

ANARCHISM

AND THE BLACK REVOLUTION

THE IDEA OF BLACK AUTONOMY



BY LORENZO KOMBOA ERVIN

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The Black Autonomy Podcast is a series of discussions on anarchism and the relevance of its revolutionary ideals to the ongoing Black Liberation Movement.

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Chapter 1. An Analysis of White Supremacy

This pamphlet will briefly discuss the nature of Anarchism and its relevance to the Black Liberation movement. Because there have been so many lies and distortions of what Anarchism really stands for, by both its left- and right-wing ideological opponents, it will be necessary to discuss the many popular myths about it. This in itself deserves a book, but is not the intention of this pamphlet, which is merely to introduce the Black movement to revolutionary Anarchist ideals. It is up to the reader to determine whether these new ideas are valid and worthy of adoption.

How the Capitalists Use Racism

The fate of the white working class has always been bound with the condition of Black workers. Going as far back as the American colonial period when Black labor was first imported into America, Black slaves and indentured servants have been oppressed right along with whites of the lower classes. But when European indentured servants joined with Blacks to rebel against their lot in the late 1600s, the propertied class decided to “free” them by giving them a special status as “whites” and thus a stake in the system of oppression.

Material incentives, as well as the newly elevated social status were used to ensure these lower classes allegiance. This invention of the “white race” and racial slavery of the Africans went hand-in-glove, and is how the upper classes maintained order during the period of slavery. Even poor whites had aspirations of doing better, since their social mobility was ensured by the new system. This social mobility, however, was on the backs of the African slaves, who were super-exploited.

But the die had been cast for the dual-tier form of labor, which exploited the African, but also trapped white labor. When they sought to organize unions or for higher wages in the North or South, white laborers were slapped down by the rich, who used enslaved Black labor as their primary mode of production. The so-called “free” labor of the white worker did not stand a chance.

Although the Capitalists used the system of white skin privilege to great effect to divide the working class, the truth is that the Capitalists only favored white workers to use them against their own interests, not because there was true “white” class unity. The Capitalists didn’t want white labor united with Blacks against their rule and the system of exploitation of labor. The invention of the “white race” was a scam to facilitate this exploitation. White workers were bought off to allow their own wage slavery and the African’s super-exploitation; they struck a deal with the devil, which has hampered all efforts at class unity for the last four centuries.

The continual subjugation of the masses depends on competition and internal disunity. As long as discrimination exists, and racial or ethnic minorities are oppressed, the entire working class is oppressed and weakened. This is so because the Capitalist class is able to use racism to drive down the wages of individual segments of the working class by inciting racial antagonism and forcing a fight for

jobs and services. This division is a development that ultimately undercuts the living standards of all workers. Moreover, by pitting whites against Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, the Capitalist class is able to prevent workers from uniting against their common class enemy. As long as workers are fighting each other, Capitalist class rule is secure.

If an effective resistance is to be mounted against the current racist offensive of the Capitalist class, the utmost solidarity between workers of all races is essential. The way to defeat the Capitalist strategy is for white workers to defend the democratic rights won by Blacks and other oppressed peoples after decades of hard struggle, and to fight to dismantle the system of white skin privilege. White workers should support and adopt the concrete demands of the Black movement, and should work to abolish the white identity entirely. These white workers should strive for multicultural unity, and should work with Black activists to build an anti-racist movement to challenge white supremacy. However, it is also very important to recognize the right of the Black movement to take an independent road in its own interests. That is what self-determination means.

Race and Class: the Combined Character of Black Oppression

Because of the way this nation has developed with the exploitation of African labor and the maintenance of an internal colony, Blacks and other non-white peoples are oppressed both as members of the working class and as a racial nationality. As Africans in America, they are a distinct people, hounded and segregated in U.S. society. By struggling for their human and civil rights they ultimately come into confrontation with the entire Capitalist system, not just individual racists or regions of the country. The truth soon becomes apparent: Blacks cannot get their freedom under this system because, based on historically uneven competition, Capitalist exploitation is inherently racist.

At this juncture the movement can go into the direction of revolutionary social change, or limit itself to winning reforms and democratic rights within the structure of Capitalism. The potential is there for either. In fact, the weakness of the 1960s Civil rights movement was that it allied itself with the liberals in the Democratic Party and settled for civil rights protective legislation, instead of pushing for social revolution. This self-policing by the leaders of the movement is an object lesson about why the new movement has to be self-activated and not dependent on personalities and politicians.

But if such a movement does become a social revolutionary movement, it must ultimately unite its forces with similar movements like Gays, Women, radical workers, and others who are in revolt against the system. For example, in the late 1960s the Black Liberation movement acted as a catalyst to spread revolutionary ideas and images, which brought forth the various opposition movements we see today. This is what we believe will happen again, although it is not enough to call for mindless "unity" as much of the white left does.

Because of the dual forms of oppression of non-white workers and the depth of social desperation it creates, Blacks workers will strike first, whether their

potential allies are available to do so or not. This is self-determination and that is why it is necessary for oppressed workers to build independent movements to unite their own peoples first. This is why it is absolutely necessary for white workers to defend the democratic rights and gains of non-white workers. This self-activity of the oppressed masses, (such as the Black Liberation movement) is inherently revolutionary, and is an essential part of the social revolutionary process of the entire working class. These are not marginal issues; it cannot be downgraded or ignored by white workers if a revolutionary victory is to be had. It has to be recognized as a cardinal principle by all, that oppressed peoples have a right to self-determination, including the right to run their own organizations and liberation struggle. The victims of racism know best how to fight back against it.

So What Type of Anti-Racist Group is Needed?

The Black movement needs allies in its battle against the racist Capitalist class — not the usual liberal or phony “radical” support, but genuine revolutionary working class support and solidarity, otherwise called “mutual aid” by Anarchists. The basis of such unity however must be principled and be based on class interest, rather than liberal “guilt tripping,” “do-gooding” or opportunism and manipulation by liberal or radical political parties. The needs of the oppressed people must be the most important consideration, but they want genuine support, not fakery or leftist rhetoric.

The Anarchist movement, which is overwhelmingly white, must start to understand that they need to do propaganda work among the Black and other oppressed community, and they need to make it possible for non-white Anarchists to organize in their communities by providing them with technical resources (printing of zines, video and audio cassette production, etc.) and assisting with financial resources.

One reason there are so few Black Anarchists is because the movement provides no means to reach people of color; win them over to Anarchism and help them organize themselves. This must change if we want the social revolution to take place in America, and if we want North American Anarchism to be more than “white rights” movement.

The type of organization needed must be a “mass” organization working to unite all workers in common class struggle, but must be able to recognize the duty to support and adopt the special demands of the Black and other non-white peoples as those of the entire working class. It must challenge white supremacy on a daily basis, it must refute racist philosophy and propaganda, and must counter racist mobilization and attacks, with armed self-defense and street fighting, when necessary. The objective of such a mass movement is to win the white working class over to an anti-white supremacy, class-conscious position; to unite the entire working class; and to directly confront and overthrow the Capitalist state, and its rulers. The cooperation of and solidarity of all workers is essential for full Social revolution, not just its privileged white sector.

For instance, an existing organization like Anti-Racist Action, if adopting such politics as an Anarchist group, should be given a higher priority by our movement. Every city and town should have ARA-type collectives, and every existing Anarchist federation should have internal working groups that do work around racism and police brutality. In fact, the type of group that I am talking about would be a federation itself to coordinate struggles on the national and maybe even international level.

This would be a revolutionary movement, not content to sit around and read books, elect a few Black politicians or “friends of Labor” to Congress or the State Legislature, write protest letters, circulate petitions, or other such tame tactics. It would take the examples of the early radical labor movements like the IWW, as well as the Civil rights movement of the 1960s, to show that only direct action tactics of confrontation and militant protest will yield any results at all. It would also have the example of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion to show that people will revolt, but there need to be powerful allies extending material aid and resistance info, and an existing mass movement to take it to the next step and spread the insurrection.

The Anarchists must recognize this and help build a militant anti-racist group, which would be both a support group for the Black revolution and a mass-organizing center to unite the class. It is very important to wrest the mass influence of the racial equality movement out of the hands of the left-liberal Democratic wing of the ruling class. The left liberals may talk a good fight, but as long as they are not for overthrowing Capitalism and smashing the state, they will betray and sabotage the entire struggle against racism. The strategy of the left-liberals is to deflect class-consciousness into strictly race consciousness. They refuse to appeal on the basis of class material interests to the U.S. working and middle classes to support Black rights, and as a result allow the right-wing to capitalize unopposed on the latent racist feeling among whites, as well as on their economic insecurity. The kind of movement I am proposing will step in the breach and attack white supremacy, and dismantle the very threads of what holds Capitalism together. Without the mass white consensus to the rule of the American state, and the system of white skin privilege, Capitalism could not go on into the next century!

