

THE **PARSOC** BULLETIN

Members | Network Projects | Solidarity

From the Education & Skills Team

- ✦ Hosted the second E&S session on ParPolity with Stephen Shalom. There was a high level of participation in both a general discussion and in break out rooms. Most of the session was recorded, and will soon be available for RU Members to access on Discord.
- ✦ The next E&S session will be on criminal justice in Parsoc, with Peter Bohmer (19th of March)
- ✦ Working on the 'Real Utopia 2' book proposal

From the Site Team

- ✦ Continue improving and maintaining website, & adding new content.
- ✦ Developing proposal for larger improvements to "introductory" and "recommended materials" sections, & creating a new "resources" page, with links to various shareable materials / templates that members might find useful for advocacy.



RU With Me?

Welcome to the third edition of The Parsoc Bulletin.

February is a short month, and admittedly, I was busier than usual, and did not send out as many reminders to submit content as I would have liked. As a result, we were light on content by the target deadline, and it crossed my mind to postpone this edition until next month. After all, it is only natural that news and activism doesn't always conform to our calendars - rolling hills, even peaks and valleys, rather than flat roads.

I even entertained the thought that perhaps it was not the appropriate time to press you all for content, considering the war in Ukraine, the UN's alarming 2022 climate impacts report, and the eerie background awareness of possible nuclear outcomes.





From the Outreach & Events Team

- ✦ The first joint meeting of RU, PEP, & ZNet will be held on March 2. Delegates will bring ideas from RU, to begin a discussion on collaboration.
- ✦ Anarchist Conference, call for papers. RU members encouraged to participate. So far, Michael Albert, Alexandria Shaner, & Mark Evans have volunteered to contribute.
- ✦ Utopia Studies Conference: Email sent to Network asking if we want to do a panel. Seeking feedback.

From the Membership Team

- ✦ Hosting a weekly Welcome Meeting for new members, and current members who want a refresher on goings on.
- ✦ Hosting on demand Info Sessions for prospective members
- ✦ Developing proposal for revised RU Membership Procedures

Luckily, that thought was fleeting, as momentary as it was wrong. If there is ANY time to encourage you to participate in this newsletter, in engaging collectively with vision for a better world, in mutual aid, it is now...

I sent a you letter, which is reposted here on page 12, asking you to join me in producing our newsletter, with a last minute rush-call for extra content. I am happy to say, you obliged.

As you take a few minutes out of your day to interact with this edition, I hope it can be a small but powerful reminder that across the globe, there are those of us who not only share a desire for a better world, but are engaged in building it, even and especially through the dark times.

Your Fellow Utopian, Alexandria

"Utopia is on the horizon. I walk two steps, it moves two steps away and the horizon runs ten steps further. So, what is utopia for? That's what it's for, it's for walking." - Eduardo Galeano

Like all RU projects, the newsletter is based on participatory values - all members are encouraged to submit content as often as desired. The task of compiling submissions and facilitating this publication is done on a volunteer basis, and rotates after every few editions.



Members' Picks

Film

- [Escape from Pretoria \(2020\)](#): A true story about two revolutionaries sentenced to prison in apartheid South Africa.
- [Muscle Shoals \(2013\)](#): A documentary that celebrates Rick Hall, founder of FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, & the signature sound he developed.
- [The Death of Stalin \(2017\)](#): political satire
- [Tear Along the Dotted Line \(2021\)](#), by radical cartoonist [ZeroCalcare](#): Animated Comedy Series

Music

- [Bob Dylan, Masters of War](#). ([read lyrics](#))

Article

- New [Wiki Page](#) for 2022 anti-war protests in Russia

Book

- [Between Labour And Capital](#), Pat Walker (editor)

Novels for the times

- [A Psalm for the Wild-Built](#), Becky Chambers
- [The Dispossessed](#), Ursula K. Le Guin
- [The Ministry of Utmost Happiness](#), Arundhati Roy
- [The Corpse Washer](#), Sinan Antoon

Video

- [Live coverage of St. Petersburg anti-war protests](#)
- [Live coverage of day two of Moscow protests & arrests](#)
- [The Serf Times, Anti-war feelings among Russian People](#)

Network News

Projects & Updates...Get involved!

