

Freedom for All

An Introduction to Anarchism

Zabalaza

2008

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
What is Anarchism?	5
Anarchist vs. Marxist Thought on Organisation of Society	7
General Principles of Anarchism	12
Capitalism, the State and Private Property	12
Down with Capitalism and the State!	14
Anarchism, Violence and Authority	14
Anarchists and Revolutionary Organisation	17

Freedom for all, and a natural respect for that freedom. Such are the essential conditions of international solidarity.

– Bakunin

Foreword

Over the last few years, the resurgence of revolutionary anarchism has caught the attention of the world.

The role of the anarchists in the anti-globalisation movement, at Seattle, Prague, Gothenburg, Genoa, La Paz, and Porto Allegre – where we have been in the forefront of militant resistance – has been widely reported in the media.

The New York Times recently proclaimed “Anarchism: the idea that refuses to die,” whilst SAPA, not to be outdone, blamed the anarchist “black bloc” for the disruption of the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy.

But what is the anarchist movement? What does it want? Where is it going? And how can you get involved?

This South African pamphlet, based on the excellent work of Black Panther-turned-Anarchist Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin, answers these questions.

Anarchism is not about violence or chaos.

Anarchists are libertarian socialists: we want the abolition of the capitalist system that systematically impoverishes billions, that crushes individual freedom, that twists and destroys human lives in the interests of profit for the few, that threatens the future of life itself through an ever-increasing ecological crisis.

But this is not enough. The problem of capitalism is not simply a problem of poverty. It is a problem of social freedom.

Capitalism does not just impoverish economically. It also destroys communities, solidarity, freedom, equality and human dignity.

It produces and reproduces horrific forms of social and economic oppression, such as racism and discrimination against women.

Capitalism and the state control us through undemocratic workplaces, schools, and local governments, through structures that serve to systematically disempower ordinary people, enslaving us to a profit system that concentrates power and wealth in the hands of a ruling class of big capitalists and politicians. They cannot benefit the majority because all governments and all corporations serve the ruling class first and foremost, and act as organs of repression against ordinary people.

For this reason, we believe in the need to replace capitalist governments with confederations of workplace and community councils based on direct democracy, participation, immediate recallability and strict mandates. These structures will allow self-management throughout our lives as opposed to the fraud of parliamentary democracy that does nothing but provide jobs for ambitious politicians and sell-outs.

It is only the working class and peasantry – organised within and across countries, across race, national and gender lines on an anti-capitalist, anti-statist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist and anti-sexist programme – that can crush capitalism and their governments.

Through the use of direct action – not elections or lobbying, not praying to leaders – rooted in mass organisations based on internal democracy – we can begin to challenge the capitalist “order” and build organs of mass counter power that can supplant capitalism, burying it so that we and our children can begin to live a decent life, as human beings. We must organise on an anti-authoritarian basis, as opposed to the capitalist model of organisation: sitting passively and taking orders from leaders, bosses and central committees.

Only the working class can free the working class. By ‘working class’ we do not just mean blue-collar workers: all people who work for others for wages and lack power are workers, no matter their jobs, and includes workers’ families, the unemployed and, more generally, the poor. Dictatorship and authoritarianism are never progressive, and have, time and again, destroyed working class movements. Authoritarian politics –including mainstream Marxism– has consistently throttled the self-initiative and self-organisation of the masses in favour of a small vanguard of incompetent leaders. And these leaders have, at best, only succeeded in establishing new dictatorships and new forms of capitalism, as happened in the Soviet Union and as continues to happen today in Cuba and China.

We need an alternative to capitalism. Sweatshops, casual labour, racism, imperialist war, poverty, massive unemployment, privatisation, child prostitution on the streets, growing police brutality, neo-liberalism. These are the face of capitalism in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries.

This pamphlet, and the ideas it expresses so clearly, point to this alternative.

Read it, study it, and get involved!

Lucien van der Walt

Note: A dictionary has been provided on the last pages. See numbers for direct reference.

Introduction

“Anarchy is society organised without authority, meaning by authority the power to impose one’s own will... authority not only is not necessary for social organisation but, far from benefiting it, lives on it parasitically, hampers its development, and uses its advantages for the special benefit of a particular class which exploits and oppresses the others”.

Errico Malatesta

l’Agitazione, June 4, 1897

Anarchists and Anarchism have historically been misrepresented to the world. The popular idea of an Anarchist as an uncontrollably emotional, violent person who is only interested in destruction for its own sake, and who is opposed to all forms of organisation, still exists to this day. Further, the mistaken belief that Anarchy is chaos and confusion, a reign of rape, murder and mindlessness – total disorder and insanity – is widely believed by the general public.

This impression is still widely believed because people from all political groups have consciously been promoting this lie for years. All who strive to oppress and exploit the working class, and gain power for themselves, whether they come from the Right or the Left, will always be threatened by Anarchism. This is because Anarchists hold that all authority and coercion¹

¹ **coercion:** to force or to hold by force

must be struggled against. In fact, we want to get rid of the greatest cause of violence throughout history – governments. To Anarchists, a Capitalist democratic government is no better than a fascist or Communist regime, because the ruling class only differs in the amount of violence they authorise their police and army to use and the degree of rights they will allow, if any. Through war, police repression, social neglect, and political repression, millions of people have been killed by governments, whether trying to defend or overthrow a government. Anarchists want to end this slaughter, and build a society based on peace and freedom.

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is free or Libertarian Socialism. Anarchists are opposed to government (the people who make the laws), the State (the people who impose the laws) and Capitalists (the people who the laws are made for). Therefore, simply speaking, Anarchism is a no-government form of Socialism.

“In common with all Socialists, the Anarchists hold that the private ownership of land, capital and machinery has had its time; that it is condemned to disappear, and that all requisites for production must and will, become the common property of society, and be managed in common by the producers of wealth.”

