



An Introduction to the Communist/Anarchist Debate

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INTRODUCTION:

The Communist/Anarchist debate arose alongside industrialization in every nation and region. The debate is about organizing and labor, but it is also about power struggles, immediacy, autonomy, and visions of what a socialist society might look like and the means to getting there. In this paper, we will look at the historical evolution of this debate in order to understand how these ideologies addressed industrial capitalist expansion. Finally, and, more specifically, we will ask how the evolution of this debate has come to influence today's anti-capitalist movements to see why they are moving further left towards Anarchism.

Together, Anarchists and Communists were a formidable force against abusive factory-owners and repressive states during the First International. Together, they were a force that wholeheartedly wanted to defeat fascism in Spain. Yet, the struggle for power and debates over strategy and philosophy has every time been the coalition's downfall. Today, Anarchists have a strong and prominent role in the opposition to global capitalism, and we will see why many feel that the Communist model and practice is no longer the best organization for resistance.

PART ONE: The Emergence of the Communist/Anarchist Debate and the Paris Commune

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe came a rising class-consciousness among the proletariat and intellectuals of Europe. The International Working Men's Association (IWMA) was formed in 1864 as an umbrella group comprising at its apex over a hundred organizations and having loose-knit 'federations' or centers that held congresses in Geneva, Brussels, and London. Their goal was to organize the proletariat into a force that could confront the bourgeoisie and their repressive governments. As we will see, however, there were many different tactics and ideologies in conflict within the First International, as it is called. The International had no particular religious or political affinity; an individual or group that wanted to join simply had to, as Michael Bakunin was to say in 1869, "embrace the cause of the workers to the exclusion of all causes contrary to its principles" [Dolgoff, p 161]. The invention of such a union of workers was intended to link the French and English working classes but it soon gained an international membership of well over a million workers [see appendix image 1].

Karl Marx was present at the first meeting of the International at Saint Martin's Hall in London, however he did not address the 2,000 people present. "In the early congresses [...] the most compelling issue was the debate between the so-called 'Marx party' (few of whom, in fact, were Marxists doctrinally), which favored socialism, and Proudhonist individualists, who hoped to supplant capitalism by fostering small-scale

peasant and artisan proprietors" [Bookchin, p 180]. As the Proudhonists were anti-collectivists, they took the brunt of criticism from the socialists in the International until 1868 when most had left the congress in Brussels. This departure "freed statist and antistatist socialists for an open collision that was finally to tear the International apart" [Bookchin, p 183]. We will see that although Proudhon is often rightfully called the father of Anarchism,* the Proudhonists' absence from the International allowed the actual Communist/Anarchist debate (in the form of the Marx/Bakunin rift) to veritably come to the forefront.

In the 1840s Karl Marx and Michael Bakunin had been friends and collaborators around the publication *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher* under the direction of Arnold Ruge [Bookchin, p 183]. However in 1848 a friend of Bakunin's named George Herwegh led a terribly unsuccessful insurrection in Germany and although Bakunin later agreed that it was poor timing, he said, "with characteristic insolence they attacked Herwegh when he was not there to defend himself. In a face-to-face confrontation with [Marx and Engels], I heatedly defended Herwegh, and our mutual dislike began then" [Dolgoff, p 27]. Despite the scandal and slander between the two men whose ideologies were so opposed, Bakunin was clearly influenced by Marx's economic works. Bakunin lost twelve years in prison and exile in Russia for his role in an armed uprising in Dresden in 1849, and when he came back to the European movement, he was greeted by Marx, who sent him a copy of *Capital*. Moreover, Bakunin was later to start a Russian translation of *Capital*.

* Proudhon may be called an anarchist because he used the self-describing term "an-archist" and he was critical of private property and Communism.

Bakunin had been organizing an international Anarchist organization called the International Alliance for Socialist Democracy that he hoped would lead insurrections throughout Europe. Those that adhered to Bakunin's ideas of spontaneous revolt were mostly Italians of the *déclassé* or lumpenproletariat class. This class was composed of those who were sons and daughters of bourgeois parents who were disillusioned by politics. The lumpenproletariat was also comprised of unskilled laborers, students, and the desperately poor. Bakunin's organization separated from the bourgeois "League of Peace and Freedom" because the league voted not to adhere to economic and social equality as a fundamental principle. In 1868, Marx and the General Council of the International received a letter from Bakunin's Alliance stating the Alliance's program and rules, and asking admission into the International, but stating it in this way: "we consider it our duty, together with our friends, to take the initiative in forming this *new* organization" [*italics mine*] [IML, p 379]. The Alliance's use of words connotes the idea that the Alliance would be both an entity inside the International and one that would work outside. The Alliance was allowed in under the condition that it be absolutely contained within the International. Marx accused the Alliance of never really disbanding and this led to the Anarchists' expulsion in 1872.

Marx and Bakunin, their personal differences notwithstanding, were ideologically similar in some ways and very different in others. As embodying Communism and Anarchism, respectively, we need to compare and contrast how their understandings of where, when, and by whose will a revolution would be realized. They were

both socialists and both believed that the proletariat's emancipation must come from organized labor struggles against the bourgeoisie and the owners of capital. Marx's theories relied on the proletariat, the industrial workers, to gain class-consciousness, organize and take control of industry, both politically and through revolution and insurrection. Bakunin believed that only through revolution could workers be emancipated, and that it was the proletariat *and* lumpenproletariat that would spark the revolt for themselves both on the countryside and in the factories. Marx looked with contempt upon the lumpenproletariat. Marx would say that the proletariat's move towards class consciousness and revolution was compelled "by the 'inexorable laws' of capitalist economic development" [Bookchin, p 187] (i.e. an historical inevitability), but Bakunin believed that the workers would be compelled by their horrific economic situation to revolt, and that it was an instinct for liberty that drove anti-capitalist fervor. Whereas Marx theorized and attended meetings, Bakunin was active and took part in insurrections throughout Europe, as disastrous as they may have been.

