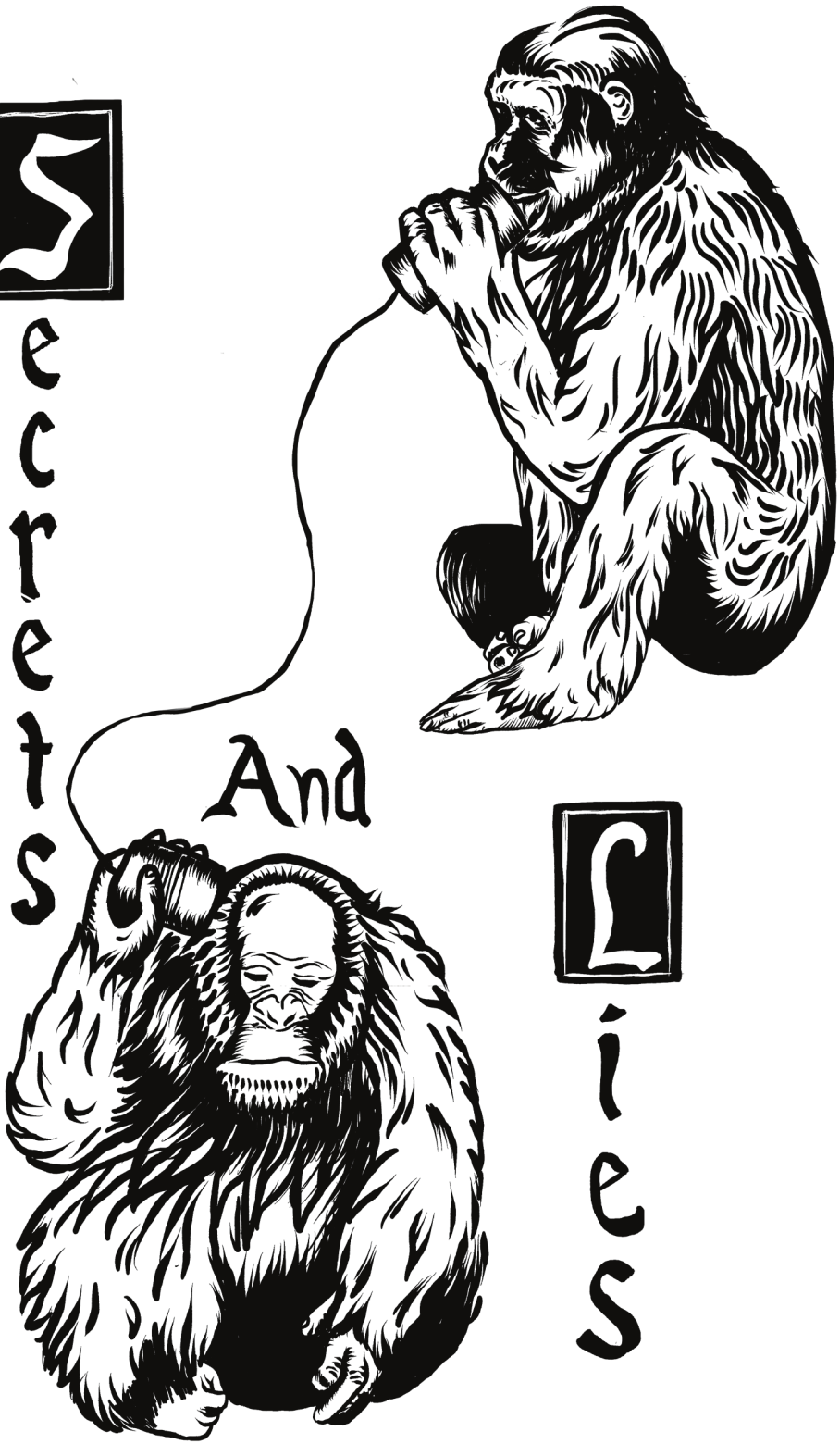
# Secrets And Lies



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# Hang On to Each Other

At its best, security culture can be beautiful – we create practices together to protect ourselves and one another, building trust to open our relationships up to the potential for shared action. This can feel like nurturing a sense of complicity and solidarity, not just with our immediate comrades, but with anarchists and rebels everywhere. Everyone spreading the flames of revolt holds precious secrets together with their trusted comrades, and this keeps our fight alive.

