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A Reply to Daryl Glaser
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on economic and social equality' (van der Walt and Schmidt 2009, 70, original emphasis). Here, common ownership of means of production is necessary *but insufficient*, since it must be matched to bottom-up democratic control of administration, coercion and production generally, which must itself be based upon the principle of individual freedom.

Glaser suggests this level of collective 'governance' is not so very different to 'states as most people understand this term' (2012, 295). Very few people understand (and none experience) the state in this way. The issue, moreover is not what 'most people' think, but how anarchism/syndicalism understands the state: a centralised institution of minority class rule, it is abolished by genuine democracy, for when the 'whole people govern' then 'there will be no one to be governed … there will be no government, no State' (Bakunin 1953, 287). Thus, Price: '*Anarchism is democracy without the state*' (2007, 172, original emphasis).

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Abstract

Examining the theory and practice of 'mass' anarchism and syndicalism, this paper argues against Daryl Glaser's views that workers' council democracy fails basic democratic benchmarks and that, envisaged as a simple instrument of a revolution imagined in utopian 'year zero' terms, it will probably collapse or end in 'Stalinist' authoritarianism—Glaser also argues instead for parliaments, supplemented by participatory experiments. While agreeing with Glaser on the necessity of a 'democratic minimum' of pluralism, rights, and open-ended outcomes, I demonstrate, in contrast, that this 'minimum' is perfectly compatible with bottom-up council democracy and self-management, as envisaged in anarchist/syndicalist theory, and as implemented by anarchist revolutions in Manchuria, Spain and Ukraine. This approach seeks to maximise individual freedom through an egalitarian, democratic, participatory order, developed as both means and outcome of revolution; it consistently insists that attempts to 'save' revolutions by suspending freedoms, instead destroy both. Parliament, again in contrast to Glaser, from this perspective, meets no 'democratic minimum', being part of the state, a centralized, unaccountable institutional nexus essential to domination and exploitation by a ruling class of state managers and capitalists. Rather than participate in parliaments, 'mass' anarchism argues for popular class autonomy from, and struggle against, the existing order as a means of winning economic and political reforms while—avoiding 'year zero' thinking—also building the new society, within and against, the old, through a prefigurative project of revolutionary counter-power and counter-culture. Revolution here means the complete expansion of a bottom-up democracy, built through a class struggle for economic and social equality, and requiring the defeat of the ruling class, which is itself the outcome of widespread, free acceptance of anarchism, and of a pluralistic council democracy and self-management system.

Introduction

It was with pleasure that I read in a recent edition of this journal Glaser's (2012) stimulating and insightful engagement with Schmidt and my *Black Flame: the revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism* (2009). Glaser raises a number of issues meriting a critical response particularly his critique of anarchism and syndicalism using democratic theory, his defence of parliament, and his account of Bolshevism.

He is correct that anarchism/syndicalism seeks a radically democratic (and where possible, participatory) order. His characterisation of its core as 'councilist governance, with workplace, neighbourhood, producer and consumer councils joined in voluntary global federations that coordinate their governing activities via negotiations' (Glaser 2012, 285), is correct, if incomplete—it understates the centrality of self-managed workplace and neighbourhood groups; the councils help link such groups into federations, enabling coordination and exchange.[1]

Glaser suggests that the 'radical change towards greater equality and democracy' proposed would 'be liable to reproduce the authoritarianism' (or 'Stalinist governance') it rejects (2012, 279–280). Why? Because the council democracy and self-management outlined in *Black Flame* supposedly lacks the basic elements of a defensible democracy, i.e. '*at a minimum* pluralistic and open, affording to citizens full freedoms of expression, association and information and an authoritative say … in who is going to lead them and in the kinds of ideological projects their governments [sic.] … pursue' (2012, 286, his emphasis).

The apparent gap arises (Glaser says) partly from naiveté (a 'utopian expectation' of a 'year zero' reboot) but partly from a supposedly instrumental conception of councils as

[1] For a classic statement: CNT [1 May 1936] n. d.

currents were key groups in the Communal Council and Clubs (McKay 2008; Bakunin ([1870] 1971); these measures were also demonstrably central to the later anarchist revolutions, as previously shown.