Parsoc Advocacy: Call for Papers & Panelists

Outreach & Events Team

There are two upcoming conferences that RU members can participate in, either in collaboration with fellow network members, or on their own:

22nd Utopian Studies Society Conference

Anarchist Studies Network: 7th International Conference

A call for papers, panel ideas, and panelists, has been sent out to the network via email.

Please get in touch with the [Outreach & Events Team](#) for more info, and to make your interest in participating known. If there are other conferences that you would like RU to know about, please let the team know!

The Parsoc Bulletin:

Call for new facilitator(s)

Alexandria Shaner

This has been my third consecutive turn as the newsletter facilitator.



This task (soliciting/compiling submissions) is done on a volunteer basis, and rotates after every few editions. So, it's time for a different facilitator!

There is currently a template for adding each edition's content, which can continue - or be changed. The task requires minimal editing. Everything that RU members submit gets published, as long as it does not violate our principles of respect, and is generally aligned with parsoc values. Critical and diverse thought is encouraged. As facilitator, your main responsibility is to remind the network to submit content, and to put your own flair on the template by adding any extra art, memes, links, text, etc that haven't yet been submitted. As the outgoing facilitator, I will remain available to support the new volunteer(s).

Contact shaner.alexandria@gmail.com with interest/questions.



Network News

Projects & Updates...Get involved.



RU Goals Project: Feedback on SMART goals

Cooper Sperling, Richard Schuitema, & Urška Breznik

In our last RU Network Business meeting, it was decided that we should rewrite some of RU's goals so they become more specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART). We ask you to take a look at them before March 16th and give your feedback.

Going forward, we will regularly check back in with these SMART goals to gauge our progress.

Members' Links

What are we publishing?

Article

Support Ukraine! Russia Get Out of Ukraine! No U.S. or NATO War!, Peter Bohmer, ZNet

War in Ukraine: Some Questions And Answers, Eugene Nulman, ZNet

Free Speech, Expensive Speech, Censorship, Social Media Algorithms, and Anarcho-Puritanism, Anatomy of a Cancellation, & more, David Rovics, CounterPunch

Reflections on "No Bosses," Participatory Economics, and Movements, Lucas Alden, Méta

Riding the Blocktrain: Can tech be revolutionary?, Alexandria Shaner, Méta

Song

"Generic Drugs", Unsafemedia, Lonnie Atkinson

Fifteen years ago, I made my first attempt at writing a political/protest song. Sadly, this satirical tune is more relevant today than it was then.

Talk

A Vision for 21st Century Leftism, Michael Albert, hosted by the Trinity College Dublin Metaphysical Society and was co-sponsored by Méta: Centre for Postcapitalist Civilization, & Real Utopia.



Video

Urška Breznik: stop animations on participatory budgeting and cooperatives, made for promotion among young people. They are in Slovenian only, but I think you might get the gist of it...

PB: Pekarna Magdalenske mreže

Coops: Pekarna Magdalenske mreže

Podcast

A Conversation with Paul Burrows of Winnipeg's Mondragon Cafe & A-Zone, Unscripted Moments

Course

SSCC is currently running the No Bosses: Life After Capitalism Course FREE for RU Members. Each week, a different participant acts as host, giving a presentation of the materials and then facilitating discussion.

The April/May session is now open for sign ups!

How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

Lonnie Atkinson

Sneak peek of a new book for RU Members...

Don't Think Of A Republican:

How I Won A Republican Primary As A Lefty Progressive And You Can Too

The book is meant to serve as a sort of satirical shadow campaign for this current election season, while hopefully inspiring those with the political imagination to consider giving it a shot (whether through running or supporting a run) in the next election.

The link has a free PDF download. You're welcome/encouraged to share it with friends or anyone in your other networks.



Official description:

A curation of the scandalous rhetoric and the unprecedented electoral truth-telling employed throughout H.F. Valentine's groundbreaking campaign, Don't Think of a Republican proves, as badass as his candidacy may have been, the idea of running a lefty progressive in a Republican primary was not really all that bonkers...

