

Federalism and Revolution

A Short Guide for Revolutionaries

Dominic Black

Contents

How can we survive?	3
How can we federate safely?	5
Are there enough of us?	6
This Is It	7
It Starts At The Heart	8

Recently I attended the Anarchist Book Fair in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas. What I saw there, what I heard, and what I felt, was truly hope-inspiring. I don't know the actual number of attendants, but based on the crowded rooms and the sheer diversity of my comrades present, I'd say it must have been hundreds. Hundreds of anarchists in a deep red state like Texas, a reminder that none of us are alone, that we have family in the most unlikely of places.

The event was an all-day thing, people from all over came to read some zines, get some stickers, meet orgs, and support them. On the tail of Praireland our gathering was an incredibly dangerous event to hold and yet I can't say any of us who knew the danger would have avoided the event. I, myself, was prepared to fight my way out of the building and thankfully it was the friendliest atmosphere I'd experienced since the General Assembly many months ago now.

For those of you who aren't aware yet, Praireland is a landmark case for the repression of radicals and especially anarchists. There were many charges which were falsified and grossly repressive, however the one which stuck out is one close to me. Daniel "Des Revol" Sanchez Estrada was given a 30 year sentence for the possession of zines. He's a tattoo artist who calls DFW home. The zines in his possession were used as "evidence" of an "antifa cell" in North Texas and now this human being is practically doing a life sentence for the very thing you're reading right now. Imagine what they could do to me for writing them?

It brings an important question to the forefront: What now?

The equivalent of a life sentence for anarchist literature should have cooled the atmosphere and made people fearful, and it's true its inspired fear in the movement, we're all scared, but more dangerously now we've become cornered. From inside the North Texas movement I can tell you there is no "North Texas Antifa." there were many groups representing our movement at the DFW Anarchist Bookfair and absolutely none of them were any sort of "Antifa Cell". What I did see were anarchists dedicated to freedom and by extension, against fascism. What they're doing to us is more sinister because, in truth, what they've begun hunting isn't just antifascists, it's the Anarchist movement specifically and the very idea of radical egalitarianism.

The Anarchists as a faction are becoming too widespread and powerful for the United States government to ignore. Our movement has become dangerous to power, and as a result power is responding. We're all in danger, and instead of hiding, we chose to gather. This speaks volumes for our unbreakable will but it reveals an even more widespread threat. The reaction of a cornered animal is to fight and right now in the United States, Anarchists are beaten and cornered animals. It changes the threat assessment, it changes the very gamble we make in everyday life. Now we can be given a life sentence merely for being anarchists and partaking in our own subculture, this means there is very, very little incentive to let them take us alive.

I don't mind this outlook, I've long believed we must prepare for a fight. Power will come for those who seek to replace it. This has never changed in the 200 years the Anarchists have existed, however; this begs the questions about our survival, our strategies, our fight.

How can we survive?

The biggest threat to anarchists is isolation. It's our connection to each other, and our solidarity in struggle which grants us such immense strength. I do not believe a gunfight with every pig in the street that tries to pull you over is going to get us anywhere except dead. Nonetheless, many, including myself, can no longer stand to live under their authority and watch as they throw

our siblings and comrades into concentration camps. I believe that the more perceptive amongst us sense a fight coming and I've already seen our current situation referred to as a "low-intensity civil conflict."

So how do we survive? Malatesta and Bakunin both spoke of the law of solidarity, the only law which we anarchists are truly beholden to. I believe in this idea, as a faith. We are fighting together in the same fight against the same enemy from a vast variety of origins. This is solidarity. Our family is everywhere. Yet, are we together? No.

Our movement was broken from the 60's with actions like COINTELPRO all the way up to the 90's when the revolutionary wave was crushed, organizers kept going through a sentiment I'd accepted myself before Trump's second presidency. "The revolution won't be in your lifetime, you're doing this hoping it'll be in the next generation's lifetime." After talking with comrades all over the country, I believe our generation is that lifetime and I believe that now it has become do or die. Now, here in 2026, we've grown enough to become a threat. Truly our scale beyond that does not matter anymore. We're out of time to merely keep building horizontal structures, we must begin uniting these structures, and for sure federations have begun forming but it's not enough.