There is, in short, no necessary link between council democracy and Soviet Union-type tyranny. Bolshevism took power not due to councils, but through their *destruction*. On the other hand, the protection of civil and political rights in the anarchist revolutions, despite wartime conditions, further discredits its claims that Lenin and Trotsky and Stalin were 'forced' into dictatorship.

The anarchist/syndicalist analysis of the state also provides a reasonable explanation *why* Lenin and Trotsky were able to create their dictatorship: by reconstructing the state, they could centralise administration and coercion in the hands of their party, followed by means of production. This new state did not require (and indeed could not tolerate) an independent system of council democracy and self-management. And it's heads thus soon, and inevitably, found themselves clashing with the popular classes that they claimed to represent.

Conclusion

Writing on China, Dirlik argues that 'recall anarchism, which Leninist Marxism suppressed', is to 'recall the democratic ideals for which anarchism … served as a repository' (1991, 3–4). This paper has sought to recall those ideals, not as an epitaph, nor yet as a defence of every dot and comma of the anarchist/syndicalist tradition, but to recall pathways in libertarian and socialist thought that move beyond the impasses of classical Marxism, liberalism, social democracy, and the 'lifestyle' politics of personal (not social) change.

Anarchism rejects parliament *because* it aspires to 'nothing less than the most complete realisation of *democracy*', 'based

helped lay the basis for Soviet tyranny. Council democracy played no essential role in classical Marxist thought, other than as a tactic to attain state power. While Marx praised the Paris Commune (Glaser 2012, 290), he did not 'champion' council democracy, instead consistently returning—even after 1871—to his long-standing programme of centralisation, nationalisation and state planning under a Communist Party (e.g. Marx and Engels [1848] 1954, 55–56; Gerth 1958, 216–217, 285–286). In the 1872 Marx/Bakunin split, for instance, Marx argued for a centralised state and Bakunin—not Marx—advocated council democracy; it was Marx who sought to impose his statist programme against the will of the majority of the First International.

But what Marx 'really' meant (or could be construed to mean) pales in the face of what *Marxism* 'really' meant: the history of Communist Parties, and also of the third of the globe once ruled by Marxists, are not the byways, but the highways, of Marxist history. In Russia, for instance, the councils were quickly subordinated to the Bolshevik state. Those who insist that Lenin 'had to' dispense with free *soviets* to 'defend' the revolution also thereby concede that council democracy was *inessential* to the Leninist project. The same treatment of council democracy as inessential to Marxist socialism is necessary for those who maintain (e.g. Trotsky 1967) that the Soviet Union and others were 'workers' states' or 'socialist'—deformed, degenerate or otherwise.

None of this is to disparage the minority of committed Marxists who have sought to rescue Marxism from the stench of the *gulag*; it is merely to suggest the awesome scale of that task.

By contrast, the core democratic measures in the Commune—mandated recallable delegates, co-operative production, militias with elections, etc.—did not arise from nowhere, and certainly not from Marx's earlier work. They were, rather, the long-standing programme of the Proudhonists and of the anarchists (Bakunin ([1870] 1971), both of which

mere *means* of revolution, rather than as spaces to debate the content or *necessity* of—or alternatives to—revolution (2012, 286, 291). This closes out dissent: politics becomes a clash between revolutionaries, culminating in 'a single party designating itself the bearer of true revolutionary socialist purpose' (Glaser 2012, 291). This dictatorial trajectory is reinforced by the exclusion of 'transituational citizens' falling outside the councils, a 'pyramidal system' of tiered assemblies of delegates, and delegates being manipulated by experts (Glaser 2012, 291).

These are all important points to be taken seriously in making the case for a council democracy combining self-management with mandated delegates, i.e. the heart of the anarchist/syndicalist vision of post-capitalist order.

But are they a convincing indictment? And since the Soviet tyranny looms large in Glaser's defence of parliamentary 'democracy' (Glaser 2012, 290), can they explain its rise? The answer to both is 'no'.