The short of it:

Within our very not-radical, two-party, U.S. political system, Don't Think Of A Republican makes a quite radical proposal: Run lefty progressives, living in red districts, in Republican primaries across the country.

How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

Matic Primc

How lessons of Participatory Society can be applied at the grassroots



It was October 2012 when the protests against the corrupt mayor began in Maribor, Slovenia. A city of a little over 100.000 people had finally had enough and in a series of protests that at its peak reached 25.000 participants the public will prevailed and the mayor announced his resignation. The nominal goals of the protest were thus met. Across Slovenia the calls for resignation were taken up and resulted in the Slovenian Peoples Uprising that went on to topple the government as well. In Maribor the protests dissipated and the question of what next hung in the air. To answer that question a meeting was called inviting anyone interested to discuss further activities. About 150 people answered that call and met in a repurposed industrial hall. The debate that ensued tended to go in two directions. A larger group of people felt that the protest movement should bring forth a candidate to run for the mayor while a much smaller group felt that pursuing an electoral path would not be able to achieve a better society and felt that other, more direct democratic avenues of action should be pursued.

Those of us in the direct democratic group continued to meet and discuss first what our goals should be and how to best achieve them. We decided we want to push for direct democracy, classlessness, end of sexism and informed by concepts of participatory society we wanted these concepts to apply inside our organization as well. So we instituted an informal organization called Initiative for City-wide assembly (Iniciativa mestni zbor - IMZ). Soon after we decided to push for direct democracy via organizing citizen assemblies in the city districts in order to create a political space where citizens could get together, discuss the issues they face and organize to either fix them or effectively pressure the authorities to fix them. The assemblies were named »Self-organized district communities« (Samorganizirane četrtne skupnosti - SČS). We decided both the IMZ and SČS will be nonhierarchical, direct democratic and operate on the basis of consensus decision making. Both would be open to anyone who wanted to come and both would have no membership, meaning whoever would come to a meeting could take part in the meeting with same rights and responsibilities as anyone else.

Maintaining the absence of hierarchy within IMZ was important to everyone involved and thus the organization never formalized as formalization would require the establishment of hierarchical structure. We worried about informal hierarchy as well and took precautions, which were embedded in the agreed upon but unwritten rules of the organization. The two overarching principles were consensus decision making, meaning we only did things everyone agreed on and direct action, which for us meant that if someone proposed something should be done they were expected to do it or at least help do it. Furthermore we were conscious of the informal hierarchies that can happen when some members of the organization have access to the media or financing or connections with some politician. To try to prevent those things creating informal hierarchies we had rules that we constantly change the person who speaks to the media, we never have just one person go to a meeting with politician, we rotate all tasks within the organization. Similarly to avoid sexism we decided that every team that goes out is representative of both sexes and in that team the roles are regularly exchanged. Not uncommonly this has led to some consternation for example when a group of people would show up to a media interview. Our meetings were usually conducted with chairs set in a circle and everyone facing the center.

How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

The Self-organized district community (SČS) assemblies themselves were not events but instead permanent structures that were called every other week regardless of circumstance. At its height (before Coronavirus made them impossible) there were 10 of them, covering 11 city districts. They were autonomous and did not need approval from anyone (including the IMZ) to bring decisions. The core principles were applied to the assemblies as well who also operated on a consensus and direct action principles. Members of the IMZ were the ones creating the political space by arranging the space, moderating/facilitating the assembly and taking care of the bureaucratic part of it (taking minutes, sending out minutes, carrying messages between assemblies). To prevent instrumentalization of assemblies the moderators were not allowed to take part in the substantive discussion or even express their opinion. Each SČS adopted their own rules of conduct for the assembly and the moderators job was to make sure the assembly ran in accordance to those rules and take minutes. Other than that the moderators role was to facilitate discussion and the reaching of decision. Every SČS assembly was conducted in the form of a circle with no desks so everyone had equal physical presence with moderator and minute taker taking a random position within the circle.

The assemblies of the SČS caught on and were attended regularly by groups of citizens and approximately 1500 people attended the assemblies, many of them became regular. The numbers of people in the assemblies varied a lot, often depending on circumstance or outstanding issues in the district. So one time when renovating a local park was the issue of the day over a hundred people would show up, but two weeks later there would be three people present. There would be some cases when no one would show up as well. However in almost every district a number of citizens would become regulars and they would come to the assemblies to discuss the problems they faces and fought to solve them. Often once they solved their problems they would stay engaged and helped their neighbours solve their problems. Often others would give up when victories were not coming in short order.

