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On Authority

A Response to Friedrich Engels

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Contents

What Does Authority Mean?	5
“Authority” in Terms of Cooperative Production	7
The Paris Commune	11
The Historical Record	13
Delegation or Power?	19
The Nature of the State	21
Anti-Authoritarians are Working for Capitalism?	22
Resources	25

individual independence is possible, or desirable. Such a condition would mean the dissolution of all human society, since the entire social existence of man depends on the interdependence of individuals and the masses. Every person, even the cleverest and strongest—nay, especially the clever and strong—are at all times, the creatures as also the creators of this influence. The freedom of each individual is the direct outcome of these material mental and moral influences, of all individuals surrounding him in that society in which he lives, develops, and dies. A person who seeks to free himself from that influence in the name of a metaphysical, superhuman, and perfectly egotistical 'freedom' aims at his own extermination as a human being. And these who refuse to use that influence on others, withdraw from all activity of social life, and by not passing on their thoughts and feelings, work for their own destruction. Therefore, this so-called 'independence,' which is preached so often by the idealists and metaphysicians: this so-called individual liberty is only the destruction of existence."

–Mikhail Bakunin, 1869

“The Organization of the International”

Resources

by the *Authoritarian-Communist Revolutions* of China,³⁵³⁶ Cuba,³⁷³⁸³⁹ Yugoslavia,⁴⁰⁴¹⁴² and Russia⁴³⁴⁴⁴⁵.

For all the petty arguments that Friedrich Engels can advance, none of them seem to hold past a quick glance. And if all that failed, then you should believe that anti-authoritarians are your enemy, because they're trying to sabotage the Social Revolution. The mass slaughter of Socialists by the hand of "Socialists" has been the most remarkable trait of all Authoritarian Communism. The predictions of Friedrich Engels couldn't have been further from the truth.

"A person who can assert that, organized activity is an attack on the freedom of the masses, or an attempt to create a new rule, is either a sophist or a fool. It is sad enough for these who don't know the rules of human solidarity, to think that complete

³⁵ (23 March 2000) The crackdown on Falun Gong and other so-called heretical organizations, Amnesty International, Web.Amnesty.Org page.

³⁶ United Nations (4 February 2004) Press Release HR/CN/1073, retrieved 12 September 2006, UN.org page.

³⁷ "Cuba's repressive machinery". Human Rights Watch. 1999. HRW.org page.

³⁸ "Information about human rights in Cuba" (in español). Comision Interamericana de Derechos Humanos. April 7 1967. CIDH.org.

³⁹ "Castro sued over alleged torture". News from Russia. November 16 2005. NewsFromRussia.com.

⁴⁰ Tomasevich, Jozo; War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: The Chetniks, Volume 1; Stanford University Press, 1975 ISBN 978-0-8047-0857-9.

⁴¹ Geiger, Vladimir. "Josip Broz Tito i sudbina jugoslavenskih Nijemaca." *?*asopis za suvremenu povijest No. 3 (2008): 801–812 (p. 806).

⁴² Geiger, Vladimir. "Josip Broz Tito i sudbina jugoslavenskih Nijemaca." *?*asopis za suvremenu povijest No. 3 (2008): 801–812 (p. 805).

⁴³ "The Great Terror: A Reassessment," by Robert Conquest, Oxford University Press, USA, 40th anniversary edition (November 15, 2007).

⁴⁴ "The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine," by Robert Conquest, Oxford University Press, USA (November 12, 1987).

⁴⁵ "Stalin: Breaker of Nations," by Robert Conquest, Penguin (Non-Classics) (November 1, 1992).

What Does Authority Mean?

"Authority, in the sense in which the word is used here, means: the imposition of the will of another upon ours; on the other hand, authority presupposes subordination. Now, since these two words sound bad, and the relationship which they represent is disagreeable to the subordinated party, the question is to ascertain whether there is any way of dispensing with it, whether — given the conditions of present-day society — we could not create another social system, in which this authority would be given no scope any longer, and would consequently have to disappear..."

"Supposing a social revolution dethroned the capitalists, who now exercise their authority over the production and circulation of wealth. Supposing, to adopt entirely the point of view of the anti-authoritarians, that the land and the instruments of labour had become the collective property of the workers who use them. Will authority have disappeared, or will it only have changed its form? Let us see.