The Myth of “Reverse Racism”

“Reverse Discrimination” has become the war cry of all those racists trying to roll back civil rights gains won by Blacks and other oppressed nationalities in housing, education, employment, and every aspect of social life. The racists feel these things should only go to white males, and that “minorities” and women are taking them away from white men. Millions of white workers day-in and day-out are bombarded by this racist propaganda, and it is having a big impact. Many whites believe this lie of reverse discrimination against white people. This belief is embraced by many duped white workers, who consider “reverse discrimination” to be at least partly responsible for the economic problems so many of them are suffering from today. Such beliefs propelled Ronald Reagan to his two terms as

U.S. president. Reagan tried to use this racist propaganda line to precipitate a rollback in the civil rights gains of oppressed nationalities.

The racists claim the concept of reverse discrimination suggests the wholesale discrimination against Blacks and other racially oppressed groups is a hoax. Baldly stated, the idea is that the passage of the 1964 Civil rights Act ended discrimination against Blacks, Latinos and other nationalities, and women, and now the law is discriminating against white people. The racists say racial minorities and women are the new privileged groups in American society. They are allegedly getting the pick of jobs, preferential college placements, the best housing, government grants, and so on at the expense of white workers. The racists say programs to end discrimination are not only unnecessary, but are actually attempts by minorities to gain power at the expense of white workers. They say Blacks and women do not want equality, but rather hegemony over white workers.

An Anarchist anti-racist movement would counter such propaganda and expose it as a ruling class weapon. The Civil Rights Act did not cause inflation by “excessive” spending on welfare, housing, or other social services. Further, Blacks aren’t discriminating against whites: whites are not being herded into ghetto housing; removed from or prohibited from entering professions; deprived of decent education; forced into malnutrition and early death; subjected to racial violence and police repression, forced to suffer disproportionate levels of unemployment, and other forms of racial oppression. But for Blacks the oppression starts with birth and childhood. Infant mortality rate is nearly three times that of whites, and it continues throughout their lives. The fact is “reverse discrimination” is a hoax. Anti-Black discrimination is not a thing of the past. It is the systematic, all pervasive reality today!

Malcolm X pointed out in the 1960s that no civil rights statutes will give Black people their freedom, and asked if Africans in America were really citizens why would civil rights be necessary. Malcolm X observed civil rights had been fought for at great sacrifice, and therefore should be enforced, but if the government won’t enforce the laws, then the people will have to do so, and the movement will have to pressure the government authorities to protect democratic rights. To unite the masses of people behind a working class anti-racist movement, the following practical demands, which are a combination revolutionary and radical reformism, to ensure democratic rights, are necessary:

Black and white workers’ solidarity. Fight racism on the job and in society.

Full democratic and human rights for all non-white peoples. Make unions fight racism and discrimination.

Armed self-defense against racist attacks. Build mass movement against racism and fascism.

Community control of the police, replacement of cops by community self-defense force elected by residents. End police brutality. Prosecution of all killer cops.

Money for rebuilding the cities. Creation of public works brigades to rebuild inner city areas, made up of community residents.

Full socially useful employment at union wages for all workers. End racial discrimination in jobs, training and promotions. Establish affirmative: action programs to reverse past racist employment practices.

Ban the Ku Klux Klan, Nazis and other fascist organizations. Prosecution of all racists for attacks on people of color.

Free open admissions to all institutions of learning for all those qualified to attend. No racial exclusion in higher education.

End taxes of workers and poor. Tax the rich and major corporations.

Full health and medical care for all persons and communities, regardless of race and class.

Free all political prisoners and innocent victims of racial injustice. Abolish prisons. Fight economic disparity.

Rank and file democratic control of the unions by building an Anarcho-Syndicalist labor movement. Make unions active in social issues.

Stop racist harassment and discrimination of undocumented workers.

Smash the right wing!

Fascism is not to be debated. It is to be smashed...

Buenaventura Durrutti, Spanish Anarchist revolutionary, 1936.

As Capitalist society decays, people will look for radical and total solutions to the misery they face. The Nazis and the Klan are among the few right-wing political forces that offer, or appear to offer, a radical answer to the current problems of society for the white masses. That these solutions are false will matter little to confused and hysterical people searching desperately for a way out of the socioeconomic crisis the Capitalist world is facing. Sections of the middle class, better-off layers of the white working class, poor and unemployed white workers, all poisoned by the racism of this society, are easy prey for Nazi and Klan demagogues.

The Nazis, skinheads and the Klan are the most extreme right-wing racist/fascist organizations in the United States. Today these groups are small, and many liberals like to downplay the threat they represent, even to argue for their legal “rights” to spread their racist venom. But these groups have a tremendous growth potential and could become a mass movement in a surprisingly short period of time, especially during an economic and political crisis like we are now in.

Basing themselves on alienated white social forces, the Nazis and Klan are trying to build a mass movement that can hire itself out to the Capitalists at the proper moment and assume state power. When the Capitalist feel that they might need an additional club to keep the workers and the oppressed in line, they will turn to the Nazis, Klan and similar right-wing organizations, with both money and support, in addition to strengthening the state police and military forces. If need be, the Capitalists will place them in power, (as they did in Spain, Germany and Italy in the 1920s and 1930s), so the fascists will smash the unions and other working class organizations; place Blacks, Latinos Gays, Asians, and Jews into concentration camps; and turn the rest of the workers into State slaves. Fascism is the ultimate authoritarian society when in power, even though it has changed its face to a mixture of crude racism and smoother racism in the modern democratic state.

So in addition to the Nazis and the Klan, there are other right-wing forces that have been on the rise in the last 15 years. They include ultra-conservative rightist politicians and Christian fundamentalist preachers, along with the extreme right section of the Capitalist ruling class itself — small business owners, talk show hosts like Rush Limbaugh, along with the professors, economists, philosophers and others in academia providing the ideological weaponry for the Capitalist offensive against the workers and oppressed people. Not all the racists wear sheets. These are the “respectable” racists, the new right conservatives, who are far more dangerous than the Klan or Nazis because their politics have become acceptable to large masses of white workers, who in turn blame racial minorities for their problems.

The Capitalist class has already shown their willingness to use this conservative movement as a smoke screen for an attack on the Labor movement, Black struggle and the entire working class. Many city public workers have been fired; schools, hospitals and other social services have been curtailed; government agencies have been privatized; welfare rolls have been cut drastically; and the budgets of city and state governments slashed. Banks have even used their dictatorial powers to demand these budget cuts, and to even, make entire cities default if they did not submit. This even happened to New York City in the 1970s. So this is not just an issue of poor, dumb rednecks in hoods. This is about hoods in business suits.

A first step in organizing and preparing the working class in the economic crisis we face is to directly take on the right-wing threat. Repressive economic legislation by conservative politicians to punish the poor and working class must be defeated; taxes on the rich and major corporations must be increased, while taxes on the workers and farmers must be abolished. If the politicians will not do it, we will organize a tax boycott to force them to do it. The Nazis and Klan must be confronted through direct action. Anarchists, the left and labor organizations must organize to defend workers and oppressed from physical assaults by the racists, as well as hold mass demonstrations in the streets at fascist rallies. We also must oppose scum like Operation Rescue that uses violent Fascist tactics against women's rights to abortions. It is part of the same battleground.

Here is the situation: David Duke, the "ex"-Klansman is now part of the "respectable" right, which picks up support among the upper middle class. Meanwhile the Klan and Nazi skinheads are making headway among different social layers, mainly poor white workers and unemployed white youth. Tom Metzger, the leader of white Aryan Resistance, called the Nazi skinheads his "Brown-shirts of the '90s." This is very dangerous, but we cannot leave these people to the Nazis and Klan uncontested. We should try to win them over, or at least neutralize any active opposition on their part. This is a defensive tactic at the very least, but really we have no choice, and it is part of our revolutionary duty to organize the entire working class anyway. We should direct propaganda to these workers to expose the Nazis and Klan for the scum they are, and show how the workers are being misled. We should also make it possible for them to fight this misery against the real enemy: the Capitalist class.

