Smashing the Orderly Party
An Anarchists' Critique of Leninism
2019

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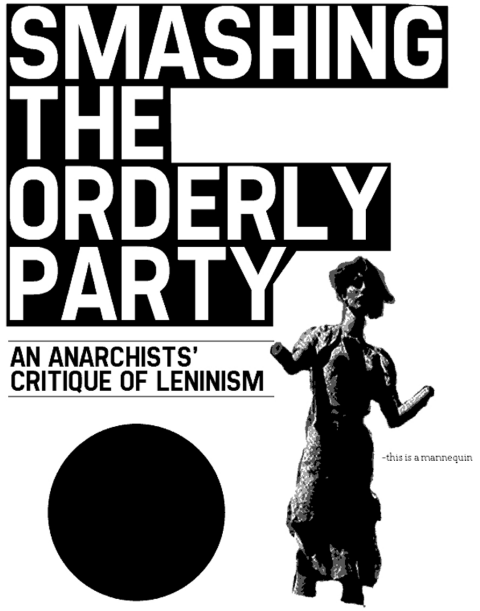

2019

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In any case, the relative irrelevance and lack of traction amongst young people toward Lenin should be relieving for anarchists. In this context, we shouldn't trap ourselves into identitarian ghettos. *Insurrection is a social event. In the coming years, we may find allies in strange places.* That being said, we should collaborate with other groups on our own terms as distinct autonomous partisans with our own ideas about how struggles should move forward. Our collaboration with Leninists should be contingent and relative to our level of affinity with individuals on a limited scope for specific purposes. We should work with them informally whenever possible for the mutual gain of all. This general strategy, of course, rewards the anarchist spirit more than the Leninist tendency, as Leninists tend to hesitate initiating meaningful radical intervention in the social clash.

Although we should not back down from critiquing authoritarian socialists, we should recognize their relative weakness in the current context. It can be important for anarchists to establish the autonomous space for anarchy by distancing themselves from the Left. While that is important, we shouldn't focus too much energy on defining ourselves in a positive sense — the better to recuperate our efforts! There is an entire social terrain to find accomplices and friendships. We should focus on building those necessary complicities in anticipation of the social clash with domination. Once we have established the necessary distance between anarchist spaces and the Leninist Parties, we should shift to a general strategy of ignoring them completely. when it comes to organization, except for when we may be able to work together.

"the party." These keywords are deeply coded, but they all mean the same thing: small groups of people controlling others, often by pretending to be on their side.

To quote from a particularly popular iconoclast—

> A state, is called the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly lieth it also; and this lie creepeth from its mouth: "i, the state, am the people.

A few tentative conclusions

Anarchy and Leninism are distinct. There is an ocean between the tension of anarchy and the positive political program of Marxist-Leninism.

Anarchy is the destruction of all authority, the destabilization of all control, the unruly indulgence of lust and passion, the Dionysian explosion of Life and excess. The anarchist sprints forward infinitely past the tyranny of the "possible" and toward living life to the fullest. The anarchist seeks to develop the material solidarities to provide for one another's emotional, mental, spiritual and physical needs in the present tense, so that we may launch a counter-attack against everything that has made us ashamed of our bodies and our dreams and so that we may encounter worlds we never considered before.

The positive project of Marxism-Leninism seeks to impose a new world of Order. They seek to construct a reality of scientific coherence whereby the current categories of society may fully realize themselves. For the Leninist, life is always elsewhere. Although they speak of communism, they aim to build a new socialist government. The Leninist believes so little in the human capacity to self-organize and in the capacity of individuals to take their lives into their own hands, that they command strict adherence to a Party of technocrats and intellectuals.

Need some context? Here's an introduction

I would like to write down some thoughts regarding Leninism as a historical and theoretical position. I am writing to those who are willing to listen in hopes of refining a critique of authoritarian socialism. I do not have delusions that this short essay will convince anyone of something drastically outside of what they already believe or at least that is not my intention.

