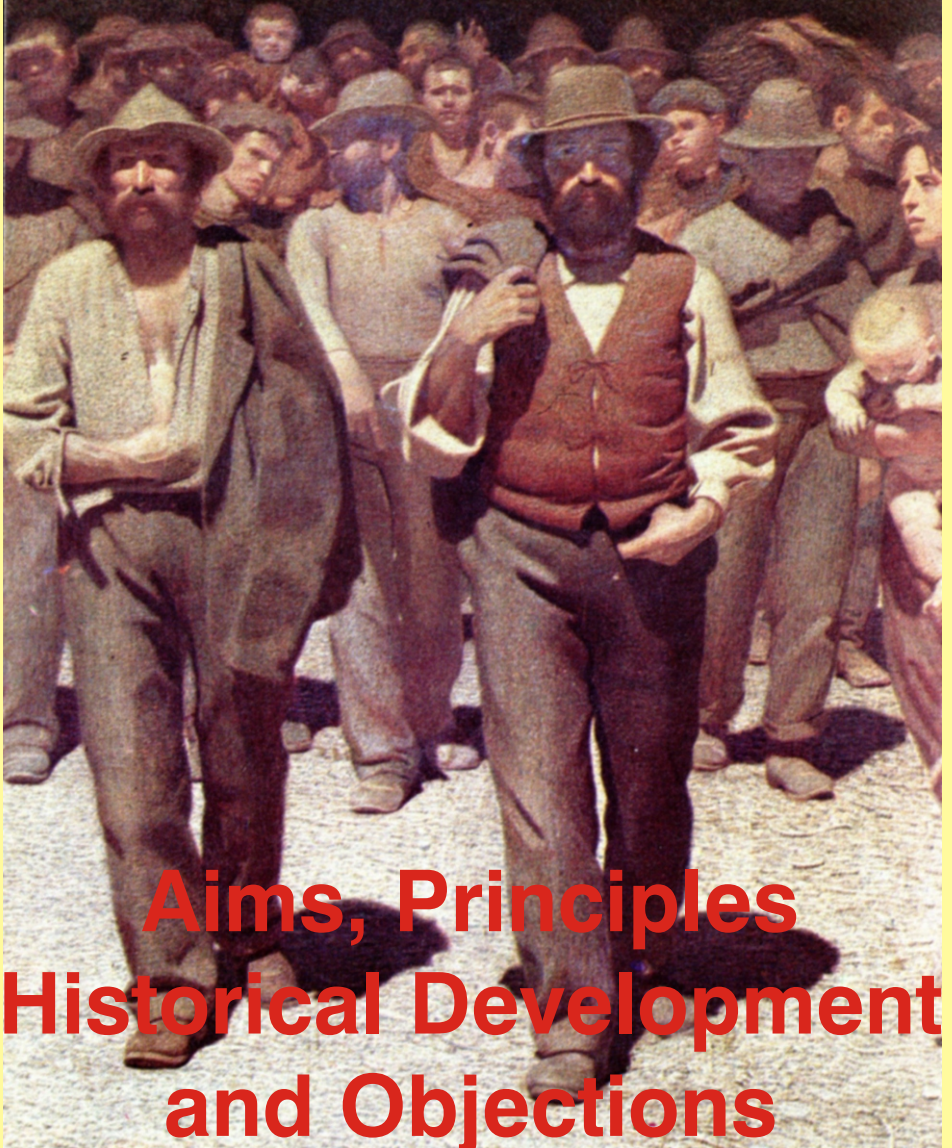


# ANARCHISM



**Aims, Principles  
Historical Development  
and Objections**



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# Libertarian Anthology I

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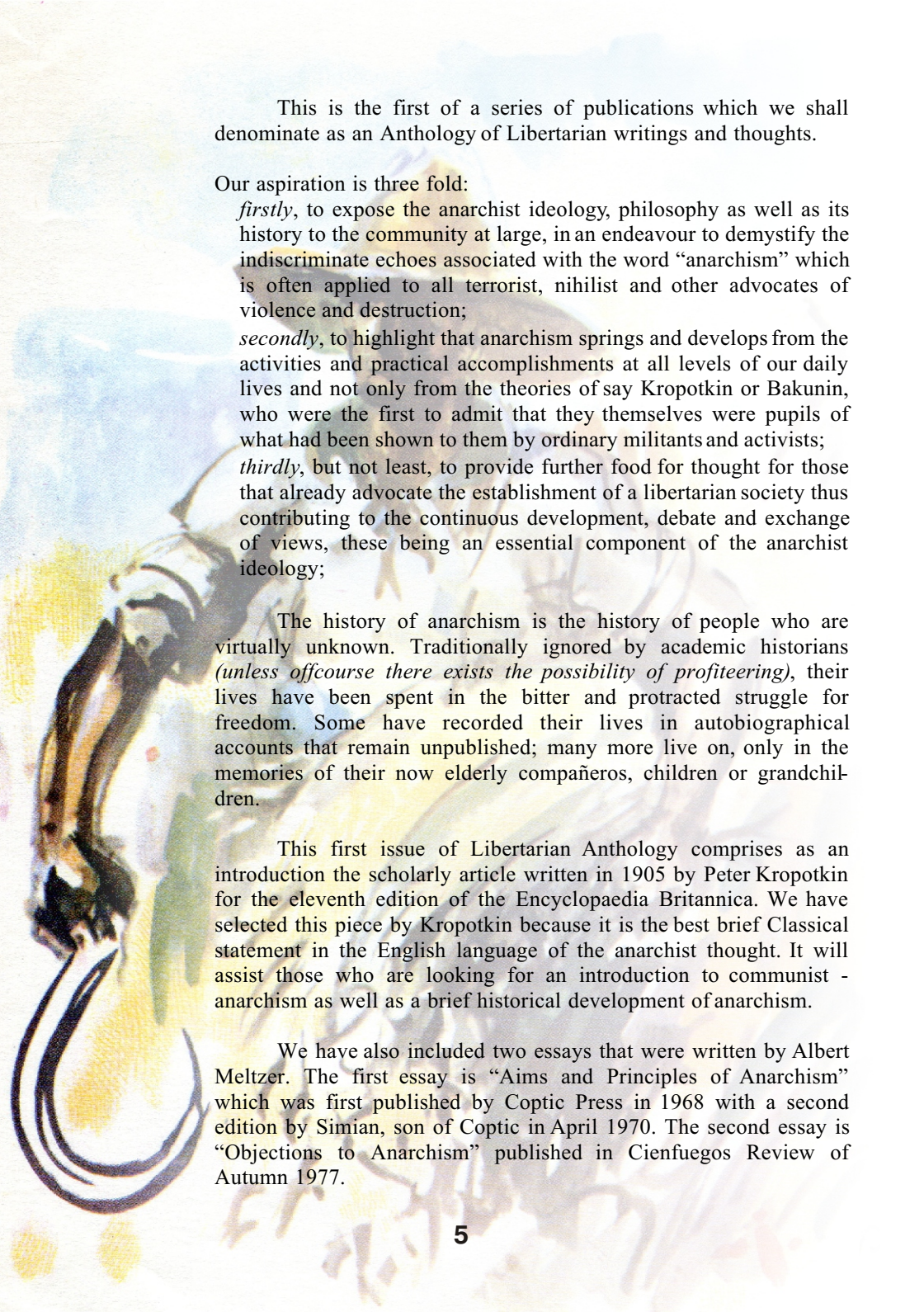
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Grupo Cultural de Estudios Sociales de Melbourne

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This is the first of a series of publications which we shall denominate as an Anthology of Libertarian writings and thoughts.

Our aspiration is three fold:

*firstly*, to expose the anarchist ideology, philosophy as well as its history to the community at large, in an endeavour to demystify the indiscriminate echoes associated with the word “anarchism” which is often applied to all terrorist, nihilist and other advocates of violence and destruction;

*secondly*, to highlight that anarchism springs and develops from the activities and practical accomplishments at all levels of our daily lives and not only from the theories of say Kropotkin or Bakunin, who were the first to admit that they themselves were pupils of what had been shown to them by ordinary militants and activists;

*thirdly*, but not least, to provide further food for thought for those that already advocate the establishment of a libertarian society thus contributing to the continuous development, debate and exchange of views, these being an essential component of the anarchist ideology;

The history of anarchism is the history of people who are virtually unknown. Traditionally ignored by academic historians (*unless ofcourse there exists the possibility of profiteering*), their lives have been spent in the bitter and protracted struggle for freedom. Some have recorded their lives in autobiographical accounts that remain unpublished; many more live on, only in the memories of their now elderly compañeros, children or grandchildren.

This first issue of Libertarian Anthology comprises as an introduction the scholarly article written in 1905 by Peter Kropotkin for the eleventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. We have selected this piece by Kropotkin because it is the best brief Classical statement in the English language of the anarchist thought. It will assist those who are looking for an introduction to communist - anarchism as well as a brief historical development of anarchism.

We have also included two essays that were written by Albert Meltzer. The first essay is “Aims and Principles of Anarchism” which was first published by Coptic Press in 1968 with a second edition by Simian, son of Coptic in April 1970. The second essay is “Objections to Anarchism” published in Cienfuegos Review of Autumn 1977.

# Anarchism

*by Peter Kropotkin*

Anarchism (from the Greek. ἀν-, and ἀρχη, contrary to authority), is the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government - harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being.

In a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the State in all its functions. They would represent an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national and international -temporary or more or less permanent- for all possible purposes: production, consumption and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection, defence of the territory, and so on; and, on the other side, for the satisfaction of an ever-increasing number of scientific, artistic, literary and sociable needs.

Moreover, such a society would represent nothing immutable. On the contrary -as is seen in organic life at large- harmony would (it is contended) result from an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences, and this adjustment would

be the easier to obtain as none of the forces would enjoy a special protection from the State.