In practice, this is inevitably messy and difficult. Developing shared ways of relating to anarchy can be clunky and frustrating. Our communication skills and capacity for self-reflection are inevitably put to the test. Secrets weigh on us and isolate us. They are a burden, albeit a necessary one that we do our best to shoulder together.

But when security culture stops being dynamic and fluid, when it stops being a mutual process grounded in our commitments to one another and the struggle and turns into an ambiguous or even mostly aesthetic subcultural ritual, it becomes a corrosive liquid that seeps into and deepens the cracks of authoritarianism, hierarchy, and ego that permeate our worlds. This can threaten shared potential for action that takes years to cultivate, and also jeopardize our safety, the very thing that security culture exists to protect. As these cracks break open and expand they can even be used as entry points for infiltration.[1] As our shared ground crumbles beneath our feet we risk falling in, away from our relationships and away from anarchy.

"Secrets & Lies" was written by someone who fell through the cracks. After some time away from the culture of secret-keeping, the author reflects on the harmful effects of this culture and how it might have been, or could be, different.

The author offers us a valuable opportunity to question our own practices and norms - are they necessary to protect ourselves and our shared potential or do they exist to signal our belonging to an exclusive club? Both are often true simultaneously, but the blaring clamor that the (often real) looming threat of repression creates in our minds can be so overwhelmingly loud that all personal and collective reflection is drowned out. And so we avoid the painful question - is our trust with our comrades, or our sense of self, or both, so fragile that we need these constant signals to feel valued?

I want to add to the author's reflections another norm that I have seen feed these dynamics. Anarchists often use their (necessary) secrets to justify a stoic and closed-off approach to their emotions. They are such committed revolutionaries that their entire lives are shrouded in secrecy. This approach is not original to anarchism, but is imported straight from the patriarchal culture we were all raised in, which teaches us that the ability to repress one's emotions is a measure of strength. On the contrary, this cultural norm has proven to be a huge vulnerability in our movements and is altogether unsustainable. While those comrades who are learned experts at keeping their emotions buried become sick, isolated, paranoid and even abusive, those who can or will not keep their internal struggles beneath the surface are pushed to the margins.

This is not to say that it is unjustified or unnecessary to re-evaluate and reshape security agreements based on mental/emotional state. Of course, sometimes we cannot handle the pressures of action, and should not be involved. Rather, how we understand mental and emotional well-being in anarchist

circles should not evoke the ideal soldier in an army, but rather reflect our anti-authoritarian and anti-patriarchal values and our desires for free and trusting relations of affinity. We all have emotions, we are all fucked up by this world, and we all need to deal with it, not just the visibly crazy among us. And our vision must be focused on the long haul - how can we make these relations that we are building and the beautiful revolt that they make possible last, beyond relatively short bursts?

As much as we need strategic intelligence in the streets, we need emotional intelligence to not propagate the poisons that we have ingested from this society, and to approach the inevitability of conflict in ways that are generative. This intelligence must be actively fostered through experimentation, sharing, and care, all of which are contingent on our willingness to learn and grow.

Many of our comrades are skeptical of mental health professionals and settings, and justifiably so - due to hatred for the violence of psychiatric institutions, to having been directly or indirectly traumatized by these institutions, or often both. Not everyone needs to see a therapist, and for those who do, it's no magic bullet. The important thing to agree on is that we all have a responsibility to seek some kind of support. There are many things that we can not talk about, but that is all the more reason to work through what we can. Our childhood trauma, interpersonal struggles, our fears of abandonment, addictions and other harmful coping mechanisms, the trauma of being locked up - these are the unresolved issues that creep up and take over, especially in times of heightened stress which anarchists experience often.