The principal contention between the authoritarian socialists* represented by Marx, and the libertarian socialists represented by Bakunin was the role of the state during and after the proletarian social revolution. The Marxist camp outlined how, politically, the proletariat should form a working class party that could wield its power to put the control of industry into its hands, that is to say, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, leading ultimately to a Communist state. This is essentially the project of socialism, which is to make the proletariat the only class and the only beneficiary from the profits of its

* Bakunin's term for statist.

labor. The Party would use the power of the state to defend itself against attack from the capitalist reactionaries and it would use state power and resources to plan the economy so that the workers would prosper. Marx advocated the abolition of bourgeois property and the conversion of all capital to common ownership.

Bakunin's theory differed because he saw that some of the proletariat of these industrial nations were growing too bourgeois so they would, if they got political control, rule just as the capitalists and bourgeoisie had — in their own interests, rather than forming a unified working class. Bakunin insisted that the economic instead of the political be the main objective of the International and all labor organizations. The economic needed to be first because the proletarians who were not bourgeois-minded (and the lumpenproletariat) would need to receive a living wage and good working conditions. Bakunin believed that an egalitarian republic could never be founded by a dictatorship so he was for the absolute destruction of the state as the first goal of Anarchists and revolutionaries. Bakunin held that the state and private property must be abolished as they, alongside capital, keep the workers poor and destitute. The people themselves would set up workers' communes, and industry would be linked by free association. Labor, in Bakunin's revolutionary model, would destroy poverty once workers owned the means collectively and once work became obligatory to all. Communes would consist of local groups of producers that do services and who would be organized from the bottom upward to form federations of communes. That is, all organization would be decentralized (not state-managed) and all authoritarian

institutions destroyed to build collectivized structures.

Fundamental tensions between the visions of Anarchism and Communism are further elucidated as we look to the Paris Commune of 1871. Thinkers such as Marx, Kropotkin, Bakunin, and Lenin have written homages to what was called by many the first socialist revolution. Marx's *The Civil War in France* is particularly enlightening and reveals an inconsistency between Marx's homage of the events and his theories of party dictatorship.

France, after being provoked by Prussia, engaged and was defeated in an embarrassing war which had the potential to cost the French government (and ultimately the French working class) five billion gold francs in full indemnities to feed the Prussian military in France and it would require France to cede land. The loss was humiliating because of the stipulations that would "permit Germans to conduct a military parade through the French capital, as part of a token occupation of the city" [Bookchin, p 215]. Louis Napoleon capitulated and handed his sword and his throne to the Prussian king. A provisional government called the Government of National Defense was put in place, but it was clear that this new government with its bourgeois members of the *Corps Legislatif* had no progressive social or economic plans. As Prussian troops surrounded Paris, the government was quickly trying to make an armistice as the Parisians revolted and vowed that the Prussians would conquer "not one inch" of their capital. The nationalism invoked by the loss of land and the humiliation therein was a strong motivating force in the petit bourgeoisie's resistance to foreign rule. Yet, what Marx saw as revolutionary was the way that the popular and working class opposition turned from a national interest to a class interest when they realized that

the debt from this disastrous, dynastic war would be put on their already overburdened shoulders. The Paris National Guard supported the workers as it seized artillery, converted the Louvre into an arsenal, and dragged cannons from the middle class districts on the west side of Paris to the working class districts on the east, readying for the siege. The National Guard was federated by March 15th 1871 and, alongside an elected Central Committee, they “constituted themselves into an independent power--a revolutionary *dual* power--that [...] had the potential to replace the official government” which had fled to Versailles. This dual power was both militant and political, directing the defense and passing legislation. An armistice was signed between the Versailles government and Prussia and the Prussian army marched to the north of fortified Paris.

From Marx's perspective as a dignitary in the First International, the Franco-Prussian war was merely a battle between two nation-states with competing dynastic aims that forced the working class of one country to fight the working class of another. Marx believed in the necessity for the proletariat to oppose nationalism: “the alliance of the working classes of all countries will ultimately kill war” [Marx, p 27]. In his analysis of the Paris Commune at that time, his views are strangely libertarian, strangely Anarchistic. While he justifiably heralded the working class uprising, it must be noted that there was hardly an industrial worker representation or presence in the commune, as Paris at this time was mainly artisanal. Yet Marx still lauded the Commune as an uprising that would challenge imperialism: “The direct antithesis to the empire was the Commune” [Marx, p 56]. Marx also

justifiably celebrated some of the commune's accomplishments: the Commune rid itself of the standing army, “instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was [sic] at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune” [Marx, p 57]. Moreover, Marx argued that the goals of the Paris Commune had a socialist sensibility. For example, everyone would receive *workmen's wages*. Churches were disendowed, leaving the priests to go “back to the recesses of private life” [Marx, p 57]. Engels would tell in his introduction to Marx's *Civil War in France*, that on April 6th 1871, the National Guard publicly burnt the guillotine, and on the 12th the Commune decided to raze the Victory Column. Made from guns captured by Napoleon, the column was a “symbol of chauvinism and incitement to national hatred” [Engels's introduction to Marx's work, p 15].

While there are few socialists who *wouldn't* be filled with hope and awe in recalling the deeds of the Paris Commune, Murray Bookchin (a contemporary Anarchist scholar) is critical of some conservative or less revolutionary aspects of the Commune. Few of those on the Central Committee were representatives of the International and in fact many were Proudhonists. The Proudhonist Internationalists had shaped the social and economic program of the Commune by advocating a people's bank and co-operation, but nonetheless they also had a “sacred” regard for private property and indeed the Commune did not raid or nationalize the Paris banks although the funds were desperately needed.

Marx held that the Commune broke the “modern state power” that was a “parasitic excrescence” [Marx, p 58].