If, it is contended, society were organized on these principles, man would not be limited in the free exercise of his powers in productive work by a capitalist monopoly, maintained by the State; nor would he be limited in the exercise of his will by a fear of punishment, or by obedience towards individuals or metaphysical entities, which both lead to depression of initiative and servility of mind. He would be guided in his actions by his own understanding, which necessarily would bear the impression of a free action and reaction between his own self and the ethical conceptions of his surroundings. Man would thus be enabled to obtain the full development of all his faculties, intellectual, artistic and moral, without being hampered by overwork for the monopolists, or by the servility and inertia of mind of the great number. He would thus be able to reach full *individualization*, which is not possible, either under the present system of individualism, or under any system of State socialism in the so-called *Volkstaat* (popular State).

The anarchist writers consider, moreover, that their conception is not a Utopia, constructed on the *a priori* method, after a few desiderata have been taken as postulates. It is derived, they maintain, from an *analysis of tendencies* that are at work already, even though state socialism may find a temporary favour with the reformers. The progress of modern techniques, which wonderfully simplifies the production of all the necessaries of life; the growing spirit of independence, and the rapid spread of free initiative and free understanding in all branches of activity -including those which formerly were considered as the proper attribution of church and State- are steadily reinforcing the no-government tendency.

As to their economical conceptions, the anarchists, in common with all socialists, of whom they constitute the left wing, maintain that the now prevailing system of private ownership in land, as well as our capitalist production for the sake of profits, represents a monopoly which runs against both the principles of justice and the dictates of utility. They are the main obstacle which prevents the successes of modern techniques from being brought into the service of all, so as to produce general well-being. The anarchists consider the wage-system and capitalist production altogether as an obstacle to progress. But they point out also that the State was, and continues to be, the chief instrument for permitting the few to monopolize the land, and the capitalists to appropriate for themselves a quite disproportionate

share of the yearly accumulated surplus of production. Consequently, while combating the present monopolization of land, and capitalism altogether, the anarchists combat with the same energy the State as the main support of that system. Not this or that special form, but the State altogether, whether it be a monarchy or even a republic governed by means of the *referendum*.

The State organization, having always been, both in ancient and modern history (Macedonian empire, Roman empire, modern European states grown up on the ruins of the autonomous cities), the instrument for establishing monopolies in favour of the ruling minorities, cannot be made to work for the destruction of these monopolies. The anarchists consider, therefore, that to hand over to the State all the main sources of economic life -the land, the mines, the railways, banking, insurance, and so on- as also the management of all the main branches of industry, in addition to all the functions already accumulated in its hands (education, State-supported religions, defence of the territory, etc.), would mean to create a new instrument of tyranny. State capitalism would only increase the powers of bureaucracy and capitalism. True progress lies in the direction of decentralization, both *territorial* and *functional*, in the development of the spirit of local and personal initiative, and of free federation from the simple to the compound, *in lieu* of the present hierarchy from the centre to the periphery.

In common with most socialists, the anarchists recognize that, like all evolution in nature, the slow evolution of society is followed from time to time by periods of accelerated evolution which are called revolutions; and they think that the era of revolutions is not yet closed. Periods of rapid changes will follow the periods of slow evolution, and these periods must be taken advantage of - not for increasing and widening the powers of the State, but for reducing them, through the organization in every township or commune of the local groups of producers and consumers, as also the regional, and eventually the international, federations of these groups.

In virtue of the above principles the anarchists refuse to be party to the present-State organization and to support it by infusing fresh blood into it. They do not seek to constitute, and invite the workingmen not to constitute, political parties in the parliaments. Accordingly, since the foundation of the International Working Men's Association in 1864-1866, they have endeavoured to promote their ideas directly amongst the labour organizations and to induce those unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation.



# The Historical Development of Anarchism

by Peter Kropotkin

The conception of society just sketched, and the tendency which is its dynamic expression, have always existed in mankind, in opposition to the governing hierarchic conception and tendency - now the one and now the other taking the upper hand at different periods of history. To the former tendency we owe the evolution, by the masses themselves, of those institutions the clan, the village community, the guild, the free medieval city - by means of which the masses resisted the encroachments of the conquerors and the power-seeking minorities. The same tendency asserted itself with great energy in the great religious movements of medieval times, especially in the early movements of the reform and its forerunners. At the same time it evidently found its expression in the writings of some thinkers, since the times of Lao-tze, although, owing to its non-scholastic and popular origin, it obviously found less sympathy among the scholars than the opposed tendency.

As has been pointed out by Prof. Adler in his *Geschichte des Sozialismus und Kommunismus*, Aristippus (b. c. 430 B.C), one of the founders of the Cyrenaic school, already taught that the wise must not give up their liberty to the State, and in reply to a question by Socrates he said that he

did not desire to belong either to the governing or the governed class. Such an attitude, however, seems to have been dictated merely by an Epicurean attitude towards the life of the masses.

The best exponent of anarchist philosophy in ancient Greece was Zeno (342-267 or 270 B.C.), from Crete, the founder of the Stoic philosophy, who distinctly opposed his conception of a free community without government to the state - Utopia of Plato. He repudiated the omnipotence of the State, its intervention and regimentation, and proclaimed the sovereignty of the moral law of the individual - remarking already that, while the necessary instinct of self-preservation leads man to egotism, nature has supplied a corrective to it by providing man with another instinct- that of sociability. When men are reasonable enough to follow their natural instincts, they will unite across the frontiers and constitute the Cosmos. They will have no need of law-courts or police, will have no temples and no public worship, and use no money - free gifts taking the place of the exchanges. Unfortunately, the writings of Zeno have not reached us and are only known through fragmentary quotations. However, the fact that his very wording is similar to the wording now in use, shows how deeply is laid the tendency of human nature of which he was the mouth-piece.

In medieval times we find the same views on the State expressed by the illustrious bishop of Alba, Marco Girolamo Vida, in his first dialogue *De dignitate reipublicae* (Ferd. Cavalli, in *Men. Dell' Istituto Vento*, xiii.; Dr. E. Nys, *Researches in the History of Economics*). But it is especially in several early Christian movements, beginning with the ninth century in Armenia, and in the preachings of the early Hussites, particularly Chojecki, and the early Anabaptists, especially Hans Denk (cf. Keller, *Ein Apostel der Wiedertauffer*), that one finds the same ideas forcibly expressed - special stress being laid of course on their moral aspects.

Rabelais and Fénelon, in their Utopias, have also expressed similar ideas, and they were also current in the eighteenth century amongst the French Encyclopaedists, as may be concluded from separate expressions occasionally met with in the writings of Rousseau, from Diderot's *Preface* to the *Voyage of Bougainville*, and so on. However, in all probability such ideas could not be developed then, owing to the rigorous censorship of the Roman Catholic Church.

These ideas found their expression later during the great French

Revolution. While the Jacobins did all in their power to centralize everything in the hands of the government, it appears now, from recently published documents, that the masses of the people, in their municipalities and “sections”, accomplished a considerable constructive work. They appropriated for themselves the election of the judges, the organization of supplies and equipment for the army, as also for the large cities, work for the unemployed, the management of charities, and so on. They even tried to establish a direct correspondence between the 36,000 communes of France through the intermediary of a special board, outside the National Assembly (cf. Sigismund Lacroix, *Actes de la Commune de Paris*).

It was Godwin, in his *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (2 vols., 1793), who was the first to formulate the political and economical conceptions of anarchism, even though he did not give that name to the ideas developed in his remarkable work. Laws, he wrote, are not a product of the wisdom of our ancestors: they are the product of their passions, their timidity, their jealousies and their ambition. The remedy they offer is worse than the evils they pretend to cure. If and only if all laws and courts were abolished, and the decisions in the arising contests were left to reasonable men chosen for that purpose, real justice would gradually be evolved. As to the State, Godwin frankly claimed its abolition. A society, he wrote, can perfectly well exist without any government: only the communities should be small and perfectly autonomous. Speaking of property, he stated that the rights of every one “to every substance capable of contributing to the benefit of a human being” must be regulated by justice alone: the substance must go “to him who most wants it”. His conclusion was communism. Godwin, however, had not the courage to maintain his opinions. He entirely rewrote later on his chapter on property and mitigated his communist views in the second edition of *Political Justice* (8vo, 1796).

Proudhon was the first to use, in 1840 (*Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* first memoir), the name of anarchy with application to the no-government state of society. The name of “anarchists” had been freely applied during the French Revolution by the Girondists to those revolutionaries who did not consider that the task of the Revolution was accomplished with the overthrow of Louis XVI, and insisted upon a series of economical measures being taken (the abolition of feudal rights without redemption, the return to the village communities of the communal lands enclosed since 1669, the limitation of landed property to 120 acres, progressive income-tax, the national organization of exchanges on a just value basis, which already received a beginning of

practical realization, and so on).

Now Proudhon advocated a society without government, and used the word anarchy to describe it. Proudhon repudiated, as is known, all schemes of communism, according to which mankind would be driven into communistic monasteries or barracks, as also all the schemes of state or state-aided socialism which were advocated by Louis Blanc and the collectivists. When he proclaimed in his first memoir on property that "Property is theft", he meant only property in its present, Roman-law, sense of "right of use and abuse"; in property-rights, on the other hand, understood in the limited sense of *possession*, he saw the best protection against the encroachments of the State. At the same time he did not want violently to dispossess the present owners of land, dwelling-houses, mines, factories and so on. He preferred to attain the same end by rendering capital incapable of earning interest; and this he proposed to obtain by means of a national bank, based on the mutual confidence of all those who are engaged in production, who would agree to exchange among themselves their produces at cost-value, by means of labour checks representing the hours of labour required to produce every given commodity. Under such a system, which Proudhon described as "Mutuellisme", all the exchanges of services would be strictly equivalent. Besides, such a bank would be enabled to lend money without interest, levying only something like 1 per cent, or even less, for covering the cost of administration. Every one being thus enabled to borrow the money that would be required to buy a house; nobody would agree to pay any more a yearly rent for the use of it. A general "social liquidation" would thus be rendered easy, without expropriation. The same applied to mines, railways, factories and so on.

In a society of this type the State would be useless. The chief relations between citizens would be based on free agreement and regulated by mere account keeping. The contests might be settled by arbitration. A penetrating criticism of the State and all possible forms of government and a deep insight into all economic problems, were well-known characteristics of Proudhon's work.

