Application of Anarchist Theory To The Modern-Day Prison Struggle

By, Sean Swain

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By Sean Swain, Political Prisoner
Toledo Correctional Institution
Toledo, Ohio
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INTRODUCTION

"While there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element, I am of it, while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

-- Eugene V. Debs

" Sometimes I dream of this social change. I get a streak of faith in evolution, and the good in man. I paint a gradual slipping out of the now, to that beautiful then, where there are neither kings, presidents, landlords, national bankers, stock brokers, railroad magnates, patent right monopolists, or tax and title collectors, where there are no overstocked markets and hungry children, idle counters and naked creatures, splendor and misery, waste and need. I am told that this is far fetched idealism, to paint this happy, povertyless, crimeless, diseaseless world. I have been told I 'ought to be behind the bars' for it .. "

Voltairine DeCleyre

"The masses must be taught to understand the true functions of prisons. Why do they exist in such numbers? What is the real economic motive of crime and the official definition of types of offenders or victims? The people must learn that when one 'offends' the totalitarian state, it is patently not an offense against the people of that state, but an assault on the privilege of the privileged few . "

George Jackson

Socialist Eugene V. Debs spoke out in Cincinnati, Ohio, opposing U.S. involvement in the first World War. He contended that the government forced the poor to fight and die to protect the economic interests of the wealthy, an immoral situation. He spent ten years in prison for speaking his mind.

Anarchist Voltairine DeCleyre had her fair share of arrests for voicing her views, as did her contemporary, Emma Goldman. Goldman urged a crowd of out-of-work men to ask for work; if refused work, to ask for bread, if refused bread, to take bread.

Her next words were uttered from a jail cell.

In the case of Black Panther Field Marshal George L. Jackson, when prison fences proved inadequate to contain his dangerous ideas, bullets from the guard tower rifle did the trick.

Anarchist theory can easily explain such situations which seem to fly in the face of the traditional, prevailing view of prisons in society--the accepted view that prisons segregate dangerous offenders from the rest of society for society's own good; that prisons are an extension of a benevolent State;

that the benevolent State is a friend and protector, an extension of the will of the governed; that the State's laws establish order and maintain the freedoms of each individual; that its police enforce the laws, its courts adjudicate offenders, and its prisons lock away the threats to our public order.

Anarchist theory presents a fundamentally different understanding of prisons and a vastly divergent view of our present reality. Anarchist theory conceives of prisons within the context of the Anarchist understanding of the State, its relationship to the individual, the origins of crime, the failure of punishment, and an understanding of the forces that liberate the individual.

The resultant Anarchist response, the application of Anarchist theory to the current reality, counters the reactionary and destructive forces commonly pervasive in institutional confinement.

A Brief Description of the Current Reality

> "When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go there without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary..."
>
> --Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*

> "...(T)he most dangerous weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed..."
>
> Stephen Biko, *I Write What I Like*

> "Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killing... It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of the essential foundations of life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, and national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group..."
>
> --Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*, Quoting the definition of *genocide*

More that 2.2 million people reside within the prisons of the United States. Including those on probation and parole whose lives are controlled directly by government agencies, the segment of the U.S. population under criminal justice supervision numbers well over seven million.

The justice and prison systems of the country represent the primary tools for wholesale genocide. From the over-representation of police in poor areas to the over-representation of the poor and minorities within the prisons, the same government forces once openly engaged in genocide against national groups now continues that same genocide through more covert means and expands its scope to include their victims' potential sympathizers---to include the revolutionary left.

Prisons have become the primary tool of population control, confining minorities and political dissidents for the years of their productivity. This works demographically to the advantage of the

status quo, keeping down minority birth rate and insuring minorities will never make up the majority. In political terms, this helps to ensure the continuance of conservative and reactionary governance inclined to serve the interests of the affluent, the white, the conservative.

Prisons have become the primary tool of economic controls, confining and releasing segments of the unemployed underclass fabricated by the manipulations of the market. This flow of unemployables permits the capitalist class to depress real wages by pointing to the availability of unemployed labor, concentrating more capital into the hands of the powerful few, increasing the gap between the wealthy and the worker.

Prisons have become the primary tool of political control, removing millions from voter lists, many times permanently. The absence of felons alters the outcomes particularly in close, local elections in the poorest areas. As the poor and marginalized are those primarily targeted and harvested for incarceration, primarily from urban areas, prisons and imprisonment prevents the emergence of politically-conscious representatives among the urban poor, stifling the potential for revolutionary currents among the poorest and those most benefiting from radical social and political change.