Peter Kropotkin

Anarchism is based upon the class struggle, but it does not take the same view of the class struggle as the Marxists do. For instance, it does not take the view that only the industrial workers can achieve Socialism, and that the victory of these workers, led by a communist working class party, represents the final victory over Capitalism. Nor do we accept the idea of a Workers' State. We believe that only the Working Class can liberate society and that we should manage industrial and economic production and distribution through, freely elected, worker and community committee's, and farm co-operatives, rather than with the interference of a party or government.

Anarchists are social revolutionaries, and feel that the Social Revolution is the process through which a free society will be achieved. Self-management will be established in all areas of social life. By their own initiative, individuals will put into action their own management of social life through voluntary associations. They will refuse to surrender their self-direction to the State, political parties, or vanguard² sects³ since each of these only establish or re-establish domination. Anarchists believe the State and capitalist authority will be ended by the means of direct action; wildcat strikes, slowdowns, boycotts, sabotage, and armed insurrection.⁴ We recognise our goals cannot be separated from the means we use to achieve them. Therefore our practice and the associations we create must and will reflect the society we seek.

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT MORE ATTENTION IS PAID TO THE AREA OF ECONOMIC⁵ ORGANISATION; SINCE IT IS HERE THAT THE INTERESTS OF EVERYONE MEET. Under Capitalism,

² **vanguard:** the leading position in a movement or the people in that position

³ **sects:** a group of people with a common interest or philosophy

⁴ **insurrection:** the act of rebelling against an established authority

⁵ **economic:** the way goods are distributed and exchanged (money in modern capitalist society).

we all have to sell our labour to survive and to feed ourselves and our families. But after an Anarchist social revolution, the wage system and the institution of private and state property will be abolished⁶ and replaced with the production and distribution of goods according to the principle of “From each according to their ability, to each according to their need”. Voluntary associations of producers and consumers will take common possession of the means of production and distribution and allow the free use of all resources to any voluntary group, as long as this does not deprive others or does not mean using wage labour. These associations could be food and housing co-operatives, co-operative factories, community run schools, hospitals, recreation facilities, and other important social services. These associations will federate with each other to achieve their common goals on both a regional and functional basis.

This federalism as a concept is a form of social organisation in which self-determining groups freely agree to co-ordinate their activities. The only social system that can possibly meet all the different needs of society, while still promoting solidarity on the widest scale, is one that allows people to freely associate on the basis of common needs and interests. Federalism, which emphasises autonomy and de-centralisation, builds solidarity and encourages groups’ efforts to be as self-sufficient as possible. Groups can then be expected to co-operate as long as they gain mutual benefit. Contrary to the Capitalist legal system and its contracts, if such benefits are not felt to be mutual in an anarchist society, any group will have the freedom to dis-associate. In this manner a flexible and self-regulating social organism⁷ will be created, always ready to meet new needs by new organisations and adjustments. Federalism is not a type of Anarchism, but it is an essential part of Anarchism. It is the joining of groups and people for political and economic survival and livelihood.

We have an enormous job ahead of us, and we must be able to work together for the benefit of the idea. The Italian Anarchist, Errico Malatesta, said it best when he wrote:

“Our task is that of pushing the ‘people’ to demand and to seize all the freedom they can to make themselves responsible for their own needs without waiting for their orders from any kind of authority. Our task is that of demonstrating the uselessness and harmfulness of the government, or provoking and encouraging by propaganda and action all kinds of individual and collective initiatives.... After the revolution, Anarchists will have the special mission of being the vigilant custodians of freedom, against the aspirants to power and possible tyranny of the majority.”

So, this is the job of the federation, but it does not end with the success of the revolution. There is much construction work to be done, and the revolution must be defended. To fulfil our tasks, we must have our own organisations. We must organise the post-revolutionary society, and this is why we federate ourselves. In a modern independent society, the principle of Federalism must be extended to all humanity. The network of voluntary associations, the Commune, will know no borders. It will be the size of the city, region or inter-region or a society much larger than the nation-state under Capitalism. It could be a mass-commune, which will include the entire world’s peoples in a number of continental Anarchist federations, say Africa, North America, or the Caribbean. Truly this would be a new world – not a United Nations or One World government, but a united Humanity.

⁶ **abolished:** to do away with (laws, regulations, or customs)

⁷ **organism:** something that is living

Our opposition is formidable.⁸ Each of us has been taught to believe in the need for government, in the absolute necessity of experts, in taking orders, in authority. For some of us it is all we know. But when we do learn to believe in ourselves and when we decide that we can create a society based on free, caring individuals, then that tendency⁹ which is buried within us will become the conscious choice of freedom-loving people. As Anarchists, we see our job as strengthening that tendency, and show that there is no democracy or freedom under government – whether in South Africa, the United States, China or Russia. Anarchists believe in direct democracy by the people as the only kind of freedom and self-rule.

Anarchism is an evolving ideal in which many individuals and social movements have influence. Women's Liberation, Racial Equality, Gay rights, the ecology movement, and others are all additions to the awareness of Anarchism, and this influence has helped in the advancement of Anarchism as a social force in modern society. These influences ensure that the social revolution we all want will be as all-inclusive and democratic as possible, and that all will be fully liberated – not just rich, straight, white males.

Anarchist vs. Marxist Thought on Organisation of Society

Historically, there have been three major forms of socialism: Free or Libertarian Socialism (Anarchism), Authoritarian Socialism (Marxist Communism), and Democratic Socialism (electoral social democracy). The non-Anarchist Left has echoed the Capitalist's portrayal of Anarchism as an ideology¹⁰ of chaos and lunacy. But Anarchism has nothing in common with this image. It is false and made up by its ideological opponents in the various schools of Marxism.

