

# **The AWL versus Anarchism**

Anarcho

July 14, 2011

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This leaflet was created to hand out at a debate on “Marxism and Anarchism” at the AWL 2011 “Ideas for Freedom” Conference. It complemented my talk (“Marxism and Anarchism” and is based on quotes from a series of four articles in the AWL’s paper, one on Working Class Struggle and Anarchism and the rest a three-part review of (the excellent) *Black Flame* (An All Feathered New Defence of Anarchism; How Anarchism Parted Ways With Marxism; and Anarchism and the Commune)

As becomes obvious from reading these terrible articles, the author knew very little about anarchism. While I made numerous comments on the articles showing this, I thought it wise to produce a leaflet which contrasts what the AWL said about anarchism and what anarchists actually argue. Hence this leaflet, the format of this is a quote from the AWL about anarchism followed by quotes from the likes of Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta stating the exact opposite.

Hopefully this will be of interest to those seeking to discover the facts about anarchism. I have also attached the pdf of the leaflet. The sources for the quotes can be found in An Anarchist FAQ (section H in particular).

## **The AWL versus Anarchism**

According to the AWL’s Martin Thomas, “Marxism is more ‘bookish’ than anarchism” and “insists more on the need for those who have decided to become consistent activists to study, to educate themselves.” Sadly, his account of anarchism published in *Solidarity* disproves it. This is easy to show, we need only compare his comments about anarchism to what anarchists like Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman and a host of others argued.

Once you do, you discover the false nature of claims that Schmidt and van der Walt’s “version of anarchism [in *Black Flame*] is one in which the traditional points of dispute with Marxism are thinned down or, some of them, virtually given up.” Rather than being “further away from conventional anarchism” it simply repeats basic revolutionary anarchist ideas – as this leaflet proves. Is it not time for Marxists to stop producing strawman arguments against anarchism?

“The black flag is the flag of strikes” (Louise Michel)

*Schmidt and van der Walt say that anarchism... was always a class-struggle movement. Anarcho-syndicalism was not a fringe development from anarchism... [Their] version of anarchism is closer to Marxism than to traditional anarchism”*

“Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Malatesta were not so naive as to believe that anarchism could be established over night. In imputing this notion to Bakunin, Marx and Engels wilfully distorted the Russian anarchist’s views. Nor did the anarchists... believe that abolition of the state involved ‘laying down of arms’ immediately after the revolution, to use Marx’s obscurantist choice of terms, thoughtlessly repeated by Lenin in *State and Revolution*. Indeed, much that passes for ‘Marxism’ in *State and Revolution* is pure anarchism – for example, the substitution of revolutionary militias for professional armed bodies and the substitution of organs of self-management for parliamentary bodies. What is authentically Marxist in Lenin’s pamphlet is the demand for ‘strict centralism,’ the acceptance of a ‘new’ bureaucracy, and the identification of soviets with a state.” (Murray Bookchin)

## Anarchism and the class struggle

“Some anarchists do [support class struggle]. Those are the anarcho-syndicalists, who on this issue have the same idea as Marxists do ... But most schools of anarchism do not.” (Martin Thomas (MT))

“between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie [is] an irreconcilable antagonism which results inevitably from their respective stations in life... the prosperity of the bourgeois class is incompatible with the prosperity and freedom of the workers... because... [it] is based on the exploitation and subjugation of the latter’s labour... war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is unavoidable” (Michael Bakunin)

“When strikes spread out from one place to another, they come close to turning into a general strike. And with the ideas of emancipation that now hold sway over the proletariat, a general strike can result only in a great cataclysm which forces society to shed its old skin... strikes indicate a certain collective strength... each strike becomes the point of departure for the formation of new groups. The necessities of the struggle impel the workers to support one another... The more active the struggle becomes... the stronger and more extensive this federation of proletarians must become.” (Bakunin)

“Anarchists have always advised taking an active part in those workers’ organisations which carry on the *direct* struggle of Labour against Capital and its protector – the State” (Peter Kropotkin)

“It is this war of classes that we must concentrate upon... Those who appreciate the urgent need of co-operating in great struggles... must organise the preparedness of the masses for the overthrow of both capitalism and the state.