Revolution with dissent unlimited: 'freedom can and must be defended only by freedom' (Bakunin ([1866] 1971), 79)

First, Glaser does not adequately engage a long-established 'mass' anarchist/syndicalist approach to building council democracy combined with self-management—an approach enabling the 'defensible' democratic 'minimum' that Glaser (and I) both support. In fairness, he admits that his critique of council democracy engages 'exclusively' its Trotskyist 'defence', in part because of *Black Flame's* scope (2012, 290). However, since his arguments bracket this 'defence' with the anarchist position (2012, 279), the latter bears restatement.

Anarchism, as argued in *Black Flame*, is an anti-authoritarian, internationalist, class-struggle socialism, aiming at a self-

managed, stateless, egalitarian global society with collectivised resources and participatory planning; syndicalism is an anarchist *strategy* wherein revolutionary unions help institute the new world through workplace occupations under self-management (van der Walt and Schmidt 2009, chaps. 1–3). Both emerged in the First International. Lest it be suggested that this is a controversial (or unusual) definition, I add that this was the anarchism of such notables as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Goldman, Malatesta, Mechoso, Lucy Parsons, Liu Sifu, Flores Magón, Gutarra, Thibedi, Makhno, Kôtuku, Shin Ch'aeho and many others; also of keystone organisations like Spain's National Confederation of Labour (CNT) and the Korean People's Association in Manchuria (*Hanjok Chongryong Haphoi*).[2]

Unlike the classical Marxism that Glaser discusses, anarchism/syndicalism agrees with liberalism that 'the happiness and prosperity of the individual must be the standard' (Rocker [1938] 1989, 23). It shares liberalism's insistence that any democratic process must be compatible with this 'standard'. However, it also shares the socialist position that a basic change in economic and social relations is essential: 'personal and social freedom is conceivable only on the basis of equal economic advantages for everybody' (Rocker [1938] 1989, 23).

The 'councilist governance' envisaged by anarchism/syndicalism aims at being genuinely libertarian and democratic, first, by championing individual liberties—including the right to openly disagree with, and within democratic norms even mobilise *against*, the democracy—and, second, by changing society fundamentally in order to make those liberties substantive.

[2] Within this tradition, there are rich debates, including on consensus versus majority decision-making, and 'anti-organisationalism' versus formal rule-bound structures. This paper only outlines the approach defending majority decision-making where necessary; formal organisation as a norm; and militarily defending social revolution—with the rider that this was dominant within historic anarchism/syndicalism.

Revolution was not the rule-from-above of 'a committee, of a party, of a given tendency' but instead enabled a range of views (48). This is a dramatically different approach to that applied by Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin—not to mention the Marxists in the First and Second Internationals.

And Russia …

These experiences underscore Glaser's observation that the broad anarchist tradition has rather more convincing democratic credentials than mainstream Marxism. Yet, these experiences, and the ideas that they expressed, also suggest that his charge that anarchism/syndicalism would be 'liable to reproduce' 'Stalinist governance' (2012, 279–280) is unfair.

It is, on the contrary, perfectly justified for anarchists/syndicalists to 'deny responsibility' (2012, 282) for the Soviet tyranny—as Glaser concedes, Bakunin had accurately predicted (decades before) that revolutionary Marxist regimes would be repressive one-party dictatorships based on forced labour (e.g. Bakunin [1872] 1971, 284). It is also, therefore, justified to insist that the fate of the Soviet Union and its ilk requires 'no rethink of anarchist precepts' (cf. 2012, 282).

I agree with Glaser that Soviet Union tyranny arose directly from Lenin's and Trotsky's 'one-party dictatorship, censorship and a ban on autonomous associations', establishing the 'institutional design and modus operandi' of Stalin's Russia—and also that these actions were in significant, although not sole, part an outcome of the Bolshevik ideology (Glaser 2012, 287; van der Walt 2011).[3]

However, I find Glaser less convincing when speaking of 'the council form … advocated and practiced by Lenin's Bolsheviks' (Glaser 2012, 292), or when implying that council democracy

[3] An important resource is Iain McKay's AnarchistFAQ, http://anarchism.pageabode.com/afaq/secH6.html

ted. However, compulsory tithes and subsidies were abolished in line with the free association principle, and large estates (ecclesiastical as well as state and private) were placed under self-management, in line with a democratic mandate to undercut economic and social inequality.

