

A Short Biography of Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin was born and raised in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1947; what he calls the "...segregated South..." was an environment of violence, racism, poverty and rejection. A youth street gang member, Ervin joined the NAACP youth group when he was 12 years old and took part in the 1960 sit-in protests which changed racial discrimination in public accommodations in the city. After being drafted and after serving two years in the U.S. Army, (where he was a Vietnam anti-war organizer and was court-martialed), he joined the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee in 1967 shortly before it merged (temporarily) with the more militant Black Panther Party.

In the wake of the urban Black rebellions that rocked the U.S. after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in the Spring of 1968, an attempt was made to frame Ervin on weapons charges and for planning to kill a local Klan leader. In order to escape prosecution in these charges Ervin hijacked a plane to Cuba in February 1969. It was while in Cuba and later in the then-Republic of Czechoslovakia, that he first became disillusioned with state socialism, recognizing it as dictatorship period, not the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as various Communist governments claimed. In Prague (the Czechoslovak capital), Ervin was betrayed to U.S. officials by pro-CIA elements left over from the Dubcek regime shortly after the Soviet invasion of the country. Briefly captured and held at the American Consulate, he fled to East Berlin where he was kidnapped by a special team of by American and West German special agents sent to recapture him. He was drugged and tortured during interrogation in the basement of the U.S. Consulate for almost a week, and after almost dying from this mistreatment, he was illegally brought back to the USA where it was falsely announced by the State department and the FBI in a press conference that he had "turned himself in" at JFK airport.

After a farce of a trial in a small town in Georgia, where he faced the death penalty before an all-white judge, jury, prosecutor and defense attorneys (appointed by the court), he was sentenced to the rest of his life in prison. Ervin remained politically active in prison where he was first introduced to the ideals of Anarchism in the late 1970s. He read many books on the subject sent by prison book clubs, and the Anarchist Black Cross, an international prisoner support movement, adopted his case. Also in prison, Ervin wrote several Anarchist pamphlets that are probably the most widely read writings on anarchism and the Black liberation movement. Anarchism and the Black Revolution is still popular, and has gone through several printings.

He was also involved in many prison struggles, the early 1970s prison union organizing campaigns and the Black prisoner movement or that period. Because of years of solitary confinement and prison mail censorship, his case was kept in obscurity, and it was not until he was one of the "Marion Brothels," a group of prisoners who became well known as they struggled against the first Control Unit at Marion Federal Penitentiary, that his case became a public concern. Ervin's own legal challenges and an international campaign eventually led to his release from prison after 15 years of incarceration.

After his release Ervin returned to Chattanooga, where for over ten years, he remained active with the Concerned Citizens for Justice, a local civil rights group, fighting police brutality and organizing against the Ku Klux Klan. In 1987 Ervin helped organize a major mobilization against the Klan that resulted in the Klan being run out of town. Also in 1987, Ervin was primarily responsible for the filing of a major civil rights lawsuit that successfully forced the city of Chattanooga to change its structure of governance on the basis that it systematically disempowered the Black community.

In retaliation for his activism, the white power structure has sought to frame Ervin up on a number of charges, the last being his arrest on misdemeanor charges in the “Chattanooga 3” case. In that case, Ervin was arrested with several other activists in the Ad Hoc Coalition Against Racism and Police Brutality (which succeeded the Concerned Citizens for Justice) for his participation in a demonstration against the failure of a grand jury to bring any criminal charges against policemen who choked a Black motorist, Larry Powell, to death in February 1993.

Chapter 3. Anarchist Theory and Practice

The major aim of this chapter is to list the major elements of Anarchist thought and to give examples of what some Anarchists think about them. Unlike other streams of political thought, Anarchists do not elevate certain texts or individuals above others. There are different types of Anarchists with many points of disagreement. The primary areas of debate among Anarchists relate to what form of organization should be struggled for and what tactics we should use. For instance, some of their most significant differences concern the economic organization of future society. Some Anarchists reject money, and substitute a system of trade in which work is exchanged for goods and services. Others reject all forms of trade or barter or private ownership as Capitalism, and feel that all major property should be owned in common.

There are Anarchists who believe in guerilla warfare, including assassination, bombings, bank expropriations, etc., as one means of revolutionary attacks on the State. But there also are Anarchists who believe almost exclusively in organizational, labor or community work. There is no single type, nor do they all agree on strategy and tactics. Some are opposed to violence; some accept it only in self-defense or during a revolutionary insurrection.

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

This false impression primarily is still widely believed because people from across the political spectrum have consciously been promoting this lie for years. All who strive to oppress and exploit the working class, and gain power for themselves, whether they come from the right or the left, will always be threatened by Anarchism. This is because Anarchists hold that all authority and coercion must be struggled against. In fact, Anarchists want to get rid of the greatest perpetrator of violence throughout history: governments. To Anarchists, a Capitalist “democratic” government is no better than a fascist or Communist regime, because the ruling class only differs in the amount of violence they authorize their police and army to use and the degree of rights they will allow, if any. Through war, police repression, social neglect, and political repression. Governments have killed millions of persons, whether trying to defend or overthrow a government. Anarchists want to end this slaughter, and build a society based on peace and freedom.

What is Anarchism? Anarchism is free or Libertarian Socialism. Anarchists are opposed to government, the state and Capitalism. Therefore, simply speaking, Anarchism is a no-government form of Socialism.

In common with all Socialists, the Anarchists hold that the private ownership of land, capital and machinery has had its time; that it is condemned to disappear, and that all requisites for production must and will, become the common property of society, and be managed in common by the producers of wealth Peter Kropotkin, in his *Anarchist-Communism: Its Basis and Principles*.

Though there are several different “schools” of Anarchist thought, revolutionary Anarchist or Anarchist-Communism is based upon the class struggle, but it does not take a mechanist view of the class struggle taken by the Marxist-Leninists. For instance, it does not take the view that only the industrial proletariat can achieve Socialism, and that the victory of this class, led by a “communist working class party” represent the final victory over Capitalism. Nor do we accept the idea of a “worker’s state.” Anarchists believe that only the peasants, workers and farmers can liberate themselves and that they should manage industrial and economic production through workers’ councils, factory committees, and farm cooperatives, rather than with the interference of a party or government.

Anarchists are social revolutionaries, and feel that the Social revolution is the process through which a free society will be created. Self-management will be established in all areas of social life, including the right of all oppressed races of people to self-determination. As I have stated, self-determination is the right to self-government. By their own initiative, individuals will implement their own management of social life through voluntary associations. They will refuse to surrender their self-direction to the State, political parties, vanguard sects since each of these merely aid in establishing or reestablishing domination. Anarchists believe the state and capitalist authority will be abolished by the means of direct action-wildcat strikes, slowdowns, boycotts, sabotage, and armed insurrection. We recognize our goals cannot be separated from the means used to achieve them. Hence our practice and the associations we create will reflect the society we seek.