Recently, there has been much debate on listserv and social media sites about an upcoming "Bash Lenin Pinata Party" being hosted by some local Atlanta anarchists. In response to this. Leninists and other authoritarian socialists (including Maoists from other parts of the country) have responded with vitriol, homophobic slanders, and multitudinous critiques of anarchy. "sectarianism," and "trolling." I am writing this because I believe that anarchists and anti authoritarians in other parts of the country have had similar encounters with Leninists. The responses I have seen are usually limited to poking fun or reverting to listing-off familiar historical bloodbaths of the Leninist project. I hope to bring a humble contribution to the discussion with the intention of increasing our capacity to meaningfully engage in ideological debate with the Party of Order — be it Leninists, bosses, police, liberals, misogynists or anyone else who seeks to impose discipline on our bodies.

For a wild, uncontrollable, rebellion without object or measure.
For anarchy!

A Brief Glossary of Terms

It is almost never the case that serious disagreements stem from simple miscommunication. With that said, I would like to avoid misunderstandings stemming from an imprecise lexicon.

AUTHORITY: The difference between your mother or your kindergarten teacher and a police officer or party hack is that the first kind of authority undermines the basis for its own existence over time and the second kind creates the material and social relations which discipline your body and mind in a self duplicating relationship of domination or attempt to do so. When anarchists talk about "authority." we are nearly always disparaging the domination of the latter. Marxists following the Leninist tradition are often intentionally unclear about their definition of authority. bouncing back and forth between the two listed above when it is expedient for them. Some Leninists even go as far as to say that they don't even know what the word authority' means. Here. I have laid bare a coherent, nuanced definition that I believe reflects the lived experiences of contemporary human reality. Note: an "Authoritarian" is simply someone who believes that authority-as-domination is necessary, desirable, or inevitable. This includes the "authority of the majority" espoused by democrats (lower-case "d").

AUTONOMY: The freedom to decide for oneself about things involving ones own body (See also: "Individual"). The limits of autonomy under capitalism are clear — it's not enough for us to simply negotiate a peace treaty with Power, we must attack! Regardless, most anarchists see autonomous self organization as an absolute prerequisite to any emancipatory project.

DISCIPLINE: It is always rewarding to accomplish a goal or to overcome an obstacle in one's life. More often than not, this requires patience and dedication or some would say, discipline. There is obviously nothing wrong with this undertaking. When I talk about "discipline" in this piece. I am referring to the historical, social, and institutional use of force, guilt, and coercion to conform human behavior to existing social morals or expectations while subsequently pathologizing or imprisoning all behaviors or biologies that do not fit the values of the social order. For anarchists, the problem of prisons, asylums. and courts is

are replaced with bureaucrats inside of the Party. This is a well-known critique of socialism even amongst "ordinary people."

If we are still compelled to work by factors outside of our control where we are still producing wealth and value for others to enjoy, and we still must suffer the boredom and misery of industrial metropolitan society, aren't we still living under capitalism? Socialists (including Leninists and other authoritarians) are quick to point out the standard of living of the masses of citizens in socialists countries but this begs a question: *is socialism simply a welfare state on steroids?*

Socialization and the legal regime of bureaucratic capitalism

Capitalism as a mode of production is composed of different parts. The most obvious parts include the working humans and those who oversee the extraction of value from their behavior (these people almost always profit from that behavior, but I suppose that's not necessary). Capitalism is reproduced because people keep behaving in ways that produce value. This is, of course, a tautology. The community of capital is why there is capitalism. Everyday life under capitalism is capitalism. The only way to destroy capitalism is to destroy the value-form and all relations of exchange through the negative projects of collective self-negation and communization.

Is this a quantitative question or a qualitative one? All things indicate to me that socialism is, in fact, capitalism in its nicest possible form.

Until it can be illustrated that socialism is something other than a redistribution of wealth, it should still be considered an element of capitalist accumulation and political economy.

Furthermore, it is an apparent strategy of authoritarian politics to equivocate the meanings of the people," "the state," or

Socialism sucks: All power to the communes!

A critique of Lenin can't be made in a vacuum Lenin is one of the most famous and respected socialists in the world. I'd like to take some time to shit-talk socialism as a political category and as a theoretical system. I'd like to make the case that socialism is not an alternative system to capitalism at all and that its proponents are not even communists. Socialism is a system of distribution inside of a capitalist economy. Socialism preserves the labor-capital relationship and the alienation of human labor. Socialism even preserves the value-form and the general M-C-M' formula of capitalism.

