

# **FOUNDING MANIFESTO**

**Our Principles and General Strategy**

Libertarian Socialist Organization

July 2023

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Anarchism is no beautiful fantasy, no abstract notion of philosophy, but a social movement of the working masses; for that reason alone it must gather its forces into one organization, constantly agitating, as demanded by the reality and strategy of the social class struggle.

Dielo Truda

An effective political practice therefore requires knowledge of reality (theory), the harmonious postulation with it of objective values of transformation (ideology) and concrete political means to achieve it (political practice). The three elements merge into a dialectical unity that constitutes an effort towards the social transformation that the party advocates.

Uruguayan Anarchist Federation

**Following the first session of our Congress, which took place in July 2023 in the city of São Paulo, we are announcing the founding of the Libertarian Socialist Organization (OSL).**

The OSL is a Brazilian anarchist organization created by the groups that made up the Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro (FARJ, state of Rio de Janeiro), Organização Anarquista Socialismo Libertário (OASL, state of São Paulo), Rusga Libertária (RL, state of Mato Grosso), Coletivo Mineiro Popular Anarquista (COMPA, state of Minas Gerais), as well as individuals from other locations in Brazil. It aims to be a nationwide organization and encourage new sections throughout Brazil.

The choice of this name is a tribute to what was the first national organization of Brazilian especificista anarchism: the former OSL, which operated between 1997 and 2000, and whose name was later used by the São Paulo militancy of that same current, in a process that ended more than 15 years ago. There are militants in the current OSL who were also part of these two previous initiatives.

In this Manifesto, we present our references and origins, and also, in summary, our principles and concepts.

## **OUR POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL REFERENCES**

When we say that we are an anarchist organization, we have a very precise notion of what anarchism is, based on an analysis of its global history over the last 150 years.

Anarchism is an ideology or political doctrine, a libertarian, anti-authoritarian and revolutionary form of socialism, which aims to mobilize the oppressed classes – wage earners in the cities and countryside, peasants, traditional and marginalized people – with a specific strategy, to carry out a social revolution that establishes a new society based on socialism, self-management, federalism, equality and freedom.

Supported by an ethical conception, anarchism starts from a social critique of all forms of domination – economic, political, intellectual-moral, so this also includes class domination, but also gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Its aim is a socialist, self-managed, federalist, egalitarian and libertarian society – in which there are no more classes and no more domination,

in which property is collectivized, where the people govern themselves and where a consistent culture serves as the solid foundation for the whole project of widespread socialization.

Achieving this requires building up a classist and combative social force that is based on this group of oppressed subjects, and that can intervene in the class struggle through various processes, including: increasing militant participation, building up a base of support, encouraging conscious struggle and voluntary engagement, as well as independence from the class enemies and their structures. [OSL, "Defining Anarchism"]

Anarchism did not arise from purely philosophical and intellectual reflections, but as an expression of ideology and doctrine (action and thought, practice and theory) coming from a sector of workers and popular movements engaged in the class struggle of the 19th century. It was consolidated with the founding of the Alliance, the first anarchist political organization in history, which operated through secret and public bodies and decisively influenced the International Workingmen's Association (IWA or "First International", 1864-1877).

The Alliance's main militant was Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), whose positions can be understood as a further radicalization of the federalist socialism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). Participating in these popular movements and struggles, Bakunin and other members of the Alliance – such as James Guillaume (1844-1916), Adh mar Schwitzgu bel (1844-1895) and Giuseppe Fanelli (1827-1877) – contributed decisively to the formation of anarchism, both in theoretical and practical terms.

Throughout the 1870s and subsequent decades, anarchist positions spread to the world's five continents. The influence of its two greatest classical thinkers, Mikhail Bakunin and Piotr Kropotkin (1842-1921), was really important in the spread of these ideas, as well as the experiences of revolutionary syndicalist, which inspired the creation, strengthening and radicalization of unions and social movements.

The relevant participation of anarchists in popular movements occurred in different countries, such as: Russia, Ukraine, Spain, Bulgaria, the United States, Portugal, France, Italy, Germany, South Africa, Egypt, China, Japan, Korea and Australia. It also occurred in almost all of the Latin American countries: Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Colombia and Cuba.

