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Federation Communiste Libertaire
Manifesto of Libertarian Communism
1953

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# Manifesto of Libertarian Communism

Federation Communiste Libertaire

1953

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The immoralist is outwardly free in all their movements. But they no longer know where they're going and when they have deceived other people they deceive themselves.

It is not enough to have a goal you also need a way of getting there.

The working out of a morality within the aware masses and still more within the libertarian communist movement — comes to strengthen the structure of revolutionary ideology and to bring an important contribution to the preparation of a new culture, at the same time as it totally repudiates the culture of the bourgeoisie.

quite clear that in this field only the ends can dictate our conduct. This means that once the ends are recognised and scientifically laid down, the means are simply a matter of tactics and in consequence can only be valued as means if they are suited to the ends, to the sought for goal. So this does not mean any old means and there is no question of justifying means. We must reject the equivocal formula 'the ends justify the means' and say more simply — 'the means only exist, are only chosen, with a view to the ends to which they are tied and suited, and do not have to be justified before the enemy and in terms of the enemy's morality'

In contrast though, these means do inevitably come within the framework of our morality, since they are appropriate to our ideal — an ideal, libertarian communism, which implies the Revolution, which in turn implies that the masses will grasp consciousness guided by the anarchist Organisation. For example the means imply the solidarity, courage and sense of responsibilities that we have cited earlier as virtues of our morality.

There is one point that should make us pause, an aspect of our morality which people might attach to the meaning of solidarity but which is really the very epitome of our morality: truth. As much as it is normal for us to cheat our enemy, the bourgeoisie, who themselves use all kinds of deceit, so we must tell the truth not just between comrades but to the masses.

How could we do otherwise when more than anything else, their awareness, and so their understanding and their judgment, must be increased? Those who have tried to behave otherwise have only succeeded in humiliating and disheartening the people, making them all lose all sense of truth, of analysis and of criticism.

There is nothing proletarian — or revolutionary about immoralist cynicism. That is the style of decadent elements of the bourgeoisie who declare the emptiness of the official morality but are incapable of finding a healthy morality in any existing milieu.



# Foreword

The 'Manifesto of Libertarian Communism' was written in 1953 by Georges Fontenis for the Federation Communiste Libertaire of France. It is one of the key texts of the anarchist-communist current.

It was preceeded by the best work of Bakunin, Guillaume, Malatesta, Berneri, the organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists written by Makhno, Arshinov and Mett, which sprang from the defeats of the Russian Revolution, and the statements of the Friends of Durruti, also a result of another defeat, that of the Spanish Revolution.

Like the 'Platform' it pitted itself against the 'Synthesis' of Faure and Voline which attempted a compromise between Stirnerite individualism, anarcho-syndicalism, and libertarian communism. Like the 'Platform' it reaffirmed the class-struggle nature of anarchism and showed how it had sprung from the struggles of the oppressed. It had the experience of another thirty years of struggle and was a more developed document than the 'Platform'. However it failed to take account of the role of women in capitalist society and offered no specific analysis of women's oppression. Whilst the F.C.L. was very active in the struggle against French colonialism in North Africa, it failed to incorporate an analysis of racism into its Manifesto.

It rejected, rightly, the concept of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' and the 'Transitional Period'. Where it made mistakes was in the use of the concepts of the 'party' and the 'vanguard'. To be fair the word 'party' had been used in the past by Malatesta to describe the anarchist movement, but the association with

social-democrats and Leninists had given it connotations which can only be avoided by dropping the term. Similarly, 'vanguard' had been used extensively, by anarchists in the past to describe, not the Leninist vanguard, but a group of workers with advanced ideas. The term was used, for example, in this respect in the Spanish movement (see Bookchin's writings on the subject), and also by anarchist-communists in the United States who named their paper 'Vanguard' (see the memoirs of Sam Dolgoff). However, it has too many unhappy associations with Leninism. Whilst we recognise that there exist advanced groups of workers, and that the anarchist movement has ideas in advance of most of the class, we must recognise fully the great creativity of the whole of the working class. There exist contradictions between advanced groups and the class as a whole, complex contradictions which cannot be explained in simple black and white terms, which could lead to the Leninist danger of substituting a group for the whole class. The anarchist-communist Organisation should be aware of these problems and attempt to minimalise these contradictions. True, the Manifesto sees this vanguard as internal to the class, rather than an external vanguard of professional revolutionaries as Lenin saw it. Nevertheless the term should be regarded with great suspicion.

The Manifesto continued the arguments for effective libertarian Organisation and ideological and tactical unity, based on the class struggle. The supporters of the manifesto made a number of political mistakes in the actions that they took. Unity was interpreted in a narrow sense, and soon they strayed off into the fiasco of running 'revolutionary' candidates in the elections, which led to the break-up of their Organisation.

Like the 'Platform' the 'Manifesto' is marred by a number of errors, with the 'Platform it was the idea of the 'executive committee', with the 'Manifesto' it was the idea of the 'vanguard'. Despite its shortcomings it is still an important document, and its best features



## Our Morality

What are the moral values which demonstrate this ideal in the proletariat?

Is this morality expressed by rules and precepts?

It is clear that it can no longer be a question of acting, and of judging moralities that we oppose, in terms of ideas of 'good' and evil, any more than we can let ourselves be dragged into futile word games as to whether the motive force for action should be called 'egoism' or 'altruism'.

But between those actions normally assured by the play of affectivity and feelings (maternal, love, empathy, saving someone who is in danger and so on) and those which depend on contracts, on written or unwritten agreements (and so on the law), there is a whole gamut of social relations which rely on moral conceptions and a moral conscience.

Where is the guarantee of sincere respect in contract clauses? What should a person's attitude be towards their enemies? Which weapons do they forbid themselves use of? There is only one morality which can act as a guide, which can fix limits, which can prevent constant recourse to litigation and juries.

It is in revolutionary practice and the lives of the aware proletariat that we find values such as solidarity, courage, a sense of responsibility, clearness of thought, tenacity, a federalism or true democracy of working-class organisations and anarchists which realises both discipline and a spirit of initiative, respect for revolutionary democracy — that is to say the possibility for all currents which sincerely seek the creation of communist society to put forward their ideas, to criticise and so to perfect revolutionary theory and practice.

The revolutionary fundamental that we have established as an imperative clearly exempts us from any morality in dealings with the enemy, the bourgeoisie, which for its own defence would try to make revolutionaries accept the prohibitions of its morality. It is

## Do We Have a Morality?

It is often pointed out that moralities could evolve or be modified, that one morality could replace another even within societies based on exploitation. There have been faint differences, adaptations or variations linked up with conditions of life but they (moralities) all protected the same essential values — submissiveness and respect for property for example. It remains no less true that these adaptations were fought against, that their promoters (Socrates and Christ for example) were often persecuted, than that morality tends towards inertia.

in any case it does not seem that the enslaved have been able to introduce their own values into these moralities.

But the important thing here is to know if the enslaved — and the revolutionaries who express their desires — can have their own values, their own morality.

If we do not wish to accept the morality of the society in which we live, if we refuse this morality both because it recognises so as to maintain a social system based on exploitation and domination, and because it is imbued with abstractions and metaphysical ideals, then on what can we base our morality? There is a solution to this apparent contradiction: it is that thought and social science allow us to envisage a process which would constitute the possibility for the human race to blossom out in every way, and that this process is really nothing other than the general desires of the oppressed, as expressed by true socialism, by libertarian communism. So it is our revolutionary goal which is our ideal, our imperative. It is certainly an ideal and an imperative on which a morality can be based, but it is an ideal which rests on the real and not on the religious revelation or a metaphysics This deal is a kind of humanism, but a humanism based on a revolutionary transformation of society and not a sentimental humanism resting on nothing at all and camouflaging the realities of the social struggle.



must be taken notice of in developing an anarchist-communist theory and strategy for today.