The SČS were very active from early 2013 to mid 2020 when the coronavirus made live meetings impossible and they were largely put on hold (with some exceptions) and totaled around 1500 individual assemblies carried out at which estimated 6000+ decisions were brought. The citizens engaged in all areas of public life, fighting for local improvements (road repairs, children's playgrounds, etc.), local policies (winning participatory budgeting, ending the harmful contract for natural gas prices, instituting mandatory consultation with citizens on adopting municipal budget, winning the creation of a new large city park, etc.) as well as national policies (stopped the police law, won adoption of participatory budgeting as a national policy, won changes to the highway system, etc.) and much in between. Often they carried out their goals directly with work actions, like building an asphalt path to allow children, but mostly by successfully pressuring the authorities to implement.



How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

The organizational structure of the SČSs developed and SČSs in different district began cooperating and formed common workgroups, such as Self organized council for the protection of users of public goods (SSVUJD), City work group on traffic, Work group for the park by the Pekrski stream and others. Often their activities elicited the ire of the municipal authorities as well as authorities at the national level. The municipal water company went as far as suing a member of the SSVUJD for causing them damage, a lawsuit the water company humiliatingly lost.

Over the years, before Coronavirus hampered its operation, the IMZ and the structure of SČSs proved to be very persistent, innovative, resilient, enjoys the respect of the public and wields considerable influence. While it has not managed to trigger a runaway growing movement it has managed to maintain its nonhierarchical structure and fierce independence and I believe it is a good example of how participatory society principles can be applied in current society to great effect.



As the end of the coronavirus pandemic approaches (hopefully), we are preparing to resume the assemblies and hope the movement is reignited and continues to develop and grow further.



How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

Peter Bohmer

Support Ukraine! Russia Get Out of Ukraine! No U.S. or NATO War!

Peter Bohmer gave the following speech at the “No War with Russia over Ukraine” rally on Feb. 5, 2022. The rally was sponsored by Economics for Everyone. This is an update, February 27th, of that talk, with some addition text for RU.

The situation between the United States and Russia over Ukraine is very dangerous. Russia is a capitalist country led by an authoritarian and militaristic leader, Vladimir Putin. A major Russian invasion of the Ukraine began on February 24th together with massive bombing.

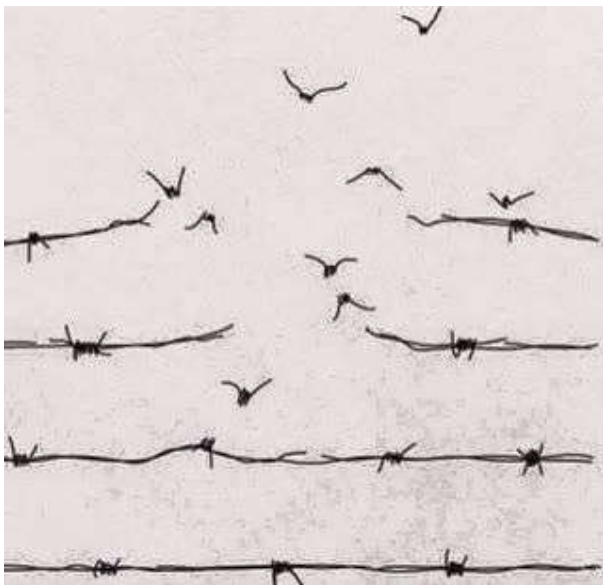
The Russian aggression is totally wrong and totally unjustified. Yet, from the mainstream media and our leaders, Russia is the only aggressor and the only responsible party for this horrific war. That is not the reality.

An agreement made and then violated - by our side

In 1990, the leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev made an agreement with Secretary of State, James Baker, then a close confidant of President, George H.W. Bush. In return for Gorbachev agreeing to the unification of Germany and permitting many nations within the USSR to become independent, the US and European leaders agreed not to station troops east of Germany nor to expand NATO there.