Industrial and economic preparedness is what the workers need. That alone leads to revolution at the bottom... That alone will give the people the means to take their children out of the slums, out of the sweat shops and the cotton mills... That alone leads to economic and social freedom” (Emma Goldman)

“*strikes and trade unions must not only be supported, but were central to the working class organising and educating itself for emancipation.*” (MT)

“the strike... is the beginnings of the social war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie... Strikes are a valuable instrument from two points of view. Firstly, they electrify the masses... awaken in them the feeling of the deep antagonism which exists between their interests and those of the bourgeoisie... secondly they help immensely to provoke and establish between the workers of all trades, localities and countries the consciousness and very fact of solidarity: a twofold action, both negative and positive, which tends to constitute directly the new world of the proletariat, opposing it almost in an absolute way to the bourgeois world.” (Bakunin)

“Since the enemy on whom we declare war is capital, it is against capital that we have to direct our efforts... the great struggle... is an essentially *economic* struggle To be able to make the revolution, the mass of workers will have to organise themselves. Resistance and the strike are excellent means of organisation for doing this... It is a question of organising societies of resistance for all trades in each town... of federating them... Workers’ solidarity must... be practised each day between all trades and all nations” (Kropotkin)

“the *direct* struggle of Labour against Capital... and the State... permits the worker to obtain some temporary improvements in the present conditions of work, while it opens his eyes to the evil done by Capitalism and the State that supports it, and wakes up his thoughts concerning the

possibility of organising consumption, production, and exchange without the intervention of the capitalist and the State.” (Kropotkin)

“Anarchism... stands for direct action... Trade unionism, the economic area of the modern gladiator, owes its existence to direct action... In France, in Spain, in Italy, in Russian, nay even in England... direct, revolutionary economic action has become so strong a force in the battle for industrial liberty as to make the world realise the tremendous importance of labour’s power. The General Strike [is] the supreme expression of the economic consciousness of the workers... Today every great strike, in order to win, must realise the importance of the solidaric general protest.” (Goldman)

“the most powerful force for social transformation is the working class movement... Through the organisations established for the defence of their interests, workers acquire an awareness of the oppression under which they live and of the antagonisms which divide them from their employers, and so begin to aspire to a better life, get used to collective struggle and to solidarity” (Errico Malatesta)

“*only the right organisation of the workers* can accomplish what we are striving for... Organisation from the bottom up, beginning with the shop and factory, on the foundation of the joint interests of the workers everywhere... alone can solve the labour question and serve the true emancipation of man.” (Alexander Berkman)

“*Trade-union struggle... yields the biggest, most stable, and most powerful organisations, and best enables the socialists to develop dialogue with and gain organised influence among their fellow-workers.*” (MT)

“the International has been... the work of the proletariat itself ... It was their keen and profound instinct as workers... which impelled them to find the principle and true purpose of the International. They took the common needs already in existence as the foundation and saw the *international organisation of economic conflict against capitalism* as the true objective of this association. In giving it exclusively this base and aim, the workers at once established the entire power of the International. They opened wide the gates to all the millions of the oppressed and exploited.... organising local, national and international strikes... establishing national and international trade unions” (Bakunin)

“what is the natural organisation of the masses? It is one based on the different occupations of their actual daily life, on their various kinds of work, organisations according to their occupations, trade organisations. When all industries, including the various branches of agriculture, are represented in the International, its organisation, the organisation of the masses of the people, will be finished.” (Bakunin)

“only the trade union sections can give their members... practical education and consequently only they can draw into the organisation of the International the masses of the proletariat, those masses without whose practical co-operation... the Social Revolution will never be able to triumph” (Bakunin)

“Revolutionary Anarchist Communist propaganda within the Labour Unions had always been a favourite mode of action in the Federalist or ‘Bakuninist’ section of the International Working Men’s Association. In Spain and in Italy it had been especially successful. Now it was resorted to, with evident success, in France and *Freedom* eagerly advocated this sort of propaganda” (Kropotkin)