# 1. Libertarian Communism, A Social Doctrine

It was in the 19th Century, when capitalism was developing and the first great struggles of the working class were taking place — and to be more precise it was within the First International (1861–1871) — that a social doctrine appeared called 'revolutionary socialism' (as opposed to reformist or statist legalist socialism). This was also known as 'anti-authoritarian socialism' or 'collectivism' and then later as 'anarchism', 'anarchist communism' or 'libertarian communism'.

This doctrine, or theory, appears as a reaction of the organised socialist workers. It is at all events linked to there being a progressively sharpening class struggle. It is an historical product which originates from certain conditions of history, from the development of class societies — and not through the idealist critique of a few specific thinkers.

The role of the founders of the doctrine, chiefly Bakunin, was to express the true aspirations of the masses, their reactions and their experiences, and not to artificially create a theory by relying on a purely ideal abstract analysis or on earlier theories. Bakunin — and with him James Guillaume, then Kropotkin, Reclus, J. Grave, Malatesta and so on — started out by looking at the situation of the workers associations and the peasant bodies, at how they organised and fought.

That anarchism originated in class struggles cannot be disputed.

How is it then that anarchism has very often been thought of as a philosophy, a morality or ethic independent of the class struggle,



in any sense (transgression, the will to change these rules being a crime). In this way morals (which do express a certain need in the framework of social life) and towards inertia.

So, they do not simply express a practical need for mediation as they may come into contradiction with new conditions of existence that appear. Moreover, they are marked by a religious, theological or metaphysical character and put forward their rules as the expression of a supernatural imperative — actions which conform to or break these rules boast a mystical nature as virtue or sin. Resignation, which really should only be a person's recognition of their limits before certain facts, becomes the primary virtue and can even impel a search for suffering, itself becoming the supreme virtue. From this point of view Christianity is one of the most hateful of moralities. So morality is not simply a codification of external sanctions but is deeply rooted in individuals in the form of 'moral conscience'. This moral conscience is acquired and maintained largely as a result of the religious nature with which morality is imbued, and is itself marked by a religious, supernatural nature. So it becomes quite foreign to the simple translation into a person's conscience of the needs of living socially.

Finally, and most importantly, even when moralities do not openly express the division of societies into classes or castes they are used by privileged groups to justify and guarantee their domination. Life law and religion (religion, law and morality are simply expressions in neighbouring spheres of the same social reality) morality sanctions the existing conditions and relations of domination and exploitation.

Since moralities are expressions of people's alienation in exploitative societies, as are ideologies, laws, religions, etc… being characterised by inertia, mystification, resignation and the justification and maintenance of class privilege — you will understand why anarchists have spent a lot of effort in denouncing their true nature.

into society, gradually as on the one hand its role is completed by the consolidation of the classless society and its evolution from the lower to the higher stage of communism, and as on the other the people as a whole have acquired the necessary level of awareness.

Development of the people's capacity for self government and revolutionary vigilance — these must be the tasks of the specific Organisation once the Revolution has been accomplished. The fate of the Revolution rests to a great extent on the attitude of the specific Organisation, on the way it sees its role. For the success of the Revolution is not inevitable: the people may give up the fight; the Organisation of the revolutionary minority may neglect its vigilance and all the bases to be established for a restoration of the bourgeoisie or a bureaucratic dictatorship — it may even transform itself into a bureaucratic power. No use is served by hiding these dangers or by refusing to undertake organised action to prevent them.

We must conduct the fight with a very clear head and it will be in proportion to our clearheadedness and vigilance that the anarchist Organisation will be able to fulfill its historic task.

## Libertarian Communist Morality

When it sets out objectives to be reached, and when it specifies the nature of the role the vanguard Organisation should take in relation to the masses, revolutionary anarchist theory reflects a certain number of rules of conduct. So we must clarify what we mean by 'morality'.

## We Oppose Moralities

The moralities of all societies reflect to a certain extent the way of life and the level of development of those societies, and as a result they are expressed in very strict rules which allow no deviation



and so as a form of humanism detached from historical and social conditions?

We see several reasons for this. On the one hand, the first anarchist theoreticians sometimes sought to trust to the opinions of writers, economists and historians who had come before them (especially Proudhon, many of whose writings do undoubtedly express anarchist ideas).

The theoreticians who followed them have even sometimes found in writers like La Boetie, Spencer, Godwin, Stirner, etc. ideas which are analogous to anarchism — in the sense that they demonstrate an opposition to the forms of exploitative societies and to the principles of domination they discovered in them. But the theories of Godwin, Stirner, Tucker and the rest are simply observations on society — they don't take account of History and the forces which determine it, or of the objective conditions which pose the problem of Revolution.

On the other hand, in all societies based on exploitation and domination there have always been individual or collective acts of revolt, sometimes with a communist and federalist or truly democratic content. As a result, anarchism has sometimes been thought of as the expression of peoples' eternal struggle towards freedom and justice — a vague idea, insufficiently grounded in sociology or history, and one that tends to turn anarchism into a vague humanism based on abstract notions of 'humanity' and 'freedom'. Bourgeois historians of the working class movement are always ready to mix up anarchist communism with individualist and idealist theories, and are to a great extent responsible for the confusion. These are the ones who have attempted to bring together Stirner and Bakunin.

By forgetting the conditions of anarchism's birth, it has sometimes been reduced to a kind of ultraliberalism and lost its materialist, historical and revolutionary character.

But at any rate, even if revolts previous to the 19th Century and ideas of certain thinkers on the relations between individual people

and human groups did prepare the way for anarchism, there was no anarchism and doctrine until Bakunin.

The works of Godwin for example express the existence of class society very well, even if they do so in an idealist and confused way. And the alienation of the individual by the group, the family, religion, the state, morality, etc. is certainly of a social nature, is certainly the expression of a society divided into castes or classes.

It can be said that attitudes, ideas and ways of acting of people we could call rebels, non-conformers, or anarchists in the vague sense of the term have always existed.

But the coherent formulation of an anarchist communist theory dates from the end of the 19th Century and is continued each day, perfecting itself and becoming more precise.

So anarchism could not be assimilated to a philosophy or to an abstract or individualist ethic.

It was born in and out of the social, and it had to wait for a given historic period and a given state of class antagonism for anarchist communist aspirations to show themselves clearly for the phenomenon or revolt to result in a coherent and complete revolutionary conception.

Since anarchism is not an abstract philosophy or ethic it cannot address itself to the abstract person, to the person in general. For anarchism there does not exist in our societies the human being full stop: there is the exploited person of the despoiled classes and there is the person of the privileged groups, of the dominant class. To speak to the person is to fall into the error or sophism of the liberals who speak to the 'citizen' without taking into account the economic and social conditions of the citizens. And to speak to the person in general while, neglecting the fact that there are classes and there is a class struggle, while satisfying oneself with hollow rhetorical statements on Freedom and Justice — in a general sense and with capital letters — is to allow all the bourgeois philosophers who appear to be liberals but are in fact conservatives or reactionaries to infiltrate anarchism, to pervert it into a vague



# 7. Respective Roles of the Specific Anarchist Organisation and of the Masses

The idea of Revolution that we have just developed implies a certain number of historical conditions: on the one hand an acute crisis of the old society and on the other the existence of an aware mass movement and an active minority that is well organised and well oriented.

It is the evolution of society itself which allows the development of the proletariat's awareness and abilities, the Organisation of its most advanced strata and the progress of the revolutionary Organisation. But this revolutionary Organisation reacts on the people as a whole and aims to develop their capacity for self-government.

We have seen, in regard to relations between the revolutionary Organisation and the masses, that in the pre-revolutionary period the specific Organisation can only suggest ends and means and can only get them accepted through ideological struggle and force of example.

In the revolutionary period it must be the same — otherwise the danger is of degeneration into bureaucracy, the transformation of the anarchist Organisation into a specialised body, into a political force separated from the people, into a State.