Anarchists and Communists alike celebrated Marx's essay on the Commune as it heralded the uprising, arming and defending of Paris as a moment of success in the opposition to the bourgeois state. Marx's analysis of one of the first proletarian revolutions is not, however, accurate in any contemporary sense of these words. Firstly and most importantly, the neo-Jacobins (non-socialist, political egalitarians who believed in private property) were the majority with Proudhonists next in volume, then radical Blanquists, then finally only a few Internationalists who were influenced by Marx [Bookchin, p 229]. As Bakunin pointed out, the socialists were a small minority in the Commune. Trapped in generalities and unable to take decisive measures, these Jacobins would sign "programs and proclamations whose general import and promise were of a positively socialist nature [. . .] [though] they were merely socialists impelled by outward circumstances than by inward conviction" [Dolgoft, pp 265-266]. Secondly, as opposed to Marx's model for proletarian revolution, the Commune's uprising was more social than it was political. That is to say, there was no industrial workers' party that would wrest control of the means of production. As Marx explained, they merely instituted progressive measures to separate the church from education and to end capital punishment. There were, however, industrial workers from outside Paris, artisans and petit-bourgeois merchants who all preferred a Commune to another despotic Emperor. Thirdly, the Commune was inherently decentralized and in this structure possibly became, as Marx claimed, an "antithesis" to state power.

The Communist/Anarchist debate, as well as centering on the question of the state, involves the role of political mobilization. Marx and Engels said that the proletariat must first gain political power and then use the state to end economic exploitation. As Marx sees the political, economic and social aspects of society: "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness" [McLellan, p 425]. Productive forces at a certain stage of development instead of developing begin to become fetters that pit a class in conflict with another. There must be a bourgeois democracy in order for the industrial proletariat to feel the fetters of economic hardship, and yearn to gain control over the productive forces as a Communist Party. The Party must necessarily gain control of the state as a coercive power against the capitalistic economic conditions that are still intact. In Marx's model, these must be removed by force. As Marx said compellingly: "the proletariat, instead of fighting piecemeal against the economically privileged classes, [would obtain] enough strength and organization to use general means of expressing itself in this struggle" [McLellan, p 607]. The workers must organize with the objective of attaining state power as a class.

In his argument against statism, Bakunin points to the preamble of the International: "...that the submission of labor to capital is the source of all political, moral, and material servitude, and that for this reason the economic emancipation of the workers is the great objective to which every political movement must be subordinated..." [Dolgoft, p 170]. As an enemy of any state (even a so-called

volkstaat), Bakunin claimed that it was indeed the State that perpetuates and aids capital to exploit labor. In Bakunin's view, to go at class emancipation in any other way but immediately collectivizing would be counterrevolutionary. Bakunin claimed that never by coercive force could freedom be attained, but only by free association and decentralization.

A poignant and controversial aspect of Marx and Engels's theories is the concept of an eventual "withering away of the state." According to Marx, the proletariat "can only use economic means which abolish its own character as wage-laborers, that is as a class; with its complete victory, therefore, its domination is at an end because its character as a class has disappeared" [McLellan, p 607]. In other words, the Communist Party would achieve political control of the state and then enact economic emancipation. For this reason, Engels was criticized by some as theorizing, then, a "postponed Anarchism" which "would hardly seem to justify any valid distinction between Communism and Bakunism" [Nova, p 55]. The difference lies in the emphasis of the Communist use of state power and the structuring towards centralization, but Bakunin and Marx's goals turn out to be the same. Engels defended his and Marx's theories by saying that the eventual destruction of the State's authority was in their theories before Anarchism in the modern sense had come to exist, and that they had not changed their theories because of criticism or doubt. Engels points to early criticism of Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty*—Marx's humorously titled and scathingly analytical work *The Poverty of Philosophy*—in which he states that political power is only useful and necessary when there are class

antagonisms in civil society. Therefore, when there are no class conflicts, there is no need for a state in any modern sense. Whether Marx made a concession or not, Bakunin was clear in asserting that Party dictatorship cannot lead to a withering away of the state: "according to Mr. Marx, the people should not only not abolish the State, but on the contrary, they must strengthen and enlarge it, and turn it over to the full disposition of their benefactors, guardians, and teachers—the leaders of the Communist party, meaning Mr. Marx and his friends—who will then liberate them in their own way" [Dolgoft, p 332]. To "complete" the historical account of this instance in the ongoing Communist/Anarchist debate, we must describe how the Paris Commune came to an end and was then placed into esoteric socialist history.

The Commune lasted two months, from March 26th 1871 to May 30th. The truce between Versailles and Prussia led to an enormous growth of the Versailles military because it now included the released French soldiers from the war with Prussia. This military could now concentrate on re-taking Paris. As theirs and the Versailles military moved in closer to the fortified city, the Commune's National Guard lost battle after battle, though not unheroically and not without the great sacrifice of many principled lives. There was little dispute amongst the Communards in the face of a very real civil war that they needed to have some centralized control. The Committee of Public Safety was formed but it ended up doing little more than enforcing conscription and closing down pro-Versailles publications (an act that the Commune had hitherto refused to do). On May 21st, a former city worker who had no sympathy for the Commune, signaled to the Versailles troops that there was a gate

in the south part of Paris that was unguarded. Before the day was out, 60,000 troops had entered the city. Instinctively, working-class heroes like Varlin and Delescluze and heroines like Louise Michel and Elisabeth Dmitrieff helped to build barricades in the streets, but neighborhood after neighborhood fell to Versailles in bloody battles. Versailles took Paris back by force and the most commonly estimated number of Communards killed is 25,000. Versailles lost 877 soldiers. Most of the Communards were brutally executed without trial.

Both Anarchists and Communists eulogized the martyrs of the Paris Commune. Despite the evidence that there were actually few proletarians involved in the Commune and despite some of the conservative views on private property held by prominent Communards, the Commune of Paris has still been held by Communists and Anarchists alike as a spontaneous revolution, in each instance an example of the appeal of their own separate ideologies.