It is very difficult for the Marxists to make an objective criticism of Anarchism as such, because by its nature it undermines all the ideas that the Marxists believe. If Marxism and Leninism, its variant which emerged during the Russian revolution, is held out to be the working class philosophy and the workers cannot owe their liberation to anyone but the Communist Party, it is very hard to go back on it and say that the working class is not yet ready to get rid of authority over it. Lenin came up with the idea of a transitional State, which would “wither away” over time, to go along with Marx's “dictatorship of the proletariat.” We expose this line as counter-revolutionary and sheer power-grabbing, and over 75 years of Marxist practice has proven us right. These so-called Socialist States produced by Marxist doctrine have only produced new police states, where workers have no rights, and a new ruling class of technocrats¹¹ and party politicians have emerged, and the class differences between those the State favoured over those it didn't created widespread poverty among the masses and another class struggle. But instead of meeting such criticisms head on, they have concentrated their attacks not on the doctrine of Anarchism, but on particular Anarchist historical figures, especially Bakunin, an ideological opponent of Marx in the First International of Socialist movements in the last century.

Anarchists are social revolutionaries who seek a stateless, classless, voluntary, co-operative federation of decentralised communes based upon social ownership, individual liberty and autonomous self-management of social and economic life.

⁸ **formidable:** extremely difficult to defeat or overcome

⁹ **tendency:** the general course or direction

¹⁰ **ideology:** the doctrines, opinions, or way of thinking of a person or group

¹¹ **technocrats:** a government of scientists and other experts (intellectuals)

Anarchists differ with the Marxists in many areas, but especially in organisation building and structure.

We differ from the authoritarian socialists in three basic ways: we reject the Marxist notions of the vanguard party, democratic centralism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and we have alternatives for each of them. The problem is that almost the entire Left, including some Anarchists, is completely unaware of Anarchism's easily understood, and formed, structural alternatives of the catalyst group, Anarchist consensus, and the mass commune.

The Anarchist alternative to the vanguard party is the catalyst group. The catalyst group is merely an Anarchist federation of affinity (friendship) groups (cells) in action. This catalyst or revolutionary anarchist federation could meet on a regular basis or only when necessary, depending on the wishes of the membership and the urgency of social conditions. It would be made up of immediately recallable delegates from each affinity group, with full voting rights, privileges, and responsibilities. It would set both policies and future actions to be performed. It would produce both anarchist theory and social practice. It believes in the class struggle and the necessity to overthrow Capitalist rule. It organises in the communities and workplaces. It is democratic and has no authority figures like a party boss or central committee.

In order to make a revolution, large-scale co-ordinated movements are necessary, and their formation is in no way counter to Anarchism. What Anarchists are opposed to is hierarchical, power-tripping leadership that suppresses the creative urge of the bulk of those involved, and forces an agenda down their throat. Members of such groups are only servants and worshippers of the party leadership. But although Anarchists reject this type of domineering leadership, we do recognise that some people are more experienced, articulate, or skilled than others, and these people will play leadership action roles. These people are not authority figures, and can be removed at the will of the body. There is also a conscious attempt to routinely rotate this responsibility and to pass on these skills to each other, especially to women, who would ordinarily not get the chance. The experience of these people, who are usually experienced activists or better qualified than most at the moment, can help form and drive forward movements, and even help people develop the potential for revolutionary change in the popular movement. What they cannot do is take over the initiative of the movement itself. The members of these groups reject hierarchical¹² positions (anybody having more official authority than others), and unlike the Marxist vanguard parties, the Anarchist groups won't be allowed to continue their leadership through a dictatorship after the revolution. Instead the catalyst group itself will be dissolved and its members, when they are ready, will be absorbed into the new society's collective decision-making process. Therefore, Anarchists are not leaders, but only advisors and organisers for a mass movement.

What we don't want or need is a group of authoritarians leading the working class, then establishing themselves as a centralised decision-making command. Instead of "withering away", Marxist states have continuously built authoritarian institutions (the secret police, labour bosses, and the Communist Party) to maintain their power. The apparent effectiveness of such organisations masks the way that revolutionaries who pattern themselves after Capitalist, hierarchical institutions become absorbed by ruling class values, and completely isolated from the real needs and desires of ordinary people.

¹² **hierarchical:** 1. a system of people or things arranged one above the other 2. the hierarchy: the people in power in any authoritarian organisation

The reluctance of Marxists to accept revolutionary social change is, however, above all seen in Marx's idea of the party. It is a prescription to nakedly seize power and put it in the hands of the Communist Party. The party that Marxists create today, they believe, should become the [only] Party of the Working Class in which that class can organise and seize power. In practice, however, this means personal and party dictatorship, which they have, historically, felt gives them the right and duty to wipe out all other parties and political ideologies. Both Lenin and Stalin (both basing their Party on Marx's ideas) killed millions of workers and peasants, their Left-wing opponents, and even members of the Bolshevik (Communist Party in Russia) Party. This bloody, treacherous history is why there is so much rivalry and hostility between Leninist and Trotskyist (Trotsky was kicked out of the Bolshevik Party) parties today, and it is why the workers' states, whether in Cuba, China, Vietnam, or Korea are such oppressive bureaucracies over their people. It is also why most of the Eastern European "Communist" countries had their governments overthrown by the small capitalists and ordinary citizens in the 1980's. Maybe we are witnessing the eclipse¹³ of State Socialism (Marxism) entirely; since they have nothing new to say and will never get those governments back again.

While Anarchist groups reach decisions through anarchist consensus,¹⁴ the Marxists organise through so-called democratic centralism. Democratic centralism poses as a form of inner party democracy, but is really just a hierarchy by which each member of a party – ultimately of a society – is subordinate¹⁵ to a higher member until one reaches the all-powerful party Central Committee and its Chairman. This is a totally undemocratic procedure, which puts the leadership above criticism. It is a bankrupt; corrupt method of internal operations for a political organisation. You have no voice in such a party, and must be afraid to say any unflattering comments to, or about, the leaders.