But in addition to defensive operations for propaganda, we must take direct offensive action to physically resist the racists when this is possible. For example, where the balance of forces allows it, we must organize to forcefully drive the Nazis and Klan off the streets. In order to smash their movements we must organize commando-type actions to attack their rallies, close their bookshops and newspapers, destroy their meeting halls, and break up their marches. Since the Nazis and Klan organize by threatening and using violence, we must be prepared to reply to them in kind, but in a better-organized and more effective way. For instance, pigs like David Duke and Tom Metzger, who have been advocating and leading the fascist movement in America, should be assassinated. We should infiltrate Klan and Nazi demonstrations in order to assault leaders and disrupt them, or hide at a distance and snipe at them with high-powered rifles. I have always felt that underground guerilla movements like the Black Liberation Army, Weather Underground, and New World Liberation Front should have attacked fascist movements and assassinated their leaders. If we cripple the fascists in this

fashion, we can smash the entire right and begin to smash the State. This is the only way to stop fascists. *Death to the Klan and all fascists!*

None other than Adolph Hitler has been quoted as saying: “Only one thing could have stopped our movement. If our adversaries had understood its principle, and from the first day had smashed with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement.” We should take heed.

One other thing that we must do, and is something which tactically separates us Anarchists from the Marxist-Leninists, is that we use our studies of the authoritarian personality to help us organize against fascist recruitment. All the M-Es “United Fronts” care about is a strict political approach to defeat fascism and prevent them from attaining state power, while being able to usher the Communist party in instead. They organize liberals and others into mass coalitions just to seize power, and then crush all radical and liberal ideological opponents after they get done with the fascists. That is why the Stalinist ‘Communist’ states resemble fascist police states so much in refusing to allow ideological plurality — they are both totalitarian. For that matter, how much difference was there really between Stalin and Hitler? So, I say that merely physically beating back the fascists is not the issue. We need to study what accounts for the mass psychology of fascism and then defeat it ideologically, going to the core of the deep seated racist beliefs, emotions, and authoritarian conditioning of those workers who support fascism and all police state authority.

The third prong of our strategy is to organize among the workers and other oppressed sections of society with a program that addresses their needs. As has been said, the Klan and Nazis recruit among certain social layers — overwhelmingly white youth who are hard-pressed by the economic crisis. These people see Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Gays, women, and radical movements as a threat. They are racist, reactionary and potentially very violent. Fearful that they will lose the little they have, they buy the myth that the problems is “those people” trying to steal their jobs, homes, future, etc., rather than the decay of the Capitalist system.

As long as there appears to be no alternative to fighting over a shrinking social “pie,” the fascists, with their simple minded “solutions,” will get a hearing among the degenerate elements of the working class. The only way to undercut the appeal of the right is to organize a Libertarian workers movement that can fight for and win the things that people need — jobs, decent housing and schools, health care, etc. This can demonstrate concretely that there is an alternative to the right wing’s poisonous “solutions,” and it can win to the ranks of the workers’ movement some of those people attracted to the fascist movement.

In all areas of our organizing, we must carry out consistent revolutionary propaganda explaining Capitalism is responsible for unemployment, rising prices, rotten schools and housing and the rest of the decay we see around us. We must expose the fact that, while the Nazis, Klan and other right-wingers make Black, Gays, Latinos and other oppressed people the scapegoat for the economic crisis, their real aim is to destroy the entire workers movement, commit genocide, start an adventurist war and turn workers into outright slaves of the State. Therefore, these fascist forces are a threat to all workers of every nationality. It must be explained that they only want to use white workers as pawns in their scheme to create a fascist dictatorship, and all workers must unite and fight back and overthrow the state if they are to be free. *Death to the Klan, death to the nazis!*

Defeat white supremacy!

The very means of class control by the rich is the least understood. White supremacy is more than just a set of ideas or prejudices. It is national oppression. Yet to most white people, the term conjures up images of the Nazis or Ku Klux Klan rather than the system of white skin privileges that really undergrids the Capitalist system in the U.S. Most white people, Anarchists included, believe in essence that Black people are “the same” as whites, and that we should just fight around “common issues” rather than deal with “racial matters,” if they see any urgency in dealing with the matter at all. Some will not raise it in such a blunt fashion, they will say that “class issues should take precedence,” but it means the same thing. They believe it’s possible to put off the struggle against white supremacy until after the revolution, when in fact there will be no revolution if white supremacy is not attacked and defeated first. They won’t win a revolution in the U.S. until they fight to improve the lot of Blacks and oppressed people who are being deprived of their democratic rights, as well as being super-exploited as workers.

Almost from the very inception of the North American socialist movement, the simple-minded economist position that all Black and white workers have to do to wage a revolution is to engage in a “common (economic) struggle” has been used to avoid struggle against white supremacy. In fact, the white left has always taken the chauvinist position that since the white working class is the revolutionary vanguard anyway, why worry about an issue that will “divide the class”? Historically Anarchists have not even brought up the matter of “race politics,” as one Anarchist referred to it the first time this pamphlet was published. This is a total evasion of the issue.

Yet it is the Capitalist bourgeoisie that creates inequality as a way to divide and rule over the entire working class. White skin privilege is a form of domination by Capital over white labor as well as oppressed nationality labor, not just providing material incentives to “buy off” white workers and set them against Black and other oppressed workers. This explains the obedience of white labor to Capitalism

and the State. The white working class does not see their better off condition as part of the system of exploitation. After centuries of political and social indoctrination, they feel their privileged position is just and proper, and what is more has been “earned.” They feel threatened by social gains of non-white workers, which is why they so vehemently opposed affirmative action plans to benefit minorities in jobs and hiring, and to redress years of discrimination against them. It is also why white workers have opposed most civil rights legislation.

Yet it is the day-to-day workings of white supremacy that we must fight most vigorously. We cannot remain ignorant or indifferent to the workings of race and class under this system, so that oppressed workers remain victimized. For years, Blacks have been “first hired, first fired” by Capitalist industry. Further, seniority systems have engaged in open racial discrimination, and are little more than white job trusts. Blacks have even been driven out of whole industries, such as coal mining. Yet the white labor bosses have never objected or intervened on behalf of their class brothers, nor will they if not pressed up against the wall by white workers.

As pointed out there are material incentives to this white worker opportunism: better jobs, higher pay, improved living conditions in white communities, etc., in short what has come to be known as the “white middle class lifestyle.” This is what labor and the left have always fought to maintain, not class solidarity, which would necessitate a struggle against white supremacy. This lifestyle is based on the super-exploitation of the non-white sector of the domestic working class as well as countries exploited by imperialism around the world.

In America, class antagonism has always included racial hatred as an essential component, but it is structural rather than just ideological. Since all of the institutions, the culture, and the socioeconomic system of U.S. Capitalism are based on white supremacy, how then is it possible to truly fight the rule of Capital without being forced to defeat white supremacy? The dual-tier economy of whites on top and Blacks on the bottom (even with all the class differences among whites) has successfully resisted every attempt by radical social movements. These reluctant reformers have danced around the issue. While winning reforms, in many cases primarily for white workers only, these white radicals have yet to topple the system and open the road to social revolution.

The fight against white skin privilege also requires the rejection of the vicious identification of North Americans as “white” people, rather than as Welsh, German, Irish, etc. as their national origin. This “white race” designation is a contrived super-nationality designed to inflate the social importance of European ethnics and to enlist them as tools in the Capitalist system of exploitation. In North America, white skin has always implied freedom and privilege: freedom to gain employment, to travel, to obtain social mobility out of one’s born class standing, and a whole world of Eurocentric privileges. Therefore, before a social revolution can take place, there must be an abolition of the social category of the “white race.” (with few exceptions in this essay, I will begin referring to them as “North Americans.”)

These “white” people must engage in class suicide and race treachery before they can truly be accepted as allies of Black and nationally oppressed workers; the whole idea behind a “white race” is conformity and making them accomplices to mass murder and exploitation. If white people do not want to be saddled with the historical legacy of colonialism, slavery and genocide themselves, then they must rebel against it. So the “whites” must denounce the white identity and its system of privilege, and they must struggle to redefine themselves and their relationship with others. As long as white society, (through the State which says it is acting in the name of white people), continues to oppress and dominate all the institutions of the Black community, racial tension will continue to exist, and whites generally will continue to be seen as the enemy.

So what do North Americans start to do to defeat racial opportunism, white skin privileges and other forms of white supremacy? First they must break down the walls separating them from their non-white allies. Then together they must wage a fight against inequality in the workplace, communities, and in the social order. Yet it not just the democratic rights of African people we are referring to when we are talking about “national oppression.” If that were the whole issue, then maybe more reforms could obtain racial and social equality. But no, that is not what we are talking about.

