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Lessons From Rojava

This holiday season was unusually kind to the anti-imperialists among us or at least it could have been. Trump shocked the world the week before Christmas by actually putting America first for a change and calling for the immediate withdrawal of the some 2000 troops still illegally occupying North Eastern Syria. Regardless of his motives, which I'm sure had very little to do with anything vaguely resembling the Christmas spirit, it's hard to deny that this executive decision would have been a decisive win for peace.

Hard but not impossible. The doves of the progressive left have enthusiastically jumped through their own pinched assholes to stomp on McGovern's grave with talking points straight out of Karl Rove's playbook. Sadly, their onslaught of non-stop pro-war agit-prop, aided and abetted by the double-speak of Mad Man Bolton and the other rabid war junkies of Trump's own administration, may have worked. The perpetually spineless Trump has moved the goal post for the pull-out from 30 days to 90 days to 3 months to 'maybe later, we'll see...'

Regardless, the rift within the Pentagon is likely irreversible and the chaos its caused can only be interpreted as the official failure of America's 6 year imperial project for the region. Being the peace-loving bomb-thrower that I am, the one part of this splendid fiasco that feels truly tragic to me is the increasingly likely implosion of the Rojava Revolution.

Amid the apocalyptic hellscape of Uncle Sam's latest jihad jamboree, one tiny light burned bright enough to singe the dim. While the rest of Syria collapsed in panic over the crumbling of the Baathist state, the nation's long maligned Kurdish community embraced their new found statelessness with open arms and created a successful anarchist society

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among the wreckage. Guided by the philosophy of Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned Nelson Mandela of the Kurdish independence movement, the people of the Syrian region of Rojava busied themselves establishing a multi-ethnic, non-sectarian, and gender equal confederation of fully autonomous collectives, councils, guilds, and syndicates. All while defending themselves from the genocidal onslaught of the Islamic State.

This display of ferocious courage stoked a fire in the hearts of many disenchanted anarchists across the globe, much the way Catalonia did during the Spanish Civil War. I include myself among these wide-eyed renegade dreamers. During one of the darkest times of my life, the Rojava Revolution inspired me to keep up the good fight. The sad fact that the good name of this revolution became tainted by America's illegal troop presence in Rojava didn't make the YPG's stand any less heroic, though it did cast a black cloud over it for those of us who are familiar with America's long tradition of leaving these impoverished mountain folk holding the bag.

Indeed, Trump's triumphant Christmas peace declaration came just a week after the Donald spoke with Turkey's revanchist sultan, Recep Erdogan, who subsequently announced his intention to invade the region with America's consent. It appears that Trump may have simply been attempting to outsource the war to Turkey who has long seen the entire nation of Syria as lost territory held by Shia savages. With Rojava out of the picture, what would be left to stop these neo-Ottomans from reinvesting in what's left of their former friends in ISIS? Perhaps this is why Assad has readily offered his Kurdish frenemies back-up on the border. If Russia steps in as well while Trump dicks around with a swamp-friendly exit date, this could prevent Erdogan from creating another Yemen-style proxy-genocide in Rojava. But it will also likely still spell out the tragic end for the Kurds dreams of a truly autonomous and stateless society.

So what do we take away from this tragedy so that the brave actions of the fallen YPG not be taken in vain and so that future stateless liberation movements can emulate their triumphs while avoiding the pitfalls that prevented their permanence? I don't pretend to have all the answers but I do see a few clear lessons worth learning in no particular order.

1. Never Trust an Imperialist– You would think that the Kurds would have learned this one by now, after getting railed by Kissinger in the 70's and HW in the 90's. Some habits die hard, I suppose. As alluring as the uranium tipped largess of the world's only super-power may appear, it always comes at a steep price. America is an empire on the ropes. The last thing they want to do is empower a movement that could render their influence in the region irrelevant. Why do you think we skull fucked Somalia so hard under Clinton?

Their booming Khat industry? No, they formed an alternative to the state in the wake of the Cold War that empowered Africa's pre-colonial tribal roots much the way Rojava did and we didn't want it to spread. In the Middle East, where no one has been left unmolested by American weaponry, endorsing the Rojava Revolution was the smartest way to damn it while encouraging Turkey to bring NATO into the clusterfuck. Think about it, America has created a disposable allie too toxic for it's neighbors to touch. Machiavelli would be jealous of such artful treachery. But that's what you get when you fuck around with empires.

2. Keep it in the Neighborhood– The second worst thing the US could do to the YPG was to turn them into a mercenary army and stretch them razor thin by sending them to fight ISIS in regions with little traditional Kurdish presence. The Kurds were riding high with US air support until they began dipping into the hinterlands. They would have been much better off solidifying their gains then doing the Yankees dirty work in Raqqa. And the Turks would have struggled to get popular support for yet another all out toss-up with the Kurds, something Erdogan originally ran on putting an end to, if the YPG would have stuck to their end of the Euphrates. Revolutionary 101 should be 'let the other motherfucker throw the first punch then kick his fucking ass on the high ground'. In other words, fighting ISIS when they attack Kobani is fine but chasing them into the desert where they came from is just moronic. Initiatory violence is always stupid. Stay on the defense, think Globally and act locally.

3. Socialists and Nationalists Over Globalists and Neoliberals– Perhaps this is redundant considering lesson 1. but nations with an emphasis on soil and/or anti-colonialism will always make for more reliable allies than massive states with lofty global ambitions. Even bourgeois nationalists like Putin will almost always prize regional stability over all-out conquest. These certainly make for some uncomfortable bedfellows for anarchists, as do Third World socialists like the Syrian Baathists, but at least they have some kind of principles to be bargained with as well as more frugal budgets. When you're talking to Russia and Syria, for better or worse, you're talking to Russia and Syria. When you're talking to the US, the EU, or NATO, you're talking to the banks and, just ask anyone who's ever been foreclosed on, there is no bargaining with the banks. You're better off with the fucking buzzards. I hate the idea of Rojava going back to the Syrian Army and their Russian handlers but at least they'll stop at the border. The US will never stop. They couldn't if they wanted to. They're hooked on capitalism and our only hope may be a Trumpian overdose. Lets just hope Pence forgot the Narcan.

4. Never Underestimate a Peoples Will to be Free– I spent over six years without leaving my house. The Kurds have spent over six centuries without a homeland. I should have hung myself years ago. The Kurds should have assimilated and melted into the Arab world forever ago. They're still there and the centuries of oppression have only lead them to embrace a liberty that transcends the jerry-rigged borders of Sykes-Picot. As I've said, their fight is part of what inspired me to burn the noose. Justice will find the Kurds and their enemies alike. Erdogan can't kill them all anymore than MBS can kill every Houthi or Nixon could kill every Vietcong. Those who underestimate the will of the oppressed will find themselves decorating the light posts of a future utopia. Rojava had a taste of that dream and that taste will never die on their tongues.

We can all learn from those who dare to die for their dreams, dearest motherfuckers. As long as we keep their spirits alive, those dreams will never die. Power to Rojava! Power to all the people! And death to the imperialist insect that preys upon them. They will never win. They have no soul to keep alive. They will grow to fear us.