Prisons have become the primary tool of social control as they create a permanently disenfranchised underclass used by both the capitalist and the politician to scare and divide the working classes, creating fear and distrust of the "criminal element" fabricated by economic and political forces. In this way, crime becomes a diversion of otherwise liberatory collective resources and the working class relinquishes more power to the ruling elite who promise falsely to treat criminals as enemies to be resisted and eliminated, all while knowingly creating the criminal element of tomorrow with failed policies today.

Directly, through the processes of advanced and plausibly-deniable torture and deprivation and psychological distortion, the modern prison complex creates predictable future crime in much the same way that tortures at Abu Graib predictably created the terrorist and guerrilla by alienating those who were victimized. In these terms, the prison systems of the US are engaged in the "Abu-Graibization" of the poor and marginalized.

Ultimately, victims of this mass Abu Graibization, subject to covert mind-war and cultural genocide, get released, steeped in the hatred the State infused into them, drenched in self-loathing, incapacitated in their wills and minds, programmed to accept second-class citizenship, to know their place, to behave as their own worst enemies, lackies and pawns of the social forces unleashed upon them in the first instance to distort them and create them as they become.

It is in light of this grave reality that Anarchist theory regarding the State and its relationship to the individual becomes most applicable.

THE STATE

" What happens in every country, by all men, and in all eras, that one man abuses a hundred thousand and deprives them of their liberty? Who would believe it, if only he heard of it, and did not see it? And if it only happened in strange and distant lands and that it was spoken of, who would not suppose it was somewhat false and made up, not really true?"

--Etienne de la Boétie

"Nothing appears more surprising, to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few, and the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers... "

--David Hume

By submitting to an organized government, or State, subjects give up power they previously exercised over themselves and they subordinate themselves to the State. Those people who comprise power, however it is that they receive it, exercise power over their subjects.

"The possession of power," Leo Tolstoy reminds us, "depraves men." So by creating a State, by creating an external power, each subject participates in the process of "depraving" men. And to make matters worse, in the establishment of a State, it is the "depraved" men of power who, in the end result, remain organized and the subjects, who submit to the State, who become disorganized.

"...Where a government exists, then the only really organized people are the minority who make up the government," said Luigi Fabbri. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon asserted, "The government of man by man is slavery." And, as Benjamin Tucker pointed out, "Rule is evil, and it is none the better for being majority rule."

Mikhail Bakunin explains: "Even in the purest democracies, such as the United States and Switzerland, a privileged minority faces a vast enslaved majority."

So what is the nature of the State?

> "(The State) meddles in all our affairs, pinions us from cradle to grave. It prescribes all our actions, it piles up mountains of laws and ordinances that bewilder the shrewdest lawyer. It creates an army of office-holders who sit like spiders in their webs and have never seen the world except through the dingy panes of their office windows. The immense and ever-increasing sums that the State collects from the people are never sufficient; it lives at the expense of future generations, and steers with all its might toward bankruptcy. 'State' is tantamount to 'war': one State seeks to weaken and ruin the other in order to force upon the latter its law, its policy, its commercial treaties, and to enrich itself at its expense; war is today the usual condition... there is a 30 years' supply of causes of war on hand. And civil war rages at the same time with foreign war; the State, which was originally designed to be a protection for all and especially for the weak, has today become a weapon of the rich against the exploited; of the propertied against the propertyless..."

Peter Kropotkin.

The State, then, behaves as if it is the enemy of the individual, of the subject that the State is supposed to defend and protect.

> "The interests of the State and those of the individual differ fundamentally and are antagonistic. The State and the political and economic institutions that it supports can exist only by fashioning the individual to their particular purpose; training him to respect 'law and order'; teaching him obedience, submission, unquestioning faith in the wisdom and justice of government; above all, loyal service and complete self-sacrifice when the State commands it, as in war. The State puts itself and its interests even above the claims of religion and God. It punishes religious or conscientious scruples against individuality because there is no individuality without liberty, and *liberty is the greatest menace to authority.*"

Emma Goldman, emphasis added.

So, far from seeking to benefit and elevate the individual, the State seeks to preserve itself at the expense of the individual—at the expense of its subjects. It seeks to harness and control the individual, and control ultimately equates with enslavement, as the two differ only by degrees.

"The State seeks to hinder every free activity by its censorship, its oversight, its police, and counts this hindering as its duty, because it is in truth a duty of self-preservation," argued Max Stirner.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE STATE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Out of self-preservation, to maintain its authority over everyone, the State seeks to diminish the subject, to keep the subject needy and incomplete and incapable of self-rule and self-governance. The State takes on responsibilities otherwise vested in the subject, and ultimately makes the subject less able to exercise self-rule and self-governance.