In Anarchist groups, proposals are talked out by members (none of whom has authority over another), dissenting minorities are respected, and each individual's participation is voluntary. Everyone has the right to agree or disagree over policy and actions, and everyone's ideas are given equal weight and consideration. No decision may be made until each individual member or affiliated group that will be affected by that decision has had a chance to express their opinion on the issue. Individual members and affiliated groups have the right to refuse support to specific federation activities, but may not actively obstruct such activities. In true democratic fashion, decisions for the federation as a whole must be made by a majority of its members.

In most cases, there is no real need for a formal meeting for the making of decisions, what is needed is co-ordination of the actions of the group. Of course, there are times when a decision has to be made, and sometimes very quickly. This will be rare, but sometimes it is unavoidable. The consensus, in that case, would then have to be among a much smaller circle than the general membership of hundreds or thousands. But ordinarily all that is needed is an exchange of information and trust among parties, and a decision re-affirming the original will be reached, if an emergency decision had to be made. Of course, during the discussion, there will be an attempt to clarify any major differences and explore alternative courses of action. And there will be an attempt to arrive at a mutually agreed upon consensus between conflicting views. As always, if

¹³ **eclipse:** loss of importance, power or fame

¹⁴ **consensus:** general or wide-spread agreement

¹⁵ **subordinate:** 1. of lesser rank or importance 2. to think of something or someone as less important than something or someone else

a decision can't be reached or there is dissatisfaction with the consensus, a vote would be taken, and with a two-thirds majority, the matter would be accepted or rejected.

This is completely different to the Marxist parties, where the Central Committee sets policy for the entire organisation, without consultation, and authority reigns. Anarchists reject centralisation of authority and the concept of a Central Committee. All groups are free associations formed out of common need, not revolutionaries disciplined by fear of authority. When the size of the work-groups (which could be formed around labour, fund-raising, anti-racism, women's rights, food and housing, propaganda, etc.) becomes awkward, the organisations can be de-centralised into two or more autonomous organisations, still united in one big federation. This enables the group to expand limitlessly while maintaining its anarchic form of de-centralised self-management. It is similar to the scientific theory of a biological cell, dividing and re-dividing, but in a political sense.

However, Anarchist groups aren't even necessarily organised loosely; Anarchism is flexible and structure can be practically non-existent or very tight, depending upon the type of organisation demanded by the social conditions being faced. For instance, organisation would tighten during military operations or heightened political repression.

Anarchists reject the Marxist idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and a so-called workers' state, in favour of a mass commune. Unlike leading members of Marxist parties, whose daily lives are generally similar to present-day middle class lifestyles, Anarchist organisational structures and lifestyles, through communal living arrangements, affinity groups, squatting, etc., attempt to reflect the liberated society of the future. Anarchists built all kinds of communes and collectives during the Spanish Revolution of the 1930's, but they were crushed by the Fascists and the Communists. Since the Marxists don't build co-operative structures (the nucleus of the new society) they can only see the world in authoritarian political terms. They want to seize State power and institute their own dictatorship over the people and the workers, instead of crushing State power and replacing it with a free, co-operative society. They insist that the party represents and is the working class, and that there is no need for them to organise themselves outside of the party. Yet, even in the former Soviet Union, the Communist Party membership only represented five percent of the population. This is elitism¹⁶ of the worst sort, and even makes the Capitalist parties look democratic by comparison.

What the Communist Party was intended to represent in terms of workers' power is never made clear, but in true 1984 doublethink fashion, the results are 80 years of political repression and State slavery, instead of an era of glorious Communist rule. They must be held accountable politically for these crimes against the people, and we must reject their revolutionary political theory and practice. They have slandered¹⁷ the names of Socialism and Communism.

We reject the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is unbridled oppression, and the various Marxist parties must be made to answer for it. Millions were murdered by Stalin in the name of fighting an internal class war, and millions more were murdered in China, Poland, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Bulgaria, and other countries by communist movements which followed Stalin's prescription for

¹⁶ **elite:** the most powerful or rich of a group, community or society elitism: the belief that society should be governed by a small group of people who think they are superior to everyone else

¹⁷ **slander:** saying something that is false and damaging about a person or thing

revolutionary terror. We reject State communism as the worst hypocrisy¹⁸ and tyranny.¹⁹ We can do better with the mass commune.

The Anarchist mass commune is an inter-regional, continental, or inter-continental federation of economic and political co-operatives and regional communal formations. We look forward to a world and a society in which real decision-making involves everyone who lives in it – a mass commune – not a few discipline freaks pulling the strings on a so-called proletarian or workers' dictatorship. Any and all dictatorship is bad, it has no good social features, yet that is what the Marxists tell us will protect us from counter-revolution. While Marxists claim that this dictatorship is necessary in order to crush any bourgeois counter-revolutions led by the Capitalist class or Right-wing reactionaries, Anarchists feel that this is itself part of the Marxist school of falsification.²⁰ A centralised apparatus, such as a state, is a much easier target for opponents of the revolution than is a federation of de-centralised communes. And these communes would remain armed and prepared to defend the revolution against anyone who militarily moves against it. The key is to mobilise the people into self-defence units and militias.

This position by the Marxists of the necessity for a dictatorship to protect the revolution was not proven in the Civil War that followed the Russian Revolution; in fact, without support of the Anarchists and other Left-wing forces, along with the Russian people, the Bolshevik government would have been defeated. And then true to any dictatorship, it turned around and wiped out the Russian and Ukrainian Anarchist movements, along with their Left-wing opponents like the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, and even ideological opponents in the Bolshevik party were imprisoned and put to death. Millions of people in Russia were killed by Lenin and Trotsky right after the Civil War, when they were building State power, which led to Stalin's bloody rule. The lesson is that we should not be tricked into surrendering the grassroots people's power to dictators who pose as our friends or leaders.

