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What We Believe

Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist
Federation

1997

As members of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, we believe there is a need to restate some fundamental positions we hold in common. We have taken this step because some recent opinions stated within Love and Rage backtrack on some of these basic principles. We believe:

1. Revolutionary anarchism is the program of a self-organized, cooperative, decentralized, and thoroughly democratic society. All social needs will be provided by a network of voluntary, self-managed associations. This means the overthrow of all forms of oppression, including, but not limited to, the domination of the working class, women, gays and lesbians, African Americans, Latinos, youth, neo-colonies, and nature. Self-organization of the people is both our vision of a new society and our program for reaching the new society.
2. This makes anarchism central to our politics. There are historical failings of anarchism, but they can be dealt

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with from within anarchism. Anarchism's mistakes occur within a basically liberating vision. They include:

- a. *ultimatism*, the idea that one can abstain from limited, reform struggles,
- b. *anti-organizationalism*, opposition to organization,
- c. *permeationism*, the idea that anarchist institutions can grow up within an authoritarian society and supplant it without a revolutionary struggle, and
- d. *opportunism*, the idea (as in the Spanish revolution) that, under emergency conditions, one can join the state to defend it from anti-democratic enemies, instead of building an alternate to the state (such as federations of popular councils).

The latter two, at least, show the attractiveness of authoritarianism, even to committed anarchists.

We must learn from other traditions of struggle, such as Black nationalism or feminism or ecology, but what we learn must be integrated into revolutionary anarchism. What matters is not anarchism as a label but anarchism as a vision and a program.

3. Especially, Marxism should be seen as an opponent of anarchism. Whatever value its parts may have, Marxism was meant to be a total vision, a combination of economics, politics, historical analysis, and philosophy. This total vision is centralist and authoritarian to the core. Unlike the errors of anarchists, Marxism's "mistake," from our point of view, is basic to its real program, the creation of a new form of authoritarian state and society. It has produced pro-imperialist Social Democracy and the totalitarian state-capitalism of Stalinism. Ultimately, it can produce nothing else.

Despite historical defeats, Marxism remains a living danger. As radicalism increases, Marxism is likely to revive, due both to its strengths (its large body of theory and practice) and weakness (its authoritarianism, which many find attractive). Anarchists must work at analyzing, discussing, and refuting Marxism.

The impression that Marxism “works” because of China or Cuba or (retro spectively) Russia, and that anarchism does not work” because it has never built a lasting free society, will be attractive to many. It is hard for people to believe in their own ability to create a new, just society, when states have been so successful in co-opting and crushing such efforts. Many find it easier to believe in authoritarianism because it seems to “work.” Unfortunately, this lack of confidence may appear even among anarchists.

4. The state should be replaced with a self-organized society — a federation of popular councils and committees and associations, such as have appeared in revolution after revolution. In place of the police and military would be the militia — the armed people. In the course of revolution and civil war, some repression and centralization may be temporarily necessary, but our principle is to limit it to the minimum which is absolutely necessary while encouraging as much freedom as is practically possible. There are some resemblances between a state and a self-organized people in a revolution, but they are not the same and must not become the same,
5. Struggles for reforms should be supported whenever they mean real benefits, such as improving the popular standard of living, or expanding the area of freedom, or decreasing pollution. But these must be real benefits for the people, not just illusions. When we pose our reform

demands, we do not worry about what the system can afford, but focus on what people need.

We will work with political groups with which we strongly disagree, for common reform goals. But we say that reforms are most likely won through the most militant mass actions, uniting as much of the oppressed as possible in independent opposition. We deny that improvements are won through elections, neither through the Democratic Party nor through a new progressive or labor party. We deny that liberation can be won by small bands of would-be heroes who take on the state, with guns and bombs by themselves, without the participation of the people.

Marxist-Leninists, nationalists, and others build organizations around the program of overthrowing the existing state and building new states. Regardless of personal motivation, such people are objectively working to create and become) a new ruling class. We must struggle ideologically with them to break them from their ideas. We can and should bloc with revolutionary statist in common efforts, both for the immediate needs of the struggle and as a means to struggle against their ideas. We need to distinguish between hardened politicians who are not going to break with Marxism-Leninism for love or money and new or questioning people whom we can reach. Unfortunately, not everyone in Love and Rage seems to perceive the line of absolute difference in ultimate goals between us and many good activists who are objectively statist — or perceive the need to struggle against their statism.