“*But what anarchists – again with the exception of anarcho-syndicalists – lack is a coherent idea of how the minority can act today so as best to contribute to majority action tomorrow.*” (MT)

“the workers’ world... is left with but a single path, that of *emancipation through practical action*... It means workers’ solidarity in their struggle against the bosses. It means *trades-unions, organisation, and the federation of resistance funds*... reducing working hours and increasing salary... the International... will propagandise its principles... organise across the frontiers of all countries... so that when the revolution ... breaks out... the International will be a real force ... [an] international organisation of workers’ associations... capable of replacing this... world of States and bourgeoisie.” (Bakunin)

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“Faithful to the anarchist traditions of the International... [Spanish anarchists] remain in the working class, they struggle with it... They bring their energy to the workers’ organisation and work to build up a force which will crush Capital on the day of the revolution: the revolutionary trade association. Trade sections, federations of all the trades.... We could not do less than advise the French workers to take up again ... the traditions of the International, to organise themselves outside all political parties by inscribing on their banner *solidarity in the struggle against Capital.*” (Kropotkin)

“*Bakunin did not see the working class as the central agent of revolution. He considered peasants and the urban unemployed, beggars, petty criminals, etc. to be much more potent revolutionary forces.*” (MT)

“it is necessary to organise the power of the proletariat. But this organisation must be the work of the proletariat itself... Organise, constantly organize the international militant solidarity of the workers, in every trade and country, and remember that however weak you are as isolated individuals or districts, you will constitute a tremendous, invincible power by means of universal co-operation” (Bakunin)

“for the International to be a real power, it must organise within its ranks the immense majority of the proletariat... The workers... join the International for... solidarity in the struggle for full economic rights against the oppressive exploitation by the bourgeoisie ... the *organisation of solidarity in the economic struggle of labour against capitalism.*” (Bakunin)

“to create a people’s force capable of crushing the military and civil force of the State, it is necessary to organise the proletariat” (Bakunin)

“a living, powerful, socialist movement... can be made a reality only by the awakened revolutionary consciousness, the collective will, and the organization of the working masses themselves.” (Bakunin)

“a new social order based... upon the collective appropriation of the instruments of labour... [created] by the development and organisation... of the social (and, by consequence, anti-political) power of the working masses.” (Bakunin)

*“The general principle established by Marx of the need for socialists to build and seek to broaden out trade unions would be complicated by the rise of trade-union bureaucracies, increasingly separating off into a distinct social layer mediating between workers and the bosses.” (MT)*

“Having convinced themselves that what they would like their [union] sections to do is what the membership actually wants, the committees make decisions for them without even bothering to consult them... The construction workers’ section simply left all decision-making to their committees... This is very good for the committees, but not at all favourable for the social, intellectual, and moral progress of the collective power of the International. In this manner power gravitated to the committees... the sections could defend their rights and their autonomy in only one way: the workers called general membership meetings. Nothing arouses the antipathy of the committees more than these popular [union] assemblies... the items on the agenda were amply discussed and the most progressive opinion prevailed... In these assemblies... great numbers of previously passive workers, caught up in the general camaraderie, repudiated their leaders and voted against their resolutions” (Bakunin)

## **Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism**

*“anarcho-syndicalism ... is the version of anarchism that identifies the society of the future as a federation of industries each run by the trade-union of the workers in the industry.” (MT)*

“Bakunin’s programme... [is that] the working class must not occupy itself with *politics*. They must only organise themselves by trades-unions... [and] by means of the International, they will supplant the place of all existing states.” (Marx)

“The future social organisation must be made solely from the bottom up, by the free association or federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international and universal.” (Bakunin)

“The organisation of the trade sections and... the Chambers of Labour... bear in themselves the living seeds of the new society which is to replace the old world. They are creating not only the ideas, but also the facts of the future itself.” (Bakunin)