We don't need the various Marxist solutions, they are dangerous and deceptive. There is another way, but to much of the Left and to many ordinary people, the choice has appeared to be Anarchic chaos or the Marxist-Communist parties, however dogmatic and dictatorial. This is the result of misunderstanding and lies. Anarchism as an ideology provides practical organisational structures, as well as valid alternative revolutionary theory, which, if used, could be the basis for organisation just as solid as the Marxists (or even more so) only these organisations will be egalitarian²¹ and really for the benefit of people, rather than for the Communist leaders.

Therefore, we build organisations in order to build a new world, to end all domination over the masses of people. We must build an organised, co-ordinated, international movement aimed at transforming the globe into a mass commune. This would really be a great development in human evolution and a gigantic revolutionary stride. It would change the world as we know it and end the problems long plaguing Humankind. It would be a new era of freedom and fulfilment.

¹⁸ **hypocrisy**: claiming to believe in something and then acting differently

¹⁹ **tyranny**: oppressive and unjust government (i.e. all government)

²⁰ **falsify**: to make (a report of evidence) false by changing it in order to mislead

²¹ **egalitarian**: to uphold equality between humans

General Principles of Anarchism

Anarchism is based on a vision of society that harmoniously unites individual self-interest and social well-being. Although Anarchists agree with Marx that Capitalism must be abolished because of its crisis-ridden nature and its exploitation of the Working Class, we do not believe that Capitalism is a necessary, progressive pre-condition for the change to a socially, economically and politically equal society. Nor do we believe that the centralised economic planning of State Socialism can provide for the wide variety of needs and desires. We reject the very idea of a need for a State or that it will just wither away by itself, or a party to boss over the workers or stage-manage the revolution. In short, while accepting parts of his economic critique of Capitalism, we do not worship Karl Marx as the perfect leader (whose ideas can never be criticised or revised) as the Marxists do, and Anarchism is not based on Marxist theory.

Anarchists believe that “the personal is political, and the political is personal”, meaning that we cannot separate our political life from our personal life. We do not play bureaucratic political roles, and then have a separate life as another social being entirely. We recognise that people know their own needs and can make the necessary arrangements to satisfy those needs, provided that they have free access to social resources. We believe that these resources should be freely provided to all, so we therefore believe in the credo of “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs”. This guarantees that everyone will be fed, clothed, and housed as normal social practice, not as degrading welfare or that certain classes will be better provided for than others.

When not deformed by corrupt (authoritarian) social institutions and practices, the interdependence and solidarity of human beings results in individuals who are responsible both for themselves and to the society which makes their well-being and cultural development possible. Therefore, we seek to replace the State, Capitalism and Authority with a network of voluntary alliances embracing all of social life – production, consumption, health, culture, recreation, and other areas. In this way, all groups and associations reap the benefits of unity while expanding the range of their freedom. We believe in free association and federating groups of affinity groups, workplace committee's, food and housing co-operatives, with others of all types.

As a practical matter, we believe that we should start to build the new society now, as well as fight to crush the old Capitalist one. We wish to create non-authoritarian mutual aid organisations for food, clothing, housing, funding for community projects and others, neighbourhood assemblies, and co-operatives, not belonging to either government or business corporations, and not run for profit but for social need. Such organisations, if built now, will provide their members with a practical experience in self-management and self-sufficiency, and will decrease the dependency of people on welfare agencies and employers. In short, we can begin now to build the infrastructure for the communal society, so that people can see what they are fighting for, not just the ideas in someone's head. That is the way to real freedom.

Capitalism, the State and Private Property

The existence of the State and Capitalism are excused by their supporters as being a necessary evil due to the so-called inability of the greater part of the population to run their own affairs and those of society, as well as being their protection against crime and violence. Anarchists realise

that the opposite is true, the main barriers to a free society are the State and the institution of private property. It is the State that causes war, police repression, and other forms of violence, and it is private property – the lack of equal distribution of major social wealth – that creates crime and deprivation.

But what is the State? The State is a hierarchical institution by which a privileged elite tries to dominate the vast majority of people. The State's mechanisms include a group of institutions containing legislative²² assemblies,²³ the civil service bureaucracy, the military and police forces, the judiciary and prisons, and the sub-central State apparatus. The government is the administrative vehicle to run the State. The purpose of this specific set of institutions, which are the expressions of authority in Capitalist societies (and so-called Socialist states), is to keep and extend domination over the common people by a privileged class, the rich in Capitalist societies, the so-called Communist Party in State Socialist or Communist societies like the old Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

However, the State itself is always an elitist structure positioned between the rulers and the ruled, order-givers and order-takers, economic haves and have-nots. The State's elite is not just the rich and the super-rich, but those people who have State positions of authority – politicians and juridical officials. Thus, the State bureaucracy itself, in terms of its relation to ideological property, can become an elite class in its own right. This administrative elite class of the State is developed not just through being given privileges by the economic elite, but also by the separation of private and public life – the family unit and civil society respectively – and by the opposition between an individual family and the larger society. It is sheer opportunism,²⁴ brought on by Capitalist competition and alienation. It is a breeding ground for agents of the State.

The existence of the State and a ruling class based on the exploitation and oppression of the Working Class are inseparable. Domination and exploitation go hand-in-hand and, in fact, this oppression is not possible without force and violent authority. This is why Anarchists argue that any attempt to use State power as a means of establishing a free, equal society can only be self-defeating because the habits of commanding and exploiting become ends in themselves. This was proven with the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution (1917 – 1921). The fact is that officials of the Communist State accumulate political power much as the Capitalist class accumulates economic wealth. Those who govern form a distinct group whose only interest is keeping political control by any means they can. But the institution of Capitalist property also allows a minority of the population to control and to regulate access to, and the use of, all socially produced wealth and natural resources. You have to pay for the land, water, and the fresh air – to some giant utility company or real estate firm.