Crucial attention will necessarily be paid to the area of economic organization, since it is here that the interests of everyone converge. Under Capitalism we all have to sell our labor to survive and to feed our families and ourselves. But after an Anarchist social revolution, the wage system and the institution of private and state property will be abolished and replaced with the production and distribution of goods according to the communist principle of: “From each according to ability, to each according to need.” Voluntary associations of producers and consumers will take common possession of the means of production and allow the free use of all resources to any voluntary group, provided that such use does not deprive others or does not entail the use of wage labor. These associations could be food and housing cooperatives, cooperative factories, community-run schools, hospitals, recreation facilities, and other important social services. These associations will federate with each other to facilitate their common goals on both a territorial and functional basis.

This federalism as a concept is a form of social organization in which self-determining groups freely agree to coordinate their activities. The only social system that can possibly meet the diverse needs of society, while still promoting solidarity on the widest scale, is one that allows people to freely associate on the basis of common needs and interests. Federalism emphasizes autonomy and decentralization, fosters solidarity and complements groups’ efforts to be as self-sufficient as possible. Groups can then be expected to cooperate as long as they derive mutual benefit. Contrary to the Capitalist legal system and its contracts, if such benefits are not felt to be mutual in an Anarchist society, any group will have the freedom to dissociate. In this manner a flexible and self-regulating social organism will be created, always ready to meet new needs by new organizations and adjustments. Federalism is not a type of Anarchism, but it is an essential part of Anarchism. It is the joining of groups and peoples for political and economic survival and livelihood.

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

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

Quoted in *Malatesta: His Life and Times*, ed. by Vernon Richards

So, this is the job of the federation, but it does not end with the success of the revolution. There is much reconstruction work to be done, and the revolution must be defended to fulfill our tasks, Anarchists must have their own organizations. They must organize the post-revolutionary society, and this is why Anarchists federate themselves.

In a modern independent society, the process of federation must be extended to all humanity. The network of voluntary associations — the Commune — will know no borders. It could be the size of the city, state, or nation or a society much larger than the nation-state under Capitalism. It could be a mass commune that would encompass all the world’s peoples in a number of continental Anarchist federations, say North America, Africa, or the Caribbean. Truly this would be a new world! Not a United Nations or “One World government,” but a united humanity.

But our opposition is formidable — each of us has been taught to believe in the need for government, in the absolute necessity of experts, in taking orders, in authority — for some of us it is all new. But when we believe in ourselves and decide we can make a society based on free, caring individuals, that tendency within us will become the conscious choice of freedom-loving people. Anarchists see their job as strengthening that tendency, and show that there is no democracy or freedom under government — whether in the United States, China or Russia. Anarchists believe in direct democracy by the people as the only kind of freedom and self-rule.

Types of Anarchists

But Anarchists can’t be expected to agree on everything. Historically these differences have led to distinct tendencies in Anarchist theory and practice.

Individualist Anarchists hope for a future society in which free individuals do their duty and share resources “according to the dictates of abstract justice.” Generally speaking, Individualists are mere philosophers rather than revolutionary activists. They are civil libertarians who want to reform the system to make it work ‘fairly.’ They were prevalent in the past century, but are still seen in “counter-cultural” Anarchist formations, middle class philosophers, or right-wing Libertarians.

Mutualists are Anarchists associated with the ideas of 19th century Anarchist philosopher, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who based his future economy on “...a pattern of individuals and small groups possessing (but not owning) their means of production, and bound by contracts of mutual exchange and mutual credit (instead of money) which would insure to each individual the product of his own labor. This type of Anarchism appears when Individualists begin to put their ideas in practice, and merely wish to reform Capitalism and make it “cooperative.” This is also where the right wing Libertarians and advocates of a minimized role for the state get the ideas. Marx

attacked Proudhon as an “idealist” and “utopian philosopher” for the Anarchist concept of Mutual Aid.

Collectivists are Anarchists based directly on the ideas of Michael Bakunin, the Russian Anarchist, the best-known advocate to the general public of Anarchist theory. Bakunin’s collectivist form of Anarchism replaced Proudhon’s insistence on individual possession with the idea of Socialist possession by voluntary institutions, and the right to the enjoyment of the individual product of his/her labor or its equivalent still assured to the individual worker. This type of Anarchism involves a direct threat to the class system and the Capitalist state, and is the view that society can only be reconstructed when the working class seizes control of the economy by a social revolution, destroys the State apparatus, and reorganizes production on the basis of common ownership and control by associations of working people. This form of Anarchism is ideologically the basis of Anarchist-Syndicalism, or revolutionary labor unionism.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are Anarchists who are active in the labor and working class movements. Anarchist-Syndicalism is a form of Anarchism for class-conscious workers and peasants, for militants and activists in the labor movement, for libertarian Socialists who want equality as well as liberty. As pointed out, this philosophy is based heavily on the ideas of Bakunin, though its organizing techniques stem from the French and Spanish CNT trade union movements (called “Syndicates”), where Anarchists were heavily involved. This is the type of Anarchism that influenced the IWW in North America and which expresses the view that the Capitalist state must be toppled by a revolutionary form of economic warfare called the General Strike, and that the economy must be reorganized and based on industrial unions, which would be under the counsel of the working class. All political matters would be handled by either an Industrial Union Congress, while workplace matters would go to a factory committee, elected by the workers themselves and under their direct control. This type of Anarchism has great potential for organizing an Anarchist working class movement in North America, if it raises contemporary issues like the shortened workweek, factory councils, the current depression and a fight back against the bosses’ offensive of the last 20 years against the working class world wide.

Anarchist-Communists are revolutionary Anarchists who believe in the philosophy of class struggle, an end to Capitalism, and all forms of oppression. Contrary to Anarchist-Syndicalism it does not limit itself to workplace organizing. The philosophy is based on the theories of Peter Kropotkin, another Russian Anarchist. Kropotkin and his fellow Anarchist-Communists not only envisaged the commune and workers’ councils as the proper guardians of production; they also attacked the wage system in all its forms, and revived the ideas of Libertarian communism. This type of Anarchism is known as Libertarian Socialism also, and includes Mast Socialists who are also opposed to the State, dictatorship, and party rule, though they are not Anarchists.

Since the 1870s the principles of Anarchist-Communism have been accepted by most Anarchist organizations favoring revolution. This Anarchist or Libertarian Communism must, of course, not be confused with much better known communism of the Marxist-Leninists, the communism which is based on state ownership of the economy and control of the both production and distribution, and also on party dictatorship. That form of authoritarian communist society is based on oppression and slavery to the state, while we favor a free, voluntary communism of shared resources. Libertarian Communism is not Bolshevism and has no connection with or support for Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky or Mao Tse Tung. It is not state or private control over the essentials of life we seek, and we oppose all forms of dictatorship. Anarchist communists seek to foster the

growth of a new society in which freedom to develop as one sees it is integrated to the fullest extent with social responsibility to others.