PART TWO: Communism and Anarcho-Syndicalism in the Spanish Civil War

Bakunin's ideas of mutual aid, decentralization, and autonomy had been elucidated to the mostly agrarian and autonomous Spaniards during the 1870's when the Spanish section of the First International was founded. This section

was inspired by Bakunin and felt the role they themselves played in a semi-feudal and unkind economy. In the 1930's, with the industrial growth of Spain, Marxism had principally caught on in administrative, skilled-labor centers like Madrid, but working class cities like Barcelona and regions like Catalonia were rooted and organizing around Anarchism. There was a strong presence of industrial workers in the trade unions. The Anarchist "custom"* of the Spanish villagers and farmers had as its strongest tenet a search for pre-capitalist, collectivist tradition. This custom was, as Bookchin points out, not atavistic, but rather a conscious rejection of the hegemonic, authoritarian role in which an industrial worker is placed.

On July 18, 1936, General Franco and the Spanish military initiated a coup against the popularly elected government. Often mistaken as simply a national and reactionary people's uprising in the face a military coup, the Spanish workers enacted, in fact, a "sweeping social revolution" [Bookchin, p 4]. From the Anarchist perspective, they did not take arms against General Franco and the fascists because they wanted to install a bourgeois democracy, they fought to restructure Spain along revolutionary lines.

The battle against Franco, however, was organized largely through the power of the trade unions, representing a coalition of Communist and Anarchist interests. There were at this time two distinct and enormous federations of trade unions: one overtly Communist, the UGT (Union General de Trabajadores) and one eventually and overtly Anarchist, the CNT (Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo). These unions had political organs that represented them: the UGT had P.S.U.C.

* Anarchists were also called "libertarians." Also, the use of the word "custom" is purposeful because mutual aid, autonomy and collectivity were considered a *way of life*.

(Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalunya) and the CNT had the F.A.I. (Federacion Anarquista Iberica). There was also P.O.U.M. (Workers' Party of Marxist Unity) which didn't represent any trade unions, and was "one of those dissident Communist parties which have appeared in many countries in the last few years as a result of the opposition to Stalinism" [Orwell, p 60].

George Orwell wrote much about the Spanish Civil War because he had been sent to Spain as a journalist. Once there, he ended up participating on the side of P.O.U.M. against Franco and the fascists. As we learn from Orwell, the political organs had many differences in strategy and ideology. The Communist UGT did not want revolution because their goal was to install a parliamentary democracy that would help to further industrialize Spain. They believed that the war must be won at all cost, and that all talk of revolution would lose the support of the semi-bourgeoisie who were fighting alongside. It was, in the view of the UGT, counter-revolutionary to create divisions among the workers by working for social revolution when the civil war was at hand. The UGT was affiliated with the Third International in Moscow (the Comintern). P.S.U.C. favored a "strong central government in place of local committees" [Orwell, p 59]. On the other hand was the CNT-FAI (nominally joined together in 1936), which favored direct workers' control and accepted no compromise in the social revolution: "[Their idea was that] the war and the revolution are inseparable" [Orwell, p 61]. Outside the elections of the Popular Front, "there remained the great army of nearly two million Anarchist workers, chiefly in Andalusia or Barcelona, organized in the CNT and directed by a secret society, the FAI. This huge self-

absorbed and passionate movement, already throbbing like a great city at war, despised the progressive government of Casares Quiroga as much as it had in the past hated the governments of the right" [Thomas, p 6]. The FAI often had to act like a secret society because of their political suppression by the government, which was growing more and more Communist. The CNT-FAI opposed all forms of authoritarianism and centralization and it held a great hostility to the bourgeoisie and the Church, which had infamous connections to the upper class and had amassed "provocative wealth" [Thomas, p 269]. Even in the CNT-FAI military, the organization was non-bureaucratic and with as little hierarchy as possible: the army officers were elected and were retractable at any time.

Within the first few days of the civil war between the Communists, anarcho-syndicalists* and the Popular Front government on one side and the fascists on the other, the Anarchists "collectivized all the large and many of the small industries in Catalonia" [Brenan, p 320] and they urged the peasants to collectivize the expropriated estates [see appendix image 2]. Their reasoning for so rapid a move was to show the women and men that would fight Franco that they were not fighting in vain; they were setting up industry to be worker-controlled. As Orwell explains the P.O.U.M. line: "The only real alternative to Fascism is workers' control. If you set up any less goal than this, you will either hand the victory to Franco, or, at best, let in Fascism by the back door" [Orwell, p 60]. Communists and other socialists of the right wanted to put the collectives under the direct control of the state. The estates in UGT (Communist) territory were "taken over by

* Syndicalism is simply a French term meaning trade unionism.

the municipality or by the officials of the Institute for Agrarian reform and the workers continued to be paid at the same rate as before" [Brenan, p 319]. The defending government in the time of war was ruled by liberal republicans; although the real power and control of the industry and the war-making was wielded by the trade unions and their parties.

The Communists were able to enlist those who were afraid or theoretically opposed to the extremities of the socialist left. About the Communist agenda Orwell states that "it hardly needs pointing out that 'liberal' capitalist opinion took the same line" [Orwell, p 51]. The Communists, with the backing of the Soviet Union in the form of munitions, were the only faction of the republic that was physically capable of winning a war with Franco (who had military support from Mussolini and Hitler). This created a strange situation: "On the one side stood the huge compact proletariat of Barcelona with its long revolutionary tradition, and on the other the white-collar workers and petit-bourgeoisie of the city, organized and armed by the Communist Party against it" [Brenan, p 325]. The CNT-FAI, hoping to receive artillery from the Communists, had to enter the government, which was contrary to its principles.