The political vanguard, the active minority, can of course during the making of the Revolution charge itself with special tasks (such as liquidating enemy forces) but as a general rule it can only be the consciousness of the proletariat. And it must finally be reabsorbed

then nothing more than a topic of curiosity and the commitment of the people to the Revolution takes away any poison left in them. If they are only expressed on the ideological level then they can only be fought on that level, and not by prohibition. Total freedom of expression, within a conscious, aware populace, can only be creative of culture.

It remains to be made clear that the responsibility for judging and deciding, on this question as on all others, rests with the peoples own organisations, with the armed proletariat.

And it is in this sense that the essential freedom, that for which the Revolution is made, is maintained and protected.



humanitarianism, to emasculate the doctrine, the organisation and the militants. There was a time, and to be honest this is still the case in some countries within certain groups, when anarchism degenerated into the tear-shedding of absolute pacifism or of a kind of sentimental Christianity. It had to react to this and now anarchism is taking up the attack on the old world with something other than woolley thoughts.

It is to the robbed, the exploited, the proletariat, the worker and peasants that anarchism, as a social doctrine and revolutionary method, speaks — because only the exploited class, as a social force, can make the revolution.

Do we mean by this that the working class constitutes the messiah-class, that the exploited have a providential clear-sightedness, every good quality and no faults? That would be to fall into idolising the worker, into a new kind of metaphysics.

But the class that is exploited, alienated, conned and defrauded, the proletariat — taken in its broad sense and made up of both the working-class as properly defined (composed of manual workers who have a certain common psychology, a certain way of being and thinking) and other waged people such as clerical workers; or to put it another way the mass of individuals whose only function in production and in the political order is to carry out orders and so who are removed from control — this class alone can overthrow power and exploitation through its economic and social position. The producers alone can bring about workers control and what would the revolution be if it were not the transition to control by all the producers?

The proletarian class is therefore the revolutionary class above all, because the revolution it can bring about is a social and not just a political revolution — in setting itself free it frees all humanity; in breaking the power of the privileged class it abolishes classes.

Certainly nowadays there aren't precise boundaries between the classes. It is during various episodes of the class struggle that division occurs. There are not precise boundaries but there are two

poles — proletariat and bourgeoisie (capitalists, bureaucrats etc.); the middle classes are split in periods of crisis and move towards one pole or the other; they are unable to provide a solution by themselves as they have neither the revolutionary characteristics of the proletariat, nor real control of contemporary society like the bourgeoisie as properly defined. In strikes for example you may see that one section of the technicians (especially those who are specialists, those in the research departments for example) rejoins the working class while another (technicians who fill higher staff positions and most people in supervisory roles) moves away from the working-class, at least for a time. Trade Union practice has always relied on trial-and-error, on pragmatism, unionising certain sectors and not others according to their role and occupation. In any case, it is occupation and attitude that distinguish a class more than salary.

So there is the proletariat. There is its most determined, most active part, the working class as properly defined. There is also something wider than the proletariat and which includes other social strata that must be won over to action: this is the mass of the people, which comprises small peasants, poor artisans and so on as well as the proletariat.

It's not a question of falling for some kind of proletarian mystique but of appreciating this specific fact: the proletariat, even though it is slow to seize awareness and despite its retreats and defeats, is ultimately the only real creator of Revolution.

Bakunin: 'Understand that since the proletarian, the manual worker, the common labourer, is the historic representative of the worlds last slave-system, their emancipation is everyones emancipation, their triumph the final triumph of humanity…'

Certainly it happens that people belonging to privileged social groups break with their class, and with its ideology and its advantages, and come to anarchism. Their contribution is considerable but in some sense these people become proletarians.

For Bakunin again, the socialist revolutionaries, that is the anarchists, speak to 'the working masses in both town and country,



## Revolutionary Power and Freedom

The revolutionary struggle itself and then the consolidation of the transformation created by the revolution both raise the question of the freedom of political tendencies which lean towards the maintenance or the restoration of exploitation. It is one of the aspects of the direct power of the masses and of the defence of the Revolution.

It cannot be a question here of freedom as properly defined which (till now existing only as something to be striven for) is precisely what the Revolution brings about: the doing away with of exploitation and alienation, government by everyone, and so active participation in social life and true democracy for all. It cannot be a question either of the right for all the partisan currents of classes (and so Stateless) society to put forward their particular solutions and express their differences of opinion. All that goes without saying.

But it is not at all the same when it's a matter of groups and organisations which are more or less openly opposing workers control an the exercise of power by the masses' organisations. And this problem is just as, if not more, likely to come from bureaucratic pseudo-socialist groups as from groups of the defeated bourgeoisie.

A distinction must be made. At first, during the violent phase of the struggle, those structures and tendencies which are defending or seeking to restore the exploitative society must be forcibly crushed. And the enemy must not be allowed to artfully organise itself, either to demoralise or to spy. That would be negation of the fight, surrender in fact. Makhno and also the Spanish libertarians found themselves faced with these problems and resolved them by suppressing the enemy's propaganda. But in cases where the expression of reactionary ideologies can have no consequence for the outcome of the Revolution, as for example when its achievements have been consolidated, these ideologies can be expressed if they are still found interesting or if they retain their power. They are

that there is the problem of some bourgeois who cannot in any way be assimilated. The agencies of popular direct power which we have defined earlier are obliged to prevent them doing harm.

With a murderer, a dangerous maniac or a saboteur you cannot on the pretext of freedom let them run off and commit the same crime again. But their putting out of harms way by the peoples security services has nothing in common with class society's degrading prison system. The individual who is deprived of freedom should be treated more medically than judicially until they can be safely returned into society.

However, the Revolution may not inevitably be realised everywhere at once and there could actually be successive revolutions which will only come together to make the universal revolution if they are spread abroad, if the revolutionary infection catches hold, if at very least the proletariat fights internationally for the defence and extension of revolutionary which are at the outset limited.

Then, as well as internal defence of the Revolution, external defence becomes necessary, but this can only take place if based on an armed populace organised into militias and, we must emphasize, with the support of the international proletariat and possibilities for the revolution to expand. The Revolution dies if it lets itself be limited and if on the pretext of defending itself it falls into restoring the State and so class society.

But the best defence for the new society lies in it asserting its revolutionary character because this quickly creates conditions in which no attempt at a restoration of the bourgeoisie will find a solid base. The total affirmation by the revolutionary territory of its socialist character is in fact its best weapon because it creates energy and enthusiasm at home and infection and solidarity abroad. It was perhaps one of the most fatal errors of the Spanish Revolution that it played down its achievements so as to devote itself above all else to the military tasks of its defence.



including all people of good will from the upper classes who, making a clean break with their past, would join them unreservedly and accept their programme in full.'

But for all that you can't say that anarchism speaks to the abstract person, to the person in general, without taking into account their social status.

To deprive anarchism of its class character would be to condemn it to formlessness, to an emptiness of content, so that it would become an inconsistent philosophical pastime, a curiosity for intelligent bourgeois, an object of sympathy for people longing to have an ideal, a subject for academic discussion.

So we conclude: Anarchism is not a philosophy of the individual or of the human being in a general sense.

Anarchism is if you like a philosophy or an ethic but in a very specific, very concrete sense. It is so by the desires it represents, by the goals that it gets: as Bakunin says — '(The proletarians) triumph is humanity's final triumph…'

Proletarian, class based in origin, it is only in its goals that it is universally human or, if you prefer, humanist.

It is a socialist doctrine, or to be more accurate the only true socialism or communism, the only theory and method capable of achieving a society without castes and classes, of bringing about freedom and equality.

Social anarchism or anarchist communism, or again libertarian communism, is a doctrine of social revolution which speaks to the proletariat whose desires it represents, whose true ideology it demonstrates — an ideology which the proletariat becomes aware of through its own experiences.