Autonomists are a new tendency in the Anarchist movement. This tendency arose in the mid 1980s in Germany and later spread to other countries in Europe and North America. Students, intellectuals, and disaffected workers made up this tendency originally, but there are also Anarchists who call themselves Autonomists to imply they are not linked with a federation, or are not doctrinaire or a purist. Like Liberating Socialism, they seem to draw their ideology from both Marxism and some tenets of Anarchist philosophy like Anarchist Communism, but they tend to be more independent and very meticulous about explaining their different identity.

In conclusion, this is one way to list the different tendencies in Anarchist thought and practice. There may be many other ways to do it and describe the historical development of each tendency. That may be beyond the scope of this pamphlet. But most Anarchists would agree on these general statements: Anarchists hope far, construct theories about, and act to promote the abolition of government, the State, and the principle of authority that is central to contemporary social forms, and to replace them with a social organization based on voluntary cooperation between free individuals. All Anarchist tendencies, except the Individualists (and to some extent, the Mutualists), see this future society based on an organic network of mutual aid associations, workers' and consumers collectives, communes, and other voluntary alliances, organized into regional units and other non-authoritarian federations for the purpose of sharing ideas, information, technical skills and large scale technological, cultural and recreational resources. All Anarchists believe in freedom from hunger and want and are against all forms of class, sexual and racial oppression, as well as all political manipulation by the State.

The philosophy is an evolving ideal in which many individuals and social movements have influence. Feminism, Black Liberation, Gay rights, the ecology movement and others, are all additions to the awareness of the philosophy of Anarchism, and this influence has helped in the advancement of the ideal of Anarchism as a social force in modern society. These influences ensure that the Social revolution we all anticipate will be as all encompassing and democratic as all, and that all will be fully liberated, not just affluent straight, white males.

Anarchist Versus Marxist-Leninist Thought on Organization of Society

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

It is very difficult for the 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 and Leninism, its variant which emerged during the Russian revolution, is held out to be the working class philosophy and the proletariat cannot owe its emancipation to anyone but itself, it is hard to go back on it and say that the working class is not yet ready to dispense with authority over it. Lenin came up with the idea of a transitional State, which would "wither away" over

time, to go along with Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat." The Anarchists expose this line as counter-revolutionary and sheer power grabbing. Over 75 years of Marxist-Leninist practice has proven us right. These so-called "Socialist States" produced by Marxist-Leninist doctrine have only produced Stalinist police states where workers have no rights, a new ruling class of technocrats and party politicians have emerged, and the class differential between those the state favored over those it didn't created widespread deprivation among the masses and another class struggle. But instead of meeting such criticisms head on, they have concentrated their attacks not on the doctrine of Anarchism, but on particular Anarchist historical figures, especially Bakunin, an ideological opponent of Marx in the First International of Socialist movements in the last century.

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

The Anarchists differ with the Marxists-Leninists in many areas, but especially in organization building. They differ from the authoritarian socialists in primarily three ways: they reject the Marxist-Leninist notions of the "vanguard party," "democratic centralism," and the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and Anarchists have alternatives to each of them. The problem is that almost the entire left, including some Anarchists, is completely unaware of Anarchism's tangible structural alternatives of the Catalyst, Group, Anarchist Consensus, and the Mass Commune.

The Anarchist alternative to the vanguard party is the catalyst group. The catalyst group is merely an Anarchist-Communist federation of affinity groups in action. This Catalyst group or revolutionary anarchist federation would meet on a regular basis or only when there was a necessity, depending on the wishes of the membership and the urgency of social conditions. It would be made up of representatives from or the affinity group itself, with full voting rights, privileges, and responsibilities. It would set both policies and future actions to be performed. It will produce both Anarchist-Communist theory and social practice. It believes in the class struggle and the necessity to overthrow Capitalist rule. It organizes in the communities and workplaces. It is democratic and has no authority figures like a party boss or central committee.

In order to make a revolution large-scale, coordinated movements are necessary, and their formation is in no way counter to Anarchism. What Anarchists are opposed to is hierarchical, power-tripping leadership which suppresses the creative urge of the bulk of those involved, and forces an agenda down their throats. Members of such groups are mere servants and worshippers of the party leadership. But although Anarchists reject this type of domineering leadership, they do recognize that some people are more experienced, articulate, or skilled than others, and these people will play leadership action roles. These persons are not authority figures, and can be removed at the will of the body. There is also a conscious attempt to routinely rotate this responsibility and to pass on these skills to each other, especially to women and people of color, who would ordinarily not get the chance. The experiences of these persons, who are usually veteran activists or better qualified than most at the moment can help form and drive forward movements, and even help crystallize the potential for revolutionary change in the popular movement. What they cannot do is take over the initiative of the movement itself. The members of these groups reject hierarchical positions — anybody having more 'official' authority than others — and unlike the M-L vanguard parties, the Anarchist groups won't be allowed to perpetuate their leadership through a dictatorship after the revolution. Instead, the catalyst group itself will be dissolved and its members, when they are ready, will be absorbed into the new society's col-

lective decision-making process Therefore these Anarchists are not leaders, but merely advisors and organizers for a mass movement.

What we don't want or need is a group of authoritarians leading the working class, and then establishing themselves as a centralized decision-making command, instead of "withering away"; Marxist-Leninist states have perpetuated authoritarian institutions (the secret police, labor bosses, and the communist party) to maintain their power. The apparent effectiveness of such organizations (we're just as efficient as the Capitalists) masks the way that "revolutionaries" who pattern themselves after Capitalist institutions become absorbed by bourgeois values, and completely isolated from the real needs and desires of ordinary people.

The reluctance of Marxist-Leninists to accept to accept revolutionary social change is, however, above all seen in Lenin's conception of the party. It is a prescription to just nakedly seize power and put it in the hands of the Communist Party. The party that Leninists create today, they believe, should become the (only) "Party of the Proletariat" in which that class could organize and seize power. In practice, however, this meant personal and party dictatorship, which they felt gave them the right and duty to wipe out all other parties and political ideologies. Both Lenin and Stalin killed millions of workers and peasants, their left-wing ideological opponents, and even members of the Bolshevik party. This bloody and treacherous history is why there is so much rivalry and hostility between Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyite parties today, and it is why the "workers' states," whether in Cuba, China, Vietnam, or Korea are such oppressive bureaucracies over their people. It is also why most of the East European Stalinist countries had their government overthrown by the petty bourgeois and ordinary citizens in the 1980s. Maybe we are witnessing the eclipse of State communism entirely, since they have nothing new to say and will never get those governments-back again.

While Anarchist groups reach decisions through Anarchist consensus, the Marxist-Leninists organize through so-called democratic centralism. Democratic centralism poses as a form of inner party democracy, but is really just a hierarchy by which each member of a party — ultimately of a society — is subordinate to a "higher" member until one reaches the all-powerful party central committee and its Chairman. This is a totally undemocratic procedure, which puts the leadership above criticism, even if it is not above reproach. It is a bankrupt, corrupt method of internal operations for a political organization. You have no voice in such a party, and must be afraid to say any unflattering comments to or about the leaders.