"Let us take by way if example a cotton spinning mill. The cotton must pass through at least six successive operations before it is reduced to the state of thread, and these operations take place for the most part in different rooms. Furthermore, keeping the machines going requires an engineer to look after the steam engine, mechanics to make the current repairs, and many other labourers whose business it is to transfer the products from one room to another, and so forth. All these workers, men, women and children, are obliged to begin and

finish their work at the hours fixed by the authority of the steam, which cares nothing for individual autonomy. The workers must, therefore, first come to an understanding on the hours of work; and these hours, once they are fixed, must be observed by all, without any exception. Thereafter particular questions arise in each room and at every moment concerning the mode of production, distribution of material, etc., which must be settled by decision of a delegate placed at the head of each branch of labour or, if possible, by a majority vote, the will of the single individual will always have to subordinate itself, which means that questions are settled in an authoritarian way. The automatic machinery of the big factory is much more despotic than the small capitalists who employ workers ever have been. At least with regard to the hours of work one may write upon the portals of these factories: Lasciate ogni autonomia, voi che entrate! [Leave, ye that enter in, all autonomy behind!]

–Friedrich Engels

You might as well go so far as to say that men are obedient to the will of their hunger when they eat, or obedient to the mastery of the rain when they seek shelter. In fact, we might as well replace the definition of authority with the definition of “force” or “influence.” So, when an individual makes a decision for themselves, without any force on them at all, they are still obeying an authority... the authority of their autonomy. And this is how Friedrich Engels starts out with his response to what he calls “the most rabid anti-authoritarians:” he redefines the word *authority* to mean something completely different.

Why even complicate it by bringing up modern machinery? Sure, we have “authority” when we work together cooperatively. But what about some lone farmer in the neolithic era?

in Serbia, that it declared war on Germany.³² The Socialists and Marxists backed the Capitalists in war, because they saw it as bringing about Communism.

But at the end of the war, Germany was burdened and oppressed to such an extreme extent — the Socialists had ploughed the seeds of Fascism, because now every German had a logical reason to feel that they were being exploited as *Germans*. Not as workers, as citizens, as people of the world, but as people of German origin — as this is where the blame was placed when the Peace Armistice was signed.³³ Without such a context, a Nationalist Party could not have reached such heights of power.

Besides this, many notable Socialists and Communists were slaughtered by the new, Weimar Republic in Germany. Rosa Luxemburg and other members of the Social Democratic Party were executed by police or military forces without a trial.³⁴ The murder of Socialists — this was the final end of the French and German Socialist parties, in their mutual cooperation with their governments and capitalists. This pattern was repeated

³² “Germany: A Modern History,” by Marshall Dill, Jr., edited by Doward M. Ehrman, published by the Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, published 1961, pg. 261.

³³ “Germany: A Modern History,” by Marshall Dill, Jr., edited by Doward M. Ehrman, published by the Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, published 1961, pg. 273.

³⁴ Rosa Luxemburg Entry, Marxists Internet Archive, marxists.org.

Anti-Authoritarians are Working for Capitalism?

“Therefore, either one of two things: either the anti-authoritarians don’t know what they’re talking about, in which case they are creating nothing but confusion; or they do know, and in that case they are betraying the movement of the proletariat. In either case they serve the reaction.”

–Friedrich Engels

“If you’re not with us, you’re against us.” An ancient rhetoric, that has always been used to oppress and exploit the innocent. And those who came after Friedrich Engels, and all involved at the International Workingmen’s Association, often made use of this same exact phrase. The assertion that anti-authoritarians “don’t know what they’re talking about” is interesting — more than half of this critique are simple corrections, verifiable by either history books or the dictionary. Far from being simple errors, they are certainly prefabricated and cloaked lies. There is almost a complete ignorance of the theories of autonomous, self-governing behavior.

The Marxist-influenced political parties of Germany²⁹ and France,³⁰ during World War 1, made peace with the Capitalists. No more strikes, no more boycotts — *we are all in this together, for the great war!* A war made over a trifling incident in the colonies. France, after slaughtering the Moroccan people by the thousands,³¹ felt so much sympathy for the oppressed people

²⁹ Burgfrieden — en.wikipedia.org . Thorpe, Wayne (2000), “Keeping the Faith: The German Syndicalists in the First World War”, *Central European History* 33 (2): 195–216, doi:10.1163/156916100746301 .