I recently overheard a conversation at a land occupation where one person was saying that everyone needs to go to therapy and the other, a native person, responded that the sweat lodge

was their therapy. Other friends have studied somatic therapy and how to regulate the nervous system[2]. Comrades in NYC started co-counseling groups, training themselves to provide support for one another in an environment they could all trust[3]. There are support groups for queer people, for family members of addicts, for survivors of sexual violence. There are so many ways of seeking support, talk therapy being just one of them, so when a comrade refuses to try or makes up excuses I see this as a red flag and a major obstacle to potential complicity. If we can't do it for ourselves right now, we owe it to our comrades to try.

While it is crucial to have support outside of our affinity groups, some topics can only be broached with our closest comrades. This is all the more reason for those who act together to make space to speak about the emotional and psychological dimensions of taking risks. A friend of mine was very impacted by the stress of an action - the circumstances surrounding it regrettably caused those involved to vow to never speak to each other about it again. In the next year, he coped with this stress by turning to heroin, and it ultimately stopped his heart - a heart that we should have embraced to process fears that no one else could.

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1. See *Toronto G20 Main Conspiracy Group: The Charges and How They Came To Be* for a story of how an infiltrator leveraged secrecy to deflect questions about their history, and silence individuals from sharing concerns among each other about details that didn't add up. (sproutdistro.com)

2. *Surviving a Pandemic: Tools for Addressing Isolation, Anxiety, and Grief* (crimethinc.com),
*Soaring Beyond The Walls: Tools For Building Capacity In Prison And Beyond* (sproutdistro.com)

3. *Mutual Aid, Trauma, and Resiliency / MAST (Mutual Aid Self/Social Therapy)* (janeaddamscollective.org/the-mast-project/)

*We all got born so afraid*
*And still search for words*
*To describe that pain*
*And cling to each other*
*Like pigeons in the rain*
*(Hang on to each other)*
*And nuzzle over feathered breast*
*(Hang on to each other)*
*With beaks all worn and cracked and stained*
*(Hang on to each other)*

*So this one's for the lost ones*
*(Hang on to each other)*
*And the dead ones and the ones who fell away*
*(Hang on to each other)*
*All our busted brothers*
*(Hang on to each other)*
*And tumbled lovers*
*(Hang on to each other)*
*Spitting at the rain*
*(Hang on to each other)*

***- Hang On to Each Other, A Silver Mt. Zion***

# Secrets & Lies

This next text was written by an anarchist comrade involved in direct action and informal organisation. In relationships of insurgent affinity, where desire and love fuses with the sincere urge to attack together this society, we have to pay attention to the consequences of our actions and the people we involve ourselves with. To understand the line of domination as it is written. When things breakdown, as all things are caused to, there must be ways to hold each other together, to prevent the kind of fragmentation that destroys people and their aspirations to continue the struggle.

> *"The psychological dimension of conflict is as important as the physical. Conflict is a struggle of wills, which takes place in people's minds as well as on the battlefield. Conflict is a struggle for power. The power may be political (ideological), military or economical (material). There is hardly a more merciless conflict as that based on ideology. The attitudes and behaviour of people (friend, foe and the undecided or uncommitted) may ultimately determine the outcome of conflict."*
>
> ***- Psychological Operations Joint Doctrine, Canadian Forces***

I have lived sometimes in the penumbral world. A world of secrets and lies. Of the not-spoken. A place in which the question may not be asked. A space where slow response latency, intrigue, and subterfuge exist. Where the gang consolidates itself. Where power games are played out under the guise of necessity and comrades are removed in whispers from the company of the uninitiated, or in silence from the company of the initiated. A world where only the 'fittest' survive, and the others discarded, friends and lovers as well as foes. One sees the eyes of an intimate search for the right word, for passage around the truth, and one does the same to others. Sometimes one does not see the eyes at all. One can see the mechanics but one cannot speak what one sees. One trusts the other in

so many ways, but cannot speak what one knows. This is the place in which the question is crime. In which you are made voiceless. Where truth is not possible. Where one must – especially if one is not classified, if one is excluded – exist on a plane of Tourettian guesswork, denial, insecurity, frustration and paranoia. Through this sieve of secrets and lies, through the thousand holes punched into the fabric of our social relationships, we can lose ourselves. We can lose one another. In the place where honesty has ceased, we become our own prisons.

