by the ten-president Avellanada and continued by Julio A. Roca, the goal of which was to annihilate the native peoples who lived in Patagonia, seize immense land holdings, reaffirm national sovereignty, and generate juicy business contracts with English and Welsh companies, as well as whoever wanted to invest. Esteban Bullrich, Patricia's brother, left his post as Minister of Education in order to stand for election. In an election ad, Esteban spoke of the positive changes that the Cambiemos government had generated during those months, stating “We have put more kids in school, more pavement on the streets, and more young men in prison...” Are these words surprising, coming from someone who defended the

⁴ ed. – Rising prices for transport, electricity, gas and food as well as austerity measures are a part of this, having provoked a general strike in April.

repressive murderer Luis Patti⁵ so that he could exercise his position in congress? He did declare that in a democracy, there is space for debate between different ideologies...

After the proposal for a week of action for Santiago went out over the internet, state security forces were put on alert – so much so that a senior official in the intelligence department of the federal police sent a document to the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, María Eugenia Vidal (of the center-right PRO party) ordering an increase in security and patrols in the streets. The document described possible attacks, and risks to individuals belonging to the security forces, infrastructure, and buildings. The result was not only a visible increase in the number of police (in plazas, border police buildings, train stations, police precincts, and troubled neighborhoods), but that they brought out the shiny toys that we hadn't seen for a long while: Federal Police armored vehicles, water cannon trucks, and troop transport vehicles all over the place. Everything but the army in the streets.

This new escalation of repression that has been taking place – and will continue – in the streets of the Capital, demonstrates that the ministry of security, as well as the bosses of police “intelligence” intend to restrict all solidarity, rage, and the actions that were unleashed following Santiago's disappearance. Perhaps these sparks can bring us to break new limits...

In some of our spaces, their harassment is plainly visible. Now it's not just phone taps and cops following some comrades home, but investigative teams taking pictures, infantry trucks on the corner, and patrols coming and going.

All of this responds to a specific context. In some neighborhoods of the province of Buenos Aires, police have been stopping members of collectives to ask for their documents and check their belongings; the notable increase in patrols and police officers is not just an effort at control and surveillance, but also at the same time, an attempt to clean up the terrible image of both the border police and the cops. During Children's Day, border police brought trucks of toys to different schools and cafeterias – that is to say, they shamelessly repeated slogans of “solidarity” in the same places where they perform intelligence work, go in shooting, and carry out fierce repression. If their intelligence work was designed under the framework of Project X in the Kirchner epoch, when they built a database following militants and organizations, now they've come out onto the field of play more than ever before, becoming one more shock force that the State can employ in its favor.

Of course, the law follows not far behind, not only with the reform to law 24.660 (which removes almost all prison benefits and temporary releases, giving more decisive power to the Penal Service), but also the increases in sentences, broadening legal definitions of illicit association, carrying weapons, and damage to private property.

Relationships Between Mapuches & Anarchists

We have seen that in the last couple years, some Mapuche communities have been leaving aside legalistic angles of struggle, and have decided to occupy the properties of large landholders and portions of state land. Machines have been burned, there have been coordinated attacks on

⁵ ed. – Argentine politician and a former senior police officer responsible for various tortures and murders from the 1970's onwards, now jailed. In 2008 while Patti's actions during the 1970's were still under formal investigation the Supreme Court of Argentina ruled that he should still be allowed to take his seat in Congress.

various positions on single ranches – similar to what is going on in the Wallmapu on the Chilean side.

The media have taken it upon themselves to declare that all Mapuches belong to the RAM, or that the Mapuches who live in the Lof belong to the RAM, generating a perfect internal enemy. In reality, the RAM are nothing more than the abbreviation with which some Mapuches claim their actions in the Wallmapu in Argentina.

El Lonko Facundo Jones Huala is recognized as belonging to this Mapuche group. At the moment, he is detained in the prison at Esquel, where he spent 18 days on hunger strike, awaiting a presumed extradition to Chile. He has recognized the occurrence of a historic confrontation not only with the Argentine state, but the Chilean state as well, along with the corporations that have devastated indigenous territories without fear of reprisal, with the excuse of “progress” [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg11*]. This is an ancestral struggle that has lasted more than 500 years. The RAM is only a small expression of this long struggle.

Harassment and persecution not only by the forces of order, but also by the business owners and the media is disgusting. They try to justify both repression and the advance of neocolonialism. They throw out headlines alleging that the Mapuches are connected to the FARC [*ed. – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Marxist-Leninist guerrillas*], that they have military assault weapons, that they are “fake indians”, and many other idiocies.