Ukraine was specifically mentioned as part of this verbal agreement. The request from Gorbachev for the neutrality of countries in Eastern Europe must be seen in the context of the Soviet Union losing 25 million of its residents from Nazi aggression and wanting to maintain a buffer between Germany and Russia.

From 1999 to 2004, NATO violated this agreement, expanding east of Germany into Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic and the Baltic countries, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The US has recently sent 10,000 US troops to Germany, Poland and Romania with more likely to come. There were major sales of weapons to Ukraine even before the Russian invasion.



A negotiated settlement

There could possibly still be a negotiated settlement along the following lines. In return for Russia agreeing to withdraw fully from the Ukraine and accepting its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Ukraine, NATO and the U.S. could pledge--that Ukraine will not now or in the future join NATO. This was the main demand by Putin and the Russian government during their troop buildup on the Ukrainian border. The U.S. totally rejected this reasonable demand so we will never know whether it would have been sufficient to stop the Russian invasion. It still should be made by the U.S. at this late date. Of course, Ukraine should be part of this negotiated settlement.

Does this violate the Ukrainian right to self-determination? Let us not forget that NATO is a military and expansionist alliance led by the US. Sovereignty doesn't include the right to militarily intervene in other countries which is a central part of NATO. In the longer run, we should demand the dismantling of NATO, a cold war relic.



Why is Our Focus on the United States?

The war is catastrophic for the people of Ukraine and could spread throughout Europe and beyond. Higher energy and food prices globally are happening and likely to worsen as well as a major refugee crisis from Ukrainians fleeing. Negotiations beginning with an immediate ceasefire and diplomacy including in a central way, Ukraine, is the way forward. A neutral Ukraine is a possible, desirable outcome of a settlement.

Let's demand that the U.S. in addition to calling for ending the Russian invasion and supporting "No Ukraine in NATO" propose sanctions that primarily hurt the rich and powerful in Russia. Much of their wealth is abroad so freezing their assets and threatening to confiscate it could reduce their support for Putin and the war. 60% of Russian exports are oil and natural gas. Refusing to buy them until a cease fire by Russia and honest negotiations would harm Russian exporters although it would also hurt the Russian people as Russian imports would soon be reduced. The U.S. could temporarily increase oil and gas production and help people here by subsidizing the rising costs they incur for higher energy prices.

Other actions that could put pressure on Russia to end its aggression include banning all Russian banks and financial institutions from the SWIFT messaging system which connects most large banks around the world. This would make it more difficult for Russian entities to process transactions and hobble the Russian economy's ability to do business beyond its borders. Another possibility is boycotting Russian sports teams such as the announcements by Sweden and Poland that they will refuse to play the Russian national soccer team in the qualifying games for the World Cup.

All these actions minimize the possibilities of a wider war and could further undermine the support for the war inside Russia thus increasing the possibility of the Putin led government ending its war of aggression or even having to resign.

There is a serious danger of the escalation of this war. The Ukrainian people have the right to defend themselves and the U.S. sending defensive weapons such as anti-aircraft artillery is justified but not offensive weapons or troops or military advisers. Those could lead to a war beyond the Ukraine.



Why is our focus on the U.S and not just Russian aggression? We live here and we can have more influence on U.S. actions than on other countries. U.S. behavior is partly our responsibility. When people here participate in an anti-war movement to stop US escalation and support peace efforts, it encourages those in Russia seeking peace and increases their credibility in demanding Russian end the war. Each will reinforce the other.

The large protests in Russia against Putin, saying No to War are courageous and inspiring. More than 3000 have been arrested in Russia since the beginning of the Russian invasion and they are continuing to grow. Let's support them. The war is not popular in Russia and may lead to Putin's downfall like what happened to the Czar for leading Russia into the highly destructive WWI.

A war between Russia and the United States over Ukraine?

Let's continue to oppose the U.S. going to war over Ukraine while supporting the Ukrainian resistance to their invasion. There is a danger of unintended consequences. Specific actions by the US or Russia could be misinterpreted and a broader war that is not planned for could occur. There is the slight danger of a nuclear war. Let us not take this chance. Let's make part of our daily life -- and the groups we are part of, a call for diplomacy and a negotiated settlement.