“we hold that the granges, trade-unions, Knights of Labour assemblies, etc., are the embryonic groups of the ideal anarchistic society” (Lucy Parsons)

“Unions... are natural organs for the direct struggle with capitalism and for the composition of the future social order” (Kropotkin)

*“In times when working-class organisation and struggle have run at a high level, many anarchists have gone over to anarcho-syndicalism, i.e. to much the same idea as Marxists about the centrality of the wage-working class and its everyday struggles.” (MT)*

“Bakunin has a peculiar theory... carry on propaganda, heap abuse on the state, organise, and when all the workers... are own over, depose all the authorities, abolish the state and replace it with the organisation of the International.” (Engels)

“I have... never ceased to urge the comrades into that direction which the syndicalists, forgetting the past, call *new*, even though it was already glimpsed and followed, in the International, by the first of the anarchists” (Malatesta)

“anarchists... do not seek to constitute, and invite the working men not to constitute, political parties in the parliaments. Accordingly, since the foundation of the International Working Men’s Association in 1864- 1866, they have endeavoured to promote their ideas directly amongst the labour organisations and to induce those unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation.” (Kropotkin)

“the split in the revolutionary movement... one, under Marx and Engels, aiming at political conquest; the other, under Bakunin and the Latin workers, forging ahead along industrial and Syndicalist lines... Syndicalism is, in essence, the economic expression of Anarchism.” (Goldman)

“Modern Anarcho-Syndicalism is a direct continuation of those social aspirations which took shape in the bosom of the First International and which were best understood and most strongly held by the libertarian wing of the great workers’ alliance” (Rudolf Rocker)

*“Unlike other variants of anarchism, anarchosyndicalism focuses on the wage-working class. It has a coherent idea of what to do in un-revolutionary times: build up the unions which will later be the instruments of revolution.”* (MT)

“Organise the city proletariat in the name of revolutionary Socialism, and in doing this, unite it into one preparatory organisation together with the peasantry.” (Bakunin)

“The union is absolutely necessary. It is the only form of workers’ grouping which permits the direct struggle to be maintained against capital without falling into parliamentarism.” (Kropotkin)

“With an admirable tenacity they [the anarchist workers] organise their unions, within each nation and internationally, and with a still more admirable ardour they prepare the great coming struggle of Labour against Capital: the coming of the international general strike.” (Kropotkin)

“direct action and the direct struggle of the workers against capital... workers are realising that they alone must free themselves... making use of Direct Action as the preparatory means for the final battle of exploited Labour against... Capital” (Kropotkin)

“the strength of the worker... is in the shop and factory, in the mill and mine. It is there that he must organise; there, on the job... Every shop and factory should have its special committee... Its members are recalled at will and others selected in their place... It is the workers who decide the matters at issue and carry their decisions out through the shop committees... [This is] the form of organisation that labour needs... These shop and factory committees, combined with similar bodies in other mills and mines, associated locally, regionally, and nationally, would constitute a new type of labour organisation.” (Berkman)

*“The Bakunin wing’s opposition.... to electoral activity by socialists was not an exaggerated but understandable reaction against socialists allowing that activity to suck in too much of their energies and their hopes.... Socialists would allow electoral activity to suck in too much of their energies and their hopes... socialists who in their majority turned out to be unprincipled parliamentary reformists”* (MT)

“The worker-deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois ideas, will in fact cease to be workers and, becoming Statesmen, they will



become bourgeois... For men do not make their situations; on the contrary, men are made by them.” (Bakunin)

“Hardly any of these ideas are new: almost all are derived from the Bakunist section of the old International” (Bertrand Russell)

## **Anarchism and the Medieval Commune**

*“Medieval Communes... [were] idealised by Bakunin, and, later, even more so by Kropotkin.”* (MT)

“Mazzini, in his hatred of the Paris Commune, has gone to the extreme of sheer foolishness. He maintains that the... revolution in Paris would lead us back to the medieval ages... He does not understand, poor fellow, that between the commune of the Middle Ages and the modern commune there is the vast difference which the history of the last five centuries wrought” (Bakunin)