Orwell elucidates on the distinctions: "Philosophically, Communism and Anarchism are poles apart. Practically--i.e. in the form of society aimed at--the difference is mainly one of emphasis, but it is quite irreconcilable. The Communist's emphasis is always on centralism and efficiency, the Anarchist's on liberty and equality. Anarchism is deeply rooted in Spain and it is likely to outlive Communism when the Russian influence is withdrawn" [Orwell, pp. 61-62].

However, the Communist Party had grown enormously and its political power in the government had grown as well.

It began to look like there was a civil war within the civil war. The Communists succeeded in stomping out much of the Anarchist and trade union's industrial collectivization by simply not providing collectives with the credit that was necessary to buy raw materials: "as soon as the supply of raw cotton was exhausted the mills stopped working" [Brenan, p 321]. The fact that the Communists had an international press helped to spread rumors that groups like the P.O.U.M. (the Trotskyist/Marxist group) were actually being paid by the fascists to sunder the Republican forces. Orwell notes that there's nothing worse than fighting fascism in the trenches and learning that some Communist writer, a thousand miles away has called *you* a fascist. The Communists had more power than the Anarchists and used it against them. Since the start of the war, the motive of the Popular Front was to disarm the workers, particularly the CNT workers: "The immediate cause of friction was the Government's order to surrender all private weapons, coinciding with the decision to build up a heavily-armed 'non-political' police from which trade union members would be excluded" [Orwell, p 150]. These sorts of Communist/Liberal tactics helped to draw dissident groups together. The P.O.U.M. fought alongside the Anarchists but they saw few or none of the guns that the Communists had obtained, leaving them armed with only old and often faulty guns that would injure the soldiers who used it.

The media, as mentioned above, had great effects on the war and the mobilization of workers into particular groups, albeit even sometimes through lies and misrepresentations. An example of a

misrepresentation in the Communist press was an attack made by the Government on the Telephone Exchange. The CNT and the UGT had occupied buildings throughout Barcelona and the Telephone Exchange was one of the key industries that the CNT controlled. On May 3rd 1937, the civil guards were sent to seize the building. The workers, who among other things had distrust and hostility towards the civil guards (who were opportunistic, even when the fascists eventually came to power) refused to give up their arms and their position in the building. After four days of street fighting with little cessation, the government sent six thousand Assault Guards to take control of the town, leaving an estimated official government count of 400 dead and 1000 wounded (presumably the workers suffered many more casualties than the guards). Orwell believed that these numbers were exaggerated: all accounts in the Communist press put the blame solely on the Trotskyites in the P.O.U.M. and exaggerated their numbers and munitions to being comparable to a powerful modern army. The P.O.U.M. was in fact a *political party* not a trade union, and it was quite small in numbers (~10,000 at this time) as compared to the trade union membership. As Orwell said, the attack was a "provocative action, a gesture which said in effect, and presumably was meant to say: 'Your power is at an end, we are taking over'" [Orwell, p 159]. Orwell began to realize that the reports of the Communist press were "consciously aimed at a public ignorant of the facts and [the reports] have no other purpose than to work up prejudice" [Orwell, p 167]. Orwell notes how the English papers introduced the defending CNT workers first as "Anarchists" (the choice of this word may result in fear and hatred)--and

then changed the word "Anarchist" to "Trotskyist" later with the hopes of drumming up prejudice and hatred. The P.O.U.M. and the Anarchists had been "systematically denigrated" in the press worldwide, themselves not having a strong, international press that could come to their defense.

All parties and unions involved in the battles on the front lines or on the streets knew that as soon as the war was won, whoever had control at that time would shape Spain to their liking. If the workers in the unions wished to hold their industries and direct them, they *had* to defend themselves from the government and its objective to put them under the control of the state. There were foreign Communists who had come to Spain and openly admitted their willingness to "liquidate" Anarchism as soon as the war was over [Orwell, p 158].

There were Anarchist factions that despised fascism at home and abroad, as well as the Communist agenda. Smaller than the P.O.U.M, with about 6,000 soldiers, was the Durruti Column headed by Buenaventura Durruti, who fought on the front lines, burned cathedrals, and would stop at no end to rid the country of fascism and help to build free libertarian communes. Durruti refused to submit himself and his company to any leaders, whether from Barcelona or Madrid. Of the Communists he said: "If they wish, they can live in peace with us; if not, we shall go to Madrid... We shall show *you*, bolsheviks [sic], how to make a revolution" [Thomas, p 319]. His use of political violence made him a hero to some and a butcher to others. Assassinations and armed street fighting like what happened in Barcelona were happening all over Spain between Anarchists and Communists.

At the beginning of this social revolution, both the Central Government

and the semi-autonomous Catalan government represented the working class. They had as their president a left-wing socialist named Largo Caballero and the trade unions had prominent roles. As the war was being fought, "every subsequent reshuffling on the Government was a move to the Right" [Orwell, p 53]. First the P.O.U.M. was suppressed and expelled, then Caballero was replaced by the right-wing socialist Negrin. Then the CNT was expelled, then the UGT. Before the first entire year of war, the socialist right had succeeded in taking much of the power from the trade unions and had put the government on a non-revolutionary path.

As far as international intervention, the USSR and Mexico came to the aid of the Republicans while Italy and Germany backed Franco's forces. The United States legitimized the Francoist side during the war and United States' corporations like Standard Oil, Ford, and General Motors all contributed to Franco's victory by selling oil on credit and army lorries cheaper than the fascists could buy them from Hitler and Mussolini [Thomas, p 943].

In the way of conclusion to this epoch of the debate, Franco's military and authoritarian Right-wing regime won the war, Barcelona fell, and Spain fell into thirty years of political immobility as the world went to war officially for the second time.