Critics of anarchism/syndicalism sometimes point to the spontaneous class violence (including attacks on Catholic churches and clergy) of the early Spanish Revolution, as evidence of a basic anarchist intolerance. But these attacks were not part of the anarchist programme: the CNT was highly critical of the Catholic establishment, but regarded religion as a matter of 'individual conscience' ([1 May 1936] n.d., 8), and it included Catholic workers.

Rather, the attacks on churches reflected smouldering hatreds, flaring around the Catholic hierarchy's active collusion with Franco's 1936 fascistic coup and subsequent war; they left Protestants unscathed. They also involved Republicans of all stripes, not only anarchists—and by no means most anarchists, since the CNT and its allies actively intervened to halt looting and anti-clerical violence (Fraser 1979, 149; Thomas 1986, 132–133, 277). Meanwhile, the CNT defended the expanding council democracy and self-management system against the violent far right, while fostering tolerance for views liberal, socialist, nationalist and religious. Thus, the CNT's Diego Abad de Santillán ([1937] 2005, 47):

> We can oppose with force those who try to subjugate us on behalf of their interests or concepts, but we cannot resort to force against those who do not share our points of view, and who do not desire to live as we attempt to. Here, our respect for liberty must encompass the liberty of our adversaries to live their own life, always on the condition that they are not aggressive and do not deny the freedom of others …

The anarchists/syndicalists envisage a council democracy guaranteeing 'absolute and complete' freedom to 'voice all opinions' without reprisals, and freedom of association, including of associations promoting 'the undermining (or destruction) of individual and public freedom' (Bakunin [1866] 1971, 79). In this system, anarchists actively promote their ideas, but claim no political 'party' monopoly; anarchist ideas predominate *only to the extent* that they are widely and freely accepted. The anarchists defend a vigorous pluralism, opposing 'all ambition to dominate the revolutionary movement of the people' by 'cliques or individuals' (Bakunin n.d., 387).

Therefore, arguments that freedoms must be restricted in the 'interest' of revolution are explicitly rejected, since expanded freedoms are the *means* and *ends* of the revolution. Anarchism is an ideology, but at the same time, it entails a defence of the right to multiple ideologies.

Real defence of the free society lies in the salutary effects of an informed 'public opinion' that accepts its framework, including it's safeguards *for* dissenting minorities (even 'charlatans and pernicious associations': Bakunin [1866] 1971, 79), and it's safeguards *against* minorities forcibly imposing their positions on the majority. Further reinforcing this system are substantive gains in democracy, rights and equality, and a reformed education system promoting critical thought and respect for human rights (Bakunin [1866] 1971, 82).

There are no other constraints on the 'ideological projects' (Glaser) that the councils might potentially adopt; faced with 'cliques or individuals' seeking to 'dominate' (Bakunin), the majority can defend itself, even militarily, but 'only by freedom' (Bakunin [1866] 1971, 79, 82), i.e. *only by defending the council democracy and self-management.*

Such a conception is to be sharply distinguished from the Leninist substitutionism that Glaser describes and rejects (2012, 291), and also from notions that political differences will disappear in socialism. Rather, as Rocker argued, anarchism aims

not at a 'perfect social order' immutably fused with a single final goal; it aspires instead to the 'unlimited perfectibility of social arrangements and human conditions' ([1938] 1989, 30).

History opens, not closes, with the councils and self-management: if persistent problems emerge with (for example) tiered councils, remedies such as a supplementary structure of directly elected and mandated delegates to higher bodies can be introduced.

Anarchist class struggle through prefiguration, participation

But that councils will be revolutionary *in the first place* is not automatic or assumed. Glaser speaks of anarchist 'pre-revolutionary democratic mobilisation' (2012, 281), but its democratic character, and its refusal to take a blind 'a leap into the dark' (289), requires unpacking. The positions that I have described are all located in 'mass anarchism', which stresses a very concrete, two-sided, revolutionary project (quite different to the immediatism of 'insurrectionist' anarchism).

First, developing mass popular class movements that are internally democratic, always maximising the development of democratic capacities, and fighting for concessions through direct action yet maintaining strict class independence and a revolutionary agenda, i.e. building a *counter-power* to ruling class power.