Capitalism is a set of social relations whereby wealth is extracted from human activity. The general formula for this relationship, one that is vague enough to account for many types of capitalist management and distribution, is Money-Commodity-More Money (M-C-M'). In this setup everything is subjected to the demands of the economy. It's also important to remember that capitalism developed in the terrain of many other imbalanced social relations, including patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity. I am not going to go too much into the details about capitalism here, but others have offered compelling and full analyses of the revolutionary mode of production.

Socialism is extreme reformism

Socialism is a system of government that radically re-defines the legal regime of property (most obviously from "private" to "public"). Capitalists are no longer allowed to hold property and they are repressed for trying. The representatives inside of the Party control the property. But we know that there is a huge difference between "public property" and "no property." Under socialism, the M-C-M' equation is preserved and the capitalists

not only a problem of administration but of the entire world order attached to their development and application.

INDIVIDUAL: Throughout the text. I may refer to the social category of the "individual." In liberal Enlightenment philosophy. The individual was a free roaming monad who entered equally into voluntary contract with other free persons and developed mechanisms of ensuring security. even at the expense of autonomy and freedom. In anarchist philosophy. as in the Marxist tradition, "individuals" do not truly exist outside of the context they are socialized in. Many anarchists are avid readers of the Postmodern and Poststructuralist marxists (ie. Critical Theory, Autonomia, "post-68" literature, etc.) who offer accurate and meaningful critiques of the metaphysical "individual" described in classical liberal thought. However, it is important to account for the real subjective experience of memory and the body as continuous nodes of interaction with other persons, places, and systems over time (meaning that all people experience themselves as singular organs of sense experience in space-time). The individual is a being in the world who experiences itself in a limited social context and who shapes its destiny in an ongoing creative process, one way or another.

THE STATE: For Marxists, the State is a centralized tool of class oppression. For Marx, the State is simply a compulsory apparatus for maintaining class distinctions. It is never really defined too strictly, which benefits anyone who wants to be in power. A useful definition of the State is either a body which maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of force or a body which maintains a monopoly on legitimate decision making. The economist definition of a State put forward by Marxists doesn't really tell us anything about how states have worked. Instead, it simply locates the State in its role in a market. It is possible, however, to conceive of governing bodies which do not impose themselves as economic actors, but simply exercise disciplinary control over human bodies. Such is the domination of the concentration camp.

Against self-victimizations anti-intellectualism among some anarchists

I am going to begin with a few thoughts on anarchists and our collective inability to meaningfully respond to the theoretical maneuvers of Leninists. I believe most of these critiques are obvious to those inside and outside of the anarchist space. Since my intention with this piece is to contribute to anarchist critique of Leninism, with my intended audience being anarchists, I feel like it may be tasteful to begin with some humble self-criticism.

It has been my experience that many anarchists have regularly and compulsively presented themselves as victims of a global historical conspiracy. By and large, the anarchist space rejects the logic of submission and victimization often expressed by liberals and activists on the Left. We prefer to see ourselves as active partisans in a social clash waged inside of societies or between worlds. It is surprising, then, that anarchists would be so reluctant to critically analyze the historical failures of anarchism. Of course, we have faced off tyrants, capitalists, and political opportunists of the Left: we have fought wars against fascism: we have made ourselves the enemies of rapists and homophobes. In short: we have declared war on the Existent and find ourselves with few comrades. Because of this, we stand against tremendous odds. However, anarchists have not simply failed because of outside forces. If this is the case, we must analyze the significance of this reality and develop holistic strategies for defense. It is not enough to be the purest ideology in the marketplace of ideas.

In the last two decades, anarchists and others have written countless essays and pamphlets critiquing the Spanish Civil War and the Paris Commune, as well as other mis-steps within the anarchist current. Still, many anarchists are unfamiliar

mode of this reform is revolution. That is perhaps the most profound difference between Leninists and Scandinavian-style social democrats who believe in the vote.

In any case, "seizing state power" is an obscene idea in today's world. The State is no longer the primary impetus of domination in today's Empire. To add to the directory of independent countries" only contributes to our current asphyxiation. The enemy today confronts us as a set of governing practices dispensed in a permanent state of global counter insurgency, not just as a class of dastardly expropriators. The entire project of constructing People's governments failed miserably in every single attempt. Even if it was simply the fault of outside forces, that reality is something Lenin's followers are going to have to account for.