“Between the Commune of the middle ages and that...established today... there will be plenty of essential differences: a veritable abyss opened up by six or seven centuries of human development... all the great cities will unfurl the same flag ” (Kropotkin)

## **Anarchism and Capitalism**

*“Bakunin... made no demand for the expropriation of capitalist property or the collective ownership of the means of production.”* (MT)

“organise society in such a manner that every individual ... should find... equal means for the development of his or her diverse faculties and their utilisation in his or her work... rendering impossible the exploitation of anyone’s labour... enable every individual to enjoy the social wealth... only in so far as he contributes directly toward the creation of that wealth... the serious realisation of liberty, justice, and peace will be impossible so long as the majority of the population... is condemned to... producing all the wealth... and receiving in return only such a small part thereof ... [Hence] the necessity of a radical social and economic reconstruction, having for its aim the emancipation of people’s labour from the yoke of capital and property owners” (Bakunin)

“the land, the instruments of work and all other capital... become the collective property of the whole of society and be utilised only by the workers, in other words by the agricultural and industrial associations.” (Bakunin)

*“Proudhon... did not even see industrial capital as exploitative.”* (MT)

“property... degrades us, by making us servants and tyrants to one another... wage-worker[s]... work under a master ... the surplus of labour, essentially collective, passes entirely, like the revenue, to the proprietor... the worker, whose share of the collective product is constantly confiscated by the entrepreneur, is always on his uppers, while the capitalist is always in profit” (Proudhon)

*“the [Anarchist] assertion that... capitalism is the product of the state.”* (MT)

“The State is authority, domination, and force, organised by the property-owning and so-called enlightened classes against the masses... the State’s domination... [is] that of the privileged classes who it solely represents” (Bakunin)

“The State is there to protect exploitation, speculation and private property.” (Kropotkin)

“the State... and Capitalism are facts and conceptions which we cannot separate from each other. In the course of history these institutions have developed, supporting and reinforcing each other.” (Kropotkin)

“the State is necessary *only* to maintain or protect property and monopoly. It has proven efficient in that function only.” (Goldman)

## **Anarchism and Revolution**

*“[Bakunin’s] repeated declaration that the first step in any revolution should be to have ‘all legal papers consigned to the flames’, and all public regulation of debts and taxes abolished, was designed to appeal to the peasant for whom ‘the state’ is nothing but the unwelcome tax-collector.”* (MT)

“the revolution must set out from the first to radically and totally destroy the State... The natural and necessary consequence of this destruction will be... dissolution of army, magistracy, bureaucracy, police and priesthood... confiscation of all productive capital and means of production on behalf of workers’ associations, who are to put them to use” (Bakunin)

“Paris will naturally make haste to organise itself as best it can, in revolutionary style, after the workers have joined into associations and made a clean sweep of all the instruments of labour, every kind of capital and building; armed and organised by streets and *quartiers*, they will form the revolutionary federation of all the *quartiers*, the federative commune... All the French and foreign revolutionary communes will then send representatives to organise the necessary common services... and to organise common defence against the enemies of the Revolution, together with propaganda, the weapon of revolution, and practical revolutionary solidarity with friends in all countries against enemies in all countries” (Bakunin)

“in order that the peasants rise up, it is absolutely necessary that the initiative in this revolutionary movement be taken up by the city workers... who combine in themselves the instincts, ideas, and conscious will of the Social Revolution” (Bakunin)

*“the working class must aim for the expropriation of the capitalists and public ownership of the means of production.”* (MT)

“under universal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership ... We want the mines, canals, railways handed over to democratically organised workers’ associations... We want these associations to be models for agriculture, industry and trade, the pioneering core of that vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic and social Republic.” (Proudhon)

“all the capital, the factories, and all instruments of work and raw materials to go to the associations, and the land to those who cultivate it with their own hands.” (Bakunin)

“the serious, final, complete liberation of the workers is possible only upon one condition: that of the appropriation of capital, that is, of raw material and all the tools of labour, including land, by the whole body of the workers.” (Bakunin)

