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Some two or three weeks ago I went to a public discussion with a Greek anarchist who volunteered in Rojava as part of the International Freedom Batallion's Queer Insurrection and Liberation Army (the people who put an LGBTQ flag in Raqqa), and talked to him for a bit afterwards. He was very honest about his experience, and the things he said were actually even kind of worse than I expected, but he's still pro-YPG. I'll copypaste a "report" from the discussion I wrote in another group.

1. Structurally, the PKK is still mostly the old Stalinist formation which had to find a way to get a PR facelift after the USSR broke up and they stopped getting Soviet weapons. A minority genuinely believes in the new official doctrine (not that it's much better in itself), while for a greater part it's just a self-aware marketing ploy.

2. Democratic confederalism and those participatory assemblies are barely functional and exist mostly in theory, because "wartime conditions make them impractical".

3. The thing about the Rojava "Revolution" not being a national liberation struggle — but a multiethnic one — something which is often repeated by Western anarchists, is something nobody over there really believes in. Institutional and military leadership positions are almost exclusively filled with Kurds (and it's mostly Kurds from Turkey, not even Syrian locals) — there's proportionally more foreigners, like Germans, in those positions than local minorities. Pretty much all of inter-ethnic cooperation happens through the SDF, which is merely a military alliance, not a political one.

4. Jineology or "Kurdish feminism" (they actually reject the label "feminism" because they consider the feminist movement to be imperialist and Eurocentric) IMO sounds like a fairly reactionary ideology. As a starting point, they use an invented image of the supposed pre-Sumerian (they believe Kurds inhabited the Mesopotamia before the Sumerians), pre-patriarchal Kurdish woman as a model which should be recreated today, based on the obsolete anthropological theory of primitive matriarchal society. Therefore their notion of women is highly essentialistic, which often turns into homophobia, not to mention transphobia (there's even pretty widespread opposition to the HDP solely due to the fact that they're pro-LGBT). The most bizarre thing is that they happen to actively reject science as a colonial, patriarchal tool which obfuscates the "true nature" of women by denying the validity of "feminine" perception like emotions or intuition. Therefore science needs to be replaced with "jineology" (women's science), a system of knowledge built by women's shared experience in grassroots communities.

One shining example of its success is the fact they reject Western medicine and encourage homeopathy, traditional and alternative "holistic" methods.

5. The entire bit about "women's solidarity" is completely lacking in practice. He gave us an example of a devout Muslim couple, both YPG supporters, where the wife reported that her husband was beating her. In fear of alienating the religious community, the YPG women didn't go any further than asking the imam to politely explain to the husband that beating his wife like that is haram. And it rarely goes beyond that, due to PKK-YPG's highly populist approach.

6. For similar reasons, the queer brigade had great troubles convincing the YPG officers to allow them to plant the LGBT flag in Raqqa. They finally were allowed to, but immediately after the battle everyone involved was stripped of their positions in the press/PR department, and some were sent to self-criticize in a reeducation camp. Also there was a large-scale investigation of all openly LGBT people in YPG, to gauge their "sense of discipline".

7. There's a strict celibacy rule for the fighters, because "all sex under capitalism is patriarchal, therefore no sex will be allowed while capitalism exists". It's however just a flimsy cover for a pragmatic disciplinary measure, since the officers are regularly breaking the rule very openly and brazenly.

8. The martyr cult is really strong and really scary — fighters pray to their martyrs every day, and repeat mantras about how "they will never be as good as them". The peak achievement of any YPG fighter is to be martyred.

9. During the Raqqa offensive the YPG in many cases acted pretty much as cannon fodder for the US Marines.

10. The pro-Kurdish FSA units in the North which the YPG sometimes fought alongside with are ordinary Jihadist looters.

11. The PKK-YPG probably has a secret deal with Iran, because they are able to hide their artillery in Iranian mountains without anyone bothering them.

12. He said that accusations of ethnic cleansing happening in certain locales definitely aren't unreasonable.

He says that many other volunteers ended up leaving, disappointed and feeling duped, and that he doesn't really blame them. He struggled with many of those things himself, but eventually learned to accept them — he now thinks all of this, although bad, is justified in a sense, and how he still has the duty to support any struggle which has a "liberatory goal", and how he must swallow his sense of "purity" for that purpose.