> *"We know that secrecy by its very nature may affect the personality of its practitioners. This is true of all forms of secrecy from the primitive secret society to the codeword compartment. The latter is a heightened form of secrecy that resembles the former in many ways. It has the aura of a secret society. It has its initiation, its oaths, its esoteric phrases, its sequestered areas, and its secrets within secrets. And in place of passwords and hand signs, there are letter designations on badges. There are in-groups and out-groups. No wonder, then, if the codeword compartment has unintended psychological effects."*
>
> ***– a March 1977 report "Critique of the Codeword Compartment in the CIA"***

Do we think the State isn't as much an expert in secrecy as it is a master of war? The people working in the secret departments of every country in the world have first-hand experience of the stressors and impact of secrecy on the psychology of secret-keepers and those not privileged to secret information. Do we think that with millennia spent sharpening the knife, it does not know what flesh it slices, at which angle, for the best meat? To build secrets is to build walls, to build judgements, to divide us from one another, to sow discontent, distrust, paranoia, to isolate those who have something to say about the way things are from those who might hear. And so the State writes another chapter in psychological warfare. To

create a garden in which secrets are sown is to sow power and corruption.

In other times and somewhere in this one, necessarily secret activity was taken under oath. The State murdered people not only for taking action, but simply for swearing an oath of secrecy to a group engaged in action against the State. And within the secret organisations - Captain Swing, the Luddites, the Molly Maguires, the IRA - to name a few, the parameters were clear. There was process, there was ritual, there was initiation and uninitiation, not only for the fighters, but for their families and their communities. Accountable action may not be what we choose to fight the State, but to choose secrecy is not strength in itself. It is a regrettable necessity and a state of being which the State creates because it suits it just as well as accountability does.

In a world of secrets and lies, there is a world of shadows. The shadows are black, cold, flat. They do not bleed or cry. They have no texture. No colour. They have the outline of humanity, but they lack soul. There is a simulacrum of strength in this parade of shadows. There is de-individuation at the same moment as the individuals attempt to realize themselves through the sudden half-formed rites of initiation they have stumbled upon and which the State has provided them by criminalising every human instinct we have, including the instinct to be open.

On some level and in the absence of true intimacy and emotional colour, the shadows become one another. In this dark mimicry, this uniformed escape from loneliness, from isolation, the shadows become one. And are a wall against the 'others'.

> *"Larson and Chastain (1990) found that the dispositional tendency to keep secrets, also called selfconcealment, contributed to physical complaints and depression, above and beyond*

*other stress factors associated with physical and psychological problems such as traumatic experiences or lack of social support. Based on these findings, Larson and Chastain (1990) concluded that secrecy, independent of the type of secret that is kept, "exacts a price and functions as an internal stressor" Research and theories on secrecy among adults suggest that the physical, psychological, and social disadvantages of secrecy may be substantial."*

By it's very nature, secrecy separates the secret-keeper(s) from those kept ignorant of the secret. The secretkeeper is the gate-keeper. And by their very nature must make judgements and valuations on the qualities, trustworthiness and desirability of inclusion of those around them. The secret-keeper and their selection of other secret-holders is not neutral. It is powerful. And if we really believe that power corrupts, we must be careful with our secrecy.