“a successful uprising... [involves] the complete political, juridical, financial, and administrative liquidation of the State, and of political and privately owned or controlled (but not strictly) personal property; the demolition of all the functions, services, and powers of the State... workers’ associations would then take possession of all the tools of production as well as all buildings and capital” (Bakunin)

“The next revolution must from its inception bring about the seizure of the entire social wealth by the workers in order to transform it into common property. This revolution can succeed only through the workers, only if the urban and rural workers everywhere carry out this objective themselves. To that end, they must initiate their own action in the period *before the revolution*; this can happen only if there is a strong *workers’ organisation*.” (Kropotkin)

“Expropriation – that is the guiding word of the coming revolution, without which it will fail in its historic mission: the complete expropriation of all those who have the means of exploiting human beings; the return to the community of the nation of everything that in the hands of anyone can be used to exploit others” (Kropotkin)

“To destroy radically this oppression... all people must be convinced of their right to the means of production, and be prepared to exercise this basic right by expropriating the landowners, the industrialists and financiers, and putting all social wealth at the disposal of the people.” (Malatesta)

## **Anarchism and Defence of the Revolution**

*“[Black Flame] concede[s] that counter-revolutionary groups will not disappear instantly, and accept the need for... ‘coordinated military defence’ with ‘the best weaponry’ (i.e. not just scattered militia groups...)”* (MT)

“In order to defend the revolution... volunteers will... form a communal militia. But no commune can defend itself in isolation. So it will be necessary to radiate revolution outward, to raise all of its neighbouring communes in revolt... and to federate with them for common defence” (Bakunin)

“the peasants, like the industrial city workers, should unite by federating the fighting battalions, district by district, assuring a common co-ordinated defence against internal and external enemies” (Bakunin)

“creation of voluntary militia, without powers to interfere as militia in the life of the community, but only to deal with any armed attacks by the forces of reaction to re-establish themselves, or to resist outside intervention” (Malatesta)

“your duty, as an Anarchist, [is] to protect your liberty, to resist coercion and compulsion.... The armed workers and peasants are the only effective defence of the revolution. By means of their unions and syndicates they must always be on guard against counter-revolutionary attack” (Berkman)

## **Anarchism and the Paris Commune**

*“The Commune.... was made up of elected representatives who were accountable to their voters and easily recallable... ‘a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time’... not like a bourgeois parliament.... [with] an executive government separate from it and standing above it.”* (MT)

“the imperative mandate, and permanent revocability are the most immediate and incontestable consequences of the electoral principle. It is the inevitable program of all democracy” (Proudhon)

“It is up to the National Assembly, through organisation of its committees, to exercise executive power, just the way it exercises legislative power... Besides universal suffrage and as a consequence of universal suffrage, we want implementation of the imperative mandate. Politicians balk at it! Which means that in their eyes, the people, in electing representatives, do not appoint mandatories but rather abjure their sovereignty!” (Proudhon)

“the collective ownership of property by freely organised producers’ associations, and... federation of communes, to replace the... State... Proudhonism, greatly developed and taken to its ultimate conclusion by the proletariat of the Latin countries.... has just attempted its first striking and practical demonstration in the Paris Commune.” (Bakunin)

*“The climax of Marx’s activity in the First International was his writing of ‘The Civil War in France’, the International’s statement of solidarity with the Paris Commune of March-May 1871. This was the major text by Marx likely to be read by the activists of the International.”* (MT)

“The general effect [of the Commune] was so striking that the Marxists themselves, who saw their ideas upset by the uprising, found themselves compelled to take their hats off to it. They went further, and proclaimed that its programme and purpose were their own, in face of the simplest logic... This was a truly farcical change of costume” (Bakunin)

## **Anarchism and Workers Councils**

*“Workers then need much broader and more flexible organisations than even the trade unions... workers’ councils”* (MT)