³⁰ Union sacrée — Wikipedia page. Raymond Poincaré, *Au service de la France*, t.IV, Paris, Plon, 1927, P.546 .

³¹ “France: A Modern History,” by Albert Guérard, edited by Doward M. Ehrman, published by the Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, published 1959, pg. 400.

Doesn’t he submit to the “legislative powers” of the earth when it rules that he must dig fifty-feet for water? Doesn’t he submit to the “signed warrants and subpoenas” of its courts, when he carries away the hole’s rocks? Just as your spine must give in to the lashes of gravity, or as your feet must submit to the authority of the ground.

How absurd. *With this type of reasoning, are we getting closer or farther away from an answer to the problem of authority?* Imagine this type of thinking in any other type of science, whether its biology or sociology. And you should see that it is not simply wrong, but it is deceitful.

Simply put, it’s okay to submit to the dictatorship of steam and mechanical heat. Those powers, when masters of society, have never raised a prison and have never trained an execution squad. Just like it’s okay to give in to the monarchy of thermodynamics, the grinding despotism of physics and chemistry, and the kings of electrical and charge behavior. All people are aware that we must labor upon the world, and in a certain way, to get what we want out of it. It requires some toil and some struggle, though it has not always required cooperation or domination. To point to this fact, call it authority, and then use it to justify controlling millions of people, is a thoughtless and almost careless proposal.

“Authority” in Terms of Cooperative Production

“We have thus seen that, on the one hand, a certain authority, no matter how delegated, and, on the other hand, a certain subordination, are things which, independently of all social organisation, are imposed upon us together with the material conditions under which we produce and make products circulate.

“We have seen, besides, that the material conditions of production and circulation inevitably develop with large-scale industry and large-scale agriculture, and increasingly tend to enlarge the scope of this authority. Hence it is absurd to speak of the principle of authority as being absolutely evil, and of the principle of autonomy as being absolutely good. Authority and autonomy are relative things whose spheres vary with the various phases of the development of society. If the autonomists confined themselves to saying that the social organisation of the future would restrict authority solely to the limits within which the conditions of production render it inevitable, we could understand each other; but they are blind to all facts that make the thing necessary and they passionately fight the world.”

–Friedrich Engels

When a single person carves wood, they are accepting their subordination to the mastery of the wood’s will... if one were to use the terminology of Mr. Engels. Someone else might have said that they have to use a certain technique or tactic if they’re want to carve the wood well. It’s obvious that when authority is defined as *all human behavior*, there is no abolishing it — and debating it is a waste of time. *Writing about it is a bigger one.*

Engels draws up one example of his definition of authority: “Let us take another example — the railway. Here too the co-operation of an infinite number of individuals is absolutely necessary, and this co-operation must be practised during precisely fixed hours so that no accidents may happen.” There is no disagreement that people must work together for certain types of economic behavior, such as production or distribution. But this is like the laws of chemistry, that determine how hard the soil is to dig, or like the laws of physics, that determine the efficiency of steam boiler.

The Nature of the State

“Why do the anti-authoritarians not confine themselves to crying out against political authority, the state? All Socialists are agreed that the political state, and with it political authority, will disappear as a result of the coming social revolution, that is, that public functions will lose their political character and will be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of society. But the anti-authoritarians demand that the political state be abolished at one stroke, even before the social conditions that gave birth to it have been destroyed. They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority.”

–Friedrich Engels

How absurd. “Confine themselves to crying out against political authority.” — This sentence, for some reason, is in contradiction to “But the anti-authoritarians demand that the political state be abolished at one stroke.” And simple, administrative functions “watching over the true interests of society” is exactly what every single government in history has described itself as. There is an accusation here, but no real criticism. Yes, the state will have to be destroyed.

Only the workers themselves can understand how society should be organized. If anyone were to command over them, they would abuse their privilege, just like aristocrats, vassals, kings, monarchs, dictators, senators, presidents, capitalists, and overseers. The trend of oppression and exploitation is this: authority, in a field of economics or politics or society or culture. But, it must begin with authority, and it cannot proceed from any other position. If the Social Revolution makes us free, then it must abolish all forms of authority.

between a delegate and a politician. A delegate is chosen among a group of free people, to negotiate for their interests — whether it is a union, an affinity group, activists, or a worker-managed industry. The delegate does not make decisions for anyone. They present the terms of their group, negotiate with others, and then they present a deal to their association. Then they, through a vote, must decide whether to accept or reject the agreement — whether they should commit to it, or send it back with further requests.