Building an anti-war movement

Let us educate ourselves, our friends and communities, our workplaces and fellow students about the history and current situation in Ukraine including the human costs of the war and Ukrainian resistance. Let's build an anti-war movement calling for "No NATO expansion into Ukraine" and Russia out. One of our tasks is to educate and build an antiwar movement for cutting US military spending and closing U.S. military bases around the world. We need a movement against the growing US military build-up and threats against China; a movement that demands the end of sanctions against Iran, Cuba and Venezuela; an end to military support for Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and an end to military sales there.

In building an anti-war movement in Olympia and beyond, we should build one that makes central calls for ending injustice and oppression in the US and links up with organizations and social movements involved in these struggles.

For example, let us connect the anti-war movement to the demand for freedom for Leonard Peltier. He was a leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and has been a continuing inspiration to Native Americans and many others. Let's build solidarity with people across borders who are resisting oppression, exploitation, authoritarianism and repression and foreign intervention.

Let's connect US militarism and imperialism, not only to its costs, but also to "race", gender and class oppression at home and to an exploitative capitalist system that we need to replace and transform into a participatory socialist system.

Leonard has spent 45 years in prison after being unjustly convicted for a 1975 killing of two FBI agents who invaded the Pine Ridge Reservation. Let us demand President Biden grant him clemency on medical and humanitarian grounds. With enough pressure, this is a winnable demand.



Dear RU,

A section where we can write to one another about anything and everything

The Activist's Antidote

[This letter was originally sent to the RU Network as an email on Feb 25, 2022.]

Dear RU,

We are light on newsletter submissions this month.

I would very much like to produce a newsletter this month, considering we are all on edge, in our own ways, due to the insanity escalating in Ukraine, on top of our usual existential and day to day concerns.

Part of the value and purpose of RU is that it is a solidarity network. Now is the time when we can step up to take care of each other, and to allow others to offer us their support. It is also a time when our resolve to build a better world is tested by the very horrors of the current world. The Parsoc Bulletin is one way that we can step up for each other. By taking just a few minutes to send in your thoughts, project updates, links to other content you like, musings, whatever, you will be strengthening this network of people who share a desire for a better world. The benefit is in the doing, and the receiving, that is mutual aid.

It may not seem like much, but I am sure each of us has had a big WTF moment in recent days, and maybe you have asked yourselves, what can I even do? For me, action is one remedy for this state of mind - a defiance against the paralysis of shock. It is a way to help ourselves as we help others, and in that, it is a fist in the air to the darkness around us.

This action doesn't need to be big, it doesn't need to solve all problems, or even offer solutions. It's really just a small thing that we each can do, that compounds and accelerates as soon as we share it.

I can extend the submission deadline until Monday Feb 28, since it is a short month, to give everyone a few extra days.

Please post your submissions (links to your projects, descriptions of your/others' projects, original content for newsletter, music, art, and members' picks) [here](#):

OR email them directly to me: shaner.alexandria@gmail.com.

Submissions can be in the format and length of your choice, and don't have to be long. If you'd like to contribute something, but can't think of what, let's talk. Don't be shy!

If you have any questions feel free to contact me.

In solidarity,

Alexandria



RU Serious?

Back by popular demand....it's cartoon time.



KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY



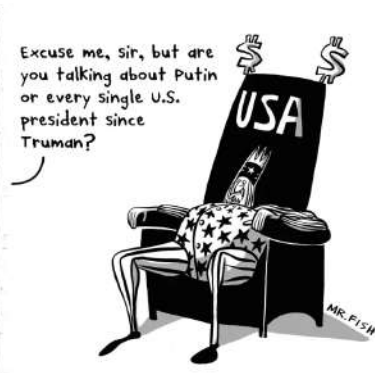
FOR THE SAFETY OF THE PUBLIC.



Sidewalk Bubblegum ©1994 Clay Butler



THE PROFITEER: "I'm as good a friend of labor as the next man—but there's no denying the fact that workingmen do spend their money foolishly."



"Yes, the planet got destroyed. But for a beautiful moment in time we created a lot of value for shareholders."

CartoonStock.com