“Toilers count no longer on anyone but yourselves. Do not demoralise and paralyse your growing strength by being duped into alliances with bourgeois Radicalism... organise outside of it the forces of the proletariat. The bases of this organisation are already completely given: they are the workshops and the federation of workshops.... instruments of struggle against the bourgeoisie, and their federation, not only national, but international.” (Bakunin)

“the federative Alliance of all working men’s associations... constitute the Commune... [the] Communal Council [is] composed of... delegates... vested with plenary but accountable and removable mandates... constitute the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces.... organise a

revolutionary force capable defeating reaction... [and for] self-defence... [The] revolution everywhere must be created by the people, and supreme control must always belong to the people organised into a free federation of agricultural and industrial associations... organised from the bottom upwards by means of revolutionary delegation” (Bakunin)

“there is no other system but that of the republic as a commune, the republic as a federation, a Socialist and a genuine people’s republic – the system of Anarchism... a free federation from below upward, of workers associations, industrial as well as agricultural... first into a commune, then a federation communes into regions, of regions into nations, and of nations into international fraternal association.” (Bakunin)

“workers’ organisations... must take the place of existing capitalist exploitation and the state...it is the duty and the task of the workers’ organisations to work out the new form of society.” (Kropotkin)

## The AWL versus Marxism

*“The Paris Commune... had shown that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes’. The working class must create a new form of state, a semi-state as Lenin would call it ... a split against a ‘Marxism’ defined principally by ‘The Civil War in France’ was assuredly not a split against a socialism of manipulating the existing state machine”* (MT)

“[This quote from *The Civil War in France*] is simply a question of showing that the victorious proletariat must first refashion the old bureaucratic, administrative centralised state power before it can use it for its own purposes.” (Engels)

“the way to show political power [in Britain] lies open to the working class. Insurrection would be madness where peaceful agitation would more swiftly and surely do the work.” (Marx)

“the institutions, customs and traditions in the different countries must be taken into account; and we do not deny the existence of countries like America, England, and if I knew your institutions better I might add Holland, where the workers may achieve their aims by peaceful means” (Marx)

“[In Holland] only a few changes will have to be made to establish that free self-government by the working class” (Engels)

“the only organisation the victorious working class finds ready-made for use, is that of the State. It may require adaptation to the new functions. But to destroy that at such a moment, would be to destroy the only organism by means of which the working class can exert its newly conquered power” (Engels)

“the republic... is the *ready-for-use* form for the future rule of the proletariat.” (Engels)

“If one thing is certain it is that our Party and the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat” (Engels)

*“The ‘Civil War in France’ was the main text on which Lenin would later draw to write his ‘State and Revolution’, and the Bolsheviks to propose the rule of workers’ councils (soviets) as the form of a workers’ regime.”* (MT)

“the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised through an organisation embracing the whole of the class, because in all capitalist countries (and not only over here, in one of the most backward) the proletariat is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts... that an organisation taking in the whole proletariat cannot directly exercise proletarian dictatorship. It can be exercised only by a vanguard... Such is the basic mechanism of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the essentials of transition from capitalism to communism... for the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised by a mass proletarian organisation.” (Lenin)

“The revolutionary dictatorship of a proletarian party is for me not a thing that one can freely accept or reject: It is an objective necessity imposed upon us by the social realities – the class struggle, the heterogeneity of the revolutionary class, the necessity for a selected vanguard in order to assure the victory. The dictatorship of a party belongs to the barbarian prehistory as does the state itself, but we can not jump over this chapter... The revolutionary party (vanguard) which renounces its own dictatorship surrenders the masses to the counter-revolution... Abstractly speaking, it would be very well if the party dictatorship could be replaced by the ‘dictatorship’ of the whole toiling people without any party, but this presupposes such a high

level of political development among the masses that it can never be achieved under capitalist conditions.” (Trotsky)

*“Trotsky fought Stalinism to the death.”* (MT)

“This growing replacement of the party by its own apparatus is promoted by a ‘theory’ of Stalin’s which denies the Leninist principle, inviolable for every Bolshevik, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can be realized only through the dictatorship of the party... The dictatorship of the proletariat imperiously demands a single and united proletarian party.” (Trotsky)