Historically, anarchism has been maintained over time in various locations around the world, in more and less vigorous moments, between ebbs and flows, without having ever disappeared. This ideology or doctrine has constituted a prominent part of unions and social movements, and has significantly influenced them. [Corr a, *Black Flag* ]

However, it is not enough to say that our organization is anarchist. Because, throughout its long history, anarchism has internally coexisted with many debates and divergences, which have even established its major currents: mass anarchism and insurrectionist anarchism.

In more general terms, we are part of the historical current of mass anarchism whose main strategy was revolutionary syndicalism. This affiliation can be explained by the fact that: we defend organization (organizational dualism) against anti-organizationalist positions, which oppose organization and which demand the actions of individuals or of small informal groups; we defend possibilism (struggles for reforms within certain strategic frameworks as a path to revolution) against anti-possibilist positions, which assert that struggles for reforms only reinforce capitalist society; we defend the need for violence (people with weapons, insurrections, advanced struggle, etc.) that complements and is connected to mass movements, as opposed to positions

that see violence as a kind of trigger (propaganda by the deed), claiming that isolated and restricted acts of violence can produce massive and revolutionary movements.

In more specific terms, following from our organizational perspective, we place ourselves within organizational dualism, that is to say within the historical expression of anarchism in which militants and organizations claimed the need for a simultaneous organization at a political-anarchist level (political organization or party) and at a social-popular level (mass, popular organization). This expression has had resonance in different parts of the world, including the global south, encouraging the creation of anarchist organizations such as the Mexican Liberal Party (in 1906, in Mexico), the Society of Anarcho-Communist Comrades (in 1914, in China), the Federation of Anarchist Communists of Bulgaria (in 1919, in Bulgaria), the [Libertarian] Communist Party (in 1919, in Brazil) and the Argentine Anarcho-Communist Federation (in 1935, in Argentina).

Among our main historical references from organizational dualism, we are most influenced by the militancy that defended homogeneous and programmatic forms of anarchist organization (especially platformism and especificismo), as opposed to more heterogeneous and flexible forms (like anarchist synthesis).

Our main references are: Bakunin, including his reflections on organizational dualism, the experience of the Alliance from 1868 onwards, and especially his work in the IWA, and Errico Malatesta (1853-1932), with his reflections on the anarchist organization (which he called the “anarchist party”), on organized anarchist participation in the union, anti-fascist or insurrectionary movements, as well as organizations he was a part of building: Socialist Revolutionary Anarchist Party (1891); Ancona Anarchist Party (1913); Italian Anarchist (Communist) Union (1919/20).

The Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad is also a central reference for our organization – in which Nestor Makhno (1888-1934), Piotr Arshinov (1887-1937), Ida Mett (1901-1973), Jean Walecki (1905-?) and Maxime Ranko (1905-1952) –, edited the magazine *Dielo Truda* and, in 1926, published the “Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists”.

We are defenders of platformism, especially some of its expressions, such as the Federation of Anarchist Communists of Bulgaria (FAKB), active between the 1920s and 1940s in Eastern Europe, and the “Manifesto of Libertarian Communism”, written in 1953 by Georges Fontenis, in France. We take up and defend, in the same way, the Latin American especificismo of the 1960s and 1970s: in Uruguay, with the experience of the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation (FAU); in Argentina, with the experience of the organization Libertarian Resistance (RL).

## **OUR TRAJECTORY IN BRAZIL AND SOME OTHER POINTS**

In Brazil, the trajectory of our militancy dates back to the process of political developments that occurred after the military dictatorship. In that context, anarchism was able to reorganize itself, with the participation of some of our oldest militants, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, in Rio de Janeiro in particular, and later on in Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo.

In addition to many militants in the popular sphere/social level (community, student and union), these militants contributed to different initiatives in the anarchist sphere/political level. Among these, we should especially mention: in Rio de Janeiro, the Libertarian Studies Circle (CEL, 1985-1991), and its successor, the Libertarian Studies Circle Ideal Peres (CELIP, 1995-present) and

the bulletin/newspaper *Libera* (from 1991 onwards) – the longest running anarchist periodical in the history of Brazil.

This older line of militancy was directly involved in the first contacts that were made with the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation (FAU), as well as in the bonds that were formed between the FAU and Brazilian anarchism (in the mid-1990s), in the formation of the Brazilian Anarchist Construction (1995) and in the writing of the document “Struggle and Organization” (1996) – a process that was responsible for introducing *especificismo* to Brazil.