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

In most cases, there is no real need for formal meetings for the making of decisions, what is needed is coordination of the actions of the group. Of course, there are times when a decision has to be made, and sometimes very quickly. This will be rare, but sometimes it is unavoidable. The consensus, in that case, would then have to be among a much smaller circle than the general membership of hundreds or thousands. But ordinarily all that is needed is an exchange of information and trust among parties, and a decision reaffirming the original decision will be reached,

if an emergency decision had to be made. Of course, during the discussion, there will be an endeavor to clarify any major differences and explore alternative courses of action. And there will be an attempt to arrive at a mutually agreed upon consensus between conflicting views. As always, if there should be an impasse or dissatisfaction with the consensus, a vote would be taken and with a 2/3 majority, the matter would be accepted, rejected or rescinded.

This is all totally contrary to the practice of Marxist-Leninist parties where the Central Committee unilaterally sets policy for the entire organization, and arbitrary authority reigns. Anarchists reject centralization of authority and the concept of a Central Committee. All groups are free associations formed out of committees not revolutionaries disciplined by fear of authority. When the size of the work-groups (which could be fanned around Labor, fundraising, anti-racism, women's rights, food and housing, et.) becomes cumbersome, the organizations can be decentralized into two or several more autonomous organizations, still united in one large federation. This enables the group to expand limitlessly while maintaining its anarchic form of decentralized self-management. It is sort of like the scientific theory of a biological cell, dividing and redividing, but in a political sense.

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

Anarchist-Communists reject the Marxist-Leninist concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and a so-called "workers' state," in favor of the mass commune. Unlike members of Leninist parties, whose daily lives are generally similar to present bourgeois lifestyles, Anarchist organizational structures and lifestyles, through communal living arrangements, urban tribes, affinity groups, squatting, etc., attempt to reflect the Liberated society of the future. Anarchists built all kinds of communes and collective during the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s, but were crushed by the fascists and the Communists. Since the Marxist-Leninists don't build cooperative structures, the nucleus of the new society, they can only see the world in bourgeois political terms. They want to just seize State power and institute their own dictatorship over the people and the workers, instead of crushing State power and replacing it with a free, cooperative society.

Of course, the party, they insist, represents the proletariat, and there is no need for them to organize themselves outside of the party. Yet even in the former Soviet Union the Communist Party membership only represented five percent of the population. This is elitism of the worst sort and even makes the Capitalist parties look democratic by comparison. What the Communist Party was intended to represent in terms of workers power is never made clear, but in true 1984 "doublethink" fashion, the results are 75 years of political repression and State slavery, instead of an era of "glorious Communist rule." They must be held accountable politically for these crimes against the people, and revolutionary political theory and practice. They have slandered the names of Socialism and Communism.

We reject the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is unbridled oppression, and the Marxist-Leninists and Stalinists must be made to answer for it. Millions have been murdered by Stalin in the name of fighting an internal class war, and millions more were murdered in China, Poland, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and other countries by Communist movements which followed Stalin's prescription for revolutionary terror. We reject State communism as the worst aberration and tyranny. We can do better than this with the mass commune.

The Anarchist mass commune (sometimes also called a Workers Council, although there are some differences) is a national continental or transnational federation of economic and political cooperatives and regional communal formations. Anarchists look to a world and a society in which real decision-making involves everyone who lives in it — a mass commune — not a few discipline freaks pulling the strings in a so-called “proletarian dictatorship.” Any and all dictatorship is bad, it has no deeming social features, yet that is what the Leninists tell us will protect us from counterrevolution. While Marxist-Leninists claim that this dictatorship is necessary in order to crush any bourgeois counterrevolutions led by the Capitalist class or right-wing reactionaries, Anarchists feel that this is itself part of the Stalinist school of falsification. A centralized apparatus, such as a state, is a much easier target for opponents of the revolution than is an array of decentralized communes. And these communes would remain armed and prepared to defend the revolution against anyone who militarily moves against it. The key is to mobilize the people into defense guards, militias and other military preparedness units.

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

We don’t need the Marxist-Leninists’ solutions, they are dangerous and deluding. There is another way, but, too much of the left and to many ordinary people, the choice has appeared to be Anarchic “chaos” or the Maoist “Communist” parties, however dogmatic and dictatorial. This is primarily the result of misunderstanding and propaganda. But Anarchism as an ideology provides feasible organizational structures, as well as valid alternative revolutionary theory, which, if utilized could be the basis for organization just as solid as the Marxist-Leninists (or even more so). Only these organizations will be egalitarian and really for the benefit of people, rather than for the Communist leaders.

Anarchism is not confined to the ideas of a single theoretician, and it allows individual creativity to develop in collective groupings, instead of the characteristic dogmatism of the Marxist-Leninists. Therefore, not being cultist, it encourages a great deal of innovation and experimentation, prompting its adherents to respond realistically to contemporary conditions. It is the concept of making ideology fit the demands of life, rather than trying to make life fit the demands of ideology.

Therefore Anarchists build organizations in order to build a new world, not to perpetuate our domination over the masses of people. We must build an organized, coordinated international movement aimed at transforming the globe into a mass commune. Such would really be a great overleap in human evolution and a gigantic revolutionary stride. It would change the world as we know it and end the special problems long plaguing humankind. It would be a new era of freedom and fulfillment. *Lets get on with it, we’ve got a world to win!*

General Principles of Anarchist-Communism

Since Anarchist-Communism is currently still the most important and widely accepted form of Anarchism more needs to be said about this dynamic revolutionary doctrine.

Anarchist-Communism is based on a conception of society that harmoniously unites individual self-interest and social well-being. Although Anarchist-Communists agree with Marx and many Marxist-Leninists that Capitalism must be abolished because of its crisis-ridden nature (here we reject the false term “anarchy of production”) and its exploitation of the working class, they do not believe Capitalism is an indispensable, progressive precondition for the transition to a socially beneficial economy. Nor do they believe that the centralized economic planning of State Socialism can provide for the wide diversity of needs or desires. They reject the very idea of the need for a State or that it will just “wither away” of its own accord; or a party to “boss over” the workers or “stage manage” the revolution. In short, while accepting tenets of his economic critique of Capitalism, they do not worship Karl Marx as an infallible leader whose ideas can never be critiqued or revised, as the Marxist-Leninists do; and Anarchist-Communism is not based on Marxist theory.

These Anarchists believe the “personal is political, and the political is personal,” meaning that one cannot divorce one’s political life from one’s personal life. We do not play bureaucratic political roles, and then have a separate life as another social being entirely. Anarchist-Communists recognize that people are capable of determining their own needs and of making the necessary arrangements to satisfy those needs, provided that they have free access to social resources. It is always a political decision whether those resources are to be freely provided to all, so Anarchist-Communists believe in the credo of “from each according to (their) means, to each according to their needs.” This assures that all will be fed, clothed, and housed as normal social practice, not as demeaning welfare or that certain classes will be better provided for than others.