It's not up to just a few to unite entire organizations in localities into coherent systems. Mikhail Bakunin spoke of "Organizational Dualism" whereas anarchists are encouraged to work through various organizations. For example, I am a member of several local orgs, all of which are horizontalist in some form or another. I am constantly looking for excuses to get them all to cross-pollinate as we call it, or exchange members and work together on different projects and events. That's how you build a federation. I'm not the only one, but I am one of few. This is a problem with not knowing how, I'd stake money on it if I had any. After talking with so many of my dear comrades across the United States and across the world, it's become clear to me that the will is there, many of us are aware of the need for federation but have no clue how to begin or what a federation even looks like.

If you're unaware, "Federalism" is a concept advocated for by Mikhail Bakunin whereas organizations and federations come together autonomously to increase their capacity and power. Its usage by anarchists is closer akin to the definition of "Confederation" though in the United States that's an especially loaded word due to the Confederacy.

Through organizational dualism, joining multiple orgs, us anarchists will begin to blur the lines between them which is an excellent result as long as the service those organizations provide in our collective construction of dual power remains the same. It's at that moment that local federations become possible, and remember that in anarchist systems one must build from the bottom up. That means regional anarchist federations are not possible until various localities have federated themselves autonomously. Local federations can then exchange resources and capacity and become a federation, and then many regional federations become a national federation, so on.

This collectivizes our power, if anarchists form a line together, it's infinitely stronger than if we were to get into random shootouts. We've seen the Black Panthers force police to de-escalate through their collective community defense, that's why the first US gun laws were passed. We're anarchists, we are not beholden to the system or its laws and they will nonetheless be forced to de-escalate rather than risk genuine conflict, at least for a time. Remember the law of solidarity, we are more powerful together than we ever were apart and we all have a common enemy. We're all terrorists now in the eyes of the state, whether we're gardeners, laborers, activists or organizers.

How can we federate safely?

The truth is that you probably can't. We're far too late into surveillance state fascism for that. That doesn't mean you shouldn't take precautions though. Never in history has a movement pushing for positive change been received without some form of violence, but reckless movements don't get far either. So what can we do to protect ourselves?

First, begin masking your digital footprint. This is only an easily breakable firewall, but nonetheless it provides an astounding amount of operational security to operate under a pseudonym or pen-name and then to separate those aliases and lives. Here with the anarchists, my name is Dominic Black, my old name is dead to me, it makes me cringe to hear it and yet I have to live a normal life and keep working. The average person doesn't know I'm an anarchist unless I'm operating as an anarchist at that moment. Many of us believe that we should always be acting in our capacity as anarchists and this is true but reality doesn't afford us the privilege anymore. In rural towns where the population is overwhelmingly conservative/fascist this can be the difference between starvation and scraping by an organizer.

Second, know your comrades. To earn my trust, you've got to commit a crime in my presence. This is a litigious society and that doesn't mean you have to kill someone to prove your worth, but I'm far less likely to believe that the person that smoked a ton of weed with me in a place where it can get you 15 years in prison is a federal agent. There's always risk involved, and only by building relationships, building trust, and disciplining yourself and what you say around those you don't trust can you minimize that risk. Visit your comrades' houses, a federal agent won't introduce you to their family.

Third, ideologically examine everyone you meet. As the government has made clear numerous times, it and its agents are either not allowed to study our theory or they're incapable of understanding it. That doesn't exactly reduce their ability to destroy us but if you understand and believe in anarchism, it shows in conversations. Spend hours talking to your comrades about where you stand on things and where they do.

Fourth, stop fed-jacketing. In our time, anarchists don't just have to worry about the state. Radlibs and authoritarian socialists make routine attempts to infiltrate organizations, sew division, co-opt, then run them into the ground, consistent with COINTELPRO. Division is an effective method. To be clear, this doesn't mean ignoring serious allegations, it means that when someone starts turning people in the organization against each other you should be wary of jumping too quickly to stand against your comrades. An infiltrator will not just hit one group in my experience, they tend to hit multiple ones and disrupt them until they either die or are co-opted.