Above all else, we tell people what we believe is the truth — about the limitations of reformist strategies and authoritarian leaders, and the need for a revolutionary anarchist strategy.

rely on themselves. It is part of the process of popular self-organization.

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We welcome others to sign this statement. Please inform any current signers.

6. The world is not divided into sectors, with anti-authoritarianism on the agenda in the advanced sectors but only nationalist capitalism on the agenda in the oppressed nations. We reject the political conclusions implied by this analysis, namely that one should work to establish progressive capitalist regimes in these less-favored sectors, and only fight to overthrow them later, if at all. Rather, we think:

- a. Where nationalist or anti-imperialist revolts take place we should work for their victory while simultaneously trying to convince people to organize independently of the nationalists and to struggle to increase mass popular power before, during, and after these struggles. If it is not possible at a given point for popular organizations to realistically fight to replace the state, they should maximize their influence and prepare for the future.
- b. The idea of a distinct nationalist/anti-imperialist revolution has its own form in the advanced imperialist countries. Rather than separate stages of revolution, it implies separate struggles by different sectors such as African Americans and an alliance between anarchists and (whomever we think are) the leaders of these struggles. We believe in supporting just struggles, but criticizing authoritarian leaders. We organize people around libertarian and anarchist politics across color (and other) lines.
- c. Anarchism and not Marxism, has long been the best program for the liberation of humanity, in both the imperialist and the oppressed nations. We deny that supporting nationalist capitalists was correct in an earlier period but not today. This is a false distinction. The ultimate goal of an inter-

national non-state society seems just as far away today as fifty years ago in many countries, such as Palestine, South Africa, Congo, or Mexico. Consequently, the arguments for supporting nationalist capitalists are just as apparently persuasive, and just as dangerous to many people today.

7. There is no one form of oppression (such as capitalism or racism) which underlies all others and is the most important. Nor are the separate oppressions just side-by-side. Rather, all forms of oppression are aspects of a single modern authoritarian system. For example, the struggle against capitalism is not just a matter for the working class as such, but is something in which women play a key role. The struggle against racism is not just a matter for African Americans, but requires the involvement of the working class, most especially Black workers. Sexism will not be overcome without opposing the destruction of nature by patriarchal capitalism. At various times, we may tactically focus on this or that issue, but ultimately no one oppression is morally more important than another, nor even truly separate from the others. Nor should other struggles wait until one is “solved,” whether capitalism or racism or any other.
8. The mainstream of anarchism has historically opposed capitalism in favor of a cooperative, nonprofit, self-managed, economy — that is, libertarian (or anti-authoritarian) socialism. To win this goal requires the participation of the international working class, but it also requires the participation of all oppressed people.
9. The most revolutionary forces are likely to be found at the intersection of various oppressions — such as Black workers or working women. These are least corrupted

by the relative privileges and benefits which the ruling class uses to buy off potentially rebellious people.

However, we write off no one. We appeal to both the self-interest and the potential idealism of the vast majority of humanity. For example, we call on white workers to give up their apparent, petty privileges over people of color, privileges which tie them to the ruling class. This is not so the whites will be worse off but guilt-free, but so that they will be both materially and morally better off.

10. Oppressed people are divided by relative privileges of gender, race, class, and nationality and blinded by irrational and authoritarian beliefs. There is no pure section of society, unpoisoned by authoritarianism. Yet we have faith that people can accept human solidarity as a supreme value — that they can give up the desire to be little bosses over those even weaker than themselves, in order to reach for real freedom for themselves and all others.
11. We want to build an organization that embodies this perspective. Anarchists are a distinct minority. Unfortunately, the vast majority of oppressed people more or less accept the system we live under. They look to leaders to save them. Anarchists hope to win over the majority by persuasion and example. As the system is shaken by its crises, we intend to raise an alternate program to that of the authoritarians. We want to persuade people to rely on themselves by building democratic mass organizations counterpoised to the rulers and would-be new rulers. Marxists are vanguardist and authoritarian because they want to build parties that will become the new rulers. It is not vanguardist or authoritarian for the anarchist minority to persuade people of our unpopular program — that people should