It contributed to the construction of the Libertarian Socialist Organization (1997-2000), the first national level *especificismo* organization in Brazil, and the Popular Resistance tendency in multiple states (from 1999 onwards); it participated in the founding and took part in the struggles of the Gaucho Anarchist Federation (FAG, from 1995 onwards), the Rio de Janeiro Anarchist Federation (FARJ, from 2003 onwards) and the Organized Anarchism Forum (FAO, from 2002 onwards).

This militancy led to the formation of anarchist organizations in São Paulo (Luta Libertária, Organização Socialista Libertária) and Mato Grosso (Rusga Libertária); it was part of developing the FARJ support network – which helped with the articulations of organizations in several states and with the founding or re-founding of organizations in São Paulo, Ceará, Santa Catarina and Paraná (between 2008 and 2011); it coordinated the specific approach and path for entering the FAO (between 2009 and 2011); it participated in the FAO and in the preparations for the founding of the Brazilian Anarchist Coordination (CAB, 2012). [OASL/FARJ, “Elements for a Historical Reconstitution of Our Current”]

Between 2012 and 2022, the militants that are now part of the OSL were working in different local organizations of the CAB, collaborating with the development of these organizations and of the CAB itself.

Even though this work from recent decades was the result of a much larger group of militants, we’re not afraid to say that we played a significant part in all of it. So, modestly, we are proud to have contributed, in Brazil, to the successes and mistakes of establishing, growing, and continuing to develop anarchism in general, and *especificismo* in particular.

In the OSL, we are working to promote four objectives that, in our view, were fundamental to the construction of the *especificismo* anarchist current in Brazil:

First, by going beyond the cultural sphere and primarily investing in the regular and permanent work to build and participate in popular movements (union, community, student, agrarian, peasant, indigenous and others), seeking to influence the social struggles of these masses from within, with a clear and defined program. This means intervening in the social reality of Brazil and defending an influential position in the shaping of a left-wing movement that does not come from traditional political parties (especially not the Brazilian Workers’ Party and its affiliates), but instead from within these social movements themselves, from a grassroots, classist, combative, direct action, independent, self-managed, federalist and revolutionary perspective.

Second, by forming a real political force, that not only contributes to the struggles of the oppressed classes, but is recognized by other political forces and popular movements, and that can form alliances and attract workers to the struggle. Working on a way to return anarchism to its historic position as an active tool of intervention in the workers’ struggles, building toward a revolutionary project of popular power capable of transforming Brazilian society.

Third, by breaking with “purism” (the kind that prevents us from articulating political principles and practices and from acting in reality as it actually is) as well as with iconoclasm (that’s

focused on aesthetically shocking society, not on transforming it). So, even when recognizing that reality definitely has a lot of problems, it is still with this reality that we must deal concretely. Our principles should guide our actions, but we have to know how to move politically in the real world, in this concrete and material reality (which is not an idealized world). Anarchism that is restricted to “lifestyle” should be done away with; we have to be like “fish in water” among workers, that is, as workers and among workers.

Fourth, by definitively abandoning synthesisism, in favor of a homogeneous and programmatic organizational position, with theoretical, ideological and practical unity, with collective responsibility and discipline. To do this, we have to distance ourselves from individualists and focus on workers who have a different militant profile. We aim to develop a militancy of commitment to the struggle and collective demands, avoiding the incorporation of ideas and practices that tend to come close to liberalism, even if they call themselves anarchists.

At the same time, we have incorporated into our organization five points that, for us, summarize the lessons learned from almost 30 years of *especifismo* in Brazil.

First, since our founding we have been able to make progress and grow, despite ebbs and flows, always keeping in mind that our project is a long-term one. Making real advances requires adding up what we’ve learned as proof that the strategy is progressing and moving forward over time. It also requires maturity, both individual and collective. Collective development must be respected, just like the militancy that leads to its accumulation over time.

Second, unity cannot be built without collective accumulation; it cannot be built with regional/state autonomy, by overemphasizing specifics in practice or by negligence and incoherent pluralism in theory. It is essential to build a political and organizational culture that is not characterized by conflict, distrust, disrespect, accusations, ever-present threats of splits and unnecessary disputes. At the same time, it is important to reject an “anything goes” attitude that is fine with inconsistencies, problems and unethical attitudes. We should encourage freedom of thought, respect for minority positions and education that precedes punishment.