It is not an authority, at all. It is a technical position within a social organization. Someone who is chosen by the people, to present demands and not to rule, are not an authority. No more than those who design the machinery in the factories, or those who organize a land-use plan for a city or county. These are plans that are presented to the people, who then can voluntarily go with or against the proposals. They are not *authorities*, because they are doing a type of work that others don't do. Where people are self-governing, there can be no authorities. In the words of Peter Kropotkin...

“To-day, when groups scattered far and wide wish to organize themselves for some object or other, they no longer elect an international parliament of Jacks-of-all-trades. No, where it is not possible to meet directly or come to an agreement by correspondence, delegates versed in the question at issue are sent to treat, with the instructions: ‘Endeavour to come to an agreement on such or such a question and then return not with a law in your pocket, but with a proposition of agreement which we may or may not accept.’”²⁸

²⁸ “The Conquest of Bread,” by Peter Kropotkin, 1892, Chapter 3, Part II.

Consider several people working together. By their cooperation, they do not create new tools, but they are capable of creating a new form that is more productive. For example, Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* described the manufacturing of pins: “One man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving, the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations...”¹ The cooperation with other people itself *forms a technique or a technology*. And just as the individual miner must submit to the laws of nature, so must they submit to the collective decisions of the workers.

Consider, for instance, a group of workers has decided to work at a certain time, and under certain conditions. It may be a mining operation, requiring great cooperation between different co-workers and departments of laborers. If a person wants to join, they certainly need to submit to the hours and times set by those workers. And, by joining, they too join the collective decision-making process with the others. If they do not care for those conditions, they may choose from any society of laborers on earth. These organizations do not impose their rules authoritatively; they are organized completely cooperative. This is, of course, presupposing that there was a *Social Revolution*, and all workers became the masters of their tools of production.

But this is authority, according to Engels: when a group of workers, voluntarily and cooperatively, decide to work together. Theirs is a submission not the rule or mastery of anyone, but to the natural benefit that comes from people working together. Most likely, some of the people in this cooperation probably think that they aren't receiving as much as they deserve. They'll think that prices are unjustified or that someone's trying to exploit them. There certainly can be disagreement, just as there can be change. But Engels says

¹ “The Wealth of Nations,” by Adam Smith, 1776, book 1, chapter 1.

that working together, cooperatively and freely, necessarily is authority.

It is possible that some of these organizations might be unfit for the people, and they'll be far more selective in choosing their cooperative workplace. Just like it is possible that a person can be born to an arid desert, where food is scarce and life is always a struggle. There is nothing unfree about people voluntarily working together to pull a living out of the earth. For a new, single worker to submit to the organization of this group, is just like how they submit to the technique necessary for pulling iron out of the ground. Both the organization, and the technique, are born out of necessity and cooperation. *Authority*, or the *domination and subordination of human relationships*, has never entered the picture.

Considering the type of production that takes place from cooperative labor, it is certain that the collective group of laborers might as well have not even existed. A single laborer, whether or not there is a mining team nearby, can still pan the rivers for gold, and pick the mines for silver. A cooperative group of miners, however, would be able to do something together, for the improved benefit of each, that none could do by themselves. Their voluntary coming-together has no effect on the autonomy of the individual — for without the society of workers, an individual couldn't ever hope to have a drill, or a conveyor belt, or underground rail tracks.

The voluntary, cooperative organization of laborers, working to feed themselves and build their communities, does not hinder the individual laborer. It provides them with an opportunity to make more out of their labor, to serve their self-interest and to improve the world that nourished them. And where the individual does not want to participate, they are still just as free as if there were no society at all. They are still capable of doing all that they could have wished for in a state of nature, and therefore, *always retain a true autonomy*.

is a chain of cooperative restaurants with nearly 400 houses over India.²⁵ The Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil has organized a million and a half workers to seize land and organize work for themselves.^{26,27}

Considering the Anarchist societies, the libertarian projects of Socialism, the cooperatives and unions and collectives — considering all of this, it is fair to say that Mr. Engels' predictions couldn't have been more mistaken. In all of these cases, it was true Socialism that was brought about; and in all of them, there was a great disregard, or even abolishment, of authority, power, and centralized leadership and organization.