It is worth noticing that French mutualism had its precursor in England, with William Thompson, who was a mutualist before he became a communist, and his followers John Gray (*A Lecture on Human Happiness*, 1825; *The Social System*, 1831) and J. F. Bray (*Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy*, 1839). It had also its precursor in America. Josiah Warren, who was born in

1798 (cf W. Bailie, *Josiah Warren, the First American Anarchist*, Boston, 1900), and belonged to Owen's "New Harmony", considered that the failure of this enterprise was chiefly due to the suppression of individuality and the lack of initiative and responsibility. These defects, he taught, were inherent to every scheme based upon authority and the community of goods. He advocated, therefore, complete individual liberty. In 1827 he opened in Cincinnati a little country store which was the first "Equity Store", and which the people called "Time Store", because it was based on labour being exchanged hour for hour in all sorts of produce. "Cost - the limit of price", and consequently "no interest", was the motto of his store, and later on of his "Equity Village", near New York, which was still in existence in 1865. Mr. Keith's "House of Equity" at Boston, founded in 1855, is also worthy of notice.

While the economic, and especially the mutual-banking, ideas of Proudhon found supporters and even a practical application in the United States, his political conception of anarchy found but little echo in France, where the christian socialism of Lamennais and the Fourierists, and the state socialism of Louis Blanc and the followers of Saint-Simon, were dominating. These ideas found, however, some temporary support among the left-wing Hegelians in Germany, Moses Hess in 1843, and Karl Grun in 1845, who advocated anarchism. Besides, the authoritarian communism of Wilhelm Weitling having given origin to opposition amongst the Swiss workingmen, Wilhelm Marr gave expression to it in the forties.

On the other side, individualist anarchism found, also in Germany, its fullest expression in Max Stirner (Kaspar Schmidt), whose remarkable works (*Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* and articles contributed to the *Rheinische Zeitung*) remained quite overlooked until they were brought into prominence by John Henry Mackay.

Prof. V. Basch, in a very able introduction to his interesting book, *L'Individualisme anarchiste: Max Stirner* (1904), has shown how the development of the German philosophy from Kant to Hegel, and "the absolute" of Schelling and the *Geist* of Hegel, necessarily provoked, when the anti-Hegelian revolt began, the preaching of the same "absolute" in the camp of the rebels. This was done by Stirner, who advocated, not only a complete revolt against the State and against the servitude which authoritarian communism would impose upon men, but also the full liberation of the individual from all social and moral bonds - the rehabilitation of the "I", the supremacy

of the individual, complete “a-moralism”, and the “association of the ego-tists”. The final conclusion of that sort of individual anarchism has been indicated by Prof. Basch. It maintains that the aim of all superior civilization is, not to permit *all* members of the community to develop in a normal way, but to permit certain better endowed individuals “fully to develop”, even at the cost of the happiness and the very existence of the mass of mankind. It is thus a return towards the most common individualism, advocated by all the would-be superior minorities, to which indeed man owes in his history precisely the State and the rest, which these individualists combat. Their individualism goes so far as to end in a negation of their own starting-point, - to say nothing of the impossibility for the individual to attain a really full development in the conditions of oppression of the masses by the “beautiful aristocracies”. His development would remain uni-lateral. This is why this direction of thought, notwithstanding its undoubtedly correct and useful advocacy of the full development of each individuality, finds a hearing only in limited artistic and literary circles.

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Peter Kropotkin

# Aims and Principles of Anarchism

*by Albert Meltzer*

## The Historical Background of Anarchism

It is not without interest that what might be called the anarchist approach goes back into antiquity; nor that there is an anarchism of sorts in the peasant movements that struggled against State oppression over the centuries. But the modern Anarchist Movement could not claim such precursors of revolt as its own more than the other modern working class theories. To trace the modern Anarchist movement we must look closer to our own times. While there existed libertarian, non-Statist and federalist groups, which, we would now call anarchist, before 1869, it was only in or about that year that they first became what we now call Anarchist.

In particular, we may cite three philosophical precursors of Anarchism: Godwin, Proudhon and Hegel. None of the three was in fact an Anarchist, though Proudhon first used the term in its modern sense (taking it from the French Revolution, when it was first used politically and not entirely pejoratively). None of them engaged in Anarchist activity or struggle, nor knew of such a thing as "Anarchism". One of the poorest though objective books on Anarchism, Eltzbacher's *Anarchism*, describes Anarchism as a sort of hydra-headed theory some of which comes from Godwin, or Proudhon, or Stirner, or Kropotkin, and so on. The book may be tossed aside as valueless except in its descriptions of what these particular men thought. Proudhon did not write a programme for all time; nor did Kropotkin in his time write for a sect of Anarchists.

Godwin is the father of the Stateless Society Movement; which we may begin at once by saying diverged into three lines. One, that of the Anarchists (with which we will deal). Two, that of American Individualism, which included

Thoreau and his school, sometimes thought of as anarchistic, but which equally gives rise to “Rugged Individualism” of the Goldwater school and to Tolstoyanism (so-called) and Ghandism. This second line of descent from Godwin is responsible for the “Pacifist Anarchist” approach or the “Individualist-Anarchist” approach that differs radically from revolutionary anarchism in the first line of descent. It is too readily conceded that “this is, after all, anarchism”. Pacifist movements, and the Gandhian in particular, are usually totalitarian and impose authority (even if by moral means); the school of Benjamin Tucker -by virtue of their “individualism”- accepted the need for police to break strikes so as to guarantee the employer's “freedom”. All this school of so-called Individualists accept, at one time or another, the necessity of the police force, hence for government, and an *a priori* definition of anarchism is *no government*. The third school of descent from Godwin is simple liberalism.

Dealing here with the “first line of descent” from Godwin, his idea of Stateless Society was introduced into the working class movement by Ambrose Cuddon, a revolutionary “internationalist” and non-Statist socialism came along with the late days of English Chartism. It had some sympathy with the French Proudhonians. Those who in Paris accepted Proudhon's theory did not consider themselves Anarchists, but Republicans. They were for the most part master artisans, running one-man productive businesses. The whole of French economy was geared both to the peasantry and to the master artisan. Independent, individualistic, and receiving no benefit from the State save the dubious privilege of paying taxes and fighting, they were at that time concerned to find out an economic method of survival and to withstand encroaching capitalism.

These French and English movements came together in the First International. The International Workingmen's Association owed its existence to Marx, indirectly to Hegelian philosophy. But within the International, there was not only the “scientific socialism” of Marx, but also Utopian Socialism, Blanquism, English Trade Unionism, German authoritarian and opportunistic socialism, Republicanism, and the various “federalistic” trends. Bakunin was not the father of anarchism, nor the “Marx” of anarchism, as often thought. He was not an anarchist until late in life. He learned his federalism and socialism from the Swiss workers of the Jura, and gave expression to the ideas of the Godwinian and Proudhonian “federalists” or non-State socialists. In many countries, Spain and Italy in particular, it was Bakunin's criticism of the ideas of Marx that gave the federalist movement its definition. (While to Anarchists, Marx is of course “the villain of the piece” in the International, it must be granted



that without Marx, clearly defining one form of socialism, there would have been no direct, clash, nor Bakunin clearly defining an opposite). There had grown up by 1869 a very noticeable trend within the International that was called “Bakuninist”, but which was very clearly in one line of descent from Godwin and in another line from Proudhon. When the Paris Commune exploded in the face of the International, it was the parting of the ways (though this was deferred a little longer and seemed to follow personal lines). From then on, Anarchists and Marxists knew by their different analyses and interpretations and actions during the Paris Commune, that they were separate.

For many years, all the same, Anarchists continued to form part of the Socialist Movement. Marx had not succeeded in building a mass movement. The German socialist movement was more influenced by Lassalle; English socialism by the reformist and Christian traditions of Radical Nonconformity. Only after Marx's death, when Marxism was the official doctrine of German social-democracy, were Anarchists excluded from Socialist Internationals; Social-Democracy marched on to its own schism, that between English Liberalism masquerading as Labour on the one hand, and Social Democracy on the other; and that between Majority Social Democracy (Bolshevism) and reformism. There were no more schisms in the anarchist movement; popular opinion made such figures as Tolstoy into an Anarchist (he was not; neither was he in the normal sense of the term a Christian nor a Pacifist, as popularly supposed), but he derived, if he were such, very clearly from the “second line” of Godwinism. What we may perhaps call “mainstream Anarchism” was singularly coherent and united, and it was given body by the writings of a number of theoreticians, such as Peter Kropotkin.

After the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune, and the repressions in many parts of the world, Anarchism passed into its well-known stage of individual terrorism; it fought back, and survived, and gave birth to (or was carried forward in) the revolutionary syndicalist movement which began in France. It lost ground after the First World War, both because of the growth of reformist socialism, and the rise of fascism; and while it made a certain contribution to the Russian Revolution, it was defeated by the Bolshevik counter-revolution. It was seen in both a destructive and constructive role in the Spanish Revolution of 1936.

By the time of the Second World War, Anarchism had been tried and tested in many revolutionary situations and labour struggles. Alternative forms had been tried and discarded. The German Revolution had introduced the idea of

Workers' Councils; the experience of the American IWW had shown the possibilities inherent in industrial unionism. Moreover, the “flint against flint” in the argument against Marxist Communism, the lessons of what socialism without freedom meant in Russia, and the failure of reformist socialism everywhere, helped to shape the anarchist doctrine.

There were never theoreticians of Anarchism as such, though it produced a number of theoreticians who discussed aspects of the philosophy. Anarchism has remained a creed that has been worked out in practice. Very often, a bourgeois writer comes along and writes down what has already been worked out in practice by workers and peasants; he is attributed by bourgeois historians as being a leader, and by successive bourgeois writers (citing the bourgeois historians) as being one more case that proves the working class relies upon bourgeois leaders.

The idea of Anarchism survived the failure of anarchist organisation. The reconstituted I.W.M.A. (“the Berlin International”) became in effect reformist; exiled organisations were reduced to impotence; in some cases the name became fashionable but the idea unknown or ignored.