Fifth, don't talk praxis near technology. Every organization needs monthly (and emergency) meetings out in nature with every single device turned off so that they can speak openly. It's one thing to crack a molotov joke or two, but you endanger yourself and everyone around you when you start dry snitching. We live in a surveillance state, and while they're not after every single one of us personally, they can and will use anything you say near or with technology against you if you do find yourself under their eye.

Sixth, vet every single member of your organization. Ask neighboring organizations if anyone knows them, hunt down local ends to verify that a person is what they say they are. Don't allow rapists into your organization. I've seen this and morally, obviously don't do this, but in experiences I've learned from comrades, when this happens they operate exactly like an infiltra-

tor. They will destroy your organization, your reputation, and your credibility in order to protect themselves and that's not even to mention the harm they're doing to human beings, the same ones you're trying to liberate. If you don't speak out, you are no better than a rapist and I dearly hope the rest of the movement treats you as such.

Seven, talk to each other. In my experience with infiltrators, they hit multiple organizations. Many of us didn't know what they were doing, and while many of our organizations organically began excluding this person because they were trying to disrupt tightly knit groups, they forced smaller less stable organizations to shift communication methods or destroyed organizations entirely. When we began talking to each other, we all realized that this person was a threat to the movement. You don't need to fed-jacket someone to say "Hey, this person is in several other groups spamming the chat literally to death, starting arguments, and disrupting groups and so heads up, I would be careful about this person so they don't harm your organization."

You need to understand that in our time there is inherent risk to this, but you accept risk every day just being an anarchist. I can no more change the conviction in my heart than I can change the color of my skin. That's why they're my convictions, and never have they wavered in my life even if my practice of them did. But ask yourself, is this about you? What about the generations after us which must suffer the consequences of our actions or inaction? Can you live with death camps in your children's lives? I cannot. It deprives me of sleep each and every night since the night I learned of Alligator Alcatraz and lost what little color was in my skin to the living nightmare. I'm not doing what I do because I've assessed that the risk to myself is minimal, I'm doing it because I strongly believe the risk to people who are queer, trans, Hispanic, Muslim, and even my own comrades is far greater and of more concern. I do this because I can't stand the idea of a generation after me suffering like I did. That's my risk assessment.

I'm not trying to discourage you, I'm trying to light a fire in your heart because our world is on fire. Only we, the people, can stop this. And we can't do it alone or separately. Therefore the only way forward is to federate, and if this movement is even half as strong and true as I believe it's become then we will continue pursuing the same ends knowing each and every one of us is doing the same in their own capacity. Take comfort in the fact that the human being beside you is in the same trench you are now. All we have left to protect us is our solidarity.

If you absorb and take seriously the seven points I've listed I promise this will mitigate the threat to you and your organizations while federating.

Are there enough of us?

Yes, there are. But not if you restrict yourself to your specific flavor of anarchism. Do you think the Anarcho-Syndicalists have a different end than you? You'd be unwise to think so. We all want a revolution where freedom and egalitarianism reigns supreme. We have very different methods of getting there and something I've learned is that these organizations aren't just different methods, they're fulfilling different systems. The Anarcho-Syndicalists are replacing bosses with workplace democracy, the Anarcho-Communists are trying to fulfill food sovereignty and achieve shelter for people who have none. Food Not Bombs is distributing food whilst Cooperation organizations are literally creating food, the Makhnovists and insurrectionists want nothing more than to give everything to defend that. All the ingredients are here for a new, radically egalitarian system if we are careful to build it precisely to achieve this.