“The Workers’ Opposition has come out with dangerous slogans, making a fetish of democratic principles! They place the workers’ right to elect representatives above the Party, as if the party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers’ democracy. It is necessary to create amongst us the awareness of the revolutionary birthright of the party, which is obliged to maintain its dictatorship, regardless of temporary wavering even in the working classes. This awareness is for us the indispensable element. The dictatorship does not base itself at every given moment on the formal principle of a workers’ democracy.” (Trotsky)

“The very same masses are at different times inspired by different moods and objectives. It is just for this reason that a centralised organisation of the vanguard is indispensable. Only a party, wielding the authority it has won, is capable of overcoming the vacillation of the masses themselves... if the dictatorship of the proletariat means anything at all, then it means that the vanguard of the proletariat is armed with the resources of the state in order to repel dangers, including those emanating from the backward layers of the proletariat itself.” (Trotsky)

*“Schmidt and van der Walt claim [Trotsky] ‘envisaged socialism as ‘authoritarian leadership... centralised distribution of the labour force... the workers’ state... entitled to send any worker wherever his labour may be needed’, with dissenters sent to labour camps if necessary’... None of the words was ever written by Trotsky as a statement of his vision of socialism.”* (MT)

Trotsky’s *Terrorism and Communism* (1920):

“the only solution to economic difficulties from the point of view of both principle and of practice is to treat the population of the whole country as the reservoir of the necessary labour power... and to introduce strict order into the work of its registration, mobilisation and utilisation.”

“We have... been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of our party. Yet... the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party.... In this ‘substitution’ of the power of the party for the power of the working class there is nothing accidental, and in reality there is no substitution at all.”

“we can have no way to Socialism except by the authoritative regulation of the economic forces and resources of the country, and the centralised distribution of labour-power in harmony with the general State plan.”

“I consider if the civil war had not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should undoubtedly have entered the path of one-man management in the sphere of economic administration much sooner and much less painfully.”

“the road to Socialism lies through a period of the highest possible intensification of the principle of the State... Just as a lamp, before going out, shoots up in a brilliant flame, so the State, before disappearing, assumes the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the most ruthless form of State, which embraces the life of the citizens authoritatively in every direction... No

organisation except the army has ever controlled man with such severe compulsion as does the State organisation of the working class in the most difficult period of transition. It is just for this reason that we speak of the militarisation of labour.”

*“When the IWW leader Big Bill Haywood, in August 1920, read an appeal by the Communist International leadership written to try to convince IWW activists that the International was the best continuation of the IWW’s tradition, he exclaimed: ‘Here is what we have been dreaming about; here is the IWW all feathered out!’”* (MT)

“The Russian Soviet Republic... is the most highly centralised government that exists. It is also the most democratic government in history. For all the organs of government are in constant touch with the working masses, and constantly sensitive to their will” (Zinoviev to the IWW)

“soviet rule in Russia could not have been maintained for three years – not even three weeks – without the iron dictatorship of the Communist Party... the dictatorship of the working class can be achieved only by the dictatorship of its vanguard, i.e., by the Communist Party... All questions... on which the fate of the proletarian revolution depends... are decided... mostly in the framework of the party organisations... Control by the party over soviet organs, over the trade unions” (Zinoviev, 1920)

“Today, people like Kautsky come along and say that in Russia you do not have the dictatorship of the working class but the dictatorship of the party. They think this is a reproach against us. Not in the least! We have a dictatorship of the working class and that is precisely why we also have a dictatorship of the Communist Party. The dictatorship of the Communist Party is only a function, an attribute, an expression of the dictatorship of the working class... the dictatorship of the proletariat is at the same time the dictatorship of the Communist Party.” (Zinoviev, 1920)

“the State cannot be sure of its own self-preservation without an armed force to defend it ... against the discontent of its own people.” (Bakunin)

*An Anarchist FAQ* – [www.anarchistfaq.org.uk](http://www.anarchistfaq.org.uk)

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