# 2. The Problem of the Programme

As anarchism is a social doctrine it makes itself known through an ensemble of analyses and proposals which set out purposes and tasks, in other words through a programme. And it's this programme which constitutes the shared platform for all militants in the anarchist Organisation. Without the platform the only cooperation there could be would be based on sentimental, vague and confused desires, and there would not be any real unity of views. Then there would only be the coming together under the same name of different and even opposing ideas.

A questions arises: could the programme not be a synthesis, taking account of what is common to people who refer to the same ideal, or more accurately to the same or nearly the same label? That would be to seek an artificial unity where to avoid conflicts you would only uphold most of the time what isn't really important: you'd find a common but almost empty platform. The experiment has been tried too many times and out of 'syntheses' — unions, coalitions, alliances and understandings — has only ever come ineffectiveness and a quick return to conflict: as reality posed problems for which each offered different or opposite solutions the old battles reappeared and the emptiness, the uselessness of the shared pseudo-programme — which could only be a refusal to act — were clearly shown.

And besides, the very idea of creating a patchwork programme, by looking for small points held in common, supposes that all the



same rate as other workers) replace hierarchical, specialised and privileged bureaucracy; where militias, controlled by adminstrative bodies such as soviets, unions and communes, with no special privileges for military technicians, realising the idea of the armed people, replace an army cut off from the body of Society and subordinated to the arbitrary power of a State or government; where peoples juries responsible for setting disputes that arise in regard to the fulfillment of agreements and obligations replace the judicial.

## Defence of the Revolution

As far as defence of the Revolution of concerned we must make clear that our theoretical conception of the Revolution is of an international phenomenon destroying all basis for counter-attack by the bourgeoisie. It is when the international Organisation of capitalism has exhausted all its possibilities of survival, when it has reached its final crisis point, that we find the optimum conditions for a successful international revolution. In this case the problem of its defence only arises as the problem of the complete disappearance of the bourgeoisie. Totally cut off from its economic and political power this no longer exists as a class. Once routed, its various elements are kept under control by the armed organs of the proletariat then absorbed by a society which will be moving towards the highest degree of homogeneity. And this last job must be taken care of directly, without the help of any special bureaucratic body.

The problem of delinquency may be linked up during the revolutionary period with that of defence of the Revolution. The disappearance of bourgeois law and of the judicial and prison systems of class society should not make us forget that there remain asocial people (however few compared to the appalling number of prisoners in bourgeois society, produced in the main by the conditions they live under — social injustice, poverty and exploitation) and

It remains for us to examine how we see the resolution of the problems of struggles posed by the Revolution and by its defence.

## Direct Workers Power

Through rejecting the idea of a State, which implies the existence and rule of a exploiter class tending to continue as such, and rejecting the idea of dictatorship, which implies mechanical relations between leaders and led, we concede the need for coordination in revolutionary direct action. (The means of production and exchange must be seized along with the centres of administration, the revolution must be protected from counter-revolutionary groups, from the undecided, and indeed from backward exploited social groups (certain peasant categories for example).

It certainly is then about exercising power but it is the rule of the majority, of the proletariat in motion, of the armed people organising effectively for attack and defence, establishing universal vigilance. The experience of the Russian Revolution, of the machnovchina, of 1936 Spain is there as witness. And we cannot do better than go along with the opinion of Camillo Berneri, who wrote from the thick of the Spanish Revolution, refuting the Bolshevik idea of the State:

'Anarchists acknowledge the use of direct power by the proletariat but they see the instrument of this power as constituted by the sum total of modes of communist Organisation — corporative bodies and communal institutions, both regional and national — freely set up outside of and opposed to any political monopoly by party, and endeavouring to reduce organisational centralisation to a minimum.'

And so against the idea of State, where power is exercised by a specialised group isolated from the masses, we put the idea of direct workers power, where accountable and controlled elected delegates (who can be recalled at any time and are remunerated at the



points of view put forward are correct, and that a programme can just spring out of peoples minds, in the abstract.

Now, a revolutionary programme, the anarchist programme, cannot be one that is created by a few people and then imposed on the masses. It's the opposite that must happen: the programme of the revolutionary vanguard, of the active minority, can only be the expression — concise and powerful, clear and rendered conscious and plain — of the desires of the exploited masses summoned to make the Revolution. In other words: class before party.

The programme should be determined by the study, the testing and the tradition of what is constantly sought by the masses. So in working out the programme a certain empiricism should prevail, one that avoids dogmatism and does not substitute a plan drawn up by a small group of revolutionaries for what is shown by the actions and thoughts of the masses. In its turn, when the programme has been worked out and brought to the knowledge of these masses it can only raise their awareness. Finally, the programme as defined in this way can be modified as analysis of the situation and the tendencies of the masses progresses, and can be reformulated in clearer and more accurate terms.

Thought of in this way the programme is no longer a group of secondary points which bring together — (or rather do not divide) people who may think themselves nearly the same, but is instead a body of analyses and propositions which is only adopted by those who believe in it and who undertake to spread the work and make it into a reality.

But, you may say, this platform will have to be worked out, drawn up by some individual or group. Of course, but since it's not a question of any old programme but of the programme of social anarchism, the only propositions that will be accepted are those that accord with the interests, desires, thinking and revolutionary ability of the exploited class. Then you can properly speak of a synthesis because it is no longer a question of discarding important things that cause division — it is now a matter of blending into

a new shared text propositions which can unite on the essential point. It's the role of study meetings, assemblies and conferences of revolutionaries to identify a programme, then gather together again and found their Organisation on this programme.

The drama is that several organisations claim to truly represent the working class — reformist socialist and authoritarian communist organisations as well as the anarchist Organisation. Only experience can settle the matter, can definitely decide which one is right.

There is no possible revolution unless the mass of people who will create it gather together on the basis of a certain ideological unity, unless they act with the same mind. This means for us that through their own experiences the masses will end up by finding the path of libertarian communism. This also means that anarchist doctrine is never complete as far as its detailed views and application are concerned and that it continuously creates and completes itself in the light of historical events.

From partial trials such as the Paris Commune, the popular revolution in Russia in 1917, the Makhnovists, the achievements in Spain, strikes, the fact that the working class is experiencing the hard realities of total or partial state socialism (from the USSR to nationalisations to the treacheries of the political parties of the West) — from all this it seems possible to state that the anarchist programme, with all the modifications it is open to, represents the direction in which the ideological unity of the masses will be revealed.

For the moment, let us content ourselves with summarising this programme so — society without classes and without State.



exercising or seizing political power, it is about doing away with it all together!

If by dictatorship is meant the domination of the majority by a minority, then it is not a question of giving power to the proletariat but to a party, a distinct political group. If by dictatorship is meant the domination of a minority by the majority (domination by the victorious proletariat of the remnants of a bourgeoisie that has been defeated as a class) then the setting up of dictatorship means nothing but the need for the majority to efficiently arrange for its defence its own social Organisation.

But in that case the expression is inaccurate, imprecise and a cause of misunderstandings. If 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is intended to mean the supremacy of the working class over other exploited groups in society (poor small owners, artisans, peasants, etc.) then the term does not at all correspond to a reality which in fact has nothing to do with mechanical relations between leaders and led such as the term dictatorship implies.

To speak of 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is to express a mechanical reversal of the situation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Now, if the bourgeois class tends through power to maintain its class character, to identify itself with the State and to become separated from society as a whole, it is not at all the same as the subordinate class, which tends to leave off its class character and to merge with the classless society. If class rule and the State represent the organised and codified power of a group which oppresses subordinate groups they do not account in any way for the violent force exercised directly by the proletariat.

The terms 'domination', 'dictatorship' and 'state' are as little appropriate as the expression 'taking power' for the revolutionary act of the seizure of the factories by the workers.

We reject then as inaccurate and causes of confusion the expressions 'dictatorship of the proletariat', 'taking political power', 'workers state', 'socialist state' and 'proletarian state'.

a transformation without social upheavals, and communist society will continue to evolve.