Second, and simultaneously, winning as many as possible to anarchist thought, so that the popular classes can use their movements to reconstruct society for substantive equality, i.e. building a revolutionary *counter-culture*.

The key point is that this project enables institutions and values *prefiguring* the new society by developing democratic self-managed institutions that fight to maximise economic and social equality in the present, and that also link this fight against

gies, or enables open-ended and unpredictable outcomes, but precisely that it *fails* on all three counts.

In Ukraine, Manchuria and Spain

The anarchist/syndicalist tradition thus takes very seriously 'the political, and in particular the formal-institutional' (Glaser 2012, 287). But in fairness, theory is one thing, practice another. I would like, therefore, to address Glaser's further 'grounds for doubt'—and his suggestion that at the 'level of detail', 'not much' separates anarchist/syndicalist 'democratic visions' from Leninists' (2012, 285–286), with some historical examples illustrating anarchist council democracy in action.

Although the Bolsheviks waged war on anarchist Ukraine of 1918–1921, the anarchists always permitted Bolsheviks and other rivals an active press plus full participation in the council democracy and self-management system (Malet 1982, 172; Palij 1976, 148–160). Two restrictions: incitement to pogroms was punishable; also, attempts by opposition papers to organise armed attacks on—as opposed to arguing against, or within—the councils was forbidden, a reasonable measure.

The anarchist Shinmin revolution in Manchuria, 1929–1931—centred on *Hanjok Chongryong Haphoi*'s council system and the anarchist Kim Jwa-Jim's wing of the Korean Independence Army—aimed at a 'free federal social system' based upon 'free agreement', 'the free will of individuals' and free speech (Ha 1986, 71–79). The 1936 Spanish CNT programme also stressed that individual freedoms 'cannot, under any circumstances, be cast aside by a society based upon wide freedom' ([1 May 1936] n.d., 10).

As in Ukraine and Shinmin, a large-scale council democracy and self-management system was put in place, including in the economy, along with widespread freedoms. In anarchist Ukraine and Spain, for example, religious freedom was permit-

‘Utopian expectations’ and ‘radical reform’

Against council democracy, Glaser insists up on the ‘entrenchment’ of ‘institutions’ of ‘liberal democracy’—supplemented perhaps by reforms like the ‘participatory municipal governance’ of Porto Allegre under Brazil’s Workers’ Party (PT) (2012, 281, 290, 297–298). By contrast, anarchism suggests that the class system can tolerate (at best) a parliament, where popular choice is expressed in a few moments at the ballot box. This is, Bakunin insisted ([1867] 1971, 144), a ‘thousand times better’ than dictatorship, but should not be deemed ‘representative democracy’ (e.g. Glaser 2012, 281, 285) as it is *neither* representative *nor* democratic. Politicians and the state are always unaccountable; ‘democracy’ also does not apply to fundamental areas like the workplace, or the larger economy and society.

The state makes concessions to mass demands with reluctance, and only when *forced* by popular class struggles (Rocker [1938] 1989, 112). The state is not ignored, here but nor is it wielded: it is instead ‘engaged’ through struggle, by the counter-power; negotiations follow struggle but must never compromise popular autonomy or class antagonism.

The PT example arguably bears out the anarchist insistence that faith in parliament is a truly ‘utopian expectation’ (Glaser). Porto Allegre’s participation model entails public input only into the details of construction and services spending, only within ‘available’ resources, and subject to executive veto. The PT has meanwhile, violating its promises, managed the ‘completion of Brazil’s embrace of capitalism and globalisation’ (Rachman 2010).

The problem with parliament for the anarchists/syndicalists is *not* that it meets a ‘democratic minimum’, effects a reasonable representation of a wide variety of interests and ideolo-

hierarchy to the necessity of, and a strategy for, revolutionary social change. Thus, counter-power/counter-culture provides ‘the living seeds of the new society which is to replace the old world’ (Bakunin [1871] 1971, 255).