What we learn from the Spanish Civil War about the Communist Party is that its aim is to wrest control of the government and bend all labor and liberation movements towards the direction dictated from Moscow. The power struggle inherent in government is not different when Communists begin to take a part in it: they acted on the side of the conservatives to "let fascism in

through the back door" by not supporting revolutionary action. We learn that when the Communist Party has control, dissent will be suppressed and all diversity of tactic abolished.

Anarchists celebrate the Spanish Civil War today because *they* were an enormous revolutionary force and did so without appealing to the bourgeoisie for help. Rather, they relied on the militant, collectivist instincts of the workers to fight fascism and non-revolutionary elements of the left. Anarchists today use the Spanish Civil War to elucidate how factionalism inspired by the Communist Party's tactics further disunified the front against fascism by creating hatred and prejudice. The history is useful today because the Communist and Anarchist structures that comprised millions of people (on a much larger scale than in the time of Marx and Bakunin's debates) were already built and we were able to see how these ideologies interacted with each other. The Communists and Anarchists had the ability to work together, as their trade unions had at times, but the ideological differences and the inherent power struggles made the coalition impossible. We will see how, on a global level, Anarchism has been rejuvenated and become a force of resistance to non-democratic and fascistic institutions, as we move to contemporary times.

PART THREE: The Communist/Anarchist Debate Within Today's Struggles

"The time for making fine Marxist points was clearly over" - Cohn-Bendit*

* Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit are two of the "non-leaders" of the Paris student and labor uprisings of 1968. The quote is from *Obsolete Communism*, (AK Press, 2000) p 74.

To many, the word "anarchy" connotes two things: chaos, and the willingness of zealots or terrorists to use violence as a tactic (that is, throwing bombs or other such images). It cannot be denied that *individuals* at times have used assassination, bombs and other forms of violence against people and called themselves Anarchists, but these acts are more deviations than "norms" of the Anarchist tradition.* There are, of course, many different kinds of Anarchism: there are collectivist Anarchists, Communist Anarchists, pragmatic Anarchists (they vote), principle Anarchists (they abstain from voting) and there are even anarcho-capitalists that support laissez-faire economics! We should, however, understand Anarchism from a modern and "more standard" viewpoint as a trend of anti-capitalism. Particularly during 19th Century industrialization, Anarchism, in general, came to mean the rejection of all state authority by organizing industry into cooperatives and joining with the rest of the left to struggle for better wages and better conditions in the short term and a destruction of state power in the long term. Many Anarchists preferred direct action tactics such as slow downs, sabotage, factory occupations and general strikes, as opposed to reformist tactics that would appeal to the government to satisfy grievances. Today, variants of Anarchism have played a role in the persistent and growing movement in

* The 1870s to the early 1900s was a period marred by assassinations and attempted assassinations of kings, CEOs of railroad magnates, and often random bourgeoisie worldwide. Acts like these certainly muddy the differences (especially in the press!) between violent nihilists and those who actually have concern for workers and the practice of mutual aid.

opposition to the anti-democratic World Trade Organization (WTO) and international banks like the World Bank that continue to make "third world" debt a growing problem. Anarchist thought and practice today emphasize non-hierarchical, anti-racist grassroots organization.

Let us look locally first, to the activism at SUNY Purchase and two particular groups that exist there to raise awareness and offer an alternative to monopolized capitalist producers. The Purchase Student Activist Collective (PSAC) is a group of activists on campus with no set political agenda or party influences, and no criteria (save a desire to make progressive change) for admittance. It relies on non-hierarchical procedures in its form by constantly switching the facilitator at every meeting and welcomingly engaging new people into discussions. It has staged anti-war demonstrations such as a theatrical "die-in" and hosted workshops and teach-ins on the threat of corporate globalization, on the condition of Iraq after a decade of sanctions, and on the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Its breadth of concerns allows it to be all-inclusive. Thus, it comprises Anarchists of all different types, there are liberals, Greens, Communists, and simply people that would like to learn more about an issue. A coalition of this sort is better for organizing than having many segmented special interest groups on campus.

A second group that has been influenced by Anarchism on campus is the Purchase Food Cooperative. There are neither directors nor a president, simply voluntary committees that split the tasks of ordering grocery and produce, advertising, scheduling, and health and safety. Although ordering organic and non-GMO foods from a cooperative distributor, the Purchase Food Co-op is still reliant on the

capitalist market, albeit via smaller and often more socially and ecologically responsible companies. This cooperative could be called a transitional Anarchist model of what participatory economics could look like. It is not an occupational model, however, because it is all volunteer, but it is transitional in that it is *preparing* people in mutual aid and cooperation and retaining an anti-capitalist spirit by not supporting the multinational giants and having an infoshop where one may buy leftist literature from AK Press. The Purchase Food Co-op is wholly outside the student government, and the administration, for that matter, has little jurisdiction over how the cooperative operates. Cooperatives, as well as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), promote independence from corporate supermarkets, have the ability to radicalize the members, and create structures that prepare people for autonomous lifestyles outside the capitalist mode.

When we look at these movements as well as the anti-corporate globalization movement as a whole, we see that "most of the creative energy for radical politics is now coming from Anarchism" [Graeber, p 61]. Indeed, the largest organizing forces are those that support direct action and that have no electoral agenda (i.e. party allegiances). These are grassroots *coalitions* that march and lock-down together. Corporate globalization, understood as synonymous with neo-liberalism,* has met, most notably, since Seattle in 1999, an

* Neo-liberalism is a kind of market fundamentalism that fosters the advent of trade agreements like NAFTA and the FTAA that have little to no democratic accountability, no respect for cultural differences, and have neither guidelines for environmental protection, nor wage and condition guidelines for labor.