> The true contrary of the proletariat is not the bourgeoisie. It is the bourgeois world, imperialist society, of which the proletariat, let this be noted, is a notorious element, as the principal productive force and as the antagonistic political pole… To say proletariat and bourgeoisie is to remain within the bounds of the Hegelian artifice: something and something else. Why? Because the project of the proletariat, its internal being, is not to contradict the bourgeoisie, or to cut its feet from under it. This project is communism, and nothing else. That is, the abolition of any place in which something like a proletariat can be installed. The political project of the proletariat is the disappearance of the space of the placement of classes. It is the loss, for the historical something, of every index of class.
>
> —"Theory of Worlds," pg. 7

"Seizing State Power"

The State exists for its own reasons but Leninists and most Marxists make the argument that the State is simply a tool of the bourgeoisie and that its functions should be taken over by the Party to repress their political opponents. Let's be absolutely clear about what this means, because Leninists always try to avoid the facts about this situation: In order the repress the bourgeoisie or the "enemies of the revolution/state" — including anarchists and other "infantile" ultra-leftists — *the Party wants to become the government.*

The "dictatorship of the proletariat" needs very specific things to exercise its control:

1. Police to round up perceived class enemies,
2. Courts to judge them in,
3. Prisons to hold them in, and
4. A centralized military to defend from outsiders.

It is common for Leninists to critique "the *capitalist* state," "*racist* police," and the "*privatized* prison system." These phrases have the appearances of radicalism. The terms "*capitalist*," "*racist*" and "*privatized*" seem to be *modifying* the nouns "state," "police," and "prison." But that couldn't be further from the truth. They are using distinct nouns. Leninists are not against the State, like anarchists are. They are against *this* state. They are not against police. They are against *these* police. They are against *these* prisons. The problem of the State, for Leninists, is an *administrative* question. In their eyes, the wrong regime holds power.

In this light we can see them for what they are: the most extreme social democrats for a drastically reformed state. The

with these critiques or have not developed their own theory regarding the events.

This brings me to my next point anti-intellectualism in the anarchist space. This is a problem that has influenced nearly every human grouping since the dawn of symbolic thought. I don't care about most of those groups — I want to talk to anarchists for a moment longer.

It seems that Marxism, as an essentially idealist philosophy from the Hegelian tradition (despite all claims to the contrary), has primarily produced an endless cast of academics, intellectuals, published authors, professors and other paid thinkers. On the other hand, anarchism has developed primarily as an evolving *practice of revolt*. The existential differences between Marxism and anarchism are not by chance and are not without consequence. In light of these differences, and perhaps in a sense of arrogance or even resentment, anarchists have not often meaningfully engaged with theoretical texts. Worse, many anarchists have avoided useful insight published by those pushing hardest at the barricades! Explicitly anarchist independent distribution networks of all sizes exist internationally, and that is beautiful. There are anarchist study groups and publishers. Still, the role of engaging with strategic or tactical considerations, let alone theoretical engagements, has been somewhat specialized in the anarchist space. This is unacceptable. We must develop a culture of praxis in the anarchist space — not so that we can abstractly bloviate on panels or in the university, but so that we can effectively spread social rebellion and disorder!

In recent years, the problem of anti-intellectualism has become less and less relevant. The crisis has given rise to several waves of anarchist activity all over the country — particularly on the west coast. In the current climate, even more so after the spontaneous developments of the #Occupy movement, anarchist networks have sprung up where they were previously

lacking, including here in Atlanta. This is a perfect opportunity for many to begin with a proper footing

TL;DR quit whining, read a book, think for yourself & let's kick ass.

Lenin as a historical figure; Some notes on the concentrated spectacle and the cult of personality

> And since commodity production is less developed under bureaucratic capitalism, it too takes on a concentrated form: the commodity the bureaucracy appropriates is the total social labor, and what it sells back to the society is that society's wholesale survival. The dictatorship of the bureaucratic economy cannot leave the exploited masses any significant margin of choice because it has had to make all the choices itself, and any choice made independently of it, whether regarding food or music or anything else, thus amounts to a declaration of war against it. This dictatorship must be enforced by permanent violence. Its spectacle imposes an image of the good which subsumes everything that officially exists, an image which is usually concentrated in a single individual, the guarantor of the system's totalitarian cohesion.
>
> —The Society of the Spectacle, Thesis 64

Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Che, Kim Jung Il, Pol Pot…

Many people associate Leninism, or even Marxism generally, with the type of totalitarian cult of personalities surrounding

domination. The cadre sees itself as the touched-up image of a revolting populace in the theater of political life.

