

THE SUBVERSIVE WRITTEN WORD

Dear comrades,

This is Toby Shone, an anarchist imprisoned in the operation Adream which was an antiterrorist investigation against the counter-information project 325. I am calling from a prison in northwest England, it's a long term, high security prison, and the fact that we can steal these moments is very important.

As you may already know, Operation A-dream was a repressive attack by the UK state in which 3 collective housing projects, a family home and storage unit were raided by cops. I was accused of being an administrator of 325.nostate, which earned me 4 terrorist charges: section 2 (distribution of terrorist publications), section 15 (funding terrorism) and two counts of section 58 (possession of information which is likely to be useful for terrorist purposes). I was also accused of several direct actions and membership of FAI, ELF and ALF. Hundreds of police were involved in the simultaneous raids and despite this, only one of the comrades were briefly detained and subsequently released for lack of evidence. It's clear through the conditions of imprisonment I am held under and the constant monitoring that an active investigation continues with tailings and surveillance of comrades on the outside along with observation of anarchist social spaces.

Why is this taking place? It's because anarchism is a threat to the existing technocratic order, our direct-action groups have a palpable reality in however minimal way in comparison to the task to be done, and the counter-information constellation continues to shine in the dark nights and become easier to use and navigate. Anarchist publishing is viewed as being an unacceptable endeavour by the police and intelligence services. Reporting on anarchist direct action, social struggles, and uprisings because it forms a narrative of subversion is arguably targeted with as much repression as that towards those who carry out the deeds that are being reported. It's a strategy which has been in existence for a very long time. In the case of Operation Adream, the police was scared of the explicit anarchist insurrectionalist and anti-civilization rhetoric combined with the distribution of electronic and paper publications. During the interrogations a particular concern of the detectives was the *purpose* of anarchist paper publication. All the electronic documents have a digital forensic signature known as the *hash value* which can be tracked across the internet and devices even if deleted from those devices. Paper publications on the other hand, cannot be tracked as they are distributed – an investigation into them requires material forensics and a traditional police enquiry: this needs more resources, money, and personnel and especially the underground publishing initiatives which may have an irregular schedule of publishing and “informal” methods of distribution.

This brings us back to the *purpose* of anarchist publications: paper copies *exist* and have the power through being passed hand to hand to have an impactful material reality. They also accumulate forensic traces, the books, magazines, and pamphlets we are talking of, dangerous ideas, which can inspire our lives. Their time duration is different from those digital, and we can view that accordingly. With our publications, even if they are doomed to be in university libraries, mainstream bookshops, or worse, museums and art galleries, they always remain controversial and even illegal in some cases. Their purpose is social war and the destruction of the State. In the investigation files of Operation Adream, dozens of anarchist publications were cited many of which we may take for granted, that are freely available at anarchist bookfairs, squats, social centres and stalls at events. Yet to the police, special unit, and prosecutors these publications form part of an amorphous conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the establishment, which is correct, but not exactly in the perverse way that they wish to interpret it. To explain, we are often confronted by the repressive model that has a special function ascribed to theorists and writers, that of “leadership”. They are accused of giving orders and instructions and then cells or cadres then carry out those orders. I don't need to tell you that this is an offense to anarchist practice, but it was a clear line of questioning put to me by the counter terrorist division. Does possession of 325 magazine indicate membership of an organization? Does that organization execute actions? And is that organisation part of a larger terrorist infrastructure? These are the types of questions bounced at me. With this scheming, marionettes of repression are formed, arranged in hierarchical structures which reflect their feverish minds. So, in those interrogations the investigators focused in some parts on questioning me about administrative functions, decision making flows, statistics figures, target demographics, research and linguistics,

or translations. To the latter the cops wanted to know *who* was responsible for the translations, *how* they were organized, and *who* decided *what* should be translated.

At what level does the level of repression equate to that of our actions? For me, the answer is straight forward. The level of repression is currently far beyond that of the anarchist direct action. It's the nature of State's repression to aim to be overwhelming and our struggle is still only an active minority. In the UK the silence and lack of action highlights the social living death. But it was not always this way. And the future remains unwritten. That's why police infiltration will continue to try to prevent ruptures and individual attacks. It's impossible to separate Operation Adream from the consequences of over a decade of anarchist direct action and social riots in Bristol. Although those things are at low ebb currently, it doesn't mean that it will remain so. Anarchism remains part of the fabric of this South-West region. And where the reports, communiques and analysis are published will remain high in the list of targets for the State. The hundreds if not thousands of publishers across the world, part of a connectivity of contemporary anarchism, add to our ability to stay relevant and expansive.

Huge changes are taking place in society, and mass discontent has the possibility to form into a needed vital resistance. The new anarchist critique of high technology is cited by various intelligence agencies, State and private, as having the threatening ability to infect the population with a deep anger of the digital future. This future being planned by the bosses is a vast surveillance state which is part of the cybernetic matrix, where machines are taking the place of humans, and the artificial intelligence has inserted itself into every place it can be situated. Likewise, we can see human beings are becoming more machine-like, and their environment is degraded and polluted. Increasingly we can talk about the fact that many complete failures are taking place in various social systems, due to the ecological collapse and economic and post-industrial transformation. Huge territories are rapidly changing from floods, wildfires, draughts and intense storms. Unprecedented challenges are coming very quickly with harsh effects on critical points pertaining to agriculture, migration, division of labour, geopolitical conflicts and so on. Our publications and counter-information networks are a direct way in which we can communicate our analysis and methods of organization. Repression recognizes the danger of the contagion of this message, and the narrative which we possess. To the extent that they illegalize our publications and try to impose exemplary sentences is only a means to an end for them. And this is what we have always faced. If we are effective, we meet repression, prison, death. That's what many comrades face across the world right now. Essentially some of us have been living under surveillance and investigation for so long, everything we do could be considered as crime, simply existing. That's worth writing about and when we read and know more about what others are confronting and how, we can gain our power.

Lastly, I want to talk about the censorship I am facing here. Since it's been a consistent feature of my imprisonment and is also part of the topic we're discussing. Many comrades face problems with their correspondence and receiving publications. This is not unusual. But it's worth saying here that I've been denied access to the majority of my correspondence and books which I am being sent. Even though I am facing denials by the prison administration that this is taking place, it most certainly is. This is the strength of our newsletters, our books, our letters to catch with comrades, that they make the enemy afraid. In my case, I'm also being denied socialist, autonomous-marxist and communist papers and books, which have been sent to me by those in solidarity from the radical left, as well as books on black history, transformative justice, and prison abolition. The very few anarchist books I have managed to receive I hold them close to my heart, here in my cell. Freedom is written with ink and our blood, like it always has been and will be. Value your books, your newspapers, your letters sent and received, combative memory persists, and we pass it to each new generation without efforts alone.

I'll finish here and so I thank you for your energy and your attention, and a strong hug to all, and especially those under repression for the written word. For from the words come deeds, and that is the topic we've encountered today. Love and rage, thank you.

Toby,
Garth Prison, 4th of March 2024