Third, a national political organization can only be built by thinking nationally and in a unified way, and this organization will only be able to promote a national project if it manages to grow and diversify in different regions and states. This requires overcoming the culture of small, personal affinity groups and instead promoting a political and organizational culture that is always seeking theoretical and strategic unity, based on grassroots self-management and federalist structures, developing a whole from parts, not the other way around. The parts cannot be completely autonomous from each other or alienated from the construction of the whole, meaning this process must be done from the bottom up.

Fourth, growing and diversifying nationally means creating the conditions for it. It requires a suitable process for joining that uses the logic of concentric circles and allows militants in different contexts to remain in the organization, avoiding a “revolving door” of militants coming and going. This also requires adequate political training to go along with it. We have to be able to pass on practical lessons and historical debates to new militants, not just neglect political training and practical guidance. We should not be driven by a rush to grow in numbers at the expense of more organic and dependable collective development.

Fifth, a national project cannot keep moving forward without critically looking at the past and without a plan for both the present and the future. Popular power cannot be built without work and social insertion, meaning mass struggles and anarchist influence in these struggles; nor can it be done without analyzing things as they are and applying theory in practice. Good

practice needs good theory, just as good theory needs good practice. They are inseparable. Those who reject practice do not change anything in the world. Those who reject theory act without knowing what they are doing and are constantly being used for other people's projects without even realizing it.

## **OUR PRINCIPLES: BRIEF SUMMARY**

The OSL is based on a set of principles – non-negotiable concepts that permanently guide our political practice – as expressions of our philosophical, theoretical, strategic, programmatic and organizational concepts.

These principles and conceptions are presented more in depth in a document called “Our Principles and General Strategy: philosophical, theoretical, strategic, programmatic and organizational conceptions”. Anyone that wants to know more about our positions can read this document. [[Read this document](#)]

## **Libertarian materialism/realism and libertarian social theory**

In terms of our theoretical-methodological approach to analyzing social reality, we've adopted what we call *libertarian materialism or realism* and *libertarian social theory*, drawing mainly from classical anarchists. This approach differs from Marxist, postmodern, (neo)positivist and, obviously, liberal analytic approaches; it is not synonymous with economic determinism, nor does it recommend any kind of *realpolitik* pragmatism that would require abandoning our principles and political identity.

In short, libertarian materialism/realism is a method of analysis that is, at the same time, naturalistic, realistic, experimental, comprehensive and critical. Libertarian social theory is a concrete application of libertarian materialism for the purpose of analyzing society. This theory is an articulated set of scientific conceptual tools for understanding reality. It is linked to ideology or anarchist doctrine and has a structural/systemic focus, supporting the analysis of the current forces at play (social conflicts), the relevant power/domination relations and of the specific scenarios in which these conflicts occur.

This approach reconciles theory and history, social structure and human action, social reproduction and transformation. It proposes, as necessary, the distinction between facts and ideas, between concrete elements and abstract ones. This relates to the structure, the situation, the actions and the thoughts/discourse, prioritizing them according to their depth and influence on social reality.

## **The concept of a capitalist-statist system**

With this approach, we can think of contemporary society as a *capitalist-statist system*, a historical mode of power/domination that can be analytically divided into three inseparable and interdependent fields: the economic, the political and the intellectual-moral (cultural).

Its structural logic is based on the permanent accumulation of economic, political and intellectual-moral capital; its social formation is the product of class struggle (considering that the social classes are not restricted to the economic field and relations of exploitation), and

of conjunctural and structural changes and transformations. Capitalism-statism destroys the environment and the natural resources; furthermore, it incorporates and modifies three other forms of structural domination: colonialism/imperialism, racism and patriarchy, which are structurally relevant to its reproduction.

## **Revolutionary transformation and libertarian socialism**

We support a political practice that culminates in a *social revolution*, abolishing class society and ownership (private as well as national/state) of the means of economic production, political decision-making and intellectual/moral values, as well as imperialism, racism and patriarchy. After a period of transition – without capitalism or the State and its legitimizing institutions – we advocate for establishing *socialism or libertarian communism*, meaning our final objective is a mode or system of power that is not based on domination.

It will be an ecologically oriented society, based on equality, freedom and self-managed/federalist democracy. It will be characterized by the socialization of ownership in the economic (production/distribution), political (administration and decision-making/control) and intellectual-moral (production and dissemination of knowledge and beliefs) spheres of society. In various councils and associations, decisions will be taken by the workers themselves, in proportion to how much they are affected by a particular decision.