Blacks (or Africans in America) are colonized. America is a mother country with an internal colony. For Africans in America, our situation is one of total oppression. No people are truly free until they can determine their own destiny. Ours is a captive, oppressed colonial status that must be overthrown, not just smashing ideological racism or denial of civil rights. In fact, without smashing the internal colony first means the likelihood of a continuance of this oppression in another form. We must destroy the social dynamic of a very real existence of America being made up of an oppressor white nation and an oppressed Black nation, (in fact there are several captive nations).

This requires the Black Liberation movement to liberate a colony, and this is why it is not just a simple matter of Blacks just joining with white Anarchists to fight the same type of battle against the State. That is also why Anarchists cannot take a rigid position against all forms of Black nationalism (especially revolutionary groups like the Black Panther Party), even if there are ideological differences about the way some of them are formed and operate. But North Americans must support the objectives of racially oppressed liberation movements, and they must directly challenge and reject white skin privilege. There is no other way and there is a shortcut; white supremacy is a huge stumbling block to revolutionary social change in North America.

The Black Revolution and other national liberation movements in North America are indispensable parts of the overall Social revolution. North American workers must join with Africans, Latinos and others to reject racial injustice, Capitalist exploitation, and national oppression. North American workers certainly have an important role in helping those struggles to triumph. Material aid alone, which can be assembled by white workers for the Black revolution, could dictate the victory or defeat of that struggle at a particular stage.

I am taking time to explain all this, because predictably some Anarchist purists will try to argue me down that having a white movement is a good thing, that Blacks and other oppressed nationalities just need to climb aboard the “Anarchist Good Ship” (a ship of fools?), and all of this is just “Marxist national liberation nonsense.” Well, we know part of the reason for an Anarchist anti-racist movement is to challenge this chauvinist perspective right in the middle of our own movement. An Anarchist Anti-Racist Federation would not exist just to fight Nazis. We need to challenge and correct racist and doctrinaire positions on race and class within our movement. If we cannot do that, then we cannot organize the working class, Black or white, and are of no use to anyone.

Chapter 2. Where is the Black struggle and where should it be going?

Some — usually comfortable Black middle class professionals, politicians or businessmen who rode the 1960s Civil rights movement into power or prominence — will say there is no longer any necessity to struggle in the streets during the 1990s for Black freedom. They say we have “arrived” and are now “almost free.” They say our only struggle now is to “integrate the money,” or win wealth for themselves and members of their social class, even though they give lip service to “empowering the poor.” Look, they say, we can vote, our Black faces are all over TV in commercials and situation comedies, there are hundreds of Black millionaires, and we have political representatives in the halls of Congress and State houses all over the land. In fact, they say, there are currently over 7,000 Black elected officials, several of whom preside over the largest cities in the nation, and there is even a governor of a Southern state, who is an African-American. That’s what they say. But does this tell the whole story?

The fact is we are in as bad or even worse a shape, economically and politically, as when the Civil rights movement began in the 1950s. One in every four Black males are in prison, on probation, parole, or under arrest; at least one-third or more of Black family units are now single parent families mired in poverty; unemployment hovers at 18–25 percent for Black communities; the drug economy is the number one employer of Black youth; most substandard housing units are still concentrated in Black neighborhoods; Blacks and other non-whites suffer from the worst health care; and Black communities are still underdeveloped because of racial discrimination by municipal governments, mortgage companies and banks, who “redline” Black neighborhoods from receiving community development, housing and small business loans which keep our communities poor. We also suffer from murderous acts of police brutality by racist cops which has resulted in thousands of deaths and wounding; and internecine gang warfare resulting in numerous youth homicides (and a great deal of grief). But what we suffer from most and what encompasses all of these ills is that fact that we are an oppressed people — in fact a colonized people subject to the rule of an oppressive government. We really have no rights under this system, except that which we

have fought for and even that is now in peril. Clearly we need a new mass Black protest movement to challenge the government and corporations, and expropriate the funds needed for our communities to survive.

Yet for the past 25 years the revolutionary Black movement has been on the defensive. Due to cooptation, repression and betrayals of the Black Liberation movement of the 1960s, today's movement has suffered a series of setbacks and has now become static in comparison. This may be because it is just now getting its stuff together after being pummeled by the State's police agencies, and also because of the internal political contradictions which arose in the major Black revolutionary groups like the Black Panther Party, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC or "snick" as it was called in those days), and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. I believe all were factors that led to the destruction of the 1960s' Black left in this country. Of course, many blame this period of relative inactivity in the Black movement on the lack of forceful leaders in the mold of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Marcus Garvey, etc., while other people blame the "fact" the Black masses have allegedly become "corrupt and apathetic," or just need the "correct revolutionary line."

Whatever the true facts of the matter, it can clearly be seen that the government, the Capitalist corporations, and the racist ruling class are exploiting the current weakness and confusion of the Black movement to make an attack on the Black working class, and are attempting to totally strip the gains won during the Civil rights era. In addition there is a resurgence of racism and conservatism among broad layers of the white population, which is a direct result of this right-wing campaign. Clearly this is a time when we must entertain new ideas and new tactics in the freedom struggle.

The ideals of Anarchism are something new to the Black movement and have never really been examined by Black and other non-white activists. Put simply, it means the people themselves should rule, not governments, political parties, or self-appointed leaders in their name. Anarchism also stands for the self-determination of all oppressed peoples, and their right to struggle for freedom by any means necessary.

So what road is in order for the Black movement? Continue to depend on opportunistic Democratic hack politicians like Bill Clinton or Ted Kennedy; the same old group of middle class sellout "leaders" of the Civil rights lobby; one or another of the authoritarian Leninist sects, who insist that they and they alone have the correct path to "revolutionary enlightenment"; or finally building a grassroots revolutionary protest movement to fight the racist government and rulers?

Only the Black masses can finally decide the matter, whether they will be content to bear the brunt of the current economic depression and the escalating racist brutality, or will lead a fight back. Anarchists trust the best instincts of the people, and human nature dictates that where there is repression there will be resistance; where there is slavery, there will a struggle against it. The Black masses have shown they will fight, and when they organize they will win!

A Call for a New Black Protest Movement

Those Anarchists who are Black like myself recognize there has to be a whole new social movement, which is democratic, on the grassroots level and is self-activated. It will be a movement independent of the major political parties, the State and the government. It must be a movement that, although it seeks to expropriate government money for projects that benefit the people, does not recognize any progressive role for the government in the lives of the people. The government will not free us, and is part of the problem rather than part of the solution. In fact only the Black masses themselves can wage the Black freedom struggle, not a government bureaucracy (like the U.S. Justice Department), reformist civil rights leaders like Jesse Jackson, or a revolutionary vanguard party on their behalf.

Of course, at a certain historical moment, a protest leader can play a tremendous revolutionary role as a spokesperson for the people's feelings, or even produce correct strategy and theory for a certain period, (Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and Martin Luther King, Jr. come to mind), and a "vanguard party" may win mass support and acceptance among the people for a time (e.g., the Black Panther Party of the 1960s), but it is the Black masses themselves who will make the revolution, and, once set spontaneously in motion, know exactly what they want.

Though leaders may be motivated by good or bad, even they will act as a brake on the struggle, especially if they lose touch with the freedom aspirations of the Black masses. Leaders can only really serve a legitimate purpose as an advisor and catalyst to the movement, and should be subject to immediate recall if they act contrary to the people's wishes. In that kind of limited role they are not leaders at all — they are community organizers.

The dependence of the Black movement on leaders and leadership (especially the Black bourgeoisie) has led us into a political dead end. We are expected to wait and suffer quietly until the next messianic leader asserts himself, as if he or she were "divinely missioned" (as some have claimed to be). What is even more harmful is that many Black people have adopted a slavish psychology of "obeying and serving our leaders," without considering what they themselves are capable of doing. Thus, rather than trying to analyze the current situation and carrying on Brother Malcolm X's work in the community, they prefer to bemoan the brutal facts, for year after year, of how he was taken away from us. Some mistakenly refer to this as a leadership vacuum." The fact is there has not been much movement in the Black revolutionary movement since his assassination and the virtual destruction of groups like the Black Panther Party. We have been stagnated by middle class reformism and misunderstanding.

We need to come up with new ideas and revolutionary formations in how to fight our enemies. We need a new mass protest movement. It is up to the Black masses to build it, not leaders or political parties. They cannot save us. We can only save ourselves.

What form will this movement take?

If there was one thing learned by anarchist revolutionary organizers in the 1960s, you don't organize a mass movement or a social revolution just by creating one central organization such as a vanguard political party or a labor union. Even though Anarchists believe in revolutionary organization, it is a means to an end, instead of the ends itself. In other words, the Anarchist groups are not formed with the intention of being permanent organizations to seize power after a revolutionary struggle. But rather to be groups which act as a catalyst to revolutionary struggles, and which try to take the people's rebellions, like the 1992 Los Angeles revolt, to a higher level of resistance.