enormous response from civil society at every one of their meetings. Indeed, the WTO and the city of Seattle were caught off guard by the magnitude and character of such an opposition from labor unions, black blocs, and affinity groups: "The Direct Action Network organizers set a tone that valued autonomy and freedom over conformity, and stressed coordination rather than pressure to conform" [Barlow, p 32]. Tactical diversity ranged from flyering, dancing, and organized marching to locking-down with the purpose of closing intersections. As a tactic, there was some property destruction, and these acts remain controversial to much of the left as well as terrifying and reprehensible to the press. Windows of Nike, the Gap, and other stores were smashed and written in spraypaint on the remaining glass at Starbucks were the words: "Corporate Greed Sux" [see appendix image 3]. The Rainforest Action Network, at least officially, said that it hurt the movement, and the Ruckus Society called it "inexcusable" [Kaplan, p 4]. However, some Anarchist groups defended property destruction as a tactic: the Acme Collective in a communiqué said that when they smash windows they "aim to destroy the thin veneer of legitimacy that surrounds private property rights" [Stamoulis, p 30]. On the discussion of this tactic, one Seattle organizer writes:

"As a movement we need to recognize the difference between property destruction and violence. I remember watching the--years ago--thousands of people hammering away at the Berlin Wall that stood as such an obvious symbol of political oppression. I did not once think that those who were smashing the wall were violent. It was a jubilant and inspiring moment. Nor do I think

that those who were toppling statues of Stalin in Eastern Europe are violent. Again, another obvious symbol of oppression. In the United States, under corporate capitalism, the symbols of oppression are the golden arches of McDonalds and other corporate stores that are destroying the planet and amassing enormous power at our expense. [...] While I advocate non-violent [against property] direct action, I understand where others are coming from and hope that we can discuss these issues as a movement that is diverse and vibrant" [Crass, p 10].

As well as critiquing the major profiteers from free trade and neo-liberalism, parts of the anti-corporate globalization movement have drafted a comprehensive "Alternative to the Americas" that offers quite viable and progressive alternatives to the neo-liberal model. Naming the coalition *The Hemispheric Social Alliance*, they have held the People's Summit of the Americas annually since 2000 and are said to represent "45 million people from throughout the Americas" [HSA, p 2], a vast network of labor organizations and citizen's groups. The drafting of an alternative model is certainly an important step to move beyond theory into action.

As Bakunin had advocated "emancipation through practical action" [Dolgoff, p 167], we see that hundreds of Anarchist organizations have popped up across the globe, from infoshops to Anarchist collectives. "There are now more than 175 Food Not Bombs chapters, at least 60 Independent Media Centers (the newest of which are in the global

south), nearly a dozen People's Law Collectives, countless troupes of puppetistas, and several new medic teams" [Kaplan, p 3].

Another indication of the renewal of the Anarchist role in the struggles, has been a recent emergence or renewing of Anarchist history and literature surfacing after what seems like years of dormancy. The aforementioned AK Press is an independent book, music, and zine distribution cooperative that caters to many of the infoshops and disseminates much of the radical literature that we see around today. Titles like Noam Chomsky's *Notes on Anarchism*, Murray Bookchin's *To Remember Spain: The Anarchist and Syndicalist Revolution of 1936*, and Alexander Berkman's *What is Communist Anarchism?* aim to tell of an oft-forgotten or ignored time in Anarchist history. Supported by radical printing presses, Anarchists are re-issuing countless works by Anarchists ranging from the Situationists to the works of Anarchist and biologist Peter Kropotkin. A band, called The Ex, has put out an album entitled "Spanish Anarchists" with a companion book about the Spanish Civil War with pictures of the soldiers and collectivized buildings. Historical and philosophical conflicts between Marxists and Anarchists have begun to be re-evaluated and revised from an Anarchist perspective. These are just a few examples of how anarchist thought has been re-emerging and there are countless ways in which it is forming a contemporary culture of its own, clearly distinguishable from the rest of the left.

The Anti-Capitalist Convergence (ACC) has been a large part of the resistance to global capital and its supportive institutions in the last couple years. Their advocacy of direct action outside of the permitted marches and their inclusion of any and all kinds of *anti-*

capitalists has made them an enormous part of the movement today. They are working for an end to the debt on developing countries and also an end to all personal debt. They advocate an abolition of the IMF and World Bank because they are not reformable. Similar to Seattle's Direct Action Network, they respect autonomy and diversity.

It should be clear that capitalism must be changed and dismantled *revolutionarily* to begin to build from the ground up on real libertarian (socially) and syndicalist (economic) underpinnings: we needn't look also to Paris in 1968 to see that the Communist Party has had a terrible history of stopping revolutions. To clarify: socialists and their opposition to capital, their ability to mobilize and organize unions, their struggle for the eight-hour day, and sundry integral achievements have made the world far better for workers and the poor. It is the authoritarian and statist aspect of Communism that leads inevitably to loss of personal liberty, suppression of alternative media and, historically, other horrific actions such as Stalin's purges. State socialism becomes exploitive and colorless precisely because it uses the ugly and violent tool of state power. Bakunin had predicted this in the 1860s and we have seen adequate examples of tyranny from the "red bureaucracy" that prove him to be correct. Alexander Berkman, a friend and comrade of Emma Goldman, wrote about how the Bolshevik revolution was, [echoing our argument about the Spanish Civil War], not entirely complete: "Claiming that only the dictatorship of their Party could conduct the Revolution, they bent all energies to secure that dictatorship" [Berkman, p 107]. That is to say, the dictatorship became an end-in-itself instead of being a

mean towards economic emancipation. Of course, non-Bolsheviks and much of the radical and revolutionary fervor were soon suppressed as a new *form* of government took control. Indeed, political opposition was outlawed, and the Communist Party busied itself with WWI, the civil war to destroy the white army and eventually "reintroducing capitalistic ownership after it had been abolished by the direct action of the industrial and agrarian proletariat. To-day [1929] Russia is a country partly State capitalistic and partly privately capitalistic" [Berkman, p 111]. So we see that to complete a Communist revolution is to have a ruling elite (called a politbureau in this case) that supposedly represents the proletariat but denies all democratic and tactical differences. Furthermore, Berkman said: "As a prominent member of a recent Communist Congress put it: 'There is room for all political parties in Russia: the Communist Party is in the Government, the others are in prison'" [Berkman, p 111]. It is true that with all the state power in the form of munitions, taxation, and resources, socialism was never given the opportunity to develop in peace, from within or outside its borders.* The authoritarian model has not worked to promote democracy but only rule by an elite. As Lenin said: "pacifism and 'democracy' in general [...] lay no claim to Marxism whatever" [Lenin, p 1]. Anarchism, as an alternative to Marxism and Communism, has been envisioned and applied all over the world. The Anarchist interpretation of Marxist history is clear: in every instance cited, state socialism will lead to the repression of dissenters.