All that can be said is what we have already made clear in connection with libertarian communism: the act of Revolution brings an immediate transformation in the sense that the foundations of society are radically changed, but a progressive transformation in the sense that communism is a constant development.

Indeed for the socialist parties and statist communists the 'transitory period' represents a society which breaks with the old order of things but keeps some elements and survivals from the capitalist an statist system. It is therefore the negation of true revolution, since it maintains elements of the exploitative system whose tendency is to grow strong and expand.

## The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The formula 'dictatorship of the proletariat' has been used to mean many different things. If for no other reason it should be condemned as a cause of confusion. With Marx it can just as easily mean the centralised dictatorship of the party which claims to represent the proletariat as it can the federalist conception of the Commune.

Can it mean the exercise of political power by the victorious working class? No, because the exercise of political power in the recognised sense of the term can only take place through the agency of an exclusive group practising a monopoly of power, separating itself from the class and oppressing it. And this is how the attempt to use a State apparatus can reduce the dictatorship of the proletariat to the dictatorship of the party over the masses.

But if by dictatorship of the proletariat is understood collective and direct exercise of 'political power', this would mean the disappearance of 'political power' since its distinctive characteristics are supremacy exclusivity and monopoly. It is no longer a question of



# 3. Relations Between the Masses and the Revolutionary Vanguard

We have seen, with regard to the problem of the programme, what our general idea is of the relation between the oppressed class and the revolutionary Organisation defined by a programme (that is, the party in the true sense of the word). But we can't just say 'class before party' and leave it at that. We must expand on this, explain how the active minority, the revolutionary vanguard, is necessary without it becoming a military-type leadership, a dictatorship over the masses. In other words, we must show that the anarchist idea of the active minority is in no way elitist, oligarchical or hierarchical.

## The Need for a Vanguard

There is an idea which says that the spontaneous initiative of the masses is enough for every revolutionary possibility.

It's true that history shows us some events that we can regard as spontaneous mass advances, and these events are precious because they show the abilities and resources of the masses. But that doesn't lead at all to a general concept of spontaneity — this would be fatalistic. Such a myth leads to populist demagogy and justification of unprincipled rebellism; it can be reactionary and end in a wait-and-see policy and compromise.

Opposed to this we find a purely voluntarist idea which gives the revolutionary initiative only to the vanguard Organisation. Such an idea leads to a pessimistic evaluation of the role of the masses, to an aristocratic contempt for their political ability to concealed direction of revolutionary activity and so to defeat. This idea in fact contains the germ of bureaucratic and Statist counter-revolution.

Close to the spontaneist idea we can see a theory according to which mass organisations, unions for example, are not only sufficient for themselves but suffice for everything. This idea, which calls itself totally antipolitical, is in fact an economistic concept which is often expressed as 'pure syndicalism'. But we would point out that if the theory wants to hold good then its supporters must refrain from formulating any programme, any final statement. Otherwise they will be constituting an ideological Organisation, in however small a way, or forming a leadership sanctioning a given orientation. So this theory is only coherent if it limits itself to a socially neutral understanding of social problems, to empiricism.

Equally removed from spontaneism, empiricism and voluntarism we stress the need for a specific revolutionary anarchist Organisation, understood as the conscious and active vanguard of the people.

## The Nature of the Role of the Revolutionary Vanguard

The revolutionary vanguard certainly exercises a guiding and leading role in relations to the movement of the masses. Arguments about this seem pointless to us as what other use could a revolutionary Organisation have? Its very existence attests to its leading, guiding character. The real questions is to know how this role is to be understood, what meaning we give to the word 'leading'.

The revolutionary Organisation tends to be created from the fact that the most conscious workers feel its necessity when confronted



the framework of the old: State capitalism and bourgeois ideologies. it is a real and concrete passage between two worlds. So the Revolution can only happen in objective conditions: the final crisis of the class regime.

This conception has nothing in common with the old romantic idea of the insurrection, of change brought about from one day to the next without any preparation. Nor has it anything to do with the gradualist, purely evolutionary conception of the reformists or of the believers in revolution as process.

Our conception of revolution, equally removed from insurrectionalism and from gradualism, can be described by the idea of the revolutionary act prepared over a long period from within the bourgeoisie and at its end by the seizure and administration of the means of production and exchange by the organisations of the people. And it is this result of the revolutionary act which draws a clear line of demarcation between the old society and the new.

So the Revolution destroys the economic and political power of the bourgeoisie. This means that the Revolution does not limit itself to physically suppressing the old rulers or to immobilising the machinery of government but that it succeeds in destroying the legal institutions of the State: its laws and custom, hierarchical methods and privileges, tradition and the cult of the State as a collective psychological reality.

## The Period of Transition

This much being granted what meaning can we give to the commonly used expression 'period of transition' which is so often seen as linked to the idea of revolution? If it is the passage between class society and classless society then it is being confused with the act of Revolution. If it is the passage from the lower stage of communism to the higher then the expression is inaccurate because the whole post-revolutionary era constitutes a slow continuous progression,

# 6. The Revolution: The Problem of Power, the Problem of State

The Libertarian Communist Programme

## The Revolution: The Problem of Power, the Problem of State

Now that we have looked in broad outline at the forms in which the power of the ruling class is expressed, and set out the essential characteristics of libertarian communism, it remains for us to say in detail how we see the passage of Revolution. Here we touch on a crucial aspect of anarchism and one which differentiates it most clearly from all other currents of socialism.

## What is the Revolution?

Should the Revolution, that is the transition from the class society to the classless libertarian communist society, be thought of as a slow process of transformation or as an insurrection?

The foundations of the communist society are laid within the society based on exploitation; new technical and economic conditions, new relations between classes, new ideas, all come into conflict with the old institutions and bring about a crisis which demands a quick and decisive resolution. This brings a transformation which has long been prepared for within the old society. The Revolution is the moment when the new society is born as it smashes



by the unequal progress and inadequate cohesion of the masses. What must be made clear is that the revolutionary Organisation should not constitute a power over the masses. its role as guide should be thought of as being to formulate and express an ideological orientation, both organisational and tactical — an orientation specified, elaborated and adapted on the basis of the experiences and desires of the masses. In this way the organisation's directives are not orders from outside but rather the mirrored expression of the general aspirations of the people. Since the directing function of the revolutionary Organisation cannot possibly be coercive it can only be revealed by its trying to get its ideas across successfully, by its giving the mass of the people a thorough knowledge of its theoretical principles and the main lines of its tactics. It is a struggle through ideas and through example. And if it's not forgotten that the programme of the revolutionary Organisation, the path and the means that it shows, reflect the experiences and desires of the masses — that the organised vanguard is basically the mirror of the exploited class — then it's clear that leading is not dictating but coordinated orientation, that on the contrary it opposes any bureaucratic manipulation of the masses, military style discipline or unthinking obedience.

The vanguard must set itself the task of developing the direct political responsibility of the masses, it must aim to increase the masses ability to organise themselves. So this concept of leadership is both natural and raises awareness. In the same way the better prepared, more mature militants inside the Organisation have the role of guide and educator to other members, so that all may become well informed and alert in both the theoretical and the practical field, so that all may become animators in their turn.

The organised minority is the vanguard of a larger army and takes its reason for being from that army — the masses. If the active minority, the vanguard, breaks away from the mass then it can no longer carry out its proper function and it becomes a clique or a tribe.

In the final analysis the revolutionary minority can only be the servant of the oppressed. It has enormous responsibilities but no privileges.

Another feature of the revolutionary organisation's character is its permanence: there are times when it embodies and expresses a majority, which in turn tends to recognise itself in the active minority, but there are also periods of retreat when the revolutionary minority is no more than a ship in a storm. Then it must hold out so that it can quickly regain its audience — the masses — as soon as circumstances become favourable again. Even when isolated and cut off from its popular bases it acts according to the constants of the peoples desires, holding onto its programme despite all difficulties. It may even be led to certain isolated acts intended to awaken the masses (acts of violence against specific targets, insurrections). The difficulty then is to avoid cutting yourself off from reality and becoming a sect or an authoritarian, military-type leadership — to avoid wasting away while living on dreams or trying to act without being understood, driven on or followed by the mass of the people.