## **JUSTIFICATION OF ANARCHISM**

**That Man is born free**

Our rights are inalienable. Each person born on the world is heir to all the preceding ages. The whole world is ours by right of birth alone. Duties, imposed as obligations or ideals, such as patriotism, duty to the State, worship of God, submission to higher classes or authorities, respect for inherited privileges, are lies.

**If man is born free, slavery is murder**

Nobody is fit to rule another. It is not alleged that Man is perfect, or that, merely through his natural goodness he should not be submitted to rule. There are no supermen or privileged classes who are “above imperfect Man” and are capable or entitled to rule the rest of us. Submission to slavery means surrender of life.

## As slavery is murder, so property is theft

The fact that Man cannot enter into his natural inheritance means that part of it has been taken from him; either by means of force (old, legalised conquest or robbery) or fraud (persuasion that the State or its servants or an inherited property owning class is entitled to privilege). All present systems of ownership mean that some are deprived of the fruits of their labour. It is true that, in a competitive society, only the possession of independent means enables one to be free of the economy (this is what Proudhon meant when, addressing himself to a master artisan, he said “property is liberty” which seems at first sight in contradiction with his dictum that it was theft.) But the principle of ownership, in that which concerns the community, is at the bottom of inequity.

## If property is theft, government is tyranny

If we accept the principle of a socialised society, and abolishing hereditary privilege, and dominant, classes, the State becomes unnecessary and unnecessary government is tyranny. “Liberty without socialism is exploitation; socialism without liberty is tyranny” (Bakunin).

## If government is tyranny, anarchy is liberty

Those who use the word “anarchy” to mean disorder or misrule are not incorrect. If they regard Government as necessary, if they think we could not live without Whitehall directing our affairs, if they think politicians are essential to our well-being and that we could not behave socially without policemen, they are right in assuming that anarchy means the opposite to what government guarantees. But those who take the reverse opinion and consider government to be tyranny are also right in considering anarchy or no-government, to be liberty. If government is the maintenance of privilege and exploitation and inefficiency of distribution its tool, then only anarchy is order.

## THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Revolutionary anarchism is based upon the class struggle, though it is true that often even the best of anarchist spokesmen, striving to avoid Marxist phraseology, may express it differently. It does not take the mechanistic view of the class struggle taken by Marx and Engels. It does not take the view that only

the industrial proletariat can achieve socialism, and that the victory of this class represents the final victory. On the contrary: had anarchism been victorious in any period before 1914, it would have been a triumph for the peasants and artisans, rather than the industrial proletariat amongst whom it was not widespread. Marxists accuse the artisans of being petit bourgeois which is a phrase used at the time by Marx; but there was a vast difference between the petit bourgeois of that day - cobblers, tailors, bookbinders, one-man printers, goldsmiths, saddlers, etc., all productive men engaged on their own account, and the non-productive “petit bourgeoisie” (Civil Servants, manufacturers, etc.) of today.

Any class may be revolutionary in its day and time; only a productive class may be libertarian in nature, because it does not need to exploit. The industrialisation of most Western countries has meant that the industrial proletariat has replaced the old “petit bourgeoisie”; and what is left of the “petit bourgeoisie” has become capitalist instead of working class, or the functionaries of the State.

As this happened, so the anarchist movement developed into *anarcho-syndicalism*, i.e. the idea that combinations of workers could, by organising themselves at their place of work and ultimately by running their own places of work, be the means of by-passing a State-run economy at the same time as eliminating a ruling class.

It has never been claimed (even, and especially, by Marx) that the working class were an idealised class (this belonged to the Christian Socialists, not the anti-idealistic Marxists or Bakuninists). Nor was it ever suggested they alone could be revolutionary; or that they could not be reactionary. It would be trying the reader's patience too much to reiterate all the “working-class are not angels” statements in repudiation of working class struggle which purport to refute that the working class could not run their own places of work. Suffice it to say that only in heaven would it be necessary for angels to take over the functions of management.

## **ORGANISATION AND ANARCHISM**

Those belonging to or coming from authoritarian parties find it hard to believe that it is possible to organise without “some form” of government. Therefore they conclude, and it is a popular argument against anarchism, that

“anarchists do not believe in organisation”. For instance: “They break up other people's organisations but are unable to do anything because they do not believe in building their own”

They may well break up organisations because they are dangerous, hierarchical or useless, but it is true to say they do not believe in building their own. It can well be admitted that particular people in particular places may have failed in such a task. It is true that in Great Britain (or Australia), for instance, the anarchists have not yet succeeded in building up an effective organisation. This is a valid, internal criticism. But it is untrue to say that there *cannot be such a thing* as an anarchist organisation. An organisation may be democratic or dictatorial; it may be authoritarian or libertarian; and there are many libertarian organisations, not necessarily anarchistic, which prove that all organisation need not be run from the top downwards.

It is significant that many trade unions, in order to keep their movement disciplined, and their members in an integral part of capitalist society, become (if they do not start as) authoritarian; but how many employers' organisations impose similar discipline? They cannot; because their members would walk out. They must come to free agreement, because the members have their independence (“property is liberty”!).

Only the most revolutionary unions of the world (I.W.W. of America, C.N.T. of Spain, etc.) learned how to keep the form of organisation of mass labour movements on an informal basis, with a minimum of central administration, and with every decision referred back to the workers on the job.

## **THE ROLE OF THE ANARCHIST IN AN AUTHORITARIAN SOCIETY**

The only place for a free man in a slave society was in prison, said Thoreau (after spending a night inside). It is a stirring affirmation, but not one to live by. The revolutionary must indeed be prepared for persecution and prosecution, but only the masochist would welcome it. It must always remain an individual action and decision as to how far one can be consistent in one's rebellion; it is not something that can be laid down. Anarchists have pioneered or participated in many forms of social rebellion and social reconstruction: libertarian education, the formation of labour movements, collectivisation, individual direct action in its many forms, and so on.

When advocating anarcho-syndicalist tactics, it is because social change for the *whole* of society can only come about through a change of the economy. Individual action may serve some liberation purpose for the individual; for example one may retire to a country commune, surround oneself with likeminded people and ignore the world. One may then, indeed, live in a free economy. But one will not bring about social change. It is not because we think that “the industrial proletariat can do no wrong” that we advocate action by the industrial proletariat; it is simply because they have the effective means to destroy the old economy and build a new one, in our type of society at least. The Free Society (which we shall later describe) will come about through workers' councils taking over the places of work and by conscious destruction of the authoritarian institutions.

## Workers' Control

When advocating workers' control of the places of work, we divide from those who merely want a share of management, or imagine there can be an encroachment upon managerial function by the workers. We want no authority supreme to that of the workers' council, consisting of all the workers and not of their delegates. We reject “nationalisation” - State control.

It should not be (but is, alas) necessary to explain that there are, of course, ways of personal liberation, and in some cases these may be necessary lest one starve, other than by mass action. But none of these can ultimately *change* society. The master artisan no longer plays an important part in production, as he did in Proudhon's day. One can get more satisfaction by working on one's own; one may indeed have to do so by economic necessity; but the means of changing society rest with those who are working in the basic economy. The “gang system” of Coventry is sometimes advocated as a means of workers' control. But it is partial control only: power remains with the financial boss. It can become a more pleasant method of working, within the capitalist system; but it cannot be a means of overthrowing the system. By all means let the system be alleviated; we do not oppose the reform of conditions of work. But we do not pretend either that this has anything to do with building the free society.

## The Anarchist as a Rebel

It is not unknown for the individual Anarchist to fight on, alone, both putting forward his own principles and acting as a catalyst of rebellion. Examples come to mind of M.P.T. Acharya, in India, and J.W. Fleming, in

Australia, fighting on for their anarchist ideas, alone, the only one in the country. But it was not of their choice. Mostly, anarchists tend to form groups based upon the locality in which they live. They may participate in other struggles (anti-militarism, anti-imperialism, etc.) or solely within the context of the class struggle (as “agitators” at work) or they may form organisations.

It is no part of the case for anarchism to say that the profession of its ideas changes peoples' character; or that the movement invites itself to be judged on anyone who happened to be around at the time. Organisations may become reformist or authoritarian. People may become corrupted by money or power. All we do say is that ultimately such corruption leads them to drop the name “anarchist” as standing in their way. (If ever the term became “respectable”, no doubt we would have to choose a fresh one, equally connotative of libertarian rebellion!).

In all organisations, personalities play a part, and it may be that in different countries different schisms may occur. Some will say that there are different types of Anarchism - syndicalism, communism, individualism, pacifism. This is not so. If one wishes to cause a schism, purely because of personal reasons or because one wishes to become more quietist or reformist, it is no doubt more convenient to pick a name as a “banner”. But in reality there are not different forms of anarchism. Anarchist-Communism, in any definition (usually that of Kropotkin) means a method of socialisation without government. An alternative idea, Anarchist-Collectivism (favoured by the Spanish Anarchists) was found in practice to be no different. If one is going to have no rule from above, one cannot lay down a precise economic plan. Communism, in the sense used by the Anarchists, is a society based on the commune, i.e. the locality. Collectivism, based upon the place of work, is a division of the commune. But few anarcho-communists would dispute that unless the commune were very small (based upon the village, not upon the town) it would have to be sub-divided into smaller units, collectives, in order that all might participate and not merely their elected representatives. Otherwise, it would become merely industrial democracy. Whilst communism is an aim, syndicalism is a method of struggle. It is the union of workers within the industrial system, attempting to transform it into a free communistic society.

Whilst in a largely peasant country, like Bulgaria the anarchist movement was “anarcho-communist” because its natural form of organisation was the village commune, it could not be said that the aim of the Bulgarian anarcho-communist movement was any different from that say of the Italian anarcho-

syndicalist movement. It is true that just as communism is not necessarily anarchist (we do not speak of the Russian type of Statism, State communism, but of authoritarian communism in its genuine form), so syndicalism need not necessarily be revolutionary. Moreover, even revolutionary syndicalism (the idea that the workers can seize the places of work through factory organisation) need not be libertarian; it could go hand in hand with the idea of a political party exercising ultimate control.