Delegation or Power?

“When I submitted arguments like these to the most rabid anti-authoritarians, the only answer they were able to give me was the following: Yes, that's true, but there it is not the case of authority which we confer on our delegates, but of a commission entrusted! These gentlemen think that when they have changed the names of things they have changed the things themselves. This is how these profound thinkers mock at the whole world.”

—Friedrich Engels

This is another dishonest attempt at defeating the “rabid anti-authoritarians.” There are very significant differences

²⁵ Vibhor Mohan (27 September 2006). “Crisis in a coffee cup”. The Tribune. TribuneIndia.com page.

²⁶ James, Deborah (2007). *Gaining Ground? Rights and Property in South African Land Reform*. New York, New York: Routledge Cavendish. pp. 148–149. ISBN 0415420318.

²⁷ Wright, Angus, and Wendy Wolford. *To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil*. Oakland: Food First Books, 2003. ISBN 0-935028-90-0.

wasn't done through authorities or Socialist party candidates, but through direct action of the workers themselves.¹⁸

In 1973, in France, after 12,000 people protested against the closing of the Lip watch factory, a workers council decided to seize the manufacturing plant. They adopted a plan of autogestion: worker self-management. Under the slogan, "It is possible: we make them, we sell them, we pay ourselves!" the workers organized work for themselves. The majority of the laborers were women, a historically disenfranchised, exploited, and oppressed group in Europe.¹⁹²⁰

In 2000, there was a worker-occupation at an Argentine, auto-parts factory owned by Cristalux. After a massive layoff, hundreds of workers seized their means of production and operated it for themselves.²¹²²²³

Besides many of these workplace occupations and seizures, there are also cooperatives. Though they sometimes have a degree of authority, such as managerial departments, some of them are completely Anarchist in nature. The Mondragon Corporation, for instance, is a cooperative that has been criticized for repressing strikes. But they are still capable of managing their industry in a decentralized manner that gives *a little more power to the worker* than Capitalism.²⁴ The Indian Coffee House

¹⁸ "ITALY 1920: When 600,000 workers seized control of their workplaces," by Tom Wetzal, presented as a talk at the Conference on Workers' Self-Organization in St. Louis in 1988, Tom Wetzal page.

¹⁹ (Autogestion Lessons), interview with Charles Piaget on Mouvements, published by mouvements.info; Mouvements.info page.

²⁰ PSU, « Lip au féminin », Critique Socialiste, n°5, 1971.

²¹ "The Silent Revolution: From the rubble of economic collapse, Argentina's recuperadas build a cooperative future," by Marcelo Ballvé, published in Orion, July | August, 2006.

²² "Occupied Factory Movement In Argentina," by Marie Trigona, Znet, October 06, 2004, zmag.org page.

²³ Other resources, as provided by the website of the filmmakers who made a documentary on the workers: thetake.org page.

²⁴ Making Mondragon: The Growth and Dynamics of the Worker Cooperative Complex (1991), William Whyte. ISBN 0875461814 .

I do not suspect that abolishing authority will have any destructive effect on industries. While there are many small voices, with their own ideas about how things should work, all are bound by their hunger and desire for a better world. This alone will drive people to cooperative, voluntary relationships that are mutual and equal. Where working together brings us more, we have always chosen that path. And if abolishing our masters and exploiters means ultimate freedom and prosperity, then that's the destination of the journey.

The Paris Commune

"Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon — authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionists. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeois? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough?"

–Friedrich Engels

Authority has now been defined as any type of resistance to authority. The fighting against capitalists and governments, while a fight against authority, is itself authority. Another bizarre redefinition. What happened to authority meaning when people make a collective agreement to work at certain hours?

Just what does Engels mean when he says “*Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it [the Paris Commune] for not having used it [authority] freely enough?*” Using the new in place of the word, what Engels means here is this: “Should we not, on the contrary, reproach the Paris Commune for not having fought hard enough against authority?” The street fighting and summary executions, which enveloped Paris and lasted several weeks, took the lives of 30,000 to 50,000 people, with up to 7,000 exiled.² Friedrich Engels, “our hero of the International Workingman’s Association,” thinks we should criticize the Paris Commune for not fighting hard enough. To him, for a city to lose one out of every forty citizens means that they certainly didn’t give enough.