For us as anarchists, it’s impossible not to be angry with the ways that the state harasses, attacks, and disappears the Mapuche, as well as the Qom⁶, the Wichí⁷, or the Guaraní⁸, not to mention the tribes living in the Amazon, who resist the advance of the machines and “human progress” understood as civilization. We share much with the Mapuche who are fighting in the south of the region, but there is also a chasm distancing us from them. Their forms of organization and the relationships that they have developed, involving themselves with nature and the land are a demonstration of their own, specific cosmovision. As anarchists, we recoil from their desire to advance and obtain their own Mapuche nation. We respect their rebel dignity, and will stand in solidarity, but we do not share in the totality of their struggle⁹.

⁶ ed. – The Toba people, also known as the Qom people, are one of the largest indigenous groups in Argentina, and historically inhabited the region known today as ‘the Pampas’ as well as parts of Bolivia and Paraguay.

⁷ ed. – The Wichí are a large group of peoples ranging about the headwaters of the Bermejo River and the Pilcomayo River, in Argentina and Bolivia.

⁸ ed. – The traditional range of the Guaraní is in present-day Paraguay between the Uruguay River and lower Paraguay River, the Misiones Province of Argentina, southern Brazil, and parts of Uruguay and Bolivia.

⁹ ed. – We don’t know enough about the Argentine context to say, but for sure there are Mapuche in struggle in Chile who do not want to erect an ‘independent’ nation-state, Mapuche or otherwise (see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg68, not to mention problems equating indigenous concepts of place to a possessive, territorial, noun-based language like English); obviously alongside others who do, comprising a very heterogeneous movement. Hence there is no single ‘Mapuche struggle’. In Argentina, Isabel Huala, mother of aforementioned Facundo Jones Huala, asserts that “I’m not Argentine or Chilean. I’m Mapuche. I am pre-existing to both States. I do not want to build another nation.” Albeit spoken from a very different context, we find it interesting to think over the words of one anarchist in Barcelona: “There’s certainly an anarchism as a radical extreme of liberalism, in which rights are purely an individual affair, and therefore questions like culture and language – these are collective realities, realities that don’t make sense on an individual scale – don’t have any importance; and that strain of anarchism in my mind takes a fairly Eurocentric read of national liberation movements, only understanding them in a European or Western context in which national liberation movements are always nationalist and always seek the creation of a new nation-state. Whereas a vision that focuses more on cultural and linguistic self-determination would realise that nationalist movements also destroy that self-determination [through the homogenizing force inherent to all State-building projects.] Such a view would also take into account various anti-colonial struggles that were not fighting for a new State but that were fighting

No Demands on the State; Permanent Conflict Against Authority

We all desire that our comrade be returned alive, that he might follow whatever path he might desire. We know that the state is responsible for this disappearance, because that is one of the functions of persecution and the “extermination” of the “disturbing elements” that impede the normal functioning of society. For the same reason, we cannot demand anything of our persecutors. They are responsible for the disappearances for trafficking, connections between the narcos and the police, executions of youth in our neighborhoods at the hands of the cops, the approval of laws raising sentences, playing with the lives of prisoners, responsible for the application of new technologies for social control, for the destruction of natural territories in order to put up concrete walls and plantations of soy or GMO corn – everything that turns the wheels of capitalist progress.

We feel that they have tried to depoliticize our comrade. They have attempted to deny his anarchist convictions, and they have tried to hold him up as a slogan for one more political campaign. On one hand, Cristina Kirchner and her bootlickers seem to have very short memories: They talk about Santiago, but they evaporate when we bring up Julio López. Although Hebe de Bonafinni (one of the founders of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo) might have said that López was a jailer and that Santiago was a social activist, she said it to defend Kirchnerism. And what’s more, it’s a lie – López was a carpenter and was disappeared in 2006 because he was going to testify against Miguel Osvaldo Etchecolatz, a leader of the forces of repression during the dictatorship. López’ disappearance demonstrates that even after 15 years, the military still has plenty of power. Nor do they want to talk about Luciano Arruga – a youth from the marginal neighborhood Lomas de Mirador, who was kidnapped, murdered, and buried as a John Doe in the la Chacarita cemetery, because he refused to steal for the police. Nor do they want to remember Cristian Ibáñez, who was detained by the police only to later appear to have “killed himself” in his cell in a police precinct in Jujuy, or Marcelo Cuellar, who was murdered in the town of Libertador