When not deformed by corrupt social institutions and practices, the interdependence and solidarity of human beings results in individuals who are responsible both for themselves and to the society that makes their well being and cultural development possible. Therefore, we seek to replace the State and Capitalism with a network of voluntary alliances embracing a of social life-production, consumption, health, culture, recreation, and other areas. In this way all groups and associations reap the benefits of unity while expanding the range of their freedom. Anarchists believe in free association and federating groups of collectives, workers’ councils, food and housing cooperatives, political collectives, with others of all types.

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

Capitalism, the State and Private Property

The existence of the State and Capitalism is rationalized by their apologists as being a “necessary evil” due to the alleged inability of the greater part of the population to run their own affairs and those of society, as well as being their protection against crime and violence. Anarchists realize that quite to the contrary, the principal barriers to a free society are the State and the institution of private property. It is the State which causes war, police repression, and other forms of violence, and it is private property — the lack of equal distribution of major social wealth — which causes crime and deprivation.

But what is the State? The State is a political abstraction, a hierarchical institution by which a privileged elite strives to dominate the vast majority of people. The State’s mechanisms include a group of institutions containing legislative assemblies, the civil service bureaucracy, the military and police forces, the judiciary and prisons, and the subcentral State apparatus. The government is the administrative vehicle to run the State. (The purpose of this specific set of institutions which are the expressions of authority in capitalist societies (and so-called “Socialist states”), is the maintenance and extension of domination over the common people by a privileged class, the rich in Capitalist societies, the so-called Communist party in State Socialist or Communist societies like the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

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

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

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

one or the other, or one then the other, because the fall of either will not ensure the fall of both. Down with Capitalism and the State!

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

Where there is a high social division of labor and complex industrial organization, money is necessary to perform transactions. It is not simply that this money is legal tender, and it is used in place of direct barter of goods. That is not what we are limited to here: Capital is money, but money as a process, which reproduces and increases its value. Capital arises only when the owner of the means of production finds workers on the market as sellers of their own labor power. Capitalism developed as the form of private property that shifted from the rural agricultural style to the urban, factory style of labor. Capitalism centralizes the instruments of production and brings individuals closely alongside of others in a disciplined work force. Capitalism is industrialized commodity production, which makes goods for profit, not for social needs. This is a special distinction of capital and capital alone.

We may understand Capitalism and the basis of our observations, as Capital endowed with will and consciousness. That is, as those people who acquire capital, and function as an elite, moneyed class with enough national and political power to rule society. Further, that accumulated capital is money, and with money they control the means of production that is defined as the mills, mines, factories, land, water, energy and other natural resources, and the rich know that this is their property. They don't need ideological pretensions, and are under no illusions about "public property."

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

Anarchism, Violence and Authority

One of the biggest lies about Anarchists is that they are mindless bomb throwers, cutthroats, and assassins. People spread these lies for their own reasons: governments, because they are afraid of being overthrown by Social revolution; Marxist-Leninists, because it is a competing ideology with a totally different concept of social organization and revolutionary struggle; and the Church, because Anarchism does not believe in deities and its rationalism might sway workers away from superstition. It is true that these lies and propaganda are able to sway many people primarily because they never hear the other side. Anarchists receive bad press and suffer a scapegoat of every politician, right or left wing.

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

But let's look at the real world and see who is causing all this violence and repression of human rights. The wholesale murder by standing armies in World Wars I and II, the pillage and rape of former colonial countries, military invasions or so-called "police operations" in Korea and Vietnam — all of these have been done by governments. It is government and state/class rule, which is the source of all violence. This includes all governments. The so-called "Communist" world is not communist and the "Free" world is not free. East and West, Capitalism, private or state remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority is bossed at work, at home, and in the community. Propaganda (news and literary), policemen and soldiers, prisons and schools, traditional values and morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or correct the many into passive acceptance of a brutal degrading and irrational system. This is what Anarchists mean by authority being oppression, and it is just such authoritarian rule which is at work in the United States of America, as well as the "Communist" governments of China or Cuba.

"What is the thing we call government? Is it anything but organized violence? The law orders you to obey, and if you don't obey, it will compel you by force — all governments, all law and authority finally rest enforce and violence, on punishment or fear of punishment.

— Alexander Berkman, in *ABC of Anarchism*

There are revolutionaries, including many Anarchists, who advocate armed overthrow of the capitalist State. They do not advocate or practice mass murder, like the governments of the modern world with their stockpiles of nuclear bombs, poison gas and chemical weapons, huge air forces, navies and armies and who are hostile to one another. It was not the Anarchists who provoked two World Wars where over 100 million persons were slaughtered; nor was it the Anarchists who invaded and butchered the peoples of Korea, Panama, Somalia, Iraq, Indonesia, and other countries who have sustained imperialist military snack. It was not the Anarchists who sent armies of spies all over the world to murder, corrupt, subvert, overthrow and meddle into the internal affairs of other countries like the CIA, KGB, MI6 or other national spy agencies, nor use them as secret police to uphold the home governments in various countries, no matter how repressive and unpopular the regime. Further, if your government makes you a policeman or soldier, you kill and repress people in the name of "freedom" or "law and order."

"You don't question the right of the government to kill, to confiscate and imprison. If a private person should be guilty of the things that the government is doing all the time, you'd brand him a murderer, thief and scoundrel. But as long as the violence

committed is “lawful” you approve of it and submit to it. So it is not real violence that you object to, but people using violence unlawfully” — Alexander Berkman, in *ABC of Anarchism*

If we speak honestly we must admit that everyone believes in violence and practices it, however they may condemn it in others. Either they do it themselves or they have the police or army to do it on their behalf as agents of the state. In fact, all of the governmental institutions we presently support and the entire life of present society are based on violence. In fact America is the most violent country on earth, or as one SNCC comrade, H. Rap Brown, was quoted as saying: “violence is as American as apple pie (!)” The United States goes all over the world committing violence, it assassinates heads of State, overthrows governments, slaughters civilians in the hundreds of thousands, and makes a prison out of captive nations, such as it is doing in Iraq and Somalia, at the present time. We are expected to passively submit to these crimes of conquest, that is the hallmark of a good citizen.

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

Basically, we would all choose to be pacifists. And like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. counseled, we would rather resolve our differences with understanding, love and moral reasoning. We will attempt these solutions first, whenever possible. In the insanity that reigns, however, our movement acknowledges the utility of preparedness. It is too dangerous a world to be ignorant of the ways to defend ourselves so that we can continue our revolutionary work. Being acquainted with a weapon and its uses does not mean that you must immediately go out and use that weapon, but that if you need to use it, you can use it well. We are forced to acknowledge that the American progressive and radical movements have been too pacifist to be truly effective. We also realize that open groups that proposed cooperative change and were basically nonviolent like the IWW, were crushed violently by the government and finally we have the unfortunate example of Dr. King, Jr. himself, who was assassinated in 1968 by a conspiracy of agents of the State, most likely the FBI.