As William Godwin stated it, "As long as man is held in the manimels of obedience, and habituated to look to some foreign guidance for direction of his conduct, his understanding and the vigor of his mind will sleep. Do I desire to raise him to the energy of which he is capable? I must teach him to feel himself, to bow to no authority, to examine the principles he entertains, and to render to his mind the reason of his conduct."

Submission to obedience and the habit of recognizing someone else as the authority over her, the subject loses the capacity for self-determination. The State, then, in this way, alienates the individual from herself. In bowing to an authority outside of herself, the individual becomes, more and more, incapable of self-direction and dependent upon an outside authority to govern her will.

The State imposes upon the individual and lessens the individual, this imposition taking concrete forms through the State's laws and the enforcement of those laws:

> "The State is force. Nay, it is the silly parading of force. It does not propose to win love or make converts; if it puts its finger into anything, it does so in an unfriendly way; for its essence consists not in persuasion, but in command and compulsion. However much pain it may take away, it cannot conceal the fact that it is the legal maimer of our will, the constant negation of our liberty. Even when it commands the good, it makes this valueless by commanding it; for every command slaps liberty in the face; as soon as the good is commanded, it is transformed into evil in the eyes of the true (that is, human, by no means divine) morality, of the dignity of man, of liberty; for man's liberty, morality, and dignity consist precisely of doing the good not because he is commanded to but because he recognizes it, wills it, and loves it."

Mikhail Bakunin.

It is this force, this threat of force which is at the basis of the relationship between the State and the individual; it is this force, this compulsion that limits the individual, limits liberty—at the expense of the individual and to the ultimate benefit of the State.

"Doubtless the State leaves the individual as free play as possible," wrote Max Stirner, "only they must never turn the play to earnest, must never forget it. The State has never any object but to limit the individual, to tame him, to subordinate him, to subject him to something general; it lasts only so long as the individual is not all in all, and is only the clear-cut limitation of me, my limitedness, my slavery."

To govern is to subordinate, to control, to tame, to reduce. In this manner, the State must limit and enslave, must subject the individual to force in order to compel the individual to recognize the legitimacy of the State and obey its directives, its laws. The every action of the individual must reflect recognition of the State as authority:

> "The other factor which impels government to become even more conservative and reactionary is the inherent distrust of the individual and the fear of individuality. Our political and social scheme cannot afford to tolerate the individual and his constant quest for innovation. In 'self-defense', the State therefore suppresses, persecutes, punishes and even deprives the individual of life. It is aided in this by every institution that stands for the preservation of the existing order. It resorts to every form of violence and force, and its efforts are

> supported by the 'moral indignation' of the majority against the heretic, the social dissenter and the public rebel—the majority for centuries drilled in State worship, trained in discipline and obedience and subdued by the awe of authority in the home, the school, the church and the press... "

Emma Goldman.

In this way, the State (and the institutions which preserve it) maintains homogeneity of behavior conformity to enforced norms. It limits and dominates, viewing liberty and the individual as feared enemies.

"...[E]ven when the State does good things, it finally rests on a club, a gun, or a prison for its power to carry it through," remarked Voltairine DeCleyre.

The role of the State in the maintenance of law for the protection of the individual no longer served its original function. "The law, which first made its appearance as a collection of customs which serve for the maintenance of society, is now merely an instrument to keep up the exploitation and domination of the industrious masses by wealthy idlers," wrote Peter Kropotkin. "It has now no longer any civic mission; its only mission is to protect exploitation."

The State pulls from the hands of the individual her liberty and duty to defend herself and offer defense as a service—a public service to all - which each individual must support through payment of taxes. But this physical protection, just like the legal protection the State provides, becomes something distorted when placed into the hands of the State:

> "Defence is a service, like any other service. It is labor both useful and desired, and therefore an economic commodity subject to the law of supply and demand. In a free market this commodity would be furnished at the cost of production. The production and sale of this commodity are now monopolized by the State. The State, like almost all monopolists, charges exorbitant prices Like almost all monopolists, it supplies a worthless, or nearly worthless, article Just like the monopolist of food product often furnishes poison instead of nutriment, so the State takes advantage of its monopoly of defence to furnish invasion instead of protection. Just as the patrons of one pay to be poisoned, so the patrons of the other pay to be enslaved. And the State exceeds all of its fellow monopolists in the extent of its villainy because it enjoys the unique privilege of compelling all people to buy its product whether they want it or not "

Benjamin Tucker.