To prevent such degeneration the minority must maintain contact with events and with the milieu of the exploited — it must look out for the smallest reactions, the smallest revolts or achievements, study contemporary society in minute detail for its contradictions, weaknesses and possibilities for change. In his way, since the minority takes part in all forms of resistance and action which can range with events from demands to sabotage, from secret resistance o open revolt) it keeps the chance of guiding and developing even the smallest disturbances.

By striving to maintain, or acquire, a wide general vision of social events and their development, by adapting its tactics to the conditions of the day, by being on its guard — in this way the minority stays true to its mission and voids the risk of trailing after events, of becoming a mere spectacle outside of and stranger to the proletariat, of being bypassed by it. It (the minority) avoids confusing abstract reckonings and schemes for the true desires of the



And so the Revolution — based on the power of the masses of the proletariat as it frees the exploited class frees all humanity.

economic equality, the abolition of privileges and of minorities who direct and exploit, which arranges for economic necessities and for the needs of the Revolution's defence. Administration of things replaces government of human beings.

If the abolition of the distinction in the economic field between those who give orders and those who carry them out is accompanied by the maintenance of this distinction in the political field, in the form of the dictatorship of a party or a minority, then it will either not last five minutes or will create a conflict between producers and political bureaucrats. So workers control must realise the abolition of all power held by a minority, of all manifestations of State. It can no longer be a question of one class dominating and leading, but rather of management and administration, in the political as much as the economic arena, by the mass economic organisations, the communes, the people in arms. It is the peoples direct power, it is not a State. If this is what some call the dictatorship of the proletariat the term is of doubtful use (we'll come back to this) but it certainly has nothing in common with the dictatorship of the Party or any bureaucracy. It is simply true revolutionary democracy.

## Libertarian Communism and Humanism

So anarchist communism, or libertarian communism, in realizing the society,of humanity's full development, a society of fully human women and men, opens up an era of permanent progression, of gradual transformation, of transitions.

It does then create a humanism of purpose, whose ideology originates within class society, in the course of the class struggles' development, a humanism which has nothing in common with fraudulent pronouncements on the abstract human being whom the liberal bourgeois try to point out to us in their class society.



proletariat. It sticks to its programme but adapts it and corrects its errors in the light of events.

Whatever the circumstances the minority must never forget that its final aim is to disappear in becoming identical with the masses when they reach their highest level of consciousness in achieving the revolution.

## In What Forms Can The Revolutionary Vanguard Play Its Role

In practise there are two ways in which the revolutionary Organisation can influence the masses: there is work in established mass organisations and there is the work of direct propaganda. This second sort of activity takes place through papers and magazines, campaigns of demands and agitation, cultural debates, solidarity actions, demonstrations, conferences and public meetings. This direct work, which can sometimes be done through activities organised by others, is essential for gaining strength and for reaching certain sections of public opinion which are otherwise inaccessible. It's of the utmost importance in both workplace and community. But this sort of work doesn't pose the problem of knowing how 'direction' can avoid becoming 'dictatorship'.

It is different for activity inside established mass organisations. But first, what are these organisations?

They are generally of an economic character and based on the social solidarity of their members but can have multiple functions — defence (resistance, mutual aid), education (training for self-government) offence (demands on the tactical level, expropriation on the strategic) and administration. These organisations — unions, workers' fight committees and so on — even when taking on only one of these possible functions offer a direct opportunity for work with the masses.

And as well as the economic structures there exist many popular groupings through which the specific Organisation can make connections with the masses.

These are, for example, cultural leisure and welfare associations in which the specific Organisation may find energy, advice and experience. Here it may spread its influence by putting across its orientation and by fighting against the attempts of state and politicians to gain hegemony and control: fighting for the defence of these organisations so they can keep their own character and become centres of self government and revolutionary mobilisation, seeds of the new society (for elements of tomorrow's society already exist in today's).

Inside all these social and economic mass organisations influence must be exercised and strengthened not through a system of external decisions but through the active and coordinated presence of revolutionary anarchist militants within them — and in the posts of responsibility to which they're called according to their abilities and their attitude. It should be stressed though that militants should not let themselves get stuck in absorbing but purely administrative duties which leave them neither time nor opportunity to exercise a real influence. Political opponents often try to make prisoners of militant revolutionaries in this way.

This work of 'infiltration' as certain people call it should tend to transform the specific Organisation from a minority to a majority one — at least from the point of view of influence.

It also ought to avoid any monopolisation, which would end up having all tasks — even those of the specific Organisation — taken over by the mass organisation, or contrariwise would assign leadership of the mass associations only to members of the specific Organisation, brushing aside all other opinions. Here it must be made clear that the specific Organisation shou@d promote and defend not just a democratic and federalist structure and way of working in mass organisations but also an open structure — that is, one that makes entry easy for all element& that are not yet organ-



the persistence of exploitation. Otherwise, since it nearly always starts off from a situation of scarcity the revolution would be automatically utterly negated. The libertarian communist revolution does not realise from the start a perfect society, or even a highly developed one, but it does destroy the bases of exploitation and domination. It is in this sense that Voline spoke of 'immediate but progressive revolution.'

But there is another problem: the problem of the State, the problem of what type of political, economic and social Organisation we'll have. Certainly the Marxist Leninist schools envisage the disappearance of the State in the higher stage of communism but they consider the State a necessity in its lower stage.

This so called 'workers' or 'proletarian' State is thought of as organised coercion, made necessary by the inadequacy of economic development, lack of progress of human abilities and — at least for an initial period — the fight against the remnants of the former ruling classes defeated by the Revolution, or more exactly the degree of revolutionary territory within and without.

What is our idea of the kind of economic administration the communist society could have?

Workers administration of course, administration by the whole body of producers. Now we have seen that as the exploiting society was increasingly realizing the unification of power, the conditions of exploitation were decreasingly private property, the market, competition, etc…and in this way economic exploitation political coercion and ideological mystification were becoming intimately linked, the essential basis of power and the line of class division between exploiters and exploited being the administration of production.

In these conditions the essential act of revolution, the abolition of exploitation, is brought about through workers control and this control represents the system for replacing all authorities. It is the whole body of producers which manages, which organises, which realises self-administration, true democracy, freedom in

ministered by workers councils or 'syndicates' or 'communes') but equally an extended growth in production, abundance in fact. Now, its for sure that when the Revolution comes conditions won't allow this higher stage of communism: the situation of scarcity signifies the persistence of the economic over the human and so a certain limit. Then the application of communism is no longer that of the principle 'to each according to their needs', but only equality of income or equality of conditions, which amounts to equal rations or even distributing through the medium of monetary tokens (of limited validity and having the sole function of distributing those products which are neither so rare as to be strictly rationed nor so plentiful as to be 'help yourself') — this system would allow the consumers to decide for themselves how to spend their income. It has even been envisaged that people might follow the formula 'to each according to their work', taking account of the backwardness in thinking of certain categories attached to ideas of hierarchy — considering it necessary to carry on with differential wage rates or to give advantages like cuts in work time so as to maintain or increase production in certain 'inferior' or not very attractive activities, or to obtain the maximum productive effort or again to bring about work force movements. But the importance of these differentials would be minimal and even in its lower stage (which some call socialism) the communist society tends towards as great an equalisation as possible and an equivalence of conditions.

## Libertarian Communism

A society in which collective ownership and the principles of equality have been realised cannot be a society where economic exploitation persists or where there is a new form of class rule. It is precisely the negation of those things.

And this is true even for the lower phase of communism which, even if it shows a degree of economic constraint, in no way justifies



ised, so that the mass organisations can win over new social forces, become more representative and more able to give to the specific Organisation the closest possible contact with the people.