Two features of a new mass movement must be the intention of creating dual power institutions to challenge the state, along with the ability to have a grassroots autonomist movement that can take advantage of a pre-revolutionary situation to go all the way.

Dual power means that you organize a number of collectives and communes in cities and town all over North America, which are, in fact, liberated zones, outside of the control of the government. Autonomy means that the movement must be truly independent and a free association of all those united around common goals, rather than membership as the result of some oath or other pressure.

So how would Anarchists intervene in the revolutionary process in Black neighborhoods? Well, obviously North American or "white" Anarchists cannot go into Black communities and just proselytize, but they certainly should work with any non-white Anarchists and help them work in communities of color. (I do think that the example of the New Jersey Anarchist Federation and its loose alliance with the Black Panther movement in that state is an example of how we must start.) And we are definitely not talking about a situation where Black organizers go into the neighborhood and win people to Anarchism so that they can then be controlled by whites and some party. This is how the Communist Party and other Marxist groups operate, but it cannot be how Anarchists work. We spread Anarchists beliefs not to "take over" people, but to let them know how they can better organize themselves to fight tyranny and obtain freedom. 'We want to work with them as fellow human beings and allies, who have their own experiences, agendas, and needs. The idea is to get as many movements of people fighting the state as possible, since that is what brings the day of freedom for us all a little closer.

There needs to be some sort of revolutionary organization for Anarchists to work on the local level, so we will call these local groups Black Resistance Committees. Each one of these Committees will be Black working class social revolutionary collectives in the community to fight for Black rights and freedom as part of the Social revolution. The Committees would have no leader or "party boss," and would be without any type of hierarchy structure, it would also be anti-authority. They exist to do revolutionary work, and thus are not debating societies or a club to elect Black politicians to office. They are revolutionary political formations,

which will be linked with other such groups all over North America and other parts of the world in a larger movement called a federation. A federation is needed to coordinate the actions of such groups, to let others know what is happening in each area, and to set down widespread strategy and tactics. (We will call this one, for want of a better name, the “African Revolutionary Federation,” or it can be part of a multicultural federation). A federation of the sort I am talking about is a mass membership organization which will be democratic and made up of all kinds of smaller groups and individuals. But this is not a government or representative system I am talking about; there would be no permanent positions of power, and even the facilitators of internal programs would be subject to immediate recall or have a regular rotation of duties. When a federation is no longer needed, it can be disbanded. Try that with a Communist party or one of the major Capitalist parties in North America!

Revolutionary strategy and tactics

If we are to build a new Black revolutionary protest movement we must ask ourselves how we can hurt this Capitalist system, and how have we hurt it in the past when we have led social movements against some aspect of our oppression. Boycotts, mass demonstrations, rent strikes, picketing, work strikes, sit-ins, and other such protests have been used by the Black movement at different times in its history, along with armed self-defense and open rebellion. Put simply, what we need to do is take our struggle to an new and higher level: we need to take these tried and true tactics, (which have been used primarily on the local level up to this point), and utilize them on a national level and then couple them with as yet untried tactics, for a strategic attack on the major Capitalist corporations and governmental apparatus. We shall discuss a few of them:

A Black Tax Boycott

Black people should refuse to pay any taxes to the racist government, including federal income, estate and sales taxes, while being subjected to exploitation and brutality. The rich and their corporations pay virtually no taxes; it is the poor and workers who bear the brunt of taxation. Yet they receive nothing in return. There are still huge unemployment levels in the Black community, the unemployment and welfare benefits are paltry; the schools are dilapidated; public housing is a disgrace, while rents by absentee landlord properties are exorbitant — all these conditions and more are supposedly corrected by government taxation of income, goods, and services. Wrong! It goes to the Pentagon, defense contractors, and greedy consultants, who like vultures prey on business with the government.

The Black Liberation movement should establish a mass tax resistance movement to lead a Black tax boycott as a means of protest and also as a method to create a fund to finance black community projects and organizations. Why should we continue to voluntarily support our own slavery? A Black tax boycott is just another means of struggle that the Black movement should examine and adopt,

which is similar to the peace movement's "war tax resistance." Blacks should be exempted from all taxation on personal property, income taxes, stocks and bonds (the latter of which would be a new type of community development issuance). Tax the Rich!

A National Rent Strike and Urban Squatting

Hand-in-glove with a tax boycott should be a refusal to pay rent for dilapidated housing. These rent boycotts have been used to great effect to fight back against rent gouging by landlords. At one time they were so effective in Harlem (NY) that they caused the creation of rent control legislation, preventing evictions, unjustified price increases, and requiring reasonable upkeep by the owners and the property management company. A mass movement could bring a rent strike to areas (such as in the Southeast and Southwest where poor people are being ripped off by the greedy landlords, but are not familiar with such tactics. Unfair laws now on the books, so-called Landlord-Tenant (where the only "right" the tenants have is to pay the rent or be evicted) should also be liberalized or overturned entirely. These laws only help slumlords stay in business, and keep exploiting the poor and working class. They account for mass evictions, which in turn account for homelessness. We should fight to rollback rents, prevent mass evictions, and house the poor and the homeless in decent affordable places.

Besides the refusal to pay the slumlords and exploitative banks and property management companies, there should be a campaign of "urban squatting" to just take over the housing, and have the tenants run it democratically as a housing collective. Then that money which would have gone toward rent could now go into repairing the dwelling of tenants. The homeless, poor persons needing affordable housing, and others who badly need housing should just take over any abandoned housing owned by an absentee landlord or even a bearded-up city housing project. Squatting is an especially good tactic in these times of serious housing shortages and arson-for-insurance by the slumlords. We should throw the bums out and just take over! Of course we will probably have to fight the cops



and crooked landlords who will try to use strong-armed tactics, but we can do that too! We can win significant victories if we organize a nationwide series of rent strikes, and build an independent tenants movement that will self-manage all the facilities, not on behalf of the government (with the tricky "Kemp plan"), but on behalf of themselves!

A Boycott of American Business

It was proven that one of the strangest weapons of the Civil rights movement was a Black consumer boycott of a community's merchants and public services. Merchants and other businessmen, of course, are the "leading citizens" of any community, and the local ruling class and boss of the government. In the 1960s when Blacks refused to trade with merchants as long as they allowed racial discrimination, their loss of revenue drove them to make concessions, and mediate the struggle, even hold the cops and the Klan at bay. What is true at the local level is certainly true at the national level. The major corporations and elite families run the country; the government is its mere tool. Blacks spend over \$350 billion a year in this Capitalist economy as consumers, and could just as easily wage economic warfare against the corporate structure with a well planned boycott to win political concessions. For instance, a corporation like General Motors is heavily dependent upon Black consumers, which means that it is very vulnerable to a boycott, if one were organized and supported widely. If Blacks would refuse to buy GM cars, it would result in significant losses for the corporation, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. Something like this could even bring a company to its knees. Yet the revolutionary wing of the Black movement has yet to use boycotts, calling it "reformism" and outdated.

But far from being an outdated tactic that we should abandon, boycotts have become even more effective in the last few years. In 1988, the Black and progressive movement in the United States hit on another tactic, boycotting the tourist industries of whole cities and states which engaged in discrimination. This reflected on the one hand how many cities have gone from smokestack industries since the 1960s to tourism as their major source of revenue, and on the other hand, a recognition by the movement that economic warfare was a potent weapon against discriminatory governments. The 1990–1993 Black Boycott against the Miami Florida tourism industry and the current Gay rights boycott against the State of Colorado (started in 1992) have been both successful and have gotten worldwide attention to the problems in their communities. In fact, boycotts have been expanded to cover everything from California grapes, beer (Coors), a certain brand of Jeans, all products made in the country of South Africa, a certain meat industry, and many things in between. Boycotts are more popular today than they ever have been.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the potential revolutionary power of a national Black boycott of America's major corporations, which is why he established "Operation Breadbasket" shortly before an assassin killed him. This organization, with offices in Chicago was designed to be the conduit for the funds that the corporations were going to be forced to pour money into for a national Black community development project for poor communities. And although he was assassinated before this could happen, we must continue his work in this matter. All over the country Black Boycott offices should be opened! We should build it into a mass movement, involving all sectors of our people. We should demonstrate, picket, and sit-in at meetings and offices of target corporations all

over the country We must take it to their very doorstep and stop their looting of the Black community.