The State, even at its best, relies upon force and relies upon the diminishing of the individual and the individual's liberty—which are threats to both the State's existence and its reason for existence The State forces the individual to pay for protection and to accept protection, whether the individual wants it or not. And more times than not, the "protection" consists of the State invading and imposing upon the individual with the arms the individual paid for.

"Whoever lays his hands upon me to govern me is a usurper and a tyrant; I declare him my enemy," wrote Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

Origins of Crime

The individual, fully capable of exercising liberty and able to self-govern, poses the greatest threat to the continued existence of the State. Such individuals render the State obsolete.

The State must control each subject, reduce the capacity of each in their abilities to self-govern and in their abilities, then, to abandon the State. The State must instill a sense of dependence into each subject, a sense of conformity and recognition of outside authority. It must force upon the individual

something less than her birthright and creating an unquestioning subject who submits to even tyranny and injustice and inequality as those things may be systematically maintained by the State.

In this way, the State creates the social forces giving rise to crime.

"THE REASON MEN STEAL IS BECAUSE THEIR RIGHTS ARE STOLEN FROM THEM BEFORE THEY ARE BORN," proclaimed Voltairine DeCleyre.

> "These are the things that make criminals, the perverted forces of man, turned aside by the institution of property, which is the giant social mistake to-day. It is your law which keeps men from using the resources and means of wealth production unless they pay tribute to other men, it is this, and nothing else, which is responsible for all the second-class of crimes and all those crimes of violence incidentally committed while carrying out a robbery..."
>
> Voltairine DeCleyre.

So crime, then, is the result of social inequities to which the exploited and destitute must react, social inequities maintained to the advantage of the wealthy through enforcement by the State and its laws. As William Godwin described, "The fruitful source of crimes consists in this circumstance, one man's possessing in abundance that of which another man is destitute."

It is the existence of wealth and privilege bestowed ultimately by the State and its laws that creates the social forces of poverty and desperation and exploitation. As Benjamin Tucker wrote, "Our prisons are filled with criminals which our virtuous State has made what they are by its iniquitous laws, its grinding monopolies, and the horrible social conditions that result from them. We enact many laws that manufacture criminals, and then a few that punish them."

Peter Kropotkin places the blame for the existence of crime squarely at the feet of the privileged classes, the capitalists, who maintain lives of excess and luxury, idle lives through the exploitation of others and not through their own labor.

> "So long as we have a cast of idlers who have us feed them under the pretext that they must lead us, so long these idlers will always be a focus of pestilence to the general morality. He who lives his life in dull laziness, who is always bent merely on getting new pleasures, who by the very basis of his existence can know no solidarity, and who by his course of life cultivates the vilest self seeking, he will always pursue the coarsest sensual pleasures and debase everything around him. With his bag full of dollars and his beastial impulses he will go and dishonor women and children, degrade art, the drama, the press, sell his country and its defenders, and, because he is too cowardly to murder with his own hands, will have his proxies murder the choicest of his nation when, someday, he is afraid for his darling money-bag...
>
> "Thus society is incessantly bringing forth beings who are incapable of an honorable and industrious life, and who are full of anti-social feelings. It does homage to them when success crowns their crimes, and sends them to the penitentiary when they are unlucky..."
>
> Peter Kropotkin.

At the root of crime is this inequity built into the social order of things, accepted by society generally as the way things are, and perpetuated with the active participation of everyone within this state of affairs, the exploited and exploiter. So observed Adolphe Quetelet, "Experience demonstrates, in fact, by every possible evidence, this opinion, which may seem paradoxical at first, that it is society which prepares the crime, and that the guilty one is but the instrument which executes it."

The social situation "prepares" the crime, the "perverted forces of man," described by Voltairine DeCleyre; forces put in motion not by the offender but by the State with its laws and preferences for the wealthy, the idler, the exploiter.

"It is safe to say that governments have committed far more crimes than they have prevented, concludes Robert Ingersoll.

So if it is the social situation, the forces of poverty and injustice and inequality that find their origin in the exploitive and self-serving indulgence of wealthy and privileged oppressors, in the maintenance of legislated inequity and social stratification, then how is it that anyone could blame the so-called offender, can hold responsible the poor, wretched, abused, and oppressed who find themselves in such desperate straights? How can one declare someone such situated a criminal, an offender, a "bad man"?

> "But who are the bad men among us?... (I)f by the men from whom the State must protect us we mean the criminals, then we know they are not special creatures like the wolf among sheep, but just such men as all of us, who like committing crimes as little as we do; we know that the activity of governments with their cruel forms of punishment, which do not correspond to the present stage of morality, their prisons, tortures . . . contributes more to the barbarizing of the people than to their culture, and hence rather to the multiplication than the diminution of such criminals."