As the United States, in particular, moves towards a more service-oriented society (and much of the "third world" into

* Here we need only cite WWI, the Russian civil war, the Stalinist purges, WWII, the nuclear arms race which diverted funds from socialist projects, and the cold war.

primary production and dependency), the class distinctions are simply not as clear as proletariat versus bourgeoisie. The affront against humanity takes the form of capitalist institutions that want to ensure "free" trade, and grant northern multinationals access to untapped resources and markets. The affront is, therefore, on all working people, not solely industrial workers or workers of developing nations: "We understand the concept 'proletariat,' to refer [...] to all those who are subordinated to, exploited by, and produce under the rule of capital" [Hardt and Negri, p 256].

As we take into consideration the history of the Anarchist/Communist debate, we come to many useful conclusions. The advocates of these theories have been fighting for the emancipation of labor from capital. We find that Anarchists and other radical or different approaches have thrice been excluded from the undertaking of anti-capitalist organizing once the Communist had achieved enough control. First, they were expelled as a group from the First International. Secondly, they were exiled or purged when the Bolsheviks came to power. Thirdly, Anarchists were denied munitions from the Communists to fight the fascists in Spain, leading to many unnecessary deaths, and many radicals having been jailed or killed when the republican forces lost. We are at a new epoch, where diversity of tactic and political views is encouraged, and we can only hope that no factional group will rise to bend the movement its particular way. "Barbara Epstein, an expert on direct action, senses that Anarchism has now become 'the pole that everyone revolves around,' much as Marxism was in the '60s. In other words, even young activists who don't identify as Anarchists have to position themselves in relation to its

values" [Kaplan, p 3]. Whether it is true or not that Anarchism is at the center, there is certainly an apprehension on the part of many of today's activists about joining Communist or other authoritarian "splinter" groups, choosing instead to work with them on a common project. The third conclusion is that Anarchists today are putting, as Bakunin did, the economic before the political. They are acting internationally to form workers' cooperatives that ensure a living wage. An example of this is Equal Exchange which is a hybrid co-op,* that functions in much of the same way that AK Press does; it buys from workers co-ops and sells principally to consumer co-ops. Equal exchange does the marketing, processing, and distribution of organic, shade-grown coffees and teas. They ensure fair trade rather than "free" trade, so the workers are guaranteed a reliable and secure living wage.

The debate between Anarchism and Communism is certainly not over. As Bakunin had adhered to organization from the bottom up and decentralization, so has the anti-corporate globalization movement. With an inspiring and rich history, Anarchists can organize for economic gains in the workplace, they can be critical of centralization in popular movements, and they can reject appeals to the state to hand over token appeasements.

Collectives, intentional communities, trade unions and co-ops are created that realize clear alternatives to an ultra-consumerist society and capitalism in general; they challenge the legitimacy of global institutions and shun all regressive moves towards hierarchy and central planning.

* A hybrid cooperative is both a consumer and a worker co-op that is owned by both the consumers possibly in the form of shares, *and* it is owned by the workers themselves.

Appendix

Image 1:

**INTERNATIONAL
WORKING MEN'S
ASSOCIATION.**

CENTRAL COUNCIL, 18 GREEK STREET, LONDON, W.

FOUNDED ON 23RD SEPTEMBER, 1864. P. A.

PUBLIC MEETING held at St. MARTIN'S HALL, London.

The Address and Statutes issued by the Provisional Central Council fully explain the Association's objects and aspirations, which, however, may be summed up in a few words. It aims at the protection, advancement, and complete emancipation, economical and political, of the Working Classes. As a means to this great end it will promote the establishment of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in EACH COUNTRY, and the co-operation of the Working Classes of DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

Its Organization, with a Central Medium at London, and numerous affiliated Branches in Europe and America, will assist in uniting the Working Classes of all Countries in a perpetual bond of fraternal co-operation. Annual Congresses of Delegates, elected by the affiliated Working Men themselves, will create for the Working Classes a public and powerful European representation.

The *Executive Council on behalf of the Operative Bricklayers Society* assembled at the *25 Hatfield Street Blackfriars London* having subscribed to the principles, and applied to enter the fraternal bond, are hereby admitted as an affiliated Branch of the Association.

Dated the 21th of February 1865

<p>E. DUPONT, <i>Corresponding Sec. for France.</i> K. MARX, <i>do.</i> <i>Germany.</i> E. HOLTROP, <i>do.</i> <i>Poland.</i></p>	<p>G. ODGER, <i>President of Council</i> G. W. WHEELER, <i>Honorary Treasurer.</i> M. JUNG <i>Corresponding Sec. for Switzerland.</i> L. LEWIS, <i>do.</i> <i>America.</i> W. R. CREMER, <i>Honorary General Secretary.</i></p>
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Application from the Operative Bricklayers' Society, dated February 21, 1865, for affiliation to the International

Image 2:



Collectivized restaurant, Barcelona 1936.

This restaurant was collectivized jointly by the trade unions, the UGT and the CNT.

Image 3:



A Starbucks' window in Seattle during the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting.
Photo "Corporate Greed Sux" by Hans Bennett from the zine *Insubordination*, Issue #1.

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