Often, because of the extremely informal nature of our political networks and interweaving of the political and the social worlds, our use of secrecy means that we can be confused about what is classified and what isn't, who is classified and who isn't. And because the political gangs co-exist and mix with the social gangs and living collectives, between which there is a great deal of cross-over, behaviour indicating secrecy is frequently blindingly obvious and, added to the requirements of ego, can often devolve into performance and a show of strength and interpersonal preferences amounting to little more than a crude gang mentality. We pretend neutrality and seriousness, but compare our behaviours and our processes with a group like the turn of the twentieth century Polish anarchist group The Revolutionary Avengers whose members were prohibited from even expressing a political opinion in their workplace so as not to jeopardise the group's secret activities. Perhaps they would be accused of vanguardism, but they also have something to teach us. Often we choose

other secret-keepers because they are attractive, desirable, have status, reputation,wear the right clothes, read the right books, behave in the right way, have certain connections, and because they are our friends. And we can isolate people on the same grounds: because we stopped liking them, stopped being intimate with them, because someone else was more exciting, because someone else has more status and reputation, because we can - if we are adept at manipulating social networks. The affinity group has its function and its strengths, but it also has its drawbacks and one of those is a lack of personal-political accountability, a plethora of loosely connected groups, the members of which may or may not feel affinity or responsibility towards individuals in other groups, and the danger of leading to a lack of respectful process, the proliferation of unspoken personal dynamics and no possibility of mediation by a third party to mitigate abuse of power when interpersonal or political problems arise. Because of security considerations, when someone is excluded, there is no one outside those groups for that person to process this with, leaving them in doubled isolation - cut off once from society at large by their political perspective and life, and now from the gang.

More than anything other political form, the concept of the affinity group so prevalent in militant circles brings up the issue of the personal and the political and it is a complex and delicate one that many of us are illequipped to deal with.

The cost of secrecy and lies is high, requiring the use of denial, splitting and dissociation, both on the part of the secret-keepers and the excluded who may include former secretkeepers. I usually think of a culture of secrecy as being about security: a necessary response to repression. But I also have the feeling it is about something other than this. That without full consciousness, it can also become somehow an end in itself. Studies have shown that the effects of secrecy on adults are overwhelmingly negative, leading to feelings of isolation,

depression and physical complaints (for secret-keepers and non-secret-keepers alike. A secretkeeper may be a gate-keeper, they are also the prisoner of their own knowledge). The negative effects of a culture of secrecy and gang mentality are blatantly visible in any politically militant scene.

Interestingly, however, studies on adolescents have revealed that secrecy can be a positive factor in the transition between child and adult, between dependence and self-actualisation. If we take this as a metaphor for some contemporary resistance groups, then we can understand secrecy as this kind of a choice. In a world in which we are stripped of any feelings or possibilities of selfmastery, and of meaning, then a culture of secrecy can represent not simply a tactical necessity, but a psychological one. Just as the adolescent chooses secretive behaviour to individuate themselves from the authorities in their lives – their parents, teachers etc – and to begin to assert themselves as different and autonomous, it is also possible that, in addition to being a response to repression and the need to protect oneself from the surveillance and legal consequences of action, cultures of secrecy in certain political groups are also an unconscious process resembling that seen in the adolescent.

> *"...secrecy is a powerful mechanism in adolescent well-being and psychosocial development....It independently contributes to adolescents' psychosocial well-being and appears to be a central factor in adolescents' feelings of autonomy"*

As these groups struggle to assert their personal and ideological autonomy against the repressive authorities of the State, the Judiciary, the corporate-industrial world and military dominance, as they struggle "to distance and disengage themselves from their primary caretakers [the State and the familial, educative, and normalised social structures] and establish boundaries between "self" and "nonself" (Kaplan, 1987) and

to "establish and consolidate their capacities of self-regulation and selfdetermination (e.g., Allen et al., 1994; Larson et al., 1996; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986).", these political circles choose secrecy, not only as a reaction, as a means to avoid detection and punishment for their attacks against the State but also as a means of defining their difference, of creating a gang.

Repression has many faces, only one of which is physical brutality and threats of incarceration. The other impacts of repression and the capitalist, totalitarian system in Europe is a process of institutionalised infantilisation and dependency. From the very basics, that is the ability to eat, be warm, move around, educate ourselves etc, we are dependents – whether we are 3 years old or 67 years old.

We are rarely able to realise who we are, and our dreams and desires are never free to live. This state of being results in a condition of perpetual immaturity.