Leo Tolstoy.

So it stands that the misperception of the causes of crime lead to punishment, which lead ultimately to the multiplication of crime. And that, then, leads one back to the serious consideration of the State's violence which is at the root of these dynamics. It is the State's violence which ultimately creates the so-called criminal—the individual who rejects the law of the State and does not act in conformity with the State's dictates.

"The individual's violence is called crime, and only by crime does he break the State's authority when he opines that the State is not above him, but he above the State," contends Max Stirner.

Again, it comes back to the individual as a threat to the State, as a threat to the forces of wealth and privilege that the State truly represents with its law and its might. The so-called criminal is an individual who has endangered the State by rejecting the State and its authority over his behavior.

Voltairine DeCleyre summed it up this way:

> "Some die because they cannot eat at all. Pray tell me what these last have to lose by becoming thieves. And why shall they not become thieves? And is the action of a man who takes the necessities which have been denied him really a criminal? Is he morally worse than the man who crawls in the cellar and dies of starvation? I think not. He is only a little more assertive...
>
> "But," you will say, and say truly, 'to begin by taking loaves means to end by taking everything and murdering, too, very often.' And in that you draw the indictment against your own system. If there is no alternative between starving and stealing, (and for thousands there is none) then there is no alternative between society's murdering its members, or the members disintegrating society. Let society consider its own mistakes, then: let it answer itself for all these people it has robbed and killed: let it cease its own crimes first!"

The Failure of Punishment

> "...As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come to some person against whom they have a spite, will

abuse his dog. I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it and pitied it... "

--Henry David Thoreau, *On Civil Disobedience*

"Soul breakers [complete isolation] exist because the authorities know that such conditions would drive *them* to the breaking point, but when I resolved that they would not conquer my will, I became stronger than they were. I understood them better than they understood me. No longer dependent upon the things of the world, I really felt free for the first time in my life. In the past I had been like my jailers; I had pursued the goals of capitalistic America. Now I had a higher freedom... Even so, the way I was treated told me a lot about those who devise such punishment. I know them well... "

Huey P Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*

Because the State and its apologists wrongly conceive of crime originating in the faulty-willed individual, in the errant person, in the irrational and immoral offender, the State prescribes punishments as sanctions for those who do not conform their behavior and do not subordinate themselves to the dictates of the Almighty State. The State and its apologists cannot imagine that the origins lie not in the faulty individual but in the corrupted and faulty social circumstance that the State itself generates, relying, as it does, upon the dynamics of force and repression and fear and control of the individual, the reduction of the individual and the taming of the general public as a whole

The State, given the reality it creates, imposes irrational expectations upon its subjects:

"No prayers, no legal enactments, will ever rid society of crime. If they would, there have been prayers enough and preachments enough and laws enough and prisons enough to have done it long ago. But pray that the attraction of gravitation will cease. Will it cease? Enact that water should freeze at 100 degrees heat. Will it freeze? And no more will men be sane and honest and just when they are compelled to live in an insane, dishonest, and unjust society, when the natural operation of the very elements of their being is warred upon by statutes and institutions which must produce outbursts destructive both to themselves and others...

• • •

"Logic would say that anyone who wished to obliterate cruelty from the character of another must himself show no cruelty; one who would teach regard for rights of others must himself be regardful. Yet the story of exile and prison is the story of the lash, the iron, the chain, and every torture that the fiendish ingenuity of *the non-criminal class can devise by way of teaching criminals to be good!* To teach men to be good, they are kept in airless cells, made to sleep on narrow planks, to look at the sky through iron grates, to eat food that revolts their palates, and destroys their stomachs, --battered and broken down in body and soul: and this is what they call reforming men!"

Voltairine DeCleyre.

Because the State operates through force, imposing law upon its subjects, it must rely upon its sanctions to re-habituate those who have, by their actions, rejected the authority of the State. Through this dynamic of force and sanctions, then, the State must respond to those who reject its

authority despite how insignificant or inefficient or even exacerbating the State's response may be to the original problem of crime—the problem of being rejected by the individual.

Beholden to its reliance on fear and force, the State must count upon the individual being prevented from rebelling, must count upon fear of sanction and prison and punishment, must pass harsher laws if fear of punishment proves ineffective.

"[T]he law has no claim to men's respect," Peter Kropotkin asserts.