Also, the description of the government established at the Paris Commune undervalues many of the city’s decentralized organizations. According to Wikipedia, “At the same time, these local assemblies pursued their own goals, usually under the direction of local workers. Despite the formal reformism of the Commune council, the composition of the Commune as a whole was much more revolutionary. Revolutionary factions included Proudhonists (an early form of moderate anarchism), members of the international socialists, Blanquists, and more libertarian republicans.”³ This is why Engels must redefine authority to mean “rifles and bayonets.” If authority meant what it says in the dictionary, the power to rule over other people, then Engels would have to say that the Social Revolution is the least authoritarian that exists.

² Cobban, Alfred. *A History of Modern France*. Vol 3: 1871–1962. Penguin books, London: 1965. Pg. 23.

³ Wikipedia, article: The Paris Commune.

would be absolutely independent of all forms of central power, taking part in the general economic system on the basis of equality.”¹⁷

In France, both in 1871 and in 1968, the people were able to organize along a cooperative, voluntary basis. They worked together socially and economically, but not politically. This trend existed in both the Free Territory, as well as in Anarchist Catalonia, during the Spanish Civil War. In none of these examples did industry break down and die, even though authority was minimal or non-existent. But, even without completely abolishing the state, there are plenty of experiments of Libertarian Socialism within Capitalism. Cooperatives, communes, and collectives, or unions, occupations, and activist groups — these are plenty examples of non-Authoritarian Socialism that spring up within Statist Capitalism. And we can analyze such organizations to see how much authority exists, and whether its presence helped or hindered the group’s ability to reach its end.

Engels’ argument about authority, in this particular section, is focused on industrial efficiency. After workers have labored in factories and on farms for years and years, can they organize their workplace themselves efficiently? Is it possible for a group of laborers go from taking orders from overseers to making decisions collectively? Besides the massive, revolutions where all of the terms of production are seized, such as in Spain or France, there are small revolutions that occur. They are certainly revolutions, for the workers have completely redefined their relationship with the means of production by seizing it.

For instance, in Italy in 1920, over 600,000 workers seized the means of production and organized work for themselves. This

¹⁷ “History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918–1921),” by Petr Arshinov, with preface by Volin, chapter 5.

works, textile mills and paper factories, electrical and chemical concerns, glass bottle factories and perfumeries, food-processing plants and breweries, as well as a host of other enterprises, were confiscated or controlled by workmen's committees, either term possessing for the owners almost equal significance in practice. Motion-picture theatres and legitimate theatres, newspapers and printing shops, department stores and bars, were likewise sequestered or controlled as were the headquarters of business and professional associations and thousands of dwellings owned by the upper class."¹⁶

The Free Territory, sometimes called *The Makhnovshchina*, lasted from 1919 to 1921 in the Ukraine. The Anarchist Army of Nestor Makhno fought German Imperialists on the west and Russian Bolsheviks on the east. Peasants and workers, cooperating together and without an authority, were able to reorganize society on radically different guidelines than Statism Quoting Petr Arshinov, a historian of the Free Territory...

"The characteristic traits specific to this movement are: a profound distrust of non-working or privileged social groups; suspicion of political parties; rejection of all dictatorships over the people by any and all organizations; rejection of the principle of the State; complete self-direction of the working people in all their affairs. The primary and concrete form of this self-direction consists of free working councils of peasants' and workers' organizations. 'Free' means that they

¹⁶ Bolloten, Burnett (1984-11-15). *The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution*. University of North Carolina Press. pp. 1107. ISBN 978-0807819067.

The Historical Record

"Wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself, to destroy the power loom in order to return to the spinning wheel."

–Friedrich Engels

There are a handful of historical records that can be brought out to demonstrate whether Engels was right or wrong. His prediction, made decades before the first Socialist State, can now be judged for its historical value. There two situations that can be examined. First, we can examine state Socialism, such as the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Korea, and Vietnam. We shall examine whether authority here was able to produce an industrial superpower, like Engels had suggested. And second, we can examine the places where Libertarian Socialism took hold, such as Catalonia in Spain, Paris in France, or the Free Territory in Ukraine.