But there is no assumption that the popular classes have (or require) a ‘perfectly unitary and homogenous collective will’ (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 2), or that these ‘living seeds’ must inevitably grow. The argument is simply that the new society *cannot emerge* unless large popular class sectors decide to make it so. Revolution here means, then, a movement for self-emancipation based upon the *organised will and choice* of the popular classes (van der Walt and Schmidt 2009, 65), to ‘take upon themselves the task of rebuilding society’ (Kropotkin [1912] 1970, 188). Fostering democratic mass movements, resting upon participation and strict mandates, has inherent as well as instrumental, value—given these politics. A specific, formal anarchist political organisation can arguably play a decisive role in this revolutionary process: to answer Glaser (2012, 294–295), this differs from conventional political parties in that it seeks neither power for itself, or political monopoly, nor does it aspire to capture the state.

Syndicalism provides an illustration: unions generally defend workers, but this does not exhaust their *potential*—they are *potential* means for coordinated workplace occupations, for self-management (through worker assemblies and committees) and for democratic planning (through unions and federations, along with communities). But this potential can *only* be realised if the unions have radically democratic structures, plus the *acceptance*, by an ever-growing number, of anarchism. Thus, Malatesta: ‘We who do not seek power, only want the consciences of men; only those who wish to dominate prefer sheep’ (1965, 115).

Against parliament, for democracy

There is no 'year zero' here, since the foundations of council democracy and self-management are laid through the 'mass' anarchist/syndicalist project of counter-power/counter-culture, of which syndicalism is only one technique. This project provides the training (and testing) ground of council democracy and self-management.

The revolution thus viewed is a revolutionary rupture, but the rupture is also simply the *expansion* of council democracy and self-management over all means of administration, coercion and administration (van der Walt and Schmidt 2009, 21). This is essential to the removal of domination and exploitation: as major resources move from elite to popular control, it becomes possible to abolish exploitation and poverty, to reconstruct work as an empowering and useful activity, and to apply democracy and free agreement in all spheres. Thus, the new society is substantively, as well as formally, based upon equality, solidarity, and diversity. As Glaser observes, anarchism/syndicalism 'necessarily confronts the existing state as an irreconcilable adversary' (2012, 281), to be abolished, not captured.

But the reasons bear restatement.

The rejection of parliament (and statism generally) arises not from a 'natural' anti-statism, but from an analysis insisting that existing society is controlled by an exploiting and dominating 'economic' and 'political', ruling class. The state is the central institution through which means of administration and coercion are monopolised; the private corporation is (with the state) the central institution through which the means of production are monopolised.

State managers and capitalists are two sectors of an interdependent (if contradictory) ruling class, its overall power resting upon the domination and exploitation of the popular classes, which is jointly enabled by the pact of domination between state and capital. This system also helps to produce and reproduce other inequities (like national oppression), although these also have their own *irreducible* features.

States and corporations are centralised and hierarchical *in order to enable this small ruling class minority to wield these means*—not because centralisation is an efficient way to run complex societies for the majority. It follows (anarchists/syndicalists argue), that anyone at the apex of either institution is *ruling class*, with class interests at odds with popular class self-determination and freedom from exploitation.

Conversely, council democracy and self-management by the popular classes, extending over the means of administration, coercion and production, is an *essential and irreplaceable* condition for the abolition of minority class rule, requiring the abolition of states and corporations in order to realise a classless order.

There can be nothing like a 'workers' state', since popular class rule is antithetical to centralised state power—and state power is always centralised. 'To assure the labourers … they will … establish socialism' through 'government machinery' is 'a colossal historical blunder': this merely changes the 'persons who manage' the system (Kropotkin [1912] 1970, 186).

States and corporations operate by logics, in ways, and for interests, that are fundamentally at odds with those of the popular classes—including the bottom-up, democratic institutional and ideological framework through which, alone, these classes can be emancipated.

Since these logics are irreconcilable, escalating counter-power/counter-culture will inevitably reach the point where it *must* (and ideally, successfully *can*) confront the ruling-class power in a decisive, probably violent, showdown. The ruling class cannot be quietly eroded away by 'lifestyle' changes, 'exiting' the system, or alternative institutions like co-operatives in its 'interstices'; it will not tolerate any challenges beyond a certain point; nor can basic questions of economic and social equality be solved without fundamental societal changes.