> "...(S)uperfluous and harmful, finally, are the laws for protection of persons, for the punishment and prevention of 'crimes.' The fear of punishment never yet restrained a murderer. He who would kill his neighbor, for revenge of necessity, does not beat his brains about the consequences; and every murderer hitherto has had the firm conviction that he would escape prosecution. If murder were declared not punishable, the number of murders would not increase even by one; rather it would decrease to the extent murders are at present committed by habitual criminals who have been corrupted in prison."
>
> Peter Kropotkin.

So injustice and cruelty which flow naturally from this coercive relationship between the State and the individual, by reliance of the State upon force and fear and sanctions, are at the root of the multiplication of crime. The unjust social system, built as it is upon laws favoring the exploiter and idler and oppressor, creates the criminal, the offender who rejects the authority of the law, the offender distorted and corrupted by social forces that have so exploited him as a commodity that he views others as commodities and behaves in his own narrow self-interest.

In either instance, the robbery of the individual of her dignity and humanity and self-sufficiency creates this criminality, an outgrowth of the social forces unleashed by the State's covert hostility toward liberty and the individual. Ultimately, the State's cruelty and hostility and repression becomes self-defeating.

"There is something in injustice, in cruelty," writes Robert Ingersoll, "which tends to defeat itself. There never were so many traitors in England as when the traitor was drawn and quartered, when he was tortured in every possible way, —when his limbs, torn and bleeding, were given to the fury of mobs, or exhibited pierced by pikes or hung in chains. The frightful punishments produced intense hatred of government, and traitors increased until they became powerful enough to decide what treason was and who the traitors were and to inflict the same torment on others."

The existence of the State and the existence of crime go together. The State's solution to crime and criminality becomes part of the problem. The abolition of the State, the abolition of authority, leads to the abolition of crime and criminality.

"The State is itself the most gigantic criminal extant. It manufactures criminals much faster than it punishes them," observed Benjamin Tucker. "We look forward to the ultimate disappearance of the necessity of force even for the purposes of repressing crime."

Liberation from Force and Fear

> "Within a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day. Fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing friends, family, property or means of livelihood, fear of poverty, fear of isolation, fear of failure. A more insidious form of fear is that which masquerades as common sense or even wisdom, condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant, or futile and small, daily acts of courage which help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity. It is not easy for a people conditioned by fear under the iron rule of the principle that might makes right to free themselves from the enervating miasma of fear. Yet even under the most

crushing state machinery courage rises up again and again, for fear is not the natural state of civilized man..."

—Aung San Suu Kyi

"You'll get your freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it. When you get that kind of attitude... they'll call you an extremist, or subversive, or seditious, or a red or a radical. But when you stay radical long enough and get people to be like you, you'll get your freedom..."

—Malcolm X

"I believe, and everybody must grant, that no Government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and if the people suddenly withdraw their cooperation in every detail, the Government will come to a standstill."

—Mohandas Gandhi

The forces of nonfreedom that view liberty and the individual as threats, the forces that maintain and perpetuate exploitation and poverty and inequality, and the forces that multiply crime through cruelty and distortion of the individual are all linked to the existence of the State, its laws and its corrupt recognition of property. The abolition of the State, then, would abolish those forces that create crime.

Voltairine DeCleyre proclaimed, "Abolish the law—this is, abolish privilege,—and crime will abolish itself." With the abolition of the State and authority, each individual would become free to engage in voluntary association to meet the demands of his own survival and the demands for collective survival as well.

"...[I]n the animal kingdom, as well as in human society, cooperation—as opposed to internecine strife and struggle –has worked for the survival and evolution of the species. [Kropotkin] demonstrated that only mutual aid and voluntary cooperation—not the omnipotent, all-devastating State—can create the basis for a free individual and associational life," wrote Emma Goldman.

Mikhail Bakunin concurs, "Man becomes man, and his humanity becomes conscious and real, only in society and by the joint activity of society. He frees himself from the yoke of external nature only by joint—that is, societary –labor; it alone is capable of making the surface of the earth fit for the evolution of mankind; but without such external liberation neither intellectual nor moral liberation are possible."

In this free re-organization of society, free of an oppressive State, the freedom of each reinforces the humanity and dignity and freedom of the other, as Bakunin further observes: "The more free men surround me, and the deeper and broader their freedom is, so much deeper, broader, and more powerful is my freedom too. On the other hand, every enslavement of men is at the same time a limitation of my freedom, or, what is the same thing, a negation of my human existence by its bestial existence."

So it is that everyone aware of their nonfreedom, in their own self-interest and in the interest of all, must seek out the means to liberate themselves from the slavery of the State, its laws, its recognition of property, and the injustice, inequality, and exploitation that naturally flow from that oppressive state of affairs.