## Non-Violence

Is pacifism a trend within the anarchist movement? The pacifism of Gandhi etc, is essentially authoritarian. The cult of non-violence as such always implies an elite, the Satyagrahi, who keep everyone else in check either by force or by moral persuasion. The general history of the orthodox pacifist movements is that they always attempt to dilute the revolutionary movement; but may come down on the side of force either in an imperialist war or by condoning aggressive actions by the governments it supports. However, it would be true to say that many Anarchists do consider it compatible with their Anarchism to be pacifists, in the sense that they advocate the use of non-violent methods (though usually nowadays advocating this on the grounds of expediency or tactics rather than principle). This type of pacifist-Anarchism might be considered a difference of policy rather than of ideas; it should not be confused with the "Tolstoyan Anarchism" (neither advocated by Tolstoy nor anarchistic) which elevates non-violence as an idol in itself.

## Immediate Aims of the Anarchist

A "reformist" is not someone who brings about reforms (he usually does not); it is someone who can see no further than amelioration of certain parts of the system. It is often necessary to agitate for the abolition of certain laws.

Sometimes the law is more harmful than the thing it legislates against and there is a danger that abolition of the law, bad as it is, might imply approval of the act itself (e.g. suicide). But this is a risk that the libertarian must take. No laws are worth passing; even those which are socially beneficial on the surface (e.g. against racial discrimination) are quite likely to be used wrongly. The Race Relations Bill and the Public Order Bill were pressed for by liberals, and were used against them. The Anarchist seeks to change attitudes and minds. When those are altered, laws become obsolete and unnecessary. At a certain point, the lawyers will be unable to operate them. At a later date, the politicians will



remodify their laws so as to be able to continue in business. The refusal of juries to convict thieves accused of theft above a certain amount, led to the ending of the death penalty for theft. The Witchcraft Act remained on the books until the 1940's, but the Public Prosecutor only dared rely on a few of its clauses, for fear of public ridicule. The Tories passed the Trade Disputes Act in vindictiveness after the General Strike, but public opinion was so much against it they never could use it and until a solid trade unionist became Minister of Labour, it was worthless. The "1381" Act was useful for squatters to trip up the council. To go to jail shouting "You can't do this, it's against the law of 1381" can only be regarded as a gesture.

It is necessary to carry on a resistance to any form of tyranny. It has been shown, too, very clearly in recent years that it is often useful to provoke the allegedly democratic forces of government into a position where it shows its true face of violence and repression. When governments see their privileges threatened, they drop the pretence of benevolence which most politicians prefer.

"Anarchists are able to bring about disorder, but cannot seize power. Hence they are unable to take advantage of the situation they create . . . and the bourgeoisie, regrouping its strength, turns to fascism." A Marxist

Anarchists can, of course, "seize power" quite as much as strict teetotalers can get blind drunk. Nothing prevents them doing so, but they would require another name afterwards. Anarchists in power would not necessarily be any better or worse than socialists or liberals; they might be as bad as communists or fascists; they would, we hope, be totally ineffective because unprepared. Their task is not to "seize power" (and those who use this term show surely that they seek personal power for *themselves*) but to abolish the bases of power. For power to all means power to nobody in particular.

It is true that if one leaves the wild animal of State power partially wounded, it becomes a raging beast that will destroy or be destroyed. It is this logic that causes anarchists to form organisations to bring about, revolutionary change. The nature of anarchism as an individualistic creed has often caused many to view the question of such organisation as one that might well be left to "spontaneity", "voluntary will", and so on. In other words, to say that there can be no organisation (save that of propaganda only) until the entire community forms its own organisations. But it is shown by events that a unity of resistance is needed against repression; that there must be united forms of action even if there are diversified forms of propaganda; and that even when, for instance,

workers' councils are formed, there are divisions between them on political grounds. Each political faction has its representatives - united outside on party lines which are able to put forward a united front within such councils and to dominate and ultimately subordinate them. There must therefore be an organised movement of anarchists if they are to be able to withstand the forces of authoritarianism. Such an organisation might well be obliged to rely upon acts of individual terrorism (such as used in China and Spain) to defend itself.

## Workers' Self-Defence

The Marxist Leninists in times of revolution prefer to rely upon the formation of a Red Army - a classic misuse of revolutionary terms. Under the control of one party, the "Red" Army is the old army under a red flag. We can see only too clearly how this can become a major instrument of repression. (Poland, after the First World War; Hungary, etc., after the Second). The very formation of an Army, to supersede workers' militias, will destroy the Revolution (Spain 1936). The newest romantic idea of a Red Army is the Guevarista notion of a peasants' army - combining the spontaneity and freedom of the Makhnovista and Zapatista/Magonista (anarchistic) peasant armies with the discipline of the Party intellectuals. It has appealed immensely to the intellectuals but found less favour amongst the peasants; it finds even more favour among intellectuals the fewer peasants there are! Régis Debray derides the workers' "self-defence" notions of anarcho-syndicalism. Briefly, these are that the workers use arms in their own defence, against the enemy at hand: it is the idea of the people at work, armed, during periods of social transformation. The Israelites have taken over the "self-defence" idea with major success - not as libertarians but out of national efficiency; indeed, so far as military action is concerned, they have shown that it can sometimes wage aggressive war successfully, or defeat a Red Army led invasion. For purely political reasons, Debray declined to take this into account; although it is an example more apposite to Western industrial countries than is the Castro movement, for instance. That the Israeli Army is nationalistic is beside the point. Its mode of organisation within the nation state is largely voluntary. It follows patterns laid down by General Orde Wingate who understood guerrilla tactics better than Che Guevara, for all the fact that he was an imperial soldier. The lack of discipline in the workers' militias does not necessarily imply inefficiency.

## How Will a Revolution Come About?

We do not know. When a revolutionary situation presents itself - as it did

with the occupation of the factories in France in 1968 (or 1936); as it did in Spain in 1936 with the fascist uprising; or with the break down of the Russian Armies in 1917; or in many other times and places; we are either ready for it, or we are not. Too often the workers are partially ready, and leave the “wounded wild animal” of capitalism or Statism fiercer than ever. It may be purely individual action that sets off the spark. But only if, at that period, there is a conscious movement towards the free society, which throws off the shackles of the past, will that situation become a Social Change.

## **BRINGING ABOUT THE NEW SOCIETY**

What constitutes an authoritarian society?

EXPLOITATION - MANIPULATION - SUPPRESSION. The organs of repression, which consist of many arms of “The Establishment”, for example:

The Apparatus of Government - the legislature, the judicature, the monarchy, the Civil Service, the Armed Forces, the Police, etc.

The Apparatus of Persuasion - the Church (*Of course, the Church can be, in some societies, an instrument of Government itself. It probably would be in the absence of a secular State*) the Press, TV, Radio, etc.

The Apparatus of Exploitation - the monetary system, financial control, the Banks, the Stock Exchange, individual and collective and State employers.

Most political reformers have some part of the unfree system that they wish to abolish (Republicans would abolish the Monarchy; Secularists would abolish the Church; Socialists would, or used to wish to, abolish the apparatus of exploitation; Pacifists would abolish the Army). Anarchists are in fact unique in wishing to abolish all. Nobody but the Anarchists wishes to abolish the Police. The Police (or the police in ultimate practice, which includes the Armed Forces) are the cornerstone of the State. Without control of the police, debates at Westminster become as sterile of result as debates of the West Kensington Debating Society (and probably far less interesting). With German money, supplied by Helphand Parvus, Lenin was able to return to Russia and to pay Lettish mercenaries to act as police. He was the only one who could do so and in this one fact Bolshevik success is constituted.

## Can one do without the State?

It seems to be generally agreed we can do without some organs of the State; can we do without them all, altogether? One cannot do the work of another (if the monarchy does not have an army, it cannot save you from foreign invasion; and the police will not get you into heaven if you do not have a church!) Any common sense codification of conduct would be better than the farrago of laws we have at present, which occupy both the lawyers and the politicians, the one interpreting the apparent desires of the other.

It is true that government does take over certain necessary social functions. The railways were not always run by the State; they belonged to capitalists, and could equally in a future society belong to the workers. Even the police at times fulfill some necessary functions: one goes to the police station to find lost dogs simply because it happens to be there. It does not follow we should never find lost dogs if there were no policemen, and that we need to be clubbed over the heads in time of social unrest and that old ladies need not lose their dogs.

There was an old superstition that if the Church excommunicated a country, it was under a terrible disaster. One could not be married, buried, leave property, do business in safety, be educated, be tended whilst sick, whilst the country was excommunicated. It was not an idle superstition: so long as people believed in the Church, if it banned a country from the communion of believers, the hospitals (run by the Church) were closed; there could be no trust in business (the clerics administered oaths); no education (they ran the schools); children could indeed be begotten, but not christened and were therefore barred from the community of believers; and unmarried parents could not leave property to their illegitimate children. One did not need the physical reality of Hell to make excommunication effective. We are wiser now. But our superstition has been transferred to belief in the State. If, we were to reject government there would be no education (for the government controls, the schools), no hospitals (ditto); nobody could carry on working because the government regulates the means of exploitation, and so on. The truth all the time has been that not the Church and not the State but we the People have worked for everything we have got; and if we have not done so, they have not provided for us. Even the privileged class has been maintained by us not them.

## The myth of taxation

The State myth calls into creation a second-hand myth, the money myth.

According to this legend, all the wealth of the country is to be found at Waterlow's printing works. As the notes roll off the presses, so our wealth is created; and if this ceased, we should be impoverished! An alternative but dated version was that these notes had to correspond with a quantity of gold buried deep in a mysterious vault (but it has long since been found that the government "welshed" on that angle!) A secondary myth is involved: that the rich help the poor (and not vice versa): that by means of taxation taken from the rich, those who are poor are "subsidized". The widespread belief in subsidisation is so great that it defies reasoned attack. Many worthy people believe that if Lady X did not spend her money on her yacht, that yacht could mysteriously be transformed into an X ray apparatus for the local hospital. They do not understand that yacht builders cannot produce X ray equipment. Others think that those on National Assistance are being supported by those at work. Yet the margin of unemployment is plainly needed by the State to make the system of exploitation work. It is as necessary as the Armed forces. Still more people believe there is a relation between the way their wages go up and down and the wages received by other people. In fact, in a competitive society, they get what they are able to command.