A Black General Strike

Because of the role they play in production, Black workers are potentially the most powerful sector of the Black community in the struggle for Black freedom. The vast majority of the Black community is working class people. Barring the disproportionate numbers of unemployed, about 11 million Black men and women are today part of the work force of the United States. About 5–6 million of these are in basic industry, such as steel and metal fabrication, retail trades, food production and processing, meatpacking, the automobile industry, railroading, medical service and communications. Blacks number 1/3 to 1/2 of the basic blue-collar workers, and 1/3 of clerical laborers. Black labor is therefore very important to the Capitalist economy.

Because of this vulnerability to job actions by Black workers, who are some of the most militant workers on the job, they could take a leading role in a protest campaign against racism and class oppression. If they are properly organized they would be a class vanguard within our movement since they are at the point of production. Black workers could lead a nationwide General Strike at their place of work as a protest against racial discrimination in jobs and housing, the inordinately high levels of Black unemployment, brutal working conditions, and to further the demands of the Black movement generally. This general strike is a Socialist strike, not just a strike for higher wages and over general working conditions; it is revolutionary in politics using other means. This general strike can take the form of industrial sabotage, factory occupations or sit-ins, work slowdowns, wildcats, and other work stoppages as a protest to gain concessions on the local and national level and restructure the workplace and win the 4-hour day for North American labor. The strike would not only involve workers on the job, but also Black community and progressive groups to give support with picket line duty, leafleting and publishing strike support newsletters, demonstrations at company offices and work sites, along with other activities.

It will take some serious community and workplace organizing to bring a general strike off. In workplaces all over the country, Black workers should organize General Strike Committees at the workplaces, and Black Strike Support Committees to carry on the strike work inside the Black community itself. Because such a strike would be especially hard-fought and vicious, Black workers should organize Worker's Defense Committees to defend workers fired or black listed by the bosses for their industrial organizing work. This defense committee would publicize a victimized worker's case and rally support from other workers and the community. The defense committee would also establish, a Labor strike and defense fund and also start food cooperative to financially and material support such victimized workers and their families while carrying on the strike.

Although there will definitely be an attempt to involve women and white workers; where they are willing to cooperate, the strike would be under Black leadership

because only Black workers can effectively raise those issues which most effect them. White workers have to support the democratic rights of Blacks and other nationally oppressed laborers, instead of just white rights campaigns” on so-called “common economic issues,” led by the North American left. In addition to progressive North American individuals or union caucuses, the labor union locals themselves should be recruited, but they are not the force to lead this struggle, although their help can be indispensable in a particular campaign. It takes major organizing to make them break free of their racist and conservative nature. So although we want and need the support of our fellow workers of other nationalities and genders, it is ridiculous and condescending to just tell Black workers to sit around and wait for a “white workers vanguard” to decide it wants to fight. We will educate our fellow workers to the issues and why they should fight white supremacy at our side, but we will not defer our struggle for anyone! *We must organize the general strike for black freedom!*

The Commune: Community Control of the Black Community

How do we raise a new revolutionary consciousness against a system programmed against our old methods? We must use a new approach and revolutionize the Black Central City Commune, and slowly provide the people with the incentive to fight by allowing them to create programs, which will meet all their social, political, and economic, needs. We must fill the vacuums left by the established order... In return, we must teach them the benefits of our revolutionary ideals. We must build a subsistence economy, and a sociopolitical infrastructure so that we can become an example for all revolutionary people.

— George Jackson, in his book ‘BE’

The idea behind a mass commune is to create a dual power structure as a counter to the government, under conditions, which exist now. In fact, Anarchists believe the first step toward self-determination and the Social revolution is Black control of the Black community. This means that Black people must form and unify their own organizations of struggle, take control of the existing Black communities and all the institutions within them, and conduct a consistent fight to overcome every form of economic, political and cultural servitude, and any system of racial and class inequality which is the product of this racist Capitalist society.

The realization of this aim means that we can build inner-city Communes, which will be centers of Black counter-power and social revolutionary culture against the white political power structures in the principal cities of the United States. Once they assume hegemony, such communes would be an actual alternative to the State and serve as a force to revolutionize African people — and by extension — large segments of American society, which could not possibly remain immune to

this process. It would serve as a living revolutionary example to North American progressives and other oppressed nationalities.

There is tremendous fighting power in the Black community, but it is not organized in a structured revolutionary way to effectively struggle and take what is due. The white Capitalist ruling class recognizes this, which is why it pushes the fraud of “Black Capitalism” and Black politicians and other such “responsible leaders. These fakes and sellout artists lead us to the dead-end road of voting and praying for that which we must really be wilting to fight for. The Anarchists recognize the Commune as the primary organ of the new society, and as an alternative to the old society. But the Anarchists also recognize that Capitalism will not give up without a fight; it will be necessarily to economically and politically cripple Capitalist America. One thing for sure we should not continue to passively allow this system to exploit and oppress us.

The commune is a staging ground for Black revolutionary struggle. For instance, Black people should refuse to pay taxes to the racist government, should boycott the Capitalist corporations, should lead a Black General Strike all over the country, and should engage in an insurrection to drive the police out and win a liberated zone. This would be a powerful method to obtain submission to the demands of the movement, and weaken the power of the state. We can even force the government to make money available for community development as a concession; instead of as a payoff to buy-out the struggle as happened in the 1960s and thereafter. If we put a gun to a banker’s head and said “Yore know you’ve got the money, now give it up,” he would have to surrender. Now the question is: if we did the same thing to the government, using direct action means with an insurrectionary mass movement, would these would both be acts of expropriation? Or is it just to pacify the community why they gave us the money? One thing for sure, we definitely need the money, and however we compel it from the government, is of less important than the fact that we forced them to give it up to the people’s forces at all. We would then use that money to rebuild our communities, maintain our organizations, and care for the needs of our people. It could be a major concession, a victory.

But we have also got to realize that Africans in America are not simply oppressed by force of arms, but that part of the moral authority of the state comes from the mind of the oppressed that consent to the right to be governed. As long as Black people believe that some moral or political authority of the white government has legitimacy in their lives, that they owe a duty to this nation as citizens, or even that they are responsible for their own oppression, then they cannot effectively fight back. They must free their minds of the ideas of American patriotism and begin to see themselves as a new people. This can only be accomplished under

dual power, where the patriotism of the people for the state is replaced with love and support for the new Black commune. We do that by making the Commune a real thing in the day-to-day lives of ordinary people.

We should establish community councils to make policy decisions and administer the affairs of the Black community. These councils would be democratic neighborhood assemblies composed of representative elected by Black workers in various community institutions — factories, hospitals schools — as well as delegates elected on a block basis. We must reject Black Mayors and other politicians, or government bureaucrats, as a substitute for community power. We must therefore have community control of all the institutions of the Black community, instead of just letting the State decide what is good for us. Not just jobs and housing, but also full control over schools, hospitals, welfare cents, libraries, etc., must turned over to that community, because only the residents of a community have a true understanding of its needs and desires.

Here is an example of how it would work: we would elect a community council to supervise all schools in the Black community. We would encourage parents, students, teachers, and the community at large to work cooperatively in every phase of school administration, rather than have an authority figure like a principal and his/her uncaring bureaucratic administration run things as are done at present. The whole Black community will have to engage in a militant struggle to take over the public schools and turn them into centers of Black culture and learning. We cannot continue to depend on the racist or Black puppet school boards to do this for us.

The local council would then be federated, or joined together, on a local level to create a citywide group of councils who would run affairs in that community. The councils and other neighborhoods collectives organized for a variety of reasons would make a mass commune. This commune would be in turn federated at the regional and national level the aim being to create a national federation of Black communes, which would meet periodically in one or a number of mass assembly meetings. This federation would be composed of elected or appointed delegates representing their local commune or council Such a national federal of communes would allow community councils from all over North America to work out common policies and speak with one voice on all matters affecting their communities or regions. It would thus have far more power than any single community council could However, to prevent this national federation from bureaucratic usurpation of power by political factions or opportunistic leaders, elections should be held regularly and delegates would be subject to recall at any time for misconduct, so that they remain under the control of the local communities they represent.

The Black community councils are really a type of grassroots movement made up of all the social formations of our people, the block and neighborhood committees, Labor, student and youth groups, (even the church, to a limited degree), social activist groups, and others to unite the various protest actions around a common program of struggle for this period. The campaigns for this period must utilize the tactics of direct mass action, as it is very important that the people themselves must realize a sense of their organized power. These grassroots associations will provide to the usually mass spontaneous actions, a form of organization whose social base is of the Black working class, instead of the usual Black middle class mis-leadership.