Understand that the more we succeed at our work, the more dangerous will our situation become, because we will then be recognized as a threat to the State. And, make no mistake, the insurrection is coming. An American Intifada that will destabilize the state. So we are talking about a spontaneous, prolonged, rising of the vast majority of the people, and the necessity to defend our Social revolution. Although we recognize the importance of defensive paramilitary violence, and even urban guerilla attacks, we do not depend upon war to achieve our liberation, for our struggle cannot be won by the force of arms alone. No, the people must be armed beforehand with understanding and agreement of our objectives, as well as trust and love of the revolution, and our military weapons are only an expression of our organic spirit and solidarity.

Perfect love for the people, perfect hate for the enemy. As the Cuban revolutionary, Che Guevara, said: “When one falls, another must take (their) place, and the rage of each death renews the reason for the fight”

The governments of the world commit much of their violence in repressing any attempt to overthrow the State. Crimes of repression against the people have usually benefited those in power, especially if the government is powerful. Look what happened in the United States when the Black revolution of the 1960s was repressed. Many protesting injustice were jailed, murdered, injured, or blacklisted — all of which was set up by the State’s secret police agencies. The movement was beaten down for decades as a result. So we cannot just depend on mass mobilizations alone, or just engage in underground offensives, if we want to defeat the state and its repression; some mid-place between the two must be found. For the future, our work will include development of collective techniques of self-defense, as well as underground work while we work towards social revolution.

Anarchists and Revolutionary Organization

Another lie about Anarchism is that they are nihilistic and don’t believe in any organizational structure. Anarchists are not opposed to organization. In fact, Anarchism is primarily concerned about analyzing the way in which society is presently organized, i.e., government.

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

What organization means within Anarchism is to organize the needs of the people into non-authoritarian social organizations so that they can take care of their own business on an equal basis. It also means the coming together of like-minded people for the purpose of coordinating the work that both groups and individuals feel necessary for their survival, well being, and livelihood. So because Anarchism involves people who would come together on the basis of mutual needs and interests cooperation is a key element. A primary aim is that the individuals should speak for themselves, and that all in the group be equally responsible for the group’s decisions; no leaders or bosses here!

Many Anarchists would even envisage large scale organizational needs in terms of small local groups organized in the workplace, collectives, neighborhoods, and other areas, who would send delegates to larger committees who would make decisions on matters of wider concern. The job of delegate would not be full-time; it would be rotated. Although their out-of-pocket expenses would be paid, the delegate would be unpaid, recallable and would only voice the group’s decisions. The various schools of Anarchism differ in emphasis concerning organization. For example, Anarcho-Syndicalists stress the revolutionary labor union and other workplace formations as the basic unit of organization, while the Anarchist-Communists recognize the commune as the high-

est form of social organization. Others may recognize other formations as most important, but they all recognize and support free, independent organizations of the people as the way forward.

The nucleus of Anarchist-Communist organization is the Affinity Group. The affinity group is a revolutionary circle or “cell” of friends and comrades who are in tune with each other both in ideology and as individuals. The affinity group exists to coordinate the needs of the group, as expressed by individuals and by the cell as a body. The group becomes an extended family; the well being of all becomes the responsibility of all.

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

— Murray Bookchin, in *Post Scarcity Anarchism*

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

1. Mutual Aid: this means giving support and solidarity between members, as well as collective work and responsibility.
2. Education: in addition to educating the society at-large to Anarchist ideals, this includes study by members to advance the ideology of the groups, as well as to increase their political, economic, scientific and technical knowledge.
3. Action: this means the actual organizing, and political work of the group outside the collective, where all members are expected to contribute.
4. Unity: the group is a form of family, a gathering of friends and comrades, people who care for the well-being of one another, who love and support each other, who strive to live in the spirit of cooperation and freedom; void of distrust, jealousy, hate, competition and other forms of negative social ideas and behavior. In short, affinity groups allow a collective to live a revolutionary lifestyle.

A big advantage of affinity groups is that they are highly resistant to police infiltration. Because the group members are so intimate, the groups are very difficult to infiltrate. Agents into them, and even if a group is penetrated, there is no “central office” which would give an agent information about the movement as a whole. Each cell has its own politics, agenda, and objectives. Therefore he would have to infiltrate hundreds, maybe thousands, of similar groups. Further, since the members all know each other, he could not lead disruptions without risk of immediate exposure, which would blunt an operation like the COINTELPRO used by the FBI against the Black and progressive movements in the 1960s. Further, because there are no leaders in the movement, there is no one to target and destroy the group.

Because they can grow as biological cells grow, by division, they can proliferate rapidly. There could be hundreds in one large city or region. They prepare for the emergence of a mass movement; they will organize large numbers of people in order to coordinate activities as their needs become apparent and as social conditions dictate. Affinity groups function as a catalyst within the mass movement, pushing it to higher and higher levels of resistance to the authorities. But they are ready-made for underground work in the event of open political repression or mass insurrection.

This leads us to the next level of Anarchist organizations, the area and regional federation. Federations are the networks of affinity groups who come together out of common needs, which include mutual aid education, action, and any other work deemed to be needed for the transformation of current society from the authoritarian state to Anarchist-Communism. The following is an example of how Anarchist-Communist federations could be structured. First, then is the area organization, which could cover a large city or county. All like-minded affinity groups in the area would associate themselves in a local federation. Agreements on ideology, mutual aid, and action to be undertaken would be made at meetings in which all can come and have equal voice.

When the local area organization reaches a size where it is deemed to be too big, the area federation would initiate a Coordinating Consensus Council. The purpose of the Council is to coordinate the needs and actions defined by all the groups, including the possibility of splitting and creating another federation. Each local area's affinity group would be invited to send representatives to the council with all the viewpoints of their group, and as a delegate they could vote and join in making policy on behalf of the group at the council.

Our next federation would be on a regional basis, say the entire South or Midwest. This organization would take care of the whole region with the same principles of consensus and representation. Next would come a national federation to cover the U.S.A, and the continental federation, the latter of which would cover the continent of North America. Last would be the global organizations, which would be the networking of all federations worldwide. As for the latter because Anarchists do not recognize national borders and wish to replace the nation-state, they thus federate with all other like-minded people wherever they are living on the planet earth.