## The Abolition of the Wage and Monetary Systems

To abolish the system of financial control, it is necessary first to understand it. We put it here in a simple fashion. The Government, or the effective financial controller which may in some cases be over the Government (the banks), assess the national wealth. A corresponding number of bank notes are printed, coin is struck, credits are granted to financial houses. According to the degree of efficiency or inefficiency of the government (which is the stuff of day to day press political sloganeering, but need not concern us), the assessment, or budget, may be correct or incorrect. The Chancellor of the Exchequer may be "generous" or "niggardly", but according to his assessment, so is the national "cake", and so are our various "slices". Salaries and wages are determined by social convention, tradition. Government patronage, economic competition, hereditary influence, trade union bargaining, individual enterprise and wildcat strikes, changing of jobs, and by various other means. According to their effectiveness, so is the "slice" of cake each receives. The cake is, of course, the same.

In time of war, under "fair rationing", such a system need not apply. In the Second World War, we had "fair rations", under which everyone, no matter what his income, received only so many coupons for meat, reckoned by weight. This was because it had been decided that meat should be shared equally, irrespective

of income. The coupons had no value in themselves. Today they are only souvenirs in Carnaby Street. Then, they were highly important.

Many communal products are equally available to all, either on payment of a fixed sum, or free. The highways are free; it would probably make no economic difference if the underground railway was also free, bearing in mind the cost of ticket collecting. We pay water rates, but may draw as much as we like (it is rationed in the Sahara and maybe costly).

A *Free Society* would vastly extend the range of communal products that would be free. It might be that some products were in short supply and would have to be rationed by some means. It could be by “labour value” tickets (an hour's work per ticket, as a means of exchange) as suggested by the collectivists; it could be by ordinary “fair rationing” in the case of many items, food included; it might be that some means of exchange, similar to money but not based upon the wages system which immediately brings equality, might be used. We cannot lay down economic laws for a future *free society*. The authoritarian economist can do so (“so long as I, or my party, are in power, the Pound Sterling will be worth 100 new pence”); the libertarian can only make such statements as “if you have inequality, you must have a privileged class and government” - not because the must is his dictum, but because it is something that follows logically (just as does the statement that if there are 100 new pence in the pound there will be four lots of 25 new pence, -whatever you might call them).

A free society is not exactly an anarchist society, and far from being a perfect society (utopia) if the latter is possible. It is a society free from repressive institutions. Only in such a society can we build up anarchism. The *Utopian Society* is one on which we should aim our sights. That is the direction in which we should be moving, and the criterion by which we justify our success and failure. No anarchist seriously expects that one Monday morning he will read that capitalism has been abolished and that the State will fall before Tuesday when the rent-collector is due. Nor does he accept the Marxist-Leninist argument that there is a need for a “transitory stage” in which the State and bureaucracy must be strengthened, beyond all previous extent, so that it may wither away when unnecessary (as if any bureaucrat would ever find he was unnecessary). Transition is the period through which we are moving: the State will be superseded as the places of work are occupied (and re-started under self-management) and as free organisms replace direction from above.

Even the fascist has his Utopia, a militarised society divided into class and

racial strata. While he may never achieve it, his actions are determined by his vision of what he wants. The same applies to all who are not entirely deluded (in that they want one thing as a future Utopia but entirely different actions are undertaken meanwhile; they perhaps want peace “but prepare for war”). Even if the anarchist does not succeed within his lifetime, he does, to the extent that he is successful, modify society, mitigate tyranny, and reform some evils.

## The Employers do not give work

Since the first Enoch Powell speech, many have by accepting his exploitation of racial differences, also accepted his anti-socialism. “Send the blacks home,” they say, basically because they are afraid of the unknown and don't wish to know more; then they try to justify this. “They are taking our jobs” etc. Work is not something, however, that is *given* by the employer. He may have the legal right to distribute work, but only because a demand for it has been made. *The wealth of the country is due to the workers*. The immigrants help to contribute to it (it is the emigrants who do not, but nobody objects to them!) It may be that in some technological society of the future, run by the State, in a sort of boss Utopia, the working class will be displaced as a productive force. But this has not yet come about. It may be that technology will reduce us, as a productive class, to mere turners of switches and openers of the scientists' car-doors; to secretaries and receptionists; to janitors and clerks. Insofar as that happens, we must smash that society. Those who revolt against *alienation* already see the signs.

## Objections to Anarchism

Whenever one attacks present day society, one senses the fears and prejudices of the average audience. They know that society is a jungle today, but do not like to admit it. Once one speaks of anarchism they bring forward objections which are, in fact, criticisms of present-day society, but which they think of as objections to a free society of the future.

They fear murder, rape, robbery, violent attack if there were no government to prevent it. And yet we all know the government cannot prevent it. (Read the “News of the World”!) It can only punish where it finds it, while its own methods of repressive action causes far more damage. The “cure” is worse than the disease. “What would you do without a police force?” - Society would never tolerate the murderer at large, whether it had a police force or not. The institutionalisation of a body to look after crime means not only that it “looks after” (and nourishes) crime, but that the rest of society feels itself absolved. A

murder next door is the State's business, not mine! Responsibility for one's neighbour is reduced in an authoritarian society, which wishes to be solely responsible for our behaviour.

“Who will do the dirty work?” - This is a question society has to ask itself, not merely the anarchist society. There are dirty jobs which are socially unacceptable and poorly paid, and nobody wants to do them. People are therefore forced to do them (by slavery); or there is competition and the jobs become better paid (and therefore socially acceptable); or there is conscription for such jobs; or (as in England today) the capitalist introduces immigration, thus putting off the problem for a generation or two, or the jobs don't get done (the street gutters aren't swept any more and we get deluged with water shooting out from cars driven by graduate psychologists). Only a clairvoyant could tell what an anarchist society would do; it is plain to all of us what it could not do (use force, since it would lack the repressive machinery). The question implies a criticism of prosperity and freedom, which bring problems in their train.

“If the Anarchists do not seize power, and have superseded other forms of socialism that would, they objectively make way for fascism.” There is really only one answer to dictatorship, and that is by the personal removal of the dictator. Anyone will seize power if given the opportunity; but if the seat is hot enough they might try to desist. We do not want to see a privileged class, and cannot put forward any claim that we would make a better privileged degree of leadership than any other.

## Leadership

This is often a vexed question: do anarchists believe in leadership or not? Obviously not, because the leadership principle leads to the elite party and the elite party leads to government. Yet for all that, there is such a thing as leadership. Some people, in some circumstances, do naturally “provide leadership”. But this should not mean they are a class apart. Any revolutionary, in a factory where the majority have no revolutionary experience, will at times “provide leadership”. But no anarchist would form an institutionalised leadership. Neither too should he wait for direction, but instead contribute with some direction.

Can public opinion itself be of an authoritarian nature?

Most certainly. Even in a free society? Off course. But this is not an



argument against a free society. There might well be for instance, in a society controlled economically by the producers, prejudice against some minorities. But there would be no means of codifying prejudice and no repressive machinery against non-conformists. Only within a free society can public opinion become superior to its prejudices. The majority is not automatically right. The manipulation of the idea of a majority is part of the government technique.

## Unity

One last objection is made against Anarchism, usually by those about to “come over”. Why disunity in the ranks of those who take up a similar position on many stands? Why cannot we be all one libertarian left? Why any division at all?

Insofar as we form councils of action - workers industrial councils - even social groups based upon radical activity, we can be united with others of the libertarian left, or indeed (in the case of workers' councils) with people of reformist or reactionary points of view. The expression of our anarchist opinions does not make us hermits. We still mix within society with people of diverse opinions and none whatsoever. Anarchist groups need to keep alive their individual identity, but only a party machine could keep us from “speaking to outsiders”.



Gravure from a spanish anarchist newspaper published in 1872

# Objections to Anarchism

*by Albert Meltzer*

## THE MARXIST-LENINIST CRITIQUE OF ANARCHISM

It is very difficult for Marxist-Leninists to make an objective criticism of Anarchism, as such, because by its nature it undermines all the suppositions basic to Marxism. If Marxism is held out to be indeed the basic working class philosophy, and the proletariat cannot owe its emancipation to anyone else but itself, it is hard to go back on it and say that the working class is not yet ready to dispense with authority placed over it. Marxism, therefore, normally tries to refrain from criticising anarchism as such - unless driven to doing so, when it exposes its own authoritarianism (“how can the workers run the railways, for instance, without direction - that is to say, without authority?”) and concentrates its attack not on anarchism, but on anarchists.

It has -whether one agrees with it or not- a valid criticism of the anarchists in asking how one can (now) dispense with political action - or whether one should throw away so vital a weapon. But this criticism varies between the schools of Marxism, since some have used it to justify complete participation in the whole capitalist power structure; while others talk vaguely only of “using parliament as a platform”. Lenin recognised the shortcomings

of Marxism in this respect and insisted that the anarchist workers could not be criticised for rejecting so philistine a Marxism that it used political participation for its own sake and expected the capitalist state to allow let itself be voted out of existence peacefully. He therefore concentrated on another aspect, which Marx pioneered, viz. criticism of particular anarchists; and this has dominated all Leninist thinking ever since.

Because of the lack of any other criticism of the Anarchists, Leninists - especially trotskyists- to this day use the *personal criticism* method. But as Lenin selected only a few well-known personalities who for a few years fell short of the ideals they preached, the latter-day Leninists have to hold that all anarchists are responsible for everyone who calls himself or herself an anarchist - or even (such as the Russian Social Revolutionaries) were only called such (if indeed so) by others. They, however, are responsible only for fully paid up members of their own party.

Someone pointed out to me a new Leninist body called "World Revolution" which was carrying out a "criticism" of both trotskyists and anarchists. It had the same weary old trotskyist arguments against anarchists - making them responsible for any and every so-called anarchist- but they themselves could not take responsibility for anyone outside their own group of unknown students numbering a dozen at most. You could repeat this method over and over again.