A few thoughts on "armed struggle"

One particular strategy of Marxism-Leninism Maoism, especially popular in the 1970s, is the strategy of the "armed vanguard." The idea is essentially that a nuclei or cadre will arm itself, go underground, and levy armed clashes with the State. This specialized activity cannot be done by most sectors of the population and will, therefore, nurture awe and respect for the "Revolutionary Organizations."

This strategy is a strategy of substitutionism, like many Leninist projects. As has been mentioned elsewhere the force of insurrection is social, not military. The question is not quantitative, as in how much damage was done to capitalist infrastructure or how many were killed, but rather qualitative: *How deep has the practice of revolt spread in society?*

Anarchists do not seek to constitute ourselves as a counter-subject, a counter-state, which will wage war with the existing state and eventually overcome it. Anarchists seek to create a livable and endless state of exception whereby society has made itself completely unrulable.

In recent years, anarchists in some places have adopted the urban guerrilla strategy, language, and aesthetic of the Maoists. They insist they are not a vanguard, but words are not enough. Much has been written on the subject and I will not go further into it here.

Recommended reading all available on theanarchistlibrary.org: "At Daggers Drawn," "Open Letter to the Anarchist Galaxy," and "Armed Joy."

in infrastructural attacks (as happened in the December 2008 uprising in Greece), but they are still the basic unit of an autonomous uprisings. Organizing by affinity allows wide sectors of the population to develop critical thinking skills, the confidence to take initiative, and higher capacity to organize and coordinate combative activity, as well as providing for each person's material and emotional needs.

Self-organization vs. Substitutionism

Anarchist affinity groups, and affinity groups in general, are expressions of autonomous self organization. They do not seek to represent the "interests" of any group of people and they act purely according to the desires of those involved. Affinity group organizing does not seek to over determine the field of legitimate human activity, nor does it succumb to the liberal traps of democracy or formalism. Affinity groups are formed any time groups of people come together to act. This is the type of self-organization seen in Montreal 2011, France 2005, Italy 1977, Algeria 2001, and, of course, Seattle 1999.

On the other hand, cadre organizations see themselves as the legitimate agents of a social clash. They need to control, oversee, and defend the movement against capital which, unfortunately for them, is overrun with "unconscious" masses. Cadres seek to perform a specialized task so that they can substitute themselves for the revolting people. For cadres, unruliness and ungovernability are problems that must be overcome. Cadres must build up legitimacy in working class organizations, usually without revealing themselves, so that they can exercise disproportionate influence over decisions. In this way, they are authoritarian and destructive to any liberatory project.

We could say this another way: *Anarchists, as anti-representational catalysts of destabilization and revolt, experience themselves as forms of life incompatible with all*

the leaders of nearly every "successful" socialist regime. Leninists typically respond that sure, cults of personality exemplify an obvious cultural shortcoming in the nation-states in question, but the leaders themselves usually did their best to actively combat obsession. According to the Leninists, critiques that reference the pattern of cults of personality lack a historical materialist understanding of the conditions surrounding the culture. Thus, the beloved leader's hands are washed off the cult surrounding them. Although some such critiques are obvious results of American propaganda, there is still a clear issue of obsession over leadership within the Leninist tradition — and not every critique can or should be reduced to its "McCarthyist" or "rightist" origins.

Socialism seeks to radically reform the legal regime of property (more on this later). A part of this process involves what leftists, including some anarchists. call "seizing the means of production."

By this. Leninists mean something like "universal nationalization of wealth" or "socialization of all resources and industries." I could say this another way — I could call this "concentrating the power to distribute goods and food into the hands of a small group of people."

It is simply intellectually lazy to critique cults of personalities without addressing the material conditions out of which they developed Marxists should be very familiar with this process.