But for Anarchism to really work, the needs of the people must be fulfilled. So the first priority of Anarchists is the well being of all; thus we must organize the means to fully and equally fulfill the needs of the people. First, the means of production, transportation, and distribution must be organized into revolutionary organizations that the workers and the community run and control themselves. The second priority of the Anarchists is to deal with community need organizations, in addition to industrial organizing. Whatever the community needs are, then they must be dealt with. This means organization. It includes cooperative groups to fulfill such needs as health, energy, jobs, childcare, housing, alternative schools, food, entertainment, and other social areas. These community groups would form a cooperative community, which would be a network of community needs organizations and serve as an Anarchistic sociopolitical infrastructure. These groups should network with those in other areas for mutual aid education, and action, and become a federation on a regional scale.

Third, Anarchists would have to deal with social illness. Not only do we organize for the physical needs of the people, but must also work and propagandize to cure the ills sprouted by the State, which has warped the human personality under Capitalism. For instance, the oppression of women must be addressed. No one can be free if 51 percent of society is oppressed, domi-

nated and abused. Not only must we form an organization to deal with the harmful effects of sexism, but work to ensure patriarchy is dead by educating society about its harmful effects. The same must be done with racism, but in addition to reeducation of society, we work to alleviate the social and economic oppression of Black and other nonwhite peoples, and empower them for self-determination to lead free lives. Anarchists need to form groups to expose and combat racial prejudice and Capitalist exploitation, and extend full support and solidarity to the Black liberation movement.

Finally, Anarchism would deal with a number of areas too numerous to mention here — science, technology, ecology, disarmament, human rights and so on. We must harness the social sciences and make them serve the people, while we coexist with nature. Authoritarians foolishly believe that it is possible to “conquer” nature, but that is not the issue. We are just one of a number of species which inhabit this planet even if we are the most intelligent. But then other species have not created nuclear weapons, started wars where millions have been killed, or engaged in discrimination against the races of their sub-species, all of which humankind has done. So who is to say which one is the most “intelligent?”

Why Am I An Anarchist?

The Anarchist movement in North America is overwhelmingly white, middle class, and for the most part, pacifist so the question arises: why am I a part of the Anarchist movement, since I am none of those things? Well, although the movement may not now be what I think it should be in North America, I visualize a mass movement that will have hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Black, Hispanic and other non-white workers in it. It will not be an Anarchist movement that Black workers and the other oppressed will just “join” — it will be an independent movement which has its own social outlook, cultural imperative, and political agenda. It will be Anarchist at its core, but it will also extend Anarchism to a degree no previous European social or cultural group ever has done. I am certain that many of these workers will believe, as I do, that Anarchism is the most democratic, effective, and radical way to obtain our freedom, but that we must be free to design our own movements, whether it is understood or “approved” by North American Anarchists or not. We must fight for our freedom, no one else can free us, but they can help us.

I wrote the pamphlet to:

1. inspire a national anti-racist and anti-cop brutality federation, which would be Anarchist-initiated or at least be heavily participated in by Anarchists;
2. create a coalition between Anarchists and revolutionary Black organizations such as the new Black Panther movement of the 1990s; and
3. to spark a new revolutionary ferment and organizations in the African-American and other oppressed communities, where Anarchism is a curiosity, if that.

I thought that if a serious, respected libertarian revolutionary put these ideas forth they would be more likely to be considered than just by a white Anarchist, no matter how well motivated. I believe I am correct about that. So here is why I am an Anarchist.

In the 1960s I was part of a number of Black revolutionary movements, including the Black Panther Party, which I feel partially failed because of the authoritarian leadership style of Huey P. Newton, Bobby Scale and others on the Central Committee. This is not a recrimination against those individuals, but many errors were made because the national leadership was too divorced from the chapters in cities all over the country, and therefore engaged in “commandism” or forced work dictated by leaders. But many contradictions were also set up because of the structure of the organization as a Marxist-Leninist group. There was not a lot of inner-party democracy, and when contradictions came up, it was the leaders who decided on their resolution, not the members. Purges became commonplace, and many good people were expelled from the group simply because they disagreed with the leadership.

Because of the over-importance of central leadership, the national organization was ultimately liquidated entirely, packed up and shipped back to Oakland, California. Of course, many errors were made because the BPP was a young organization and was under intense attack by the state. I do not want to imply that the internal errors were the primary contradictions that destroyed the BPP. The police attacks on it did that, but, if it were better and more democratically organized, it may have weathered the storm. So this is no mindless criticism or backstabbing attack. I loved the party. And, anyway, not myself or anyone else who critique the party with hindsight, will ever take away from the tremendous tale that the BPP played in the Black Liberation movement of the 1960s. But we must look at a full picture of our organizations from that period, so that we do not repeat the same errors.

I think my brief period in the Panthers was very important because it taught me about the limits of — and even the bankruptcy of — leadership in a revolutionary movement. It was not a question of a personality defect on behalf of particular leader, but rather a realization that many times leaders have one agenda, followers have another.

I also learned this lesson during my association with the African People’s Socialist Party during the 1980s when I had gotten out of the joint I had met Omali Yeshitela while I was confined in Leavenworth (KS.) federal pen, when he was invited to our annual Black Solidarity Bay festivities in 1979. This association continued when they formed the Black prisoners’ organization, the African National Prison Organization shortly thereafter. ANPO was definitely a good support organization, and along with News and Letters Committees the Kentucky branch of the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression, and the Social revolutionary Anarchist Federation (now defunct), they wrote letters and made phone calls to have me hospitalized after I had been infected with Tuberculosis, which saved my life. But the group folded when the proposed coalition of founding organizations collapsed due to sectarianism.

After I got out of prison, I lost contact with them as they had moved from Louisville to the West Coast. It was not until 1987 that I once again contacted them when we were having a mass demonstration against police brutality in my hometown. They were invited and came to the demo, along with NAPO and several left-wing forces, and for two years off and on, I had an association with them. But I felt APSP politically was always an authoritarian organization, and even though was never a member, I became more and more uncomfortable with their organizational policies. In the Summer Of 1988, I went to Oakland, California to attend an “organizers’ school,” but I also wanted to satisfy myself about the internal workings of the group. For six weeks, I worked with them out of their national headquarters in the local community. I was able to determine for myself about internal matters and also about the politics of the group itself. I found out that about a whole history of purges, factional fights, and the ‘one man’ dictatorial leadership style of the

Party. While in Oakland, I was asked to attend a meeting in Philadelphia that Fall to reestablish ANPO.

I attended the Philly meeting, but was very concerned when I was automatically placed as part of a “slate” to be officers of the ANPO group, without any real democratic discussion among the proposed membership, or allowing others to put themselves forward as potential candidates. I was in fact made the highest-ranking officer in the group. Although I still believe that there should be a mass political prisoners’ movement and especially a Black prisoners’ movement, I became convinced that this was not it. I believe that it will take a true coalition of forces in the Black and progressive movements to build a mass base of support. I got to feeling that these folks just wanted to push the party and its politics, rather than free prisoners, and so I just dropped out and haven’t dealt with them since. I was very disillusioned and depressed when I learned the truth. I won’t be used by anybody – not for long.