The human being will struggle for freedom, for strength, for self-realisation against all the odds. As adolescents we do this through the formation of gangs, initiations, uniforms and clothing indicators and of shared standards, identities and an arcanum peculiar to itself. Sub-cultures. These hold within them the danger of being inherently reactionary and in terms of political groupings, unless we want to remain tiny and reproductive of insidious power structures, we would do well to be aware of the psychological impact of these structures and behaviours.

Living in a state of arrested development is not reclaiming one's full humanity.

> *The three basic aims of PSYOPS [Psychological Operations] are to: 1) Weaken the will of the enemy or adversary by lowering morale and reducing the efficiency of this force through*

*the creation of doubt, dissidence and disaffection within the ranks. 2) Reinforce the feelings of friendly target audiences. 3) Gain the support and cooperation of uncommitted or undecided audiences."*

***– Psychological Operations Joint Doctrine, Canadian Forces***

All cultures of secrecy come up against problems. If they are about effectiveness and security, then they need reviewing from time to time. Even the CIA acknowledged the psychological and effective problems of high levels of secrecy. One report even suggested that secrecy actually led to insecurity and an inability to be affective: non-sensitive information was withheld along with top secret information, leading to failures in action for example, dissaffection and unnecessary power dynamics.

When we begin to allow pathological cultures of secrecy to develop, then if what we are striving for is some measure of human health, mutual respect and solidarity, self (and this also refers to the wider self of comrades) realisation and autonomy, then we need to be constantly vigilant as to our motivations and the way we act towards each other and the world at large.

Because of the very informal and sometimes haphazard way we stumble into 'militancy', we do not always come to it with full consciousness, discussion, mindfulness or formal introduction. Inside or outside of the secrets, there is a tendency towards tension in interpersonal relationships, paranoia, feelings of inclusion and exclusion, lowered morale, a sense of isolation or privilege, hierarchies and personal insecurity. It can be destructive and paralysing. The first question we need to ask is, in any other world would this life of secrecy, essentially this way of relating to others, be what we would choose, and if yes, why, and if not, then how can we minimise the damage done by a situation we are forced into and rationalise the process? What world do we want, and what worlds are we

creating now because if we continue to damage each other in the present, at one future point of liberation do we think this is all miraculously going to change!?

Today I cannot speak. My heart is in my mouth. I am paralysed from the neck up. My throat. My mouth. My tongue. My lips. My words. My thoughts. There is no communication anymore. Honesty has ceased. In its place, there are looks, allusions, guesses, sly smiles, gestures, people pulling other people to one side away from other people who may or may not be included in disclosures. I am never sure if I have understood what is going on and there is no way to check. There is the spreading of confusion. Security put through a scrambler and shuffled. There is no logic. There are places it is acceptable to talk openly but they seem to be no safer than the places that aren't. There are the people that decide which is which. There is no structure. There is no clarification. There is paranoia. There is confusion. There is the fear of exclusion. The relief of inclusion. There is power and ego. Every time I say something I feel waves of panic. Every time I open my mouth I can feel my face flush with fear. Every time my mouth closes having dropped the words on the air, every time I speak to someone on the phone, every time I press send on an email, I can feel the adrenaline surge. I can no longer say the simplest things without these sensations. My tongue dries up. My thoughts scatter. My mouth grows stiff and I close the curtain across the window of my eyes so that they match yours. This is called mimicry, and it occurs subconsciously in instances of social exclusion as an attempt to pacify or ingratiate the excluder. Every interaction is tainted with the same suspicion, self-consciousness and fear as the court appearance. Every friendship becomes a prison where we stand on opposites side of the walls. Friendship too is ceasing.