The industry of the state governments of Authoritarian Socialists are all disastrous The grain confiscation and farm "collectivization" of Stalin, for instance, is responsible for between 2 and 10 million deaths in Ukraine.⁴⁵⁶ In "Communist" China, workers are regularly exposed to toxic and deadly chemicals in the production of iPhones and iPods.⁷ While authority is legally allowed to do this, the workers are not legally allowed

⁴ France Meslé, Gilles Pison, Jacques Vallin France-Ukraine: Demographic Twins Separated by History, Population and societies, N°413, juin 2005.

⁵ ce Meslé, Jacques Vallin Mortalité et causes de décès en Ukraine au XXè siècle + CDRom ISBN 2-7332-0152-2 CD with online data partially.

⁶ Shelton, Dinah (2005). *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*. Detroit ; Munich: Macmillan Reference, Thomson Gale. pp. 1059. ISBN 0028658507.

⁷ "Wintek Factory Workers Protest Over Working Conditions," January 19th, 2010 at 12:30 PM, by Jeff Gamet.

to strike. In “Communist” Vietnam, the Socialist overseers have a way to make you work: sexual abuse and physical torture.⁸ In Cuba, if workers become socially-conscious and form a union, they are all fired. They are evicted from their apartments, arrested by the police, and harassed, beaten, and tortured by the *Socialist Government*.⁹ This is how things are organized industrially in Socialism where there is great authority.

And when we look at situations where Socialists have abolished authority, what is the result? Did industry come to a complete stop, as Engels had predicted? Engels mistakes the Paris Commune of 1871 as being created by a government, when in fact, it was created by the voluntary, cooperative action of a revolutionary population. In fact, Engels wouldn’t dare go so far as to say that Mikhail Bakunin, the Anarchist philosopher, was involved in the French uprisings.¹⁰¹¹¹² This might give the reader the impression that there were Anarchist ideals at work in the Paris Commune — *that it was the result of Libertarian philosophy, not Authoritarian philosophy*. The philosopher of authority certainly wouldn’t give their reader that kind of liberty to decide how they think.

Industry did not die out in the Paris Commune of 1871, and no historian would even pretend to imagine that. Engels’ predictions fail the moment that they’re made. Less than one hundred years later, in 1968, the workers of Paris — and all of France — rise up, abolish their national and local governments, and seized the means of production. Ten out of fifteen million

⁸ “Asian Nike Workers Strike Over Pay,” AP, Saturday 26 April 1997, 4:53 am EDT, JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP).

⁹ Violations of social and labor rights in Cuba, 2003, Federación Sindical de Plantas Eléctricas, Gas y Agua en el exilio. April 30, 2004, CubasIndical.org page.

¹⁰ International Institute of Social History, Michail Aleksandrovi? Bakunin Papers, IISG.nl page.

¹¹ “The Paris Commune,” by Mikhail Bakunin, First Published in 1871 Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY.

¹² “Letters to a Frenchman,” by Mikhail Bakunin, September 1870.

workers are on strike.¹³ Charles De Gaul, the so-called great freedom fighter against Fascism, banned Left-wing organizations and threatened to use violence on the people.

Under this type of oppressive, violent government, Prime Minister De Gaul’s personal militia engaged in kidnappings, tortures, executions, and bombings.¹⁴ It was irrelevant to him that the main organizations and people he targeted were the original Free Fighting French that defeated the Nazis. Even with all this vicious authority, cloaked in democratic phrases, the workers organized without power and elections. The laborers themselves took the industries, and operated themselves, on a voluntary and cooperative basis.¹⁵ Threatened with a great and powerful authority, that massacres its own people, the people were still able to manage industry without authoritarianism. Engels prediction died by his misinterpretation of the Paris Commune in 1871. But the experiment was run again, in 1968, and again it thoroughly disproved Engels’ ideas about authority.

In 1936, Anarchists in Spain also proved Engels’ suggestions to be completely false. Everything was done without authority, and industries were organized by the workers themselves without any rulers deciding for them. Burnett Bolloten, a Spanish Civil War historian, writes of the Anarchists in Catalonia, Spain...

“Railways, tramcars and buses, taxicabs and shipping, electric light and power companies, gasworks and waterworks, engineering and automobile assembly plants, mines and cement

¹³ The Beginning of an Era, from Situationist International No 12 (September 1969). Translated by Ken Knabb.

¹⁴ François Audigier, Histoire du SAC, la part d’ombre du gaullisme, Stock, 2003, p. 462.

¹⁵ The Beginning of an Era (part1, part 2) Situationist International #12, 1969.