I would argue that any regime or government that consolidates forces of production and distribution into a single apparatus (whether Party or People's Army) is only able to reproduce slavish citizens. The centralization of production holds everyone dependent, against the alternative of certain war and famine, on the central apparatus. This daily existence in bureaucratic state capitalism of the Leninist persuasion, can only reproduce itself. The citizen-worker-subject is trapped in an infinite cycle of subjectivization. Outside of this process

stands only the sovereign: the patriarch who represents everything that could ever be free, the only thing that could ever meaningfully impact reality, the only individual left in a sick, dead world of work poverty, misery, and obsession. Production, distribution, trade security. Nation, and then dependence are wrapped up in a single concentrated spectacle: *the Big Brother who accounts for all of one's needs.*

Security and dinner came with Stalin's face branded on the packaging, so to speak

In this way, the Leninist strategy of "seizing state power" had to have a Stalin.

In contemporary American society, with its integrated spectacle, all of life is reduced to the consumption of competing fluid and meaningless images that only specialists can understand. Americans create and participate in their own becoming-false. They are alien in their own bodies and see themselves as reflections of images. Under bureaucratic state capitalism, however, this was not so. Since all commodity circulation was centralized, the images of those commodities were also centralized. Everything was mediated by the image of the leader who was the only real actor in the entire social factory. There is no reason to believe that this will not happen again every single time production is organized this way.

Lenin and his willing executioners

I am not going to address the famines caused by forced industrialization or forced collectivization. It must be mentioned, however, that the centralization of power destroyed the Russian ecosphere and caused millions of deaths over several decades from famine and drought. Many Leninists today still view industrialization as good and view the reluctance of the peasants/sailors to send all of their food to Moscow for War Communism and redistribution to have been "individualist." This comes, I believe, from

working class organizations according to the needs and recommendations of the larger coordinating body (i.e. the central committee). While cadres have relative autonomy because they are federated, they are not expressions of legitimate self-organization. Their membership guidelines preclude free association, while the party structure that governs them enforces ideological hegemony and conformity. Although in "democratic centralism" debate is encouraged individuals are expected to go along with the majority decision. How this is distinct from contemporary bourgeois democracy is unclear to me.

Affinity Groups: The affinity group is the basic unit of most anarchist organizing. especially from currents directly or indirectly influenced by Italian and North American insurrectionary anarchism. Affinity groups are essentially small, closed, informal groups of people who share a common goal, common knowledge and who have come together to directly achieve their goals. "Common goals" can be anything from "smash the windows out of the Niketown" to "make some leaflets before the march" to "hold the banner together." Affinity groups coordinate and organize themselves autonomously. They intervene however they see fit, but usually with some level of consideration for the plans of larger formations. "Common knowledge" means that each person in the affinity group has a general idea of everyone else's expectations, temperament, and how they will feel about the action they take following its execution, especially in the event of repression or failure. Affinity groups are normally between 3 and 10 people and come together only for a particular set of actions (ie. informally).

Affinity is developed through discussion and shared experience. Affinity is not short-hand for "friendship," although it is often the case that people form affinity groups with those they are closest to socially. There are certainly limits to affinity-group organizing, especially in periods of open insurrection when it may be necessary to involve upwards of 100 people

and cannot develop the force necessary to overcome it. The only solution to this problem. Lenin believes, is to form secret, conspiratorial bands which will intervene in the struggle of the working class to beat back liberalism and to help develop an insurrectionary fervor. These groups, called cadres, would be federated with nuclei in the factories. Cadres would report back to the central committee of the Bolshevik Party, which would consolidate the information brought back and decide the strategic course of action at that point. When an insurrection begins, the Party will team with the advanced layers of the working class and their most revolutionary organizations and groups to "seize state power" with which to launch a "dictatorship of the proletariat."

I do not believe that I have straw-manned the position of Lenin, although it is likely that I am inaccurate about some of the details. I have not thoroughly read *What is to be Done?*, but I have read several sections and I've discussed the text with self-described Leninists many times. Furthermore, I have read online overviews and watched short introductory videos. In short. I do not claim to be an expert — so excuse any inaccuracies. Regardless. I believe this to be the basic position Lenin holds.

Remember that the State, according to Lenin, is simply an instrument of class oppression. Thus, once it is used by the Party to obliterate class distinctions, state functions will become totally redundant. The State will 'wither away." bringing us to full Communism.