I imagined we were rebels. Instead, I am a decades old teenager standing on the edge of a schoolyard wondering why no

one will play with me any more. Across the yard is the gang I used to be a part of. Everything is as it was. Except I am not there. I am here. On the outside. On the other side of the wall of the people who were recently my friends, lovers, comrades. Because I am no longer considered fit. Because my lover left me, because my friend left me also, because I felt I had to leave the house we all shared and I don't really know where else to go and I am in a strange country that is not where I grew up with a language I do not speak. And because I fell apart a little under the strain, I am no longer considered fit for action. I have been judged by a few without due process, in secret conversations behind my back and which I am not told about until I ask. I know the signs, the looks, the constellations. Only none of these are directed at me anymore. And what used to seem to me as one of the included as a necessary part of struggle begins to seem more like a performance. A spectacle of secrecy for which one of the motivations seems to be to display to others their condition of exclusion, and the peacock fan of inclusion. And suddenly, in this world of rebels who usually hold an opinion about everything, no one has anything to say: not, what happened, who decided this and why, where are you, are you okay, do you have another group, how do we deal with this? The question is not allowed. And although some remain 'friends', the quagmire of betrayal and a different complicity reeks between us and friendship cannot cross it.

I do not want to be part of the gang any more. I only want to be included again. There is no sense of solidarity nor of affinity. There is anger and impotence. There is isolation and depression. There is exhaustion. There is pride. There is frustration. The secret-keepers' laughter is brash with secrets, their bodies arrogant with lies. Their eyes look everywhere but mine and, for the first time in my life, through prison, through arrests, through attack, through riots, through discussions, I have no comrades.

*In research studies, it has been observed that people who experienced exclusion from groups during the experiment literally felt colder. When asked to assess the temperature of the room, they reported the temperature on average to be colder than those who had been included. When asked to choose from a range of food and drink, those who had been excluded overwhelmingly requested more hot food and hot drinks than those who had been included.*

Even when I am inside the secret, even when I am included, I feel discomfort. It is like being in an abusive family where everyone outside the family is someone to whom you cannot divulge anything important. In a world of secrets and lies, everyone else is the other. Everyone else is a person who is not included, not trusted, not desired, not privileged. Everyone else is someone to fear. Everyone else is not, by definition, worthy or trustworthy. From everyone else you are fundamentally split off, disassociated. Your conversation is grey and cumbersome with what is not being said, what cannot be said. You are too close and not close enough. You are isolated and yet not isolated enough. You live in a world characterised by anonymity, but not anonymous enough that the impact of the secrets you hold, and share, and the conspirators you esteem, are hidden from the excluded who might be your closest friends. The exchange with others outside the secretive unit, the miniscule informal party, is no longer free and so the cycle of dependence on the secretive unit is increased. Everything that troubles you about the secrets or about the abusive unit cannot be talked about, leading to a greater sense of isolation - except with the other secret-keepers who are the source of the discomfort. Cut off in this way from the rest of the world in which everyone else is deemed not to be trusted, at times then you are led to wonder, then what exactly are you fighting for?

For the first time in months, you ask me to turn off my phone so that we can talk freely and my gratitude makes me want to throw up.

What are we feeling when we are keeping secrets? Militant, bonded, closed, awkward, confused, powerful, included, privileged, strong, paranoid, stressed, exhilarated, endangered, deceitful, needy? How we do deal with all these feelings, how do we live our lives around them? How do we keep vigilant over the myriad consequences of living that kind of life and the subconscious reasons behind the choices we make? What is our relationship to others who aren't also secret keepers? And on what grounds are we basing our choice of other secret-keepers? What are we keeping secret and when are we keeping secrets simply for the form and the pleasure of it rather than the necessity?

The world of secrets is a world of lovers, exclusive. It is intimacy and complicity. It is the political and the personal. To be on the outside of lovers like this can be torment. Especially when they were once your lovers too. To be on the inside of lovers like this can be torment. Especially when other lovers are on the outside.

I know I will find other lovers and other secrets. But I will try to do it differently. With respect to those that have fought before us, with respect for the struggle for maturity, in full realisation of the breadths of damage done to us and that we do to each other, we need to combine secrecy with humanity and the strength to constantly be vigilant of the system within us as much without.