against the imposition of the State (as a Western artifact). And you could also consider that probably the four most revolutionary, multitudinary examples of anarchism in practice would be Cataluña/Aragón 1936, Machinovchina in 1919, the Balkans commune in 1903 and the Shinmin commune in Manchuria in 1929; three out of four of those arose in part because anarchists took part in an anti-statist, anti-nationalist way. So there’s certainly a rich history there and a lot of room to maneuver that doesn’t put us in the dead-end of nationalism.” More strongly, another comrade from the same territory describes the more ‘radical’ version of this liberalism: “Starting from the fact that “every nation and all cultural identity is an artificial social construct of domination,” there is a cosmopolitanism straight out of a catalog that, under the mask of a sort of fictional “nihilism” (culture is domination, ergo, deny culture, we deny civilisation completely, forgetting that our own anarchist ideas and nihilism itself are cultural constructs and fruit of that same civilisation) plays the game of domination without even stopping to reflect on it. It is common to find among anarchists, especially those anarchists born in the so-called “First World” and in countries or regions where there have been no centrifugal tensions, that slogans, in principle valid and legitimate, such as “Neither Homeland nor Borders” or “The Poor Have No Country”, become an apology for a sort of “citizenship of the world” more false than a plastic coin. I ask all these people: what is more cosmopolitan than neoliberal globalisation, cultural homogenization, the disappearance of identities and cultures, the ways of being, existing and acting in a territory, and the imposition of what I would call “substitutes for uprooting”; that is, this vulgar culture of emptiness, where no-one knows, understands or relates to their territory and environment because of the lack of a worldview that allows them to understand and attack their conditions of existence from their own context; where the same products are consumed here as in China, with the same canned flavors; we speak the same colonising languages, and we think of the same terms and the same frameworks that have been instilled in us all, without even asking ourselves where all that comes from: beyond repeating that “everything is a construct” and conforming to that?” (The Unbearable Folly of Being: a Critique of Referendums & Anarchism).

General San Martín in 2003, at a march following Ibáñez' murder – both were militants with the Combative Classist Current. They don't want to talk about Carlos Fuentealba, killed by police repression in Neuquén during a labor organizers' roadblock of Route 22nd in 2007, or Juan Carlos Erazo, killed in Mendoza in 2008 following a brain abscess resulting from an injury when he was hit by a rubber bullet and tear gas, during a factory takeover where he worked. They want to forget that on June 17th, 2010, Diego Bonefoi was murdered by police in Bariloche, shot in the back of the head. On the next day, the neighborhood organized a protest, and two more youths were killed in the resulting police repression: Nicolás Carrasco and Sergio Cárdenas. On October 20th of the same year, Mariano Ferreyra – a militant in the Workers' Party – was shot twice and killed by strikebreakers from the Railway Union, during a protest organized by workers whose jobs at Roca Railways in Avellanada had been outsourced. During the Kirchner era, indigenous peoples have had the same fortune. The indigenous community member Javier Chocobar, part of a Diaguita community in Tucumán, was resisting displacement alongside other members of the community. On October 12th, 2009, an ex-police member in service of the landowners drove in and started shooting, killing and injuring other inhabitants of the community. On November 23th, 2010, in Formosa, some indigenous Qom members of the community La Primavera blocked a road to reclaim their lands. The police repressed them violently, murdering two members of the community, Sixto Gómez and Roberto López...

This has not only taken place under Kirchnerism. All governments are of one color, and have dozens of repressive murders on their hands. Further back there are Víctor Choque, Teresa Rodríguez, Mauro Ojeda, Francisco Escobar, Aníbal Verón, Carlos Santillán, Oscar Barrios, the youths Maximiliano Tasca, Cristian Gómez, Adrián Matassa, Miguel Bro, Javier Barrionuevo, Petete Almirón, Dario Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki, and so many more who have been beaten, tortured, disappeared, and murdered by the forces of order – in neighborhoods, in police precincts, in psychiatric hospitals, in brothels and jails.

Their hands are bloody – soaked with the blood of the marginalized, the blood of illegals, the blood of rebels. Passivity is not an option: it's time to demand vengeance Vengeance against the executioners, and vengeance for the life of misery they have imposed. Vengeance for their constant violence. There has never been peace, with so many dead, and we know who is responsible. We know their names, their titles, and their intentions. They try to call us infiltrators, to call us violent, and we reply: *WE CAN BE WORSE STILL...*

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Some anarchists in Buenos Aires
We Can Be Worse Still
reflections & thoughts on the month following the disappearance of Santiago Maldonado
September 2017

from Return Fire vol.5 chap.3 (autumn 2017) – to read the articles referenced throughout this text in [square brackets], PDFs of Return Fire and related publications can be read, downloaded and printed by visiting returnfire.noblogs.org or emailing returnfire@riseup.net

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