This controlling group may be a separate economic class or the State itself, but in either case the institution of property leads to a set of social and economic relations, Capitalism, in which a small sector of society reaps enormous benefits and privileges at the expense of the labouring majority. The Capitalist economy is based, not upon fulfilling the needs of everyone, but on amassing profit for a few. Both Capitalism and the State must be attacked and overthrown, not one or the other, or one then the other, because the fall of either will not ensure the fall of both.

²² **legislative:** having the power to make or process laws

²³ **assemblies:** a number of people gathered together

²⁴ **opportunist:** a person who changes their actions to take advantage of opportunities and circumstances without thinking about principles ...ism: the name given to the act

Down with Capitalism and the State!

No doubt, some workers will mistake what we are saying as a threat to their personally accumulated property. No, we recognise the distinction between personal possessions and major capitalistic property. Capitalistic property is that which has as its basic characteristic and purpose the command of other people's labour power because of its exchange value. The institution of property conditions the development of a set of social and economic relations that has established Capitalism, and this situation allows a small minority within society to reap enormous benefits and privileges at the expense of the labouring majority. This is the classic scenario of Capital exploiting labour.

Where there is a high social division of labour and complex industrial organisation, money is needed to buy and/or sell. It is not simply that this money is legal, and that it is used in place of direct barter of goods, that is not what we are limited to here: Capital is money, but money as a process which reproduces and increases its value. Capital arises only when the owner of the means of production finds workers on the market as sellers of their own labour power. Capitalism developed as the form of private property that shifted from the rural, agricultural style to the urban, factory style of labour. Capitalism centralises the instruments of production and brings individuals closely alongside others in a disciplined work force.

Capitalism is industrialised commodity²⁵ production, which makes goods for profit, not for social needs. This is a special distinction of Capital, and Capital alone.

We may understand Capitalists, from what we have seen, as Capital given will and consciousness. That is, as those people who acquire Capital, and function as an elite class with enough financial and political power to rule society. Also, that accumulated Capital is money, and with money they control the means of production that is defined as the mills, mines, factories, land, water, energy, and other natural resources. The rich know that this is their property. They don't need ideological pretensions, and are under no illusions about public property.

An economy, like the one we have briefly sketched, is not based on fulfilling the needs of everyone in society, but instead is based on the accumulation of profits for the few, who live in extreme luxury as a leisure class, while we, the workers and poor, live in either poverty or one or two pay-cheques away. You see, therefore, that doing away with government also means the abolition of monopoly²⁶ and personal ownership of the means of production and distribution.

Anarchism, Violence and Authority

One of the biggest lies about Anarchists is that we are mindless bomb-throwers, cutthroats, and assassins.

People spread these lies for their own reasons: governments, because they are afraid of being overthrown by social revolution; Marxists, because it is a competing ideology with a totally different method of social organisation and revolutionary struggle; and the Church, because Anarchism does not believe in deities and its rationalism might sway workers away from superstition. It is true that these lies and propaganda are able to sway many people, mostly because they never hear the other side. Anarchism receives bad press and suffers as the scapegoat of every politi-

²⁵ **commodity**: something that can be bought or sold

²⁶ **monopoly**: exclusive control of something (e.g. supply of a product or service)

cian – Right or Left wing. Because a Social revolution is an Anarchist revolution, which not only abolishes one exploiting class for another, but all exploiters and the instrument of exploitation, “the State”; because it is a revolution for people’s power, instead of political power, because it abolishes both money and wage slavery; because we are for total direct democracy and freedom, instead of politicians to represent the masses in Parliament, or the Communist Party; because we are for workers’ self-management of industry, instead of government regulation; because Anarchists are for full sexual, racial, cultural and intellectual freedom, instead of sexual and cultural repression, censorship, and racial oppression – because of this, lies have had to be told that we are killers, rapists, robbers, mad bombers, the worst of the worst.

But let’s look at the real world and see who is causing all this violence and repression. The wholesale murder by standing armies in World Wars 1 and 2, the pillage and rape of the colonies, military invasions and dictatorships – all of these have been done by governments. It is government and State/Class rule, which is the source of all violence. This includes all governments. The so-called Communist world is not communist and the Free world is not free. East and West, Capitalism – private and State – remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, at home, and in the community. Propaganda (news and education), policemen and soldiers, prisons and schools, traditional values and morality²⁷ all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or force the many into passive²⁸ acceptance of a brutal, degrading, and irrational²⁹ system. This is what we mean by authority being oppression, and it is just such authoritarian rule that is at work in South Africa, Nigeria, the USA, as well as the Communist governments of China and Cuba.

“What is this thing we call government? Is it anything but organised violence? The law orders you to obey, and if you don’t obey, it will compel you by force – all governments, all law and authority finally rest on force and violence, on punishment or fear of punishment.”

Alexander Berkman,
ABC of Anarchism

Most Anarchists advocate armed overthrow of the Capitalist State. We do not advocate or practice mass murder, like the governments of the modern world with their stockpiles of nuclear bombs, poison gas and chemical weapons, huge air forces, navies, and armies. It was not the Anarchists who provoked³⁰ two World Wars where over 100 million people were slaughtered; nor was it the Anarchists who invaded and butchered the people of Korea, Panama, Somalia, Iraq, Indonesia, and other countries who have suffered imperialist military attack. It was not the Anarchists who sent armies of spies all over the world to murder, disrupt, subvert, overthrow, and meddle into the internal affairs of other countries like the NIA, CIA, KGB, MI6, or other national spy agencies, nor use them as secret police to uphold the home governments in various countries, no matter how repressive and unpopular the regime. Further, if your government makes you a policeman or soldier, you kill and repress people in the name of freedom or law and order, even if you don’t want to.