# Postscript (practical)

I wrote "Secrets and Lies" a year ago. In that year, I took myself out of the political scene entirely, spent time away from everyone and everything I knew and which I felt identified with. I reflected a lot on the situation and the political scene that prompted "Secrets and Lies": on what my part was in it all, as well as what other people's part was. We are of course all within our rights to decide we no longer want to work with someone and we have to learn how to deal with this from both the position of excluder and excluded at some point, so these are just a few thoughts about things that could have been done better in such a situation.

When the relationship between me and my comrade began to disintegrate, we did talk things through regularly and an attempt was made to keep doing projects together, just not highly 'sensitive' ones. In this way, we attempted to rebuild our trust, confidence and knowledge of each other. I recommend this, even though in this instance it didn't work.

**Do not assume neutrality:** If you need to seek advice in an emotionally fraught situation with lots of characters, think about the relationships involved and also the kind of values and judgements you are giving to certain kinds of behaviours/responses over others (i.e. manipulative and/or exploitative ones) in the choices you are making. Be as open as safely possible with the excluded person and acknowledge the impact of their exclusion. Unless there is a very good reason not to, inform the excluded person of any discussions had about them or even better allow them to be present so that they can participate in the decision-making and challenge things if they need to. To exclude someone from action is hard to do and to be excluded and then left feeling stranded in a situation that is fraught with security issues is irresponsible, not only for emotional well-being but also for everyone's security.

If you are excluded and feel you need to communicate over the closure including the need to be clear about what others think and where you stand, agree who it is ok to talk about it with. You might have to take the initiative as others might be embarrassed, unsure whether it's okay to talk about it, or prefer to stick their heads in the sand. If possible, safely get someone from an affiliated affinity group or another outside agreed trusted person to be an ear. Patterns of abuse and power thrive in closed groups (nuclear family units for example). Also, be cautious of working with couples or at least be very sure that you all can deal with it. On a long term security basis, be careful with each other and how you behave. All of us think and hope our friends and ourselves wouldn't talk, but looking over the Atlantic at the repression against the ELF/ALF in the USA, known as the "Greenscare", it shows that you don't know how people and situations can change, to the extent where former comrades are willing to sell out their friends and loved ones to prevent long jail terms.

When, if, the police suddenly come on top and drag you off to a cell on your own and tell you that so-and-so said this about you or talked or whatever, your past experience of people and their behaviour will affect how effective the state's psychological warfare is. If someone has dropped you or a good friend and comrade suddenly or gone behind your back before or you have witnessed them going behind someone else's, under great pressure, how do you know they won't do the same with the cops? How do you know you won't doubt them?

Similarly, if you have witnessed a comrade crumble under the pressure of the struggle during their life and exhibit behaviours and responses you don't understand and don't feel comfortable or safe with, how do you know they won't do it when terrorised by the police in a more intimate way? State repression is designed to divide, overwelm and destroy us - what are the threads in your life which keep your comrades

tight? How do you deal with each other's weaknesses and limitations as well as strengths? Who do you have affinity with and on what grounds?

**Be discerning about secrecy:** Is it really necessary or is it about something else e.g. power and ego trip?

**Do not dismiss power dynamics:** People can be in stronger and weaker positions at a given time, and if someone seems to be or feels themselves to be in a much weaker position for whatever reason, try and understand why and consider cutting them some slack.

**We are not robots:** The personal and political are not always so easily detached, especially in groups/scenes based on affinity and informality. However, we are all different. Some people need to be more accepting of the emotional and others need to learn to manage their emotions better. If you know you are an 'emotional person', prone to insecurity, jealousy, pride and other deadly sins, then you need to be responsible for keeping on top of this and making sure situations are dealt with before they explode. If you are not an 'emotional person', it is probably best not to deny that this exists in others as this will mean lots of issues are brushed under the carpet only to come out later. Interpersonal problems like the one I experienced are part of the rebellion: a chance to create/experiment with new social relationships and to see how the system plays itself out through us in our behaviours and dynamics. If we look at all these things with courage we can deepen our rebellion and fight longer and stronger.

*Good luck, take care of yourselves and each other, and don't get caught!*

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