Cadres vs. Affinity Groups: Similarities and Differences

Cadres: A cadre is a tight-knit group of professional revolutionaries who intervene in social movements and

a profound disregard in the Leninist tendency to consider environmental devastation as well as rampant authoritarianism in their tendency. I am also not going to discuss Stalin's forced labor and extermination camps because most Leninists understand that Stalin was a horrible bastard.

I'd like to spend the least time here because I think many people are aware of the deaths dealt at the hands of Lenin and other Leninist dictators. Of note is the suppression of the Kronstadt Commune and the Ukrainian Black Army. Both of these groups helped to overthrow the Tsar and collaborated with the Bolsheviks for years leading up to their deaths. Also noteworthy is the Stalinist repression of the Spanish anarchists and the Maoist beheadings of anarchists during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Leninists are often frustrated when anarchists bring these things up, and for good reason. Leninists (whether as strict Marxist-Leninists or as Maoists or Trotskyists) identify with a very particular historical moment. They see themselves as reflections of these leaders. They locate themselves in the theory, behaviors, and lives of these Great Men. To question the legitimacy of this his-story calls into question how they see themselves. Although they would argue that they are not dogmatic followers of their leaders, it is yet to be illustrated that they wouldn't follow similar orders to maim and kill political opponents if they were made today. After all, there were many smart, independent, comrades who gladly persecuted political opponents under socialist governments.

When Leninists are confronted with the betrayals of the Kronstadt, don't they always justify it? "It was a historical necessity." If it's not a divine/objective necessity. like the colonization of the New World was thought to be, then it's the fault of the anarchists. Why weren't they sending grain to Moscow? Why weren't they submitting to the orders of the Bolshevik leadership? Why did they oppose class collaboration with the

national bourgeoisie? These excuses mimic the justification for virtually every imperialist or totalitarian venture in history.

The most insidious justification is that it was a sad thing that had to happen. This way, modern Leninists are able to distance themselves from behaviors that they see as wise and, besides being unfortunate, completely legitimate. They can maintain airs of radicalism while preserving their loyalty and commitment to the Party-line.

The final justification they offer is some form of disassembling. They insist that "Lenin wasn't a superhero" who could just do whatever he wanted. *This is dishonest in full.* Aside from the fact that the Bolshevik party was totally hierarchical and Lenin could have literally retracted the order to murder if he wanted, it is also an inconsistent distribution of agency.

They laud Lenin for the good thing he does and divert

blame for the bad things. Furthermore, anarchists know the problem wasn't just Lenin. We are very much aware that the problem was totally structural. That is why we are against the State. People shouldn't have the authority to make decisions like that. When people are able to dominate others, they usually do. Lenin could have been anyone and that's what scares us about his followers.

Oh yeah, one more thing!

Anarchists are not innocent activists and in none of these circumstances were they quietly trying to build up State power. Anarchists are rebels and in most of these circumstances they were actively moving forward with revolutionary maneuvers against domination. Because the Leninist Strategy of "seizing State power" involves establishing a new "revolutionary government." an equivocation is made whereby the "State" is substituted for "Revolution" and the phrase "enemy of the revolution" is subtly transformed into the Hobbesian/monarchist "enemy of the state." It is no surprise that enemies "on the right

as well as the left" are opposed with tyrannical force. The State is to blame for anarchist deaths. That much is clear. This was not the oppression of legitimate citizens in an otherwise quaint society. The anarchists killed by Leninists and Maoists were casualties in a social war.

Against all authority; Critique of the vanguard strategy +More!

> Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement…and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy.
>
> — "What Is To Be Done?," "The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats"

Perhaps the defining characteristic of Leninism as a distinct political philosophy is his revolutionary strategy developed in his text *What is To Be Done?*, published in 1901. In the text. Lenin describes the repressive conditions of the political situation in Tsarist Russia at the turn of the century and the potential vectors of revolt at that point from his perspective (which, it turns out, is "objective" and "scientific"! How lucky!). The text describes a backward feudal society completely controlled by the Tsar and his police. Surveillance is near total and any attempts at economic blockades or even passive demonstration are met by brutal repression by the royal police force. Furthermore, there was little to no revolutionary momentum or theory coming from Russia at the time, outside of the Nihilist movement

Lenin proposes that the spontaneous self-organization of the working class has as its limit "trade union consciousness" which can only negotiate conditions inside of market society