²⁷ **morality:** to do with the belief of what is right or wrong

²⁸ **passive:** not active

²⁹ **irrational:** senseless or unreasonable / absurd / no facts behind it

³⁰ **provoke:** to anger someone / to make something happen

“You don’t question the right of the government to kill, to confiscate and imprison. If a private person should be guilty of the things that the government is doing all the time, you’d brand him a murderer, thief and scoundrel. But as long as the violence committed is ‘lawful’, you approve of it and submit to it. So it is not really violence that you object to, but people using violence unlawfully.”

Alexander Berkman,
ABC of Anarchism

If we speak honestly, we must admit that everyone in this society believes in violence and practices it, however much they may condemn it in others. Either they do it themselves to their children or to others, or they have the police and army to do it on their behalf as agents of the State. In fact, all of the governmental institutions we presently support and the entire life of present society are based on violence.

Anarchists have no monopoly on violence and when it was used in so-called “propaganda by the deed” attacks in the nineteenth century, it was against tyrants and dictators, rather than against the common people. These individual attacks – bombings, assassinations, sabotage were efforts at making those in power personally responsible for their unjust acts and repressive authority. In fact, Anarchists, Socialists, Communists and other revolutionaries, as well as patriots and nationalists, and even reactionaries and racists like the AWB or Nazis have all used violence for a variety of reasons. Who would not have rejoiced if a dictator like Hitler had been slain by assassins, and thus spared the world racial genocide and World War II? Further, all revolutions are violent because the oppressing class will not give up its power and privileges without a bloody fight. So, we have no choice anyway.

Basically, we would all choose to be pacifists. And like Martin Luther King counselled, we would rather resolve our differences with understanding, love, and moral reasoning. We will attempt these solutions first, whenever possible. In the insanity that reigns, however, our movement acknowledges the usefulness of preparedness. It is too dangerous a world to be ignorant of the ways to defend ourselves so that we can continue our revolutionary work. Knowing a weapon and its uses does not mean that you must immediately go out and use that weapon, but that if you need to use it, you can use it well.

Understand that the more we succeed at our work, the more dangerous will our situation become, because we will then be recognised as a threat to the State. And make no mistake, an insurrection is coming, that will destabilise the State. So we are talking about a spontaneous,³¹ prolonged,³² rising of the vast majority of the people, and the necessity to defend ourselves against the State’s reaction. Although we recognise the importance of defensive paramilitary violence, and even urban guerilla attacks, we do not depend on war to achieve our liberation, for our struggle cannot be won by the force of arms alone. No, the people must be armed beforehand with understanding and agreement of our objectives, as well as trust and love of each other, and our military weapons are only an expression of our organic spirit and solidarity. Perfect love for all but preparedness against those who don’t want it. As the Cuban revolutionary, Che Guevara, said, “When one falls, another must take their place, and the rage of each death renews the reason for the fight.”

³¹ **spontaneous:** starting from a natural feeling, voluntary, an action that has not been thought out first

³² **prolonged:** lengthened or extended

The governments of the world commit much of their violence in repressing any attempt to overthrow the State. Crimes of repression against the people have usually benefited those in power, especially if the government is powerful. Look what happened in South Africa during the apartheid years! Many protesting injustices were jailed, murdered, injured, or blacklisted – all of which was set-up by the State's police agencies. So we cannot just depend on mass mobilisations alone, we must also learn how to defend ourselves, if we want to defeat the State and its repression. For the future, our work will include development of collective techniques of self-defence, as well as underground propaganda work, while we work towards Social revolution.

Anarchists and Revolutionary Organisation

Another lie about Anarchists is that we don't believe in any organisational structure. We are not opposed to organisation. In fact, Anarchism is primarily concerned about analysing the way in which society is presently organised – i.e., government.

Anarchism is all about organisation, but it is about alternative forms of organisation to what now exists. Anarchism's opposition to authority leads to the view that organisation should be non-hierarchical and that membership should be voluntary. Anarchist revolution is a process of organisation building and re-building. This does not mean the same thing as the Marxist concept of party building, which is just about strengthening the rule of party leaders and driving out those members who have an independent position. These purges³³ are methods of domination that the Marxists use to beat all democracy out of their movements, yet they have the cheek to call this democratic centralism.

What organisation means within Anarchism is to organise the needs of the people into non-authoritarian social organisations so that they can take care of their own business on an equal basis. It also means the coming together of like-minded people for the purpose of co-ordinating the work that both groups and individuals feel necessary for survival, well-being, and livelihood. Because Anarchism involves people who would come together on the basis of mutual needs and interests, co-operation is a key element. A primary aim is that the individuals should speak for themselves, and that all in the group be equally responsible for the group's decisions; no bosses welcome!

Many Anarchists envisage large scale organisational needs in terms of small local groups organised in the workplaces, and neighbourhoods, who would send delegates to larger committees who would make decisions on matters of wider concern. The job of delegate would not be full-time and would be rotated. These delegates would be unpaid, recallable and would only voice the groups' decisions. We support free, independent organisations of the people as the only way forward.

The nucleus³⁴ of Anarchist organisation is the affinity (friendship) group. The affinity group is a revolutionary circle or cell of friends and comrades who are in tune with each other both in ideology and as individuals. The affinity group exists to co-ordinate the needs of the group, as expressed by the individuals and by the cell as a body. The group becomes an extended family, the well-being of all becomes the responsibility of all.

³³ **to purge:** to get rid of or kick out of an organisation

³⁴ **nucleus:** a central thing around which others are grouped

“Autonomous, communal, and directly democratic, the group combines revolutionary theory with revolutionary lifestyle in its everyday behaviour. It creates a free space in which revolutionaries can remake themselves individually, and also as social beings.”