Decentralize everything. The more heads the government has to cut off, the harder it is for them to kill any movement. If any single person is too valuable to the cause, you must reduce their value to the meat on their bones. That doesn't mean devaluing them as people though, that's not what I'm saying here. For example, in my case my initial value to the anarchist movement is my historical and theoretical knowledge, beyond that it's the relationships I build. If you've seen my previous work, you know I've endeavored to unload each and every piece of historical knowledge I know. My educational curriculum's inspired by Francisco Ferrer and Paulo Freire is nothing except in an attempt to disperse my knowledge across the anarchist movement in a way that can keep moving without me and I am constantly attempting to spread relationships too. I am making it so that I have nothing left to contribute to the movement except the labor I explicitly give to it in whatever form that takes and more importantly, I am making it so the movement loses absolutely nothing EXCEPT my capacity and my company, the movement and organizations can't be killed by removing me.

Our comrades are all around us, across cities, states, and nations. There's an organization for almost every system in almost every context and you cannot know what you're missing until you've brought what you have together. You're not going to start a perfect dual power federation right off the bat, there will be holes, and it's my hope that by doing what we can as local federations to fill those voids and federating upwards to regional federations, we can cover nearly every system needed that's possible to imagine and we can do so together in consensus based structures with precautions taken to avoid being subdued by inaction.

Your organization and you, yourself, are unique to your context. As long as you are pursuing the fulfillment of the cause closest to your heart and trust that your comrades are going to do the same you are doing everything you possibly can. Someone wants to be the garbage man, someone wants to be a laborer, someone wants to fix your car or your computer.

This Is It

The world is on fire. Democrats are choosing the side of the fascists through their opposition to radical ideas (And not so radical ones, like not supporting genocidal regimes, you knew there was gonna be a free Palestine somewhere in here.), communists are actively working against us, and fascists are pushing us into a corner, accusing us of terrorism for wanting a free and equal society.

Your fellow human beings are being thrown into concentration camps, charged life sentences for reading literature, and murdered for helping others to their feet. They are crushing us and it's up to us whether or not to let them. We either unite and defend ourselves against fascists, our common enemy, or we remain apart and allow fascists to strangle us out of existence.

Fascists have made the first move against us, revolution isn't something we can ever simply initiate, it's a matter of necessity and the necessity is present here and now. Society must change or these petulant authoritarian children are going to force us to reap the consequences of their sick and twisted pathologies. You don't have to throw a molotov, but you do need to have a wartime mindset, you need to be on your toes and prepared to defend, you need to be prepared to support yourself, start creating alternatives for capitalist systems, all of them. Food from the wild, housing from scraps, clothes from cloth, water from the well and boiled. You need to do this because you need to be able to survive if and when the state and corporations cut you off.

Do you truly believe we're far from open blacklists? They will starve us out if they can and have to.

Yes, revolution, the total reorganization of society from the roots up, is not only desirable but has become a necessity for the survival of the anarchist movement. What's more, the survival of every human being in an age of nuclear bombs and fascist superpowers.

It Starts At The Heart

The United States is the western hegemony, it's the great big empire enveloping our world, and make no mistake the eastern hegemony is no better but the stranglehold the United States has on everyone makes it even less possible for them to fight back. Do you think Palestine can truly fight for its survival with the United States backing Israel's every move? Can Brazil or Chile or Chiapas escape colonization whilst the empire which oppresses it remains at total strength?

The world is waiting on us right here in the heart of the empire, in the United States. They cannot break free unless the empire has been destabilized and we cannot finally end the empire without their help. This isn't us or them, it takes all of us to fight this fight. And I speak the same to our comrades in Russia and China, I know you're out there, I know some of you somewhere and sometime are reading this, until you fight back, your comrades cannot either. It's all or nothing. Any single group acting will be crushed by the world's empires. All of our struggles are connected by the same enemies, the state, capitalism, and ethiocracy. All connected by white supremacy, colonialism, and nationalism.

Do what you must do, and trust your comrades to do the same. Remain accountable to your people, and your people alone. You owe nothing to the empires and elites of the world. Most importantly, don't shame those who don't fight like you. Not everyone can pick up a gun, just like not everyone can stand to do the boring accounting work for an organization, nor can they stand to do social media, or start gardens. We each have different skillsets and all of them are necessary for a coherent system from mutual aid all the way to defense.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Dominic Black
Federalism and Revolution
A Short Guide for Revolutionaries

To be released on Substack soon

theanarchistlibrary.org