The Anarchists recognize these community councils as being a form of direct democracy, instead of the type of phony American “democracy,” which is really nothing but control by politicians and businessmen. The councils are especially important because they provide embryonic self-rule and the beginnings of an alternative to the Capitalist economic system and its government. It is a way to undermine the government and make it an irrelevant dinosaur, because its services are no longer needed.

The Commune is also a Black revolutionary counterculture. It is the embryo of the new Black revolutionary society in the body of the old sick, dying one. It is the new lifestyle in microcosm, which contains the new Black social values and the new communal organizations, and institutions, which will become the sociopolitical infrastructure of the free society.

Our objective is to teach new Black social values of unity and struggle against the negative effects of white Capitalist society and culture. To do that we must build the Commune into a Black Consciousness movement to build race pride and respect, race and social awareness and to struggle against the Capitalist slave masters. This Black communalism would be both a repository of Black culture and ideology. We need to change both our lives and our lifestyles, in order to deal with the many interpersonal contradictions that exist in our community. We could examine the Black family, Black male/female relationships, the mental health of the Black community, relations between the community and the white establishment and among Black people themselves. We would hold Black consciousness raising sessions in schools, community centers, prisons and in Black communities all over North America — which would teach Black history and culture, new liberating social ideas and values to children and adults, as well as counseling and therapy techniques to resolve family and marital problems, all the while giving a Black revolutionary perspective to the issues of the day. Our people must be made to see that the self-hatred, disunity, distrust, internecine violence and oppressive social conditions among Black people are the result of the legacy

of African slavery and the present day effects of Capitalism. Finally the main objective of Black revolutionary culture is to agitate and organize Black people to struggle for their freedom.

As Steve Biko, the murdered South African revolutionary, has been quoted as saying:

“The call for Black consciousness is the most positive call to come from ally group in the Black world for a long time. It is more than just a reactionary rejection of whites by Blacks... At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realization by Black that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Once the latter has been so effectively manipulated and controlled try the oppressor as to make the oppressed believe that he is a liability to the white man, then there is nothing the oppressed can do that will really scare the powerful masters... The philosophy of Black consciousness, therefore expresses group pride and the determination by Blacks to rise up and attain the envisaged self.”

By the “envisaged self,” Biko refers to the Black self, a liberated psyche. It is that which we want to rescue with such a Black consciousness movement here in America. We need to counter Black self-hatred and the frivolous “party mentality. We also want to end the social degradation of our community, and rid it of drug addiction, prostitution, Black-on-Black crime, and other social evils that destroys the moral fiber of the Black community. Drugs and prostitution are mainly controlled by organized crime, and protected by the police, who accept bribes and gifts from gangsters. These negative social values, the so-called “dog-eat-dog” philosophy of the Capitalist system teaches people to be individualists of the worst sort. Willing to commit any kind of crime against each other, and to take advantage of each other. This oppressive culture is what we are fighting. As long as it exists, it will be hard to unify the people around a revolutionary political program.

Building A Black survival program

But there must also be some way to ensure their economic survival, in addition to providing new cultural role models. It is then when the Commune, a network of community organizations and institutions, assumes its greatest importance. We will build a sociopolitical infrastructure to intervene in every area of Black life: food and housing cooperatives, Black Liberation schools, people’s banks and community mutual aid funds, medical clinics and hospitals, rodent control and pest extermination programs, cooperative factories, community cultural and entertainment centers, the establishment of an intercommunal electronic communications network, land and building reclamation projects, public works

brigades to rebuild the cities, youth projects, drug clinics, and many other such programs.

All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the Black community, but they are not solutions to our problems, because although we can build a survival economy now, we have to realize it will take a social revolution to overthrow Capitalism and obtain full economic self-sufficiency. But they will help us to organize the Black community around a true analysis and understand of their situation. This is why they are called survival programs, meaning surviving under this system pending a social revolution.

Building consciousness and revolutionary culture means taking on realistic day-to-day issues, like hunger, the need for clothing and housing, joblessness, transportation and other issues. It means that the Commune must be in the vacuum where people are not being properly fed clothed, provided with adequate medical treatment or are otherwise being deprived of basic needs.

Contrary to the rhetoric of some leftist groups, this will not make people passive or just dependent on us. Rather than struggling against the government and demanding those things, it inspires confidence in the revolutionary forces and exposes the government as uncaring and incompetent. That is more of an incentive for the people to revolt and overthrow the government than balding political pep rallies, giving speeches, running for public office, and publishing manifestos and resolutions or party newspapers and other garbage (that no one reads but their own members), like most Black and radical groups do now.

We need a new way of confronting our oppressed situation. We need to unite our people to fight, and to do that we need to educate, agitate and organize. That's the only way we'll win a new world. What follows is an example of the and of survival program I mean:

- We must have community control of all businesses and financial institutions located in our communities, and for those businesses not working in our best interests or not returning some of its revenue back to the community, we will seize said businesses and turn them into community cooperatives and mutual aid banking societies.
- We must have community control of all housing and major input in all community planning of Black communities. If a piece of property or house is owned by a slumlord (either a private Realtor or government agency), we will seize it and turn it into community housing cooperatives. We oppose Urban Renewal, spatial decomposition, yuppie gentrification and other such racist schemes to drive us out of the cities. We must have complete control of all planning boards affecting and concerning the Black community. To enforce these demands, we should lead rent strikes, demonstrations, armed actions and urban squatting to drive landlords out and take over the property.

- We must have an independent self-sustaining economy to guarantee full employment for all our people. We demand that the U.S. government provide massive economic aid to rebuild the cities. The government spends billions per year for the Pentagon killing machine. At least that amount should be redirected to meet the needs of America's oppressed communities. Ghetto housing must be rebuilt and turned over to the occupants. Adequate jobs and services must be provided to all community residents including first preference for all construction jobs in the Black community, when public works brigades are assigned to rebuild the cities. We must fight for Black grassroots control of all government funds allocated to the Black community through a network of mutual aid banking societies, community development corporations, and community development credit unions.
- Reparations: the Big Payback. The United States government and the rich class of this country has stolen and oppressed Africans in this continent for decades. They worked our ancestors as slaves, and after slavery they continued to oppress, murder and exploit our people, on down to the present day. We must build a mass movement in our communities to compel the government and the rich to provide the means for our community redevelopment. They owe us for centuries of abuse and robbery! We must demand that reparations, in the form of community development money and other funds, be provided and placed in credit unions, cooperatives, and other mutual aid institutions in the Black community, so that we can start to obtain some measure of economic self sufficiency. Yet we know that they won't give the money to us. We must fight them for it, just like we must struggle to overturn the system of wage slavery today.
- End police brutality. We must organize self-defense units to protect the Black community and its organizations, and remove the State's police farces. We demand criminal prosecution and jailing of all brutal or killer cops. No jurisdiction for the State's judicial system in Black liberated zones.
- We must undertake a large-scale program to train Black people as doctors, nurses and medical paraprofessionals in order to make free quality medical and dental care available to Black people. We must demand that the government subsidize all such medical and dental training, as well as for the operation of clinics, but Black people themselves must establish and run the free medical clinics in all Black communities whether urban or rural. This would include community anti-drug programs and drug rehabilitation clinics.
- We must establish a Black community-controlled food system for self-sufficiency and as a way of fighting to end hunger and malnutrition, including a trucking network, warehouses, communal farms, farmers' cooperatives, food cooperatives, agricultural unions, and other collective associations. This will include a protest campaign challenging the theft of Black farmland by

agribusiness corporations and rich white “land barons” and reclaiming it for our projects. This is especially important now that the U.S. has entered an economic crisis that will not be able to provide for our needs. We must force the government to provide the money for many of these projects, to be administered under our total control, instead of by a government agency.

- The Black community must have control of its entire educational system from the nursery school through college. We must establish a Black Liberation educational system which meets the training needs of Black children, prepares them for job training and future economic security, service to their community, and gives them a knowledge of themselves and an understanding of the true history and culture of African people; as well as a program of adult education for community people whose earlier educational opportunities have been stunted. We should demand free higher education for Blacks and other minorities at full government expense, including remedial training programs for all who wish to qualify.
- We must demand and fight for the release of all Black political prisoners and victims of racial injustice, we must investigate and review the cases of all such prisoners who are the victims of government political repression and racist frame-ups, and lead a mass campaign for their release. Some of our best revolutionary organizers are rotting away in the prison houses of this land.
- The central demand is for Black control of the Black community, its politics and economy. We have to take over the cities, establish municipal communes, and exercise self-government, as a vital step. We are the majority in many of the major cities of this country and we should be able to control our own affairs (or at least obtain some autonomy), but as we should now be aware we won't ever get this community social power by voting for some Black Capitalist politician, or from passively depending for “salvation” on leaders of one sort or another. We have to do it ourselves if we are to ever get on the road to freedom.