Murray Bookchin,
Post Scarcity Anarchism

We could also refer to these affinity formations as “groups for living revolution” because they live the revolution now, even though only in seed form. Because the groups are small – from three to fifteen – they can start from a stronger basis of solidarity than political strategy alone. The groups would be the best means of political activity of each member. There are four areas of involvement where affinity groups work.

1. **Mutual Aid.** This means giving support and solidarity between members, as well as collective work and responsibility.
2. **Education.** In addition to educating the society at-large to Anarchist ideals, this includes study by members to advance the ideology of the group, as well as to increase their political, economic, scientific, and technical knowledge.
3. **Direct Action.** This means the actual organising and political work outside of the group, where all members are expected to contribute.
4. **Unity.** The group is a form of family, a gathering of friends and comrades, people who care for the well-being of one another, who love and support each other, who strive to live in the spirit of co-operation and freedom, without distrust, jealousy, hate, competition, and other forms of negative social ideas and behaviour. In short, affinity groups allow their members to live a revolutionary lifestyle.

One big advantage of affinity groups is that they are highly resistant to police infiltration because the group members are so intimate. Even if a group is penetrated there is no central office that would give an agent information about the movement as a whole. Each cell has its own agenda and objectives. Therefore, an agent would have to infiltrate hundreds, maybe thousands, of similar groups and since the members all know each other, an agent could not lead disruptions without the risk of immediate exposure. Further, because there are no leaders in the movement, there is no one to target and destroy the group.

Because affinity groups can grow as biological cells grow, by dividing, they can spread rapidly. There could be hundreds in one large city or region. They come prepared for a mass movement, they can organise large numbers of people to co-ordinate activities as their needs become clear and according to any social conditions. Affinity groups function as a catalyst within the mass movement, pushing it to higher and higher levels of resistance to the authorities. But they are ready-made for underground work in case of open political repression or mass insurrection.

This leads us to the next level of Anarchist organisation, the regional federation. Federations are the network of affinity groups who come together out of common needs, which includes mutual aid, education, direct action, co-ordination, and any other work needed for the change from today’s society, from the authoritarian State to Anarchism. The following is an example of how

Anarchist federations could be structured. First, there is the regional federation that could cover a large city or region. All like-minded affinity groups in the region would associate themselves in a Regional Federation. Agreements on mutual aid and action to be done would be discussed at meetings in which all can come and have an equal voice.

When the Regional Federation reaches a size where it is too big, the Regional Federation can divide into District or Local Federations. Each affinity group in each area will send one delegate to sit on their Local Federation Committee. The purpose of the committee is to co-ordinate the needs and actions defined by all the groups in the district or local area. As a mandated delegate, after referring back to their group, they could vote and join in co-ordination and decision making on the things that affect the local area. Thereafter, one delegate from each Local Federation Committee will sit on the Regional Federation Committee, which will operate on exactly the same principles as the Local Federation Committee except that it will only deal with things that affect the region as a whole.

Our next federation would be an Eco-Regional Federation, for example the entire coastal plain. This federation would take care of the whole eco-region, with the same principles of consensus, mandating and delegation. Next would come the Inter-Regional Federation to cover Southern Africa and then the Continental Federation, covering the continent of Africa. Last would be the Global Federation, which would be the networking of all federations world-wide. As for the last, because we do not recognise national borders and wish to replace the nation-state, we thus federate with all other like-minded people wherever they live on Earth.

For Anarchism to really work, the needs of the people must be fulfilled. Our first priority is the well-being of all; thus we must organise the means to freely and equally fulfil the needs of the people. First, the means of production, transportation, and distribution must be organised into revolutionary organisations that the workers and the community run and control themselves. Our second priority is to deal with community needs organisations, in addition to industrial organising. Whatever the community needs are, they must be dealt with. This means organisation. It includes co-operative groups to fulfil such needs as health, energy, jobs, childcare, housing, alternative schools, food, entertainment, and other social areas. These community groups would form a co-operative community, which would be a network of community needs organisations and serve as an Anarchistic socio-political infrastructure. These groups should network with those in other areas for mutual aid, education, and action, and become a federation on a regional scale.

Third, we would have to deal with social illness. Not only should we organise for the physical needs of the people, but we must also work and propagandise to cure the ills sprouted by the State that has warped the human personality under Capitalism. For instance, the oppression of women. No one can be free if 51 percent of society is oppressed, dominated, and abused. Not only must our organisation deal with the harmful effects of sexism, but also work to ensure patriarchy is dead by educating society about its harmful effects. Women need to empower themselves for self-determination to lead free lives. We need to form groups to expose and combat sexual prejudice and Capitalist exploitation, and extend full support and solidarity to the Working Class Women's liberation movement.

Finally, Anarchism would deal with a number of areas too numerous to mention here – science, technology, ecology, disarmament, and so on. We must harness the social sciences and make them serve the people, while we co-exist with nature. Authoritarians foolishly believe that it is possible to conquer nature, but that is not the issue. We are just one of a number of species which inhabit

this planet, even if we are the most intelligent. But then other species have not created nuclear weapons, started wars where millions have been killed, or engaged in discrimination against the 'races' of their sub-species, all of which humankind has done. So who is to say which is the most "intelligent"?

Right then...

Lets get on with it, *we've got a world to win!*

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Zabalaza
Freedom for All
An Introduction to Anarchism
2008

zabalazabooks.net

Over the last few years, the resurgence of revolutionary anarchism has caught the attention of the world. The role of the anarchists in the anti-globalisation movement, at Seattle, Prague, Gothenburg, Genoa, La Paz, and Porto Allegre – where we have been in the forefront of militant resistance – has been widely reported in the media. The New York Times recently proclaimed “Anarchism: the idea that refuses to die,” whilst SAPA, not to be outdone, blamed the anarchist “black bloc” for the disruption of the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy. But what is the anarchist movement? What does it want? Where is it going? And how can you get involved?

theanarchistlibrary.org