"The revolution has for allies all who suffer oppression and exploitation; let it appear and the universe stretches its arms to it," declared Joseph-Pierre Proudhon.

How does this liberation—this so-called "revolution" come to pass? The very first and essential factor is recognition that each individual possesses power. It begins with a belief in one's own authority rather than a belief in authority residing elsewhere, as in the State. "Man's true liberation," Emma Goldman proclaimed, "individual and collective, lies in his emancipation from authority *and from the belief in it.*" (Emphasis added.)

> "The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. He frees himself and shows the way to others. Freedom and slavery are mental states. Therefore, the first thing is to say to yourself, 'I shall no longer accept the role of a slave. I shall not obey orders as such but shall disobey them when they are in conflict with my conscience.'"
>
> Mohandas Gandhi.

Conscious and aware of their own power and rejecting authority as the slavery that it is, internally liberated former subjects begin to work toward their external and complete liberation, inspiring others in the process. As Peter Kropotkin described:

> "Men of courage, willing not only to speak but to act, pure characters who prefer prison, exile and death to a life that contradicts principles; bold natures who know that in order to win one must dare, these are the advanced-guard who open the fight long before the masses are ripe to lift the banner of insurrection openly and to seek their rights, arms in hand. In the midst of complaining, talking, discussing, comes a murderous deed by one or more persons, which incarnates the longings of all."

Such "courageous characters" make insurrection and freedom contagious, subverting the fear that authority relies upon in order to control individuals and populations. The spirit of rejecting authority spreads and it is in the refusal of submission that the old order eventually starves. As Benjamin Tucker relates, "Power feeds on its spoils, and dies when its victims refuse to be despoiled. They can't persuade it to death; they can't vote it to death; they can't shoot it to death, but *they can always starve it to death.*" (Emphasis added.)

The withdrawal of consent and cooperation brings about the collapse of the State.

"...[T]he day after the revolution," wrote Luigi Fabbri, "no one should have the power or the economic wherewithal to exploit the labor of another..."

THE ANARCHIST RESPONSE: APPLICATION OF ANARCHIST THEORY TO THE CURRENT REALITY

> "Persons in power should be very careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasures, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy, because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase on his soul..."
>
> --Professor Gilbert Murray, Oxford University, *Hibbert Journal*, "The Soul As It Is, And How to Deal With It"

"..The *will to revolt*... seems to express... a newly awakened consciousness, not of causes but of *potentiality*. It is a spreading awareness of the possibilities of human existence... that together inspire, first in individuals, then in communities and entire nations, *an entirely new attitude toward life*.

"The effect of this sudden awareness, this sudden fruition of consciousness is to produce. . a pervasive and urgent desire for radical change, based on the new insight, startling in its simplicity, that the conditions of life that had seemed immutable can, after all, be changed.

"Limitations that were formerly accepted all at once become intolerable... The *will to act* is born. It is as if people everywhere were saying: *Look, here is something we can do, or have, or be, simply by acting. Then what have we been waiting for? Let us act!*

"This, at any rate, describes the state of mind of the modern insurgent, the guerrilla fighter, whatever his slogan or his cause; and his secret weapon, above and beyond any question of strategy or tactics or techniques of irregular warfare, is nothing more than *the ability to inspire this state of mind in others*. The defeat of the military enemy, the overthrow of the government, are secondary tasks, in the sense that they come later. The primary effort of the guerrilla is to militate the population, without whose consent no government can stand for a day.

"The guerrilla is subversive of the existing order in that he is the disseminator of revolutionary ideas; his actions lend force to his doctrine and show the way to radical change. Yet it would be an error to consider him as being apart from the seed bed of revolution. He himself is created by the political climate in which revolution becomes possible, and is himself as much an expression as he is a catalyst of the popular will toward such change.. "

– Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: A Study in Guerrilla Warfare*

Objectively, the current prison population represents a nexus of several converging points. Those confined within this system are most often those most victimized by the forces of the State and its capitalist owners, abused and mis-educated, accepting the rule of the forces of reaction as inevitable. Simultaneously this same population is composed of the same elements that the fascists' police, prosecutors, courts, and legislatures all deemed the greatest potential, political threat to the current system; the individuals who have, in specific and limited ways, likely in narrow self-interest, rejected the validity of the law or its application to them.

Hence, the "offender" is likely one disarmed since birth, formed and shaped by the forces of poverty and exploitation and proactive repression, born and bred to know his place and has, in some limited way, rebelled and forgotten his place -yet without necessarily rejecting the right of State authority to put him back in it.