## **A project of self-managed popular power**

We defend the construction of *self-managed popular power*, the foundation of our general strategy for transformation, as a path to social transformation. To achieve this, it is necessary to transform the capacity of the oppressed classes into a social force. The best way to do this is to organize and engage with the proletariat, the peasantry and the other oppressed classes in popular movements (unions and social movements) and also to give strategic and programmatic guidance to these movements.

When creating, strengthening and participating in these movements, there are certain characteristics and ways of promoting struggles that we must defend, including: both the size and the reach of these movements; a classist and combative base and perspective; a program of class independence and direct action; organizational and decision-making methods based on self-management and federalism; the development of a transformative and revolutionary perspective, through struggles for immediate wins and reforms; the unification of the oppressed classes, looking for overlap between class-based struggle and issues related to the environment, nationality, race-ethnicity and gender-sexuality.

## **The role of the anarchist organization**

Following from this general strategy, the *role of the political organization or anarchist party* is central since it affects the working masses (the oppressed classes). This is done by mobilizing, organizing and engaging workers in popular movements, enhancing and accelerating the transformation of their capacity into a social force. This is also done by focusing on popular

movements and promoting strategic and programmatic guidance (our project of self-managed popular power).

The anarchist organization aims to increase the social force of anarchists and to influence unions and social movements; in doing this, it must deal with various different tendencies, as well as enemies and adversaries. It promotes the need for social revolution and libertarian socialism, seeking to make movements and the masses the main protagonists of this process. It doesn't condone vanguardist methods since the relationship between anarchists/party and movements/masses must be complementary, interdependent and based on self-management (anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical). It rejects "grassrootsism" and "tailist" perspectives that go along with whatever is popular, regardless of its content.

## **The concept of anarchist organization**

We promote a particular *concept of anarchist organization*: organizational dualism – meaning anarchists should, at the same time, organize themselves as workers in popular movements and as anarchists in the specific political organization. This means making use of the distinction between the social level (of popular masses) and the political level (of cadres, of anarchists), as well as the relationship between them described above. At the social level, our proposal is close to the historical forms of revolutionary syndicalism; at the political level, it has references in the history of homogeneous and programmatic organizations: platformism and especificismo.

We are an anarchist organization made up of cadres (active minority), which expresses, articulates, organizes and coordinates ideological and (anarchist) doctrinal positions for parts of the oppressed classes. It operates around four organizational principles: 1.) Self-management/Federalism: base-controlled, with bottom-up decisions; rotating, and revocable delegations; concentric circles of organization, using consensus/vote; 2.) Theoretical and ideological unity: a clear and unified political line, defended and promoted by all the militants; 3.) Strategic and tactical unity: a clear and unified programmatic line (strategy and tactics), defended and promoted by all the militants; 4.) Collective responsibility: each militant is responsible for the organization and the organization is responsible for each militant.

## **OUR MILITANCY**

We have encouraged a certain kind of militancy, both for those who are part of the organization and for those who intend to join. As militants (who above all else are workers like anyone else, and who do not have to dedicate themselves to studying anarchism or being intellectuals), they are prepared and interested in organized anarchism, and they are willing to participate in anarchist militancy on a daily basis, both the internal work in the organization and the social work in popular movements. In general, we team up with people who are already participating in unions, social movements and other various struggles, but also with people who are interested in starting this type of activity.

Our militancy is in line with the principles and concepts of the organization, following from and further developing a particular militant style and method for collective work. This requires adopting certain positions and doing away with others. Among these are: encouraging organic development, unity and self-discipline; focusing on constructive work (on reality and not just

criticism or self-reflective discussions); working collectively; engaging rationally in debates; developing capacity for criticism (respectful and constructive), self-criticism and constant learning; maintaining ethical relationships, trust and respect; promoting strong relationships among the militants and in spaces where we do social work.

The positions to throw out include: informality, autonomism, individualism and lack of responsibility; debates based on subjectivism and disrespectful or destructive criticism; moral/moralistic disagreements; fostering a climate of permanent conflict and infighting; arrogance, elitism and self-proclaimed superiority; tolerating unethical conduct; “lynchings” and other trials/judgements that go beyond our libertarian criteria; the permanent surveillance of the private lives of militants.

**Ethics, commitment, freedom!**

**Fight, create, popular power!**

**For the advancement of organized anarchism in Brazil!**

**Libertarian Socialist Organization (OSL)**

**July 2023**

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