# Internal Principles Of The Revolutionary Organisation Or Party

What we have said about the programme, and about the role of the vanguard and its types of activity, clearly shows that this vanguard must be organised. How?

## Ideological Unity

It is obvious that in order to act you need a body of coherent ideas. Contradictions and hesitations prevent ideas getting through. On the other hand, the 'synthesis', or rather the conglomeration, of ill-matched ideas which only agree on what isn't of any real importance, can only cause confusion and can't stop itself being destroyed by the differences which are crucial.

As well as the reasons we found in our analysis of the problem of the programme, as well as deep ideological reasons concerning the nature of that programme, there are practical reasons which demand that a genuine Organisation be based on ideological unity.

The expression of this shared and unique ideology can be the product of a synthesis — but only in the sense of the search for a single expression of basically similar ideas with a common essential meaning.

Ideological unity is established by the programme which we looked at earlier (and will define later on): a libertarian communist



# 5. The Qualities of Libertarian Communism

Libertarian Communist Programme

## The Qualities of Libertarian Communism

We have tried to summarise as clearly as possible the characteristics of the bourgeois society which the Revolution has the goal of doing away with as it creates a new society: the anarchist communist society. Before examining how we see the Revolution we must make clear the essential qualities of this Libertarian Communist Society.

Communism: From the lower to the higher state or complete communism

You could not define communist society any better than by repeating the old 'From each according to their means, to each according to their needs.' First it affirms the total subordination of the economic to the needs of human development in the abundance of goods, the reduction of social labour and of each persons part in it to their own strengths, to their actual abilities. So the formula expresses the possibility for peoples total development.

Secondly, this formula implies the disappearance of classes and the collective ownership and use of the means of production, as only such use by the community can allow distribution according to needs.

But the complete communism of the formula 'to each according to their needs' presupposes not only collective ownership (ad-

At this stage, which is being brought about in every country, even the U.S.A., was attempted by Nazism and almost perfectly attained in the USSR, one may wonder if it is still correct to speak of capitalism: perhaps this level of development of the imperialist stage of capitalism should not rather be seen as a new form of exploitive society which is already something other than capitalism? The difference then would be no longer quantitative but qualitative: it would no longer be a question of a degree of capitalism's evolution but of something else, something really quite new and different. But this is chiefly a matter of appreciation, of terminology, which may seem premature and without real importance at present.

It is enough for us to express as follows the form of exploitation and slavery towards which bourgeois society is tending: the State as a class apparatus and as Organisation of the class, simultaneously instrumental and functional, superstructure and structure, is tending to unify all the powers, every form of domination, of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat.



programme which expresses the general desires of the exploited masses.

We should again make it clear the specific Organisation is not a union or contractual understanding between individuals bringing their own artificial ideological convictions. It arises and develops as an organic, natural way because it corresponds to a real need. Its development rests on a certain number of ideas which aren't just created all of a piece but which neglect the deep desires of the exploited. So the Organisation has a class basis although it does accept people originally from the privileged classes and in some way rejected by them.

## Tactical Unity, A Collective Way Of Acting

Using the programme as its basis the Organisation works out a general tactical direction. This allows it to exploit all the advantages of structure: continuity and persistence in work, the abilities and strengths of some making up for the weaknesses of others, concentration of efforts, economy of strength, the ability to respond to needs and circumstances with the utmost effectiveness at any time. Tactical unity prevents everyone flying off in all directions, frees the movement of the disastrous effects of several sets of tactics and fighting each other.

It is here we get the problem of working out tactics. As far as ideology is concerned — the basic programme, the principles if you like — there is no problem: they are recognised by everyone in the Organisation. If there is a difference of opinion on essential matters there is a split and the newcomer to the Organisation accepts these basic principles, which can only be modified by unanimous agreement or at the cost of a separation.

It is quite another matter for questions of tactics. Unanimity may be sought but only up to the point where for it to come about would mean everyone agreeing by deciding nothing, leave an Or-

ganisation like an empty shell, drained of substance (and of use since the organisation's exact purpose is to co-ordinate forces towards a common goal). So, when all the arguments for the different proposals have been made, when discussion can not usefully continue, when similar opinions that agree in principle have merged and there still remains an irreducible opposition between the tactics proposed then the Organisation must find a way out. And there are only four possibilities:

(a) Decide nothing, so refuse to act, and then the Organisation loses all reason for existing.

(b) Accept the tactical differences and leave everyone to their own positions. The Organisation can allow this in certain cases on points that are not of crucial importance.

(c) Consult the Organisation through a vote which will allow a majority to break off, the minority accepted that it will give up its ideas as far as public activity is concerned but keeping the right to develop its argument inside the Organisation — judging that if its opinions accord with reality more closely than the majority view then they will eventually prevail by proof of events.

Sometimes the lack of objectivity of this procedure has been invoked, number not necessarily indicating truth, but it is the only one possible. It is in no way coercive as it only applies because the members of the Organisation accept it as a rule, and because the minority accept it as a necessity, which allows the tactical proposals accepted to be put to the test.

(d) When no agreement between majority and minority proves possible on a crucial issue which demands the Organisation take a position then there is, naturally and inevitably, a split.

In all cases the goal is tactical unity and if they did not try to achieve this then conferences would just be ineffective and profitless confrontations. That's why the first possible outcome (a) — to decide nothing — is to be rejected in every case and the second (b) — to allow several different tactics — can only be an exceptional choice.



## The State

If capitalism, despite its transformations, or its adaptations, helps its permanent features (plus value, crises, competition, etc.) … the State can no longer be regarded simply as the public Organisation of repression in the hands of the ruling class, the agent of the bourgeoisie, capitalism's copper.

An examination of the forms of the State previous to the period of the rise of capitalism, and of the present day forms of the State, leads us to see the State as being important other than just as an instrument. The Mediaeval, the State of the absolute monarchies of Europe, the State of the Pharaohs etc… were realities in their own right, they constituted the ruling State — Class.

And the State of the imperialist stage of capitalism, the State of today, is tending away from being superstructure to itself becoming 'structure'.

For the ideologies of the bourgeoisie the State is the regulator organ is modern society. This is true, but it is that because of a form of society which is the enslavement of a majority to a minority. It is therefore the organised violence of the bourgeoisie against the workers, it is the tool of the ruling class. But alongside this instrumental aspect it is tending to acquire a functional character, itself becoming the organised ruling class. It is tending to overcome the conflicts between the controlling groups on politics and economics. It is tending to fuse the forces which hold political and economic power, the different sectors of the bourgeoisie, into a single bloc, whether to increase its capacity for internal repression or to add to its expansive power abroad. It is moving towards the unity of politics and economics, extending its hegemony over all activities, integrating the trade unions etc … transferring the waged worker as properly defined into a modern serf, completely enslaved but with a minimum of safeguards (allowances, Social Security, etc). It is no longer an instrument but a power in itself.

(4) State Capitalism: everything that characterised the previous stage is accentuated. Wars are no longer enough to overcome crises. A permanent war economy is needed which will invest huge amounts of capital in the war industries while adding nothing to a market already over-congested stuffed with goods; an appreciable profit is procured by State orders.

This period is characterised by the State's seizure of the most important sections of the economy, of the labour market.

The State becomes capitalism — client, purveyor and overseer of works and labour power — and so assures itself of every increasing control of planning, culture and so on.

Bureaucracy develops, discipline and regulation are imposed on labour.

Exploitation and the wage earning class remain, as do the other essential features of capitalism, but with the appearance of socialising forms (regulations, Social Security, retirement pensions) which mark the enslavement of more and more of the proletariat.

State capitalism has various forms: German National Socialism, Stalinist National Socialism, ever increasing state control in the 'democracies' but appearing in a comparatively restricted form (due to a still vast reserve of plus value from their colonies). Politically as economically this period tends to take on a totalitarian form.

