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The Anarchist Road To Revolution

Bongani Maponyane

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We, anarchists, are committed to building a society based on self-management and equality. We identify with the analyses and experiences of Mikhail Bakunin, who stated the need for freedom beyond the limited confines of “democracy” – where you are only free to vote on who is next to govern you. Bakunin argued that freedom comes responsibility: this included responsibility to others in the maintenance of this freedom. We need a society based on these principles; an anarchist society which expects from each according to their ability, and provides to each according to their needs.

How do we achieve this? The anarchist society is achieved through a revolutionary strategy based on mass organization to overthrow systems and relationships of hierarchical (or top-down) political, economic and social power. These organisations – trade unions and community movements – we refer to as counter-power.

We need to build syndicalist trade unions – revolutionary anarchist trade unions – which fight alongside working class and poor community organisations. These syndicalist

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movements will be the battering ram which smashes down capitalism. In South Africa that would mean a specific focus on black organisation, but in time this would be broadened to the entire working class population regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, etc. Along with counter-power, we need to build a revolutionary working class consciousness – or counter-culture – based on emancipatory education.

However, these institutions of peoples' power do not just arise out of nothing. People need to be presented with the ideas of anarchism, and the influence of anarchism needs to be maintained within these organisations. This is one of the primary responsibilities, we argue, of an anarchist political organization. This kind of organization does not seek power on behalf of, or over movements, but acts within these movements to influence opinions in an open, honest, democratic way.

We aim to build counter-power and counter-culture as the nucleus of the future society based on community and worker councils that control production, distribution, education and decision-making. Anarchism, therefore, is a prefigurative socialist political ideology and practice that seeks to build the new world of freedom within the shell of this decaying world of capitalist and state oppression and domination.

Many decisions will be based on scientific research and debate and their implementation coordinated by these future councils. Therefore, life will be organized by the very people who work and contribute to society for their own benefit and the benefit of others around them. When decisions affecting larger groups of people need to be coordinated, delegates can be chosen on specific mandates to represent the decisions of their councils. These delegates, however, will have no power to alter the decisions of their communities without the approval

of those they are representing. This is the major difference between anarchist direct democracy and the current system of representative democracy – a system that centralizes the power of decision-making in the hands of a small group, the ruling class. We seek to make decisions with people, not over people! Grassroots decision-making and peoples’ power can only exist if the power of political and economic systems is situated in grassroots structures. We hold council delegates to account through a system of mandates, report-backs and the principle of immediate recall: if a delegate does not fulfill a mandate and acts outside the wishes of the council, that individual is immediately replaced with someone who will.

Industry will be controlled by workers and land equitably shared for the benefit of all to meet social and individual need. To achieve this, our revolutionary counter-culture must also take into account the influence and impact of other, competing, ideas influencing the working class and poor, such as nationalism, patriotism and Marxism. We need to educate ourselves away from these authoritarian ideologies that, when put into practice, have only replicated hierarchical domination, despite the good intentions of some of those exclaiming their ideas. These ideologies promote the necessity of political parties and the need to capture the state for the implementation of programmes. But the state can never be used to create an equal and free society – as it is itself a hierarchical institution promoting power over people.

Building counter-power and counter-culture requires an new, alternative working class political education, one that assists to build peoples’ understandings of the world around them and that provides a way-forward for organization building. The anarchist political organization, then, must play a central role to this end. Unlike the Marxist “vanguard” party that claims to speak on behalf of all working class people, or the national-

ist “Peoples” party that claims to speak for all the people of a particular nation, the anarchist organization acts as educators, agitators and organisers within the working and poor class, not above it. Insofar as we are leaders it is because we aim at a leadership of ideas, not individuals nor political parties, and not a leadership over the masses. With anarchism as the leading idea, we can build our strength towards victory against oppression and domination.