For the Anarchist, for one who rejects the State, its laws, and the fascist forces of capital which the State ultimately serves, the prisoner represents that individual most-shaped by the harshest of oppressions, the clearest expression of the reality of our slave-existence. No one has better glimpsed the true face of the State. So, for the Anarchist, the prison complex represents the training ground where an entire population, an army of the most oppressed and potentially most ardent allies in the cause of revolution are warehoused by the thousands—disempowered and disarmed, subject to covert mind-control, torture, and cultural genocide.

This army, absent any other intervention, submits to the fascist's mind control and genocide *without perceiving any other alternative*. Having been rendered powerless in every encounter with every institution supporting the current fascist order, the prisoner has never had any experience in the

exercise of his or her own power. So, within this context, the single most important contribution which Anarchism can provide to such a prisoner population is *an alternative to reactionary suicide* the idea of something that the prisoner can do or have or be—the concept of direct action.

The Anarchist, through sharing and disseminating the revolutionary idea, the framework of internal liberation, provokes the prisoner, making her or him capable of asking that profound and dangerous question, the singularly important question in the history of human existence: *"What can we do about it?"* In this way, Anarchism provides prisoners the idea of *"something we can do or have or be simply by acting. Then what have we been waiting for? Let us act!"*

In this context, a previously disarmed and oppressed people recognize the potential to change the circumstances of their own lives, conditions that they previously viewed as imputable, circumstances and conditions of their larger communities, and they are infused with a completely new way of seeing the world and its operation.

The prisoner becomes armed, dangerous with ideas and awareness and conscious of her or his own potential. But more importantly still, the prisoner becomes aware of the potential *of collective* power.

The Anarchist inspires in prisoners a new state of mind and instills a belief in liberation, freedom, new revolutionary idea. In this way, the Anarchist most effectively creates guerrillas among the prisoner population—among the slave population—disseminators of the revolutionary ideal who are formed not just by their exposure to the idea of Anarchism but by the experience of oppression and brutality imposed by the State.

As Robert Taber wrote of the guerrilla, "Limitations that were formerly accepted all at once become intolerable. . . the *will to act* is born. . . "

The prisoner, the slave, previously cast upon the trash heap by the oppressive machinery of the fascist State, grows into new capacities for self-determination, self rule, and the empowerment of others by inspiring in them this new state of mind. In this way, the Anarchist becomes the liberator of formerly-subjugated populations, making liberation contagious among the captives that the State previously held in complete sway, subjecting them at will to cultural genocide and complete psychological and social disarmament. But now, with the intervention of the Anarchist, a new and revolutionary captive culture begins to take root and flourish, one subversive of the State's genocidal aims.

And, again, in reference to Robert Taber, "The defeat of the enemy, the overthrow of the government, are secondary tasks, in the sense that they come later. The primary effort is to militate the population, without whose consent no government can stand for a day."

A militated prison population composed of individuals empowered by the Anarchistic ideal, engaged in mutual aid and voluntary association and cooperation, capable of self-governance and inspired in the maintenance of their own culture, has the potential to render impotent the State's oppressive machinery, to undermine the power of the State's system of sanctions, to undue the harm the fascist State would otherwise impose upon its passive and accepting captives.

And without a real threat of sanctions, without the imposition of effective punishment, without real control of its own prison system and its captive population, the power of prison and punishment and the enforcement of the *law* on a broader, general level is effectively abolished.

Militating the prisoner population, empowering and liberating prisoners with the revolutionary truth and arming them with the tools for their own self-organization and mutual aid ultimately robs the State and the fascist forces of market capital of one of its primary and necessary components, one of its most essential pillars: The power to punish.

Such a tactic serves more than the direct and immediate aims of liberating prisoners, as it also may contribute to a broader strategy. The subversion of the prison through co-opting the population (turning the prison into revolutionary academies) axiomatically opens up greater "free space" throughout the entire social order; it diverts attention and resources of the oppressor to deal with the dangerous, libratory trends within its concentration camps; it makes the system of exploitation and expansion and oppression more unsustainable, hastening its inevitable collapse.

Anarchists, engaged in the modern day prison struggle, perform necessary and essential revolutionary functions in the subversion and defeat of inimical fascist forces and the creation of a new order, one where the institutions of the old order cannot stand. This Anarchist engagement is not an elective contribution to the next revolution, a footnote to the struggle over the reactionary forces of fascism. It is its fundamental basis.

Freedom,

Sean Swain
Political Prisoner
Toledo Correctional Institution
February 12, 2007

Sean Swain A243-205
P.O. Box 80033
Toledo, Ohio 43608