The early stages of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was a contrast in many ways to any Black freedom group to come before or after, Part of the SNCC activists were middle class college intellectuals, with a small number of working class grassroots activists, but they developed a working style that was very anti-authoritarian and was unique to the Civil rights movement. Instead of bringing in a national leader to lead local struggles, like Dr, Martin Luther King Jr. and his group, the Southern Christian Leadership Council, was wont to do, SNCC sent in field organizers to work with the local people and develop indigenous leadership and help organize, but not take over local struggles. They placed their faith in the ability of the people to determine an agenda which would best serve them and lead themselves to obtain their goals rather than being inspired or told what to do by a leader SNCC itself had no strong leaders, even though it had persons in decision-making authority, but they were accountable to membership boards and the community in a way no other group in the civil rights movement was.

SNCC was also a non-secular organization, in contrast to SCLC, which was formed by Black preachers and had co-opted their style of organizing from the Black church, with a religious authority figure who gave orders to the troops. Today most political commentators or historians still do not want to give full credit to the effectiveness of SNCC, but many of the most powerful and successful struggles of the Civil rights movement were initiated and won by SNCC, including most of the voting rights struggles and the Mississippi phase of the freedom movement. I learned a lot about internal democracy by being a part of SNCC, how it could make or break an organization, and how it had so much to do with the morale of the members Everyone was given an opportunity to participate in decision-making, and felt part of a great historical mission, which would change their lives forever. They were right. Even though SNCC gave some lifelong lessons to all of us involved, even if it was destroyed by the rich and their own, who resorted to an authoritarian style in later years.

I also began to have a rethinking process after I was forced to leave de U.S. and go to Cuba, Czechoslovakia and other countries in the “Socialist bloc,” as it was called then. It was cleat that these countries were essentially police states, even though they had brought many significant reforms and material advances to their peoples over what had existed before. I observed also that racism existed in those countries, along with the denial of basic democratic rights and poverty on a scale I would not have thought possible. I also saw a great deal of corruption by the Communist Party leaders and State administrators, who were well off, while the workers were mere wage slaves. I thought to myself, “there has to be a better way!” There is. It is Anarchism, which I

started to read about when I was captured in East Germany and had heard more about when I was eventually thrown into prison in the United States.

Prison is a place where one continually thinks about his other past life, including the examination of new or contrary ideas, I began to think about what I had seen in the Black movement, slang with my mistreatment in Cuba, my capture and escape in Czechoslovakia, and my final capture in East Germany. I replayed all this over and over in my head. I was first introduced to Anarchism in 1969, immediately after I was brought back to the U.S. and was placed in the federal lockup in New York City, where I met Martin Sostre. Sostre told me about how to survive in prison, the importance of fighting for prisoners' democratic rights, and about Anarchism. This short course in Anarchism did not stick however, even though I greatly respected Sostre personally, because I did not understand the theoretical concepts.

Finally around 1973, after I had been locked up for about three years, I started receiving Anarchist literature and correspondence from Anarchists who had heard about my case. This began my slow metamorphosis to a confirmed Anarchist, and in fact it was not until a few years later that I came over. During the late 1970s, I was adopted by Anarchist Black Cross-England and also by a Dutch Anarchist group called HAPOTOC, (Help A Prisoner Oppose Torture Organizing Committee), which organized an instrumental defense campaign. This proved crucial in ultimately getting people all over the world to write the U. S. government to demand my release.

I wrote a succession of articles for the Anarchist press, and was a member of the Social revolutionary Anarchist Federation, the IWW, and a number of other Anarchist groups in the U.S. and around the world. But I became disheartened by the Anarchist movement's failure to fight white supremacy and its lack of class struggle politics. So, in 1979, I wrote a pamphlet called Anarchism and the Black Revolution, to act as a guide to the discussion of these matters by our movement. Finally, in 1983, I was released from prison, after having served almost 15 years.

For all these years, the pamphlet influenced a number of Anarchists who were opposed to racism and also wanted a more class struggle-oriented approach than the movement then afforded. Meanwhile I had fallen away from the Anarchist movement in disgust, and it was not until 1992 when I was working in my hometown of Chattanooga, Tennessee, as an anti-racist community organizer, that I ran into an Anarchist named John Johnson and once again made contact. He gave me an issue of Love and Rage newspaper, and as a result, I contacted Chris Day of Love and Rage, and comrades in WSA in New York. The rest, as they say, is history. I have been back with a vengeance ever since!

All of a sudden, I see there are now others in the movement who understand the workings of white supremacy and they have encouraged me to rewrite this pamphlet I have gratefully done so. Why am I an Anarchist? I have an alternative vision for the revolutionary process. There is a better way. Let us get on with it!

What I Believe

All anarchists do not believe in the same things. There are differences and the field is broad enough that those differences can coexist and be respected. So I don't know what others believe, I just know what I believe in and I will spell out it simply, but thoroughly.

I believe in Black liberation, so I am a Black revolutionary. I believe that Black people are oppressed both as workers and a distinct nationality, and will only be freed by a Black revolution,

which is an intrinsic part of a Social revolution. I believe that Blacks and other oppressed nationalities must have their own agenda, distinct world-view, and organizations of struggle, even though they may decide to work with workers.

I believe in the destruction of the world Capitalist System, so I am an anti-imperialist, As long as Capitalism is alive on the planet, there will be exploitation, oppression and nation-states. Capitalism is responsible for the major world wars, numerous brush wars, and millions of people starving for the profit motive of the rich countries in the West.

I believe in racial justice, so I am an anti-racist, The Capitalist system was mated by and is maintained by enslavement and colonial oppression of the African people, and before there will be a social revolution white supremacy must be defeated. I also believe that Africans in America are colonized and exist as an internal colonial of the U.S, white mother country. I believe that white workers must give up their privileged status, their “white identity,” and must support racially oppressed workers in their fights for equality and national liberation Freedom cannot be bought by enslaving and exploiting others.

I believe in social justice and economic equality, so I am a Libertarian Socialist. I believe that society and all parties responsible for its production should share the economic products of labor. I do not believe in Capitalism or the state, and believe they both should be overthrown and abolished I accept the economic critique of Marxism, but not its model for political organizing. I accept the anti-authoritarian critique of Anarchism, but not its rejection of the class struggle.

I believe in workers control of society and industry, so I am an Anarcho-Syndicalist. Anarchist Syndicalism is revolutionary labor unionism, where direct action tactics are used to fight Capitalism and take over industry I believe that the factory committees workers’ councils and other labor organizations should be the workplaces, and should take control from the Capitalists after a direct action campaign of sabotage, strikes, sitdowns, factory occupations and other actions.

I do not believe in government, and so I am an Anarchist. I believe that government is one of the worst forms of modern oppression, is the source of war and economic oppression, and must be overthrown. Anarchism means that we will have more democracy, social equality, and economic prosperity. I oppose all forms of oppression found in modern society: patriarchy, white supremacy, Capitalism, State Communism, religious dictates, gay discrimination, etc.