So Statism reveals itself in forms simultaneously political, economic and cultural: State finance, war economy, huge public works, conscripted labour, concentration camps, forced movement of populations, ideologies which justify the totalitarian order of things (for example, a counterfeit version of Marxist-Leninist ideology in the USSR, race in Hitler's National Socialism, Ancient Rome in Mussolini's Fascism, etc.).



Of course it is only meetings where the whole Organisation is represented which can decide the tactical line to be laid down (conferences, congresses, etc.).

## Collective Action And Discipline

Once these general tactics (or orientation) have been decided the problem of applying them comes up. It is obvious that if the Organisation has laid down a line of collective action it is so that the militant activities of every member and every group within the Organisation will conform to this line. In cases where a majority and a minority have drawn apart but the two sides have agreed to carry on working together, no-one can find themselves bullied because all have agreed to this way of acting beforehand and had a hand in the drawing up of the 'line'. This freely accepted discipline has nothing in common with military discipline and passive obedience to orders. There is no coercive machinery to impose a point of view that isn't accepted by the whole Organisation: there is simply respect for commitments freely made, as much for the minority as for the majority.

Of course the militants and the different levels of the Organisation can take initiatives but only in- so far as they do not contradict agreements and arrangements made by the proper bodies: that is, if these initiatives are in fact applications of collective decisions. But when particular activities involve the whole Organisation each member must consult the Organisation through liaison with its representative organs.

So, collective action and not action decided personally by separate militants.

Each member takes part in the activity of the whole Organisation in the same way as the Organisation is responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of each of its members, since

they do not act in the political domain without consulting the Organisation.

## Federation Or Internal Democracy

As opposed to centralism, which is the blind submission of the masses to a centre, federalism both allows those centralisations which are necessary and permits the autonomous decision-making of each member and their control over the whole. It only involves the participants in what is shared by them.

When federalism brings together groups based on material interests it relies on an agreement and the basis for unity can sometimes be weak. This is the case in certain sectors of union activity. But in the revolutionary anarchist Organisation, where it's a question of a programme which represents the general desires of the masses, the basis for coming together (the principles, the programme) is more important than any differences and unity is very strong: rather than a pact or a contract here we should speak of a functional, organic, natural unity.

So federalism must not be understood as the right to show off your personal whims without considering the obligations to the Organisation that you've taken on.

It means the understanding reached between members and groups with a view to common work towards a shared goal — but a free understanding, a considered union.

Such an understanding implies on the one hand that those who share it fulfill the duties they've accepted completely and go along with collective decisions; it implies on the other that the coordinating and executive bodies be appointed and controlled by the whole Organisation at its assemblies and congresses and that their obligations and prerogatives be precisely established.

So it is on the following bases that an effective anarchist Organisation can exist:



population etc. the capitalism which has established itself in Western Europe has a world to conquer, enormous sources of wealth and markets which appear to be vast).

The bourgeois revolutions, by getting rid of feudal restraints, help the new system to develop.

It is industrialisation and technical progress which have been the basis for the existence of the capitalist mode of production and for the transition from the mercantile bourgeoisie of the 15$^{th}$, 16$^{th}$ and 17$^{th}$ Centuries to the industrialist capitalist bourgeoisie. They continue to develop.

Throughout this period crises are infrequent and not too serious. The state plays a background role as competition gets rid of the weak — it is the free play of the system. It is the time of gas and coal in the technical sphere; of property, the individual boss, competition and free trade in the economic; parliamentarianism in the political; total exploitation and the most dreadful poverty of the wage-earners in the social.

(3) Monopoly Capitalism or Imperialism: productivity increases but markets constrict or don't increase at their previous rate. Fall in the rate of profit of over accumulated capital.

Agreements (trusts, cartels, etc.) replace competition, joint-stock companies replace the individual boss, protectionism intervenes, the export of capital comes to be added to that of commodities, financial credit plays a major role, the merger of banking capital with industrial capital creates financier capital which tames the state and calls on its intervention.

It is the time of petrol and electricity in the technical sphere; of agreements, protectionism, the over-accumulation of capital and the tendency to fall of the rate of profit, of crises in the economic; of wars, imperialism and the growth of the State in the political. War is essential if crises are to overcome — destruction frees markets. In the social sphere: poverty for the working class but social legislation limits certain aspects of exploitation.

ing on a very limited part of history and only the anarchist theoreticians, especially Bakunin and Kropotkin, strove to give its full importance to a phenomenon which too often was limited to the State of the period of capitalism's rise.

Today the evolution of capitalism, passing from classical capitalism to monopoly capitalism, then to directed and to State capitalism, is giving rise to new social forms which the summary analyses of the State can no longer account for.

## What is Capitalism?

(a) It is a society of rival classes where the exploiting class owns and controls the means of production.

(b) In capitalist society all goods — including the power of waged labour — are commodities.

(c) The supreme love of capitalism, the motive for the production of goods, is not peoples needs but the increasing of profit, that is the surplus produced by workers, the extra to what is absolutely necessary for them to stay alive.

This surplus is also called plus-value.

(d) Increase in the productivity of labour is not followed by the valorisation of capital which is limited (under-consumption). This contradiction, which is expressed by the 'tendency to fall of the rate of profit', creates periodic crises which lead the owners of capital to all sorts of carry-ons: cut-backs in production, destruction of produce, unemployment, wars and so on.

Capitalism Has Evolved:

(1) Pre-capitalist era: from the end of the Middle Ages the merchant and banking bourgeoisie develops within the feudal economy.

(2) Classical or Liberalist or Private Capitalism: individualism of the owners of capital, competition and expansion (after the early accumulation of capital, by dispossession, pillage, ruin of the peasant



- Ideological Unity
- Tactical Unity
- Collective Action and Discipline
- Federalism

# 4. The Libertarian Communist Programme

## Aspects Of Bourgeois Rule — Capitalism And The State

Before we show the goals and solutions of libertarian communism we must examine what kind of enemy we're faced with.

From what we can know of human history we see that ever since human societies have been divided into classes (and especially since the division of social labour), there have been conflicts between the social classes and, from the earliest demands and revolts, as if a chain of struggles fought for a better life and a more just society.

Anarchist analysis considers that modern day society, like all those which came before it, is not a single unit — it is divided into two very different camps, different as much in their situation as in their social function: the proletariat (in the broad sense of the word) and the bourgeoisie.

Added to this is the fact of the class struggle, whose character may vary — sometimes complex and imperceptible, sometimes open, rapid and easy to see.

This struggle is very often masked by clashes of secondary interests, conflicts between groups of the same class, complex historical events which at first sight don't have any direct connection with the existence of classes and their rivalry. Basically though this struggle is always directed towards transforming contemporary society into a society which would answer the needs wants and sense



of justice of the oppressed and through this, in a classless society, liberating the whole of humanity.

The structure of any society always expresses in its laws, morality and culture the respective positions of the social classes — some exploited and enslaved, the others holding property and authority. In modern society economics, politics, law, morality and culture all rest on the existence of the privileges and monopolies of one class and on the violence organised by that class to maintain its supremacy..

## Capitalism

The capitalist system is very often considered as the only form of exploitative society. But capitalism is a relatively recent economic and social form and human societies have certainly known other kinds of slavery and exploitation since the clans, the barbarian empires, the ancient cities, feudalism, the cities of the Renaissance and so on.

Analysis of the birth, development and evolution of capitalism was the work of the movement of socialist theoreticians at the start of the 19$^{th}$ Century (Marx and Engels did not more than systematise them), but this analysis gives a poor account of the general phenomenon of oppression by one class or another, and of its origin.

There is no point getting involved in debate as to whether authority came before property or the other way round. The present state of Sociology does not allow us to settle the matter absolutely, but it seems clear that economic, political, religious and moral powers have been closely linked from the very beginning. In any case, the role of political power cannot be limited to its merely being the tool of economic might powers. In that way analysis of the phenomenon of capitalism was not accompanied by adequate analysis of the phenomenon of the State, because people were concentrat-