This wrinkle in Leninism has produced another criticism of anarchism (usually confined to trots and maoists): anarchists are responsible not only for all referred to as anarchists, but for all workers influenced by anarchist ideas. The C.N.T. is always quoted here, but significantly it's whole history before and after the civil war is never mentioned; solely the period of participation in the government. For this, the anarchists must forever accept responsibility! But the trots may back the reformist union U.G.T. without accepting any responsibility for any period in its entire history. In all countries (if workers) they presumably join or (if students) accept, the reformist trade unions. That is alright. But a revolutionary trade union must forever be condemned for any one deviation, Moreover, if broken, it must never be rebuilt; the reformist union must be rebuilt in preference. This is the logical consequence of all trot thinking on Spain or other countries where such unions exist, proving their *preference* for reformist trade unionism (because of the reformist unions negative character which lends itself to a leadership they may capture; as against a federated or decentralised union which a leadership cannot capture).

## Petty Bourgeois

Notwithstanding this preference for non-revolutionary unions, and condemnation of the anarchists for unions built from the bottom up, all Marxist-Leninists have a seemingly contradictory criticism of anarchists, namely “they are petty bourgeois”.

This leads them into another difficulty: How can one reconcile the existence of anarcho-syndicalist unions with “petty bourgeois” origins - and how does one get over the fact that most Marxist-Leninists today are professional gentlemen studying for or belonging to the conservative professions? The answer is usually given that *because* anarchism is “petty bourgeois” those embracing it “whatever their occupation or social origins” must also be “petty bourgeois”; because Marxism is working class, its adherents must be working-class “at least subjectively”. This is a sociological absurdity, as if “working class” meant an ideological viewpoint. It is also a built-in escape clause.

Yet Marx was not such a fool as his followers. “Petty bourgeois” in his day did not mean a solicitor, an accountant, a factory manager, sociologist or anything of that sort (they were “bourgeois” - the term *small* was, “petit”, not “petty” that qualified the adjective - meant precisely that these were not the same as bourgeoisies). The small burgher was one who had fewer privileges, economically, than the wealthy, but had some privileges by virtue of his craft. Anarchism, said Marx, was a movement of the artisan worker, that is to say, the self-employed craftsman with some leisure to think and talk, not subject to factory hours and discipline, independently minded and difficult to threaten, not backward like the peasantry. In England, these people tended to become Radicals, perhaps because the State was less oppressive and less obviously unnecessary. In many countries, however, they were much more extreme in their radicalism and in the Swiss Jura, within the clockmakers, anarchism prospered. It spread to Paris - and the Paris Commune was above all a rising of artisans who had been reduced to penury by Napoleon III and his war. As the capitalist technique spread throughout the world, the artisans were ruined and driven into the factories. It is these individual craftsmen entering industrialisation who become anarchists, pointed out successive Marxists. They are not conditioned to factory discipline which produces good order, a proletariat prepared to accept a leadership and a party, and to work forever in the factory provided it comes under State control.

That this observation was true is seen by the crushing of the communes in Paris and in Spain and throughout the world, especially in places like Italy, in the Jewish pale of settlement in Russia, and so on. It should be the task of an anarchist union movement to seize the factories, but only in order to break down mass production and get back to craftsmanship. *This* is what Marx meant by a “petty bourgeois” outlook, and the term having changed its meaning totally, the Marxists misunderstand him totally.

## Vanguards

The reluctance of Marxist-Leninists to accept change is, however, above all seen in the acceptance of Lenin's conception of the Party (it is not that of Marx). Lenin saw that Russia was a huge mass of inertia, with a peasantry that would not budge but took all its suffering with an Asiatic patience. He looked to the “proletariat” to push it. But the “proletariat” was only a small part of the Russia of his day. Still he recognised it as the one class with an interest in progress -provided he felt it had a direction- of shrewd, calculating, ruthless and highly educated people (who could only come from the upper classes in the Russia of the time). The party they created should become, as much as possible, the party of the proletariat in which that class could organise and seize power. It had then the right and the duty to wipe out all other parties.

The idiocy of applying this policy today -in countries like Britain, Australia, USA- is incredible. One has only to look at the parties which offer themselves as the various parties of the proletariat (of which, incidentally, there could be only one). Compare them with the people around. The parties' membership is *far behind* in political intelligence and understanding. They are largely composed of shallow, inexperienced, youthful enthusiasts who understand far less about class struggle than the average worker.

Having translated the Russian Revolution into a mythology which places great stress on the qualities possessed by its leadership, they then pretend to possess that leadership charisma. But as they don't have it there is a total divorce between the working class and the so-called New Left, which has, therefore, to cover itself up with long-winded phrases in the hope that this will pass for learning; in the wider “Movement” with definitions at second-hand from Marxist-Leninism they scratch around to find someone really as backward and dispossessed as the *moujik*, and fall back on the “Third World” mythology. . .

The one criticism applied by Marxist-Leninists of anarchism with any serious claim to be considered is, therefore, solely that of whether political action should be considered or not. This is a purely negative attitude by anarchists. Wherever anarchists have undertaken it, because of circumstances, it has ended in disaster and betrayal of the revolutionary movement much as when Marxists have undertaken it.

## THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC CRITIQUE OF ANARCHISM

The early socialists did not understand that there would be necessarily a difference between anarchism and socialism. Both were socialists, but whereas the latter hoped to achieve socialism by parliamentary means, the latter felt that revolutionary means were necessary. As a result many early anarchist and socialist groups (especially in Britain and Australia) were interchangeable in working class membership. Something might come from political action; something by industrial methods; the revolution had to be fought as soon as possible; the one therefore was complementary to the other though it was recognised that they might have to follow separate paths.

This, however, changed because the face of socialism changed. It dropped its libertarian ideas for Statism. "Socialism" gradually came to mean State control of everything and therefore, moved far from being another face of anarchism, instead it became its direct opposite. From saying originally that "the anarchists were too impatient", therefore, the parliamentary socialists turned to a criticism of the anarchists levelled at them by people who had no desire to change society at all, whether sooner or later. They picked up what is essentially the conservative criticism of anarchism: which is that the State is the arbiter of all legality and the present economic order is the only established legal order. A stateless society -or even its advocacy- is criminal of itself! (To this day, a police constable in court or a journalist will, for this reason, refer to anarchism as if it were self-evidently criminal).

Most upholders of any parliamentary system deliberately confuse it with democracy, as an ideal system of equal representation, as if it already existed. Thus ultra-parliamentarism is "undemocratic" and even the elementary exercise of industrial bargaining can be held to be "undemocratic" - as if a few hundred men and a few dozen women selected at random alone had the right of exercising control over the rest of the country.

Since the Russianisation of “Communism”, turning it away from both parliamentarism and democracy, it has suited the social-democrat to speak of criticism from the revolutionary side as being necessarily from those wanting dictatorship. The anarchists, who can hardly be accused of dictatorship - except by politically illiterate journalists who do not understand the differences between parties, must therefore be “criminal” and whole labour movements have been so stigmatised by the Second International. This has been picked up by the U.S. Government with its “criminal syndicalism” legislation which is similar to that in more openly fascist countries.

No more than the Marxist-Leninists, the Social-Democrats are unable to state that their real objection to Anarchism is the fact that it is against power and privilege and so undermines their whole case. They bring up, if challenged, the objection that it is “impossible”. If “impossible”, what have they to fear from it? Why is it that in countries like Spain and Portugal, where the only chance of resisting Communist tyranny is the Anarchist Movement, do the Social-Democrats prefer to help the Communist Party? In Spain until the reappearance of the Socialist Party (PSOE) and because it was politically profitable, the British Labour Party helped the communist-led factions but would do nothing for the anarchists.

Dictatorship of the proletariat is “possible”, only too much so. When it comes it will sweep the socialists away. But if the anarchists resist, the socialists will at least survive to put forward their alternative. They fear only the consequences of that alternative being decisively rejected, for who would choose State Socialism out of the ashcan for nothing if they could have Stateless Socialism instead?

In the capitalist world, the social-democrat objects to revolutionary methods, the “impatience” and alleged “criminality” of the anarchists. But in the communist world, social-democracy is by the same conservative token equally “criminal”, indeed more so, since it presumably postulated connection with enemy powers. The charge of "impatience" can hardly be levelled since there is no way of effecting a change legally; and the whole idea of change by parliamentary methods is a farce. Social-democracy, in the face of Marxist Leninism, gives up the fight without hope. It has nothing to offer. There can be no change from Fascism to Social-Democracy because no constitutional methods offer themselves - but at least in that case, they could in the past rely on foreign support changing the system. Their interpretation of socialism apparently forbids them to take this view in regard to the Soviet

Union and its satellites. They have no ideas on how to change. They hope that nationalists and religious dissidents will put through a bit of liberalism that will ease the pressure. Yet anarchism offers a revolutionary attack upon the communist countries that is not only rejected by the social democrats; in power, they unite with other capitalist powers to harass and suppress that attack.

## THE LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC OBJECTION TO ANARCHISM

Liberal-Democracy is afraid to make direct criticisms of anarchism because to do so undermines the whole reasoning of liberal democracy. It therefore resorts to falsification: anarchists are equated with Marxists (and thereby the whole Marxist criticism of anarchism is ignored). The most frequent target of attack is to suggest that Anarchism is some form of Marxism plus violence, or some extreme form of Marxism.

The reason liberal democracy has no defence to offer against real anarchist argument is because liberal democracy is using it as its apologia in the defence of “freedom” yet circumscribing walls around it. It pretends that parliamentarism is some form of democracy, although sometimes prepared to admit (under pressure) that parliamentarism is no form of democracy at all, and occasionally seeks to find ways of further democratising it. The undoubtedly dictatorial process that a few people, once elected, by fair means or foul, have a right to make decisions for the majority, is covered up by a defence of the Constitutional Rights or even the individual liberty, of those members of Parliament... Burke's dictum that they are representatives, not delegates, is quoted ad nauseum (as if this reactionary politician had bound the British people for ever, though he, as he is self-admitted, did not seek to ask their opinions on the matter once).

Liberal economics are almost as dead as the Dodo. What rules is either the monopoly of the big firms or of the State. Yet *laissez faire* economics remain embodied aspirations of the Tory Party which they never implement. They object to the intervention of the State in business. But they never care to carry the spirit of competition too far. Enoch Powell commented on the fact that there was no logical reason why there should be any restriction on the movement of currency and this is good Tory policy (though never implemented! Not until the crisis is over!) Why should we not be able to deal in



gold pieces or U.S. dollars or Maria Theresa thalers or francs or Deutschmarks or even devalued Deutschmarks? The pound sterling would soon find its own level, and if it were devalued, so much the worse for it. But why stop there? If we can choose any currency we like, free socialism could co-exist with capitalism and it would drive capitalism out.

State socialism can co-exist with capitalism as long as the State gives a place to the existence of capitalism (it drives it out in Russia, allows a small place in other Communist countries).

But once free socialism competes with capitalism -as it would if we could choose to ignore the State's symbolic money and deal in one of our own choosing which reflected real work values- who would choose to be exploited? Quite clearly no *laissez-faire* economist who had to combine his role with that of party politician (and therefore practical man) would allow things to go that far. All Powell was doing was contrasting State intervention with non-intervention. He had no intention of letting the State go by default. Indeed, as a politician (if not exactly a party one, or if so, it is hard to say which one) he is for State repression of the most direct and brutal kind.

Liberal democracy picks up one of the normal arguments against anarchism which begins on the right wing; namely it begins with the objections against socialism -that is Statism- but if there is an anti-Statist socialism that is in fact more liberal than itself, then it is “criminal”. If it is not, then it seeks law to make it so.

This argument is in fact beneath contempt, yet it is one which influences the press, police and judiciary to a surprising extent. But in fact anarchism as such (as distinct from specific anarchist organisations) could never be illegal, because no laws can make people love the State. It is only done by false ideals, such as describing the State as a “country”.

The fact is that liberal democracy seldom voices any arguments against anarchism as such -other than relying upon prejudice- because its objections are purely authoritarian, and unmask the innate Statism and authoritarianism of liberalism. Nowadays conservatives like to appropriate the name “libertarian” to describe themselves as if they were more receptive to freedom than socialists. But their libertarianism is confined to keeping the State out of interfering in their business affairs. Once anarchism makes it plain that it is possible to have both social justice and to dispense with the State these

conservatives show their true colours. Their arguments against State Socialism and Communism may sound “libertarian”, but their arguments against Anarchism reveal that they are essentially authoritarian. That is why they prefer to rely upon innuendo, slanders, and false reporting, which is part and parcel of the Establishment anti-anarchism, faithfully supported by the media.

## THE FASCIST OBJECTION TO ANARCHISM

The fascist objection to anarchism is, curiously enough, more honest than that of the Marxist, the Liberal or the Social Democrat. Most of these will say -if pressed- that Anarchism is an ideal, perhaps imperfectly understood, but either impossible of achievement or possible only in a distant future. The Fascist, on the contrary, admits its possibility; what is denied is its desirability.

The right wing authoritarian (which term includes many beyond those naming themselves fascists) worships the very things which are anathema to Anarchists, especially the State. Though the conception of the State is idealised in fascist theory, it is not denied that one could do without it. But the “first duty of the citizen is to defend the State” and it is high treason to oppose it or advocate its abolition.

Sometimes the State is disguised as the “corporate people” or “the nation” giving a mystic idea of the State beyond the mere bureaucratic apparatus of rule. The forces of militarism and oppression are idealised after a German Emperor said that universal peace was “only a dream and at that not even a good dream”. Running throughout right wing patriotism is a mystical feeling about the “country”, but though Nazis in particular sometimes have recourse to an idealisation of the “people” (this has more of a racial than a popular connotation in German) - it is really the actual soil which seems to be held sacred, thus taking the State myth to its logical conclusion. For the Anarchist this of course is nonsense. The nonsense can be seen in its starkest form with the followers of Franco who have killed off so many Spaniards, hanker for the barren rock of Gibraltar; especially with General Millan de Astray who wanted to kill off “bad Spaniards” and eradicate Catalans and Basques - in the name of a unitary Spain (thus, as Unamuno

pointed out, making Spain “one-armed and one-eyed” as the notorious General was himself).

Anarchism is clearly seen by Fascists as a direct menace and not a purely philosophic one. It is not merely the direct action of Anarchists but the tiling itself which represents the evil (the media is just getting round to picking up these strands in fascist thinking, ironing them out nicely, and presenting them in the “news” stories). Hitler regarded the authoritarian state he had built as millennial (the thousand year state) but he knew it could be dismembered and rejected. His constant theme was the danger of this, and while he concentrated (for political reasons) attacks on a totalitarian rival, State Communism (since Russia presented a military menace), his attacks on “cosmopolitanism” have the re-iterated theme of anti-anarchism.

“Cosmopolitanism” and “Statelessness” was one of the “crimes” with which he associated Jews (as did the totalitarian communism of Russia), though plainly since his day large numbers of them have reverted to nationalism and a strong state. The theme of “Jewish domination” goes hand in hand with “anarchistic destruction of authority, morals and discipline”; since for him personal freedom was bad in itself (only national freedom is permissible). Insofar as one can make sense of his speeches (which are sometimes deceptive since he follows different strands of thought according to the way he could sway an audience), he believes “plunging into anarchy” of a country (abolition of State restraints) will lead to chaos, which will make it possible for a dictatorship other than one in the people's interests to succeed.

This Nazi propaganda is constantly echoed by the media “plunging the country into anarchy would be followed by a Communist or extreme right-wing dictatorship” -taken from a leading newspaper, and echoed almost daily.

Hitler did not confuse State Communism with anarchism (as Franco did deliberately, for propaganda purposes, trying to eradicate anarchism from Spanish history). He equates communism with “Jewish domination” and the case against the Jews (in original Nazi thinking) that they are a racially pure people who will gain world conquest over helots like the Germans if a “Master Race” does not control the Germans and keep the rival State out. In a condition of freedom the German “helots” would revert to anarchy, just as the racially “inferior” Celts of France threw out the Norman Nordic overlords (the Houston Chamberlain version of the French Revolution). Later, of course, when Nazism became a mass party it was expedient to amend this to

saying the *Germans* were the Master Race, but this was not the original Nazi philosophy nor was it privately accepted by the Nazi leaders (“the German people were not worthy of me”). But they could hardly tell mass meetings that they were all “helots”.

To sum up the fascist objection to Anarchism: it is not denied that the abolition of the State can come about, but if so, given economic, social and political freedom, the “helots”; -who are “naturally inclined” to accept subjection from superior races- will seek masters. They will have the nostalgia for “strong rule”.

In Nazi thinking, strong rule can only come from racially pure members of the “Master Race” (something a little more than a class and less than a people), which can be constructive masters (i.e. the “Aryans”), or a race which has had no contact with the “soil” and will be thus destructive. (This identification of the Jews would have to be completely revised in light of present day Israel).

In other types of Fascist thinking, given freedom, the people will throw off all patriotic and nationalistic allegiances and so the “country” will cease to be great. This is the basis of Mussolini's fascism, and of course, it is perfectly true, bearing in mind that “the country” is his synonym for the State and his only conception of greatness is militaristic. The frankest of all is the Spanish type of fascism which sought to impose class domination of the most brutal kind and made it plain that its opposition to anarchism was simply in order to keep the working class down; if necessary, the working class may be decimated in order to crush anarchism.

It is true of all political philosophies and blatant with the fascist one that its relationship to anarchism throws a clear light upon itself.

## THE AVERAGE PERSON'S OBJECTIONS TO ANARCHISM

Generally speaking the ordinary people pick up their objections to anarchism from the press, which in turn is influenced by what the Establishment wants. At present, in this country there is a definite ruling on transcribing Anarchism and Marxism, or Anarchism and Nationalism, so that the one must be referred to the other, in order to confuse. This has been borne

out in many exposures in countless anarchist publications showing where avowed Marxists are described in the Press as “anarchists” while avowed Anarchists are described as “Marxists” or “Nationalists” (the latter usually in Catalonia and sometimes in Euzkadi). On some occasions Nationalists are called “anarchists” but usually when the word “anarchist” is being used as if to describe oneself as an anarchist was to make a confession of guilt. This, as we have seen, is picked up from the liberal-democratic attitude to anarchism; but it is flavoured strongly with the fascist attitude too. Because of it, the phrase “self-confessed anarchist” has to be used by the Press to describe a person who is an anarchist as opposed to someone whom they have merely labelled anarchist in order to confuse.

Generally, therefore, the average person takes the fascist view of anarchism, as picked up in its entirety by police officers and others, as genuine; but tempered with the fact that they do not take it quite as seriously. Sometimes they confuse the word “revolutionary”, and assume all who protest are thereby anarchists. This ignorance, however, is more often displayed by journalists than it is by the general public.

When it comes down to an objection to anarchism *as it is* as distinct from objections to a mythological anarchism as imagined or caricatured by the authoritarian parties or Establishment, there are not many serious objections from the general public. They may not think it practical of realisation if presented in a positive way to them; but they usually do so if presented in a negative way -i.e. describing the tyranny of the State, the fact that we could dispense with authoritarian parties, the worthlessness of politicians, and so on. The sole main objection is perhaps the feeling that they want to make the best out of life as it is; that they do not feel strong enough to challenge the State or to face the struggle involved in bringing about a free society, or put up with the many vicissitudes, major and minor, that make up the life of a militant or someone reasonably committed to an ideal. The temptations to conform and to accept the bribes which the capitalist class can now hold out are too great; only when the State wants its last ounce of blood do they wake up to the need for resistance, but then it is too late, and also, of course, the State then takes on the pretence of being “the country” in order to be loved instead of hated or disliked. Nevertheless when the State clearly goes against “the country” they do tend to rebel.

These attitudes of the people as a whole cannot be lightly dismissed; if they could be, there would be no problem of a free society; when they can be, we shall be well on the way to it.