The Need for a Black Labor Federation

The demand for Black labor has been the central economic factor in America; it was Black labor that built the foundations of this nation. Beginning with slave labor in the Old South on plantations, then with sharecropping and other farm labor after the Civil war, successive migration to the North and working mills, mine and factories during a 40 year period (1890–1920), and on down to the present day, Black labor is important to the functioning of the Capitalist economic order. Almost from the beginning, Black workers have organized their own Labor unions and worker's associations to represent their interests: the National Colored Labor Union in 1869, the national Colored Farmer's Alliance (Populist) in the same year, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the 1940s, the league of

Black Revolutionary Workers in the 1960s; the United Construction Workers Association and the Black and Puerto Rican Coalition of Construction Workers in the 1970s, and on down to the present day with such unions or associations as the Black Workers for Justice and the Coalition for Black Trade Unionists. Some of these were unions, some were just associations of Black workers in existing unions. (Note: In addition to Black organized or led labor federations in the 1870s, there were 90,600 Black workers in the Knights of Labor in the 1880s and at least 100,000 in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the 1900s.)

In fact, the trade unions would not even exist today if it were not for the assistance and support of the Black worker. Trade unionism was born as an effective national movement amid the great convulsions of the Civil War and the fight to end slavery, yet Black workers were routinely excluded from unions like the American Federation of Labor. Only militant associations like the Knights, IWW and the Anarchist-initiated International Working People's Association (IWPA) would accept their memberships at all. This continued for many years, until the founding of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) began its campaign of strikes, sit-downs, and other protest actions to organize the unskilled industrial workers. Black labor was pivotal in these battles, yet has never fully reaped the benefits. In fact, the Labor bosses betrayed them when the CIO was beaten down in the 1950s.

You would think that American labor movement would see it as criminal or racist to ignore these fellow workers today in that fashion. But even now there is no labor organization in the U. S. which gives full representation and equal treatment to Black workers. The fact is that even with some Black Labor officials in office, Black workers receive far fewer union benefits than white workers, and are trapped in the most low-paid, tedious and dangerous jobs, even though they made substantial economic gains during the 1960s.

The majority of the Black masses are in the working class. Because of the role they play in production, Black industrial and clerical workers are potentially the most powerful sector of the Black community in the struggle for Black liberation. As the victims of inequality in the economy, Black workers have already begun to organize for their interests and protect their rights on the job, even if the union is conservative and won't fight the boss. They have formed union caucuses and even independent labor unions where necessary. Of course, the unity of Black and white workers is indispensable to combat and overthrow Capitalism. But where white workers are now privileged and Black workers are penalized, Black unity and struggle must precede and prepare the ground for any Black-white unity on a broad scale. Black caucuses in the Unions can fight against discrimination in hiring, firing, and upgrading, and for equality of treatment in the unions, now, while white workers still have yet to widely support democratic rights for Black and other oppressed nationalities. Black Caucuses are important. Where they are part of organized labor, they should strive to democratize the unions, regenerate their fighting spirits, and eliminate white job trust practices. These Black caucuses in the unions should demand:

- Rank and file democratic control of the union.
- Equal rights and treatment for all unionists; eliminate all racist practices in the labor movement.
- Affirmative action programs to redress past racist employment practices, end racial discrimination based on seniority and other ploys.
- Full employment for all Blacks, women, and other non-white workers.
- A 20–30 hour workweek with no reduction in pay.
- The right to strike, including wildcat strikes without union sanction.
- Speedier and fair grievance procedures.
- An escalator clause in all union contracts to ensure automatic wage adjustments to keep up with the rising cost of living.
- Full payment of social security by employer and the government. Full unemployment compensation at 100 of base pay.
- Minimum wages at union scale.
- Prevent runaway shops, phony bankruptcy, or “strategic plant shutdowns” by companies without notice to union or to gain advantage in contract negotiations.
- A public works program to rebuild the Black and other inner-city communities, and to provide work for Black workers.
- Worker’s self-management of industry by factory committees and worker’s councils, elected by the workers themselves.

In addition to the union caucuses, Black working people need a national Black workers association, which would be both a revolutionary union movement to do workplace organizing, but also would be a mass social movement for community organizing. Such a movement would combine the organizing tactics to both the labor and Black Liberation movements. It is not designed to drive Blacks out of those unions where they are already organized, but would rather serve as a tool

to multiply their numbers and strength, and turn their unions into militant, class struggle instruments.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which organized Black auto workers during the late 190s provides an example of the type of organization needed. The League, which grew out of its major affiliate, the Dodge Revolutionary Movement (DRUM), was undoubtedly the most militant Black Labor movement in American history. It was a Black labor federation which existed as an organized alternative to the United Auto Workers, and was the inevitable step of taking the Black Liberation struggle to the industrial shop floor, the point of production, and Capitalism's most vulnerable area.

The League had wisely decided to organize in the Detroit automobile production industry. This was an industry where its workers were an important part of the workforce and also in the Detroit Black community, where the League united the struggle in the factories with that of the Black struggle as a whole. It quickly became a major force in the workplace and in the streets as many of its cadres organized on college campuses and in the Black inner-city areas. It had the potential to become a mass nationwide Black working class movement, but this potential was stifled through political faction fights among the leadership, lack of a solid organized base in the factories; company/UAW/and State repression, organized racism and lack of cooperation among white workers, and other such reasons. Eventually the League split into mutually hostile factions and died, after less than five years of existence.

Even though the League was at best a revolutionary syndicalism organization, and later a rigid Marxist-Leninist organization, (and their adoption of this later authoritarian ideology, with its ideas of purges and unquestioned leadership, directly lead to its demise), there is much that Anarchists and radical Black labor activists can learn from the League. The main thing is that Black workers can and should be organized into some sort of independent labor association, in addition to or even in lieu of, their membership in organized labor unions and especially where the unions are of the sellout type and discriminates against Blacks. Also it is much easier for Black workers to organize other Black workers and their community in support of strikes and workplace organizing. That is precisely why we need to establish a group like the League today, but as an Anarcho-Syndicalist organization, so as to avoid the past pitfalls and ideological squabbles of Marxism-Leninism. Simply stated what would be the program of a newly formed National Federation of Black Workers?

- For class struggle against the bosses.
- To organize the unorganized Black workers ignored by the trade unions.
- For workers solidarity among all nationalities of workers.

It should be an International Black Labor Federation!

From Detroit, Michigan to Durban, South Africa, from the Caribbean to Australia, from Brazil to England, Black workers are universally oppressed and exploited. The Black working class needs its own world labor organization. There is no racial group more borne down by social restraint than Black workers; they are oppressed as workers and as a people. Because of these dual forms of oppression and the fact that most trade unions exclude or do not struggle for Black laborer's rights, we must organize for our own rights and liberation. Even though in many African and Caribbean countries there are "Black" labor federations, they are reformist or government-controlled. There is a large working class in many of these countries, but they have no militant labor organizations to lead the struggle. The building of a Black workers' movement for revolutionary industrial sabotage and a general strike, or organize the workers for self-management of production, and so undermine and overthrow the government is the number one priority.

What would an international Black labor federation stand for? Firstly, since many Black workers, farmers, and peasants are not organized at all in most countries, such an organization would be one big union of Black workers, representing every conceivable skill and vocation. Also such an organization means the worldwide unity of Black workers, and then, secondly, it means coordinated international labor revolts. Capital and Labor have nothing in common.

The real strength of workers against Capital and the imperialist countries is economic warfare. A revolutionary general strike and boycott of the multinational corporations and their goods by Black workers all over the globe is how they can be hurt. For instance, if we want to make Britain and the USA withdraw financial and military support from South Africa then we use the weight and power of Black Labor in those countries to wage strikes, sabotage, boycott and other forms of political and economic struggle against those countries and the multinational companies involved. It would be a power to be reckoned with. For instance, coordinated actions by trade unions and political action groups in that country have already caused major-policy changes, a full-fledged general strike would likely lead to the total economic collapse of the racist South African state, especially if such strikes were supported by Black workers in North America.

In addition to asking the Black workers to form their own international labor federation and to organize rank-and-file committees within their existing trade unions to push them into a class struggle direction, we also invite Black workers to join Anarcho-Syndicalist labor organizations like the IWW and the Workers Solidarity Alliance, the American section of the International Workers' Association, which is based in Paris, France. But, of course, it is not intended to drive Black workers out of those unions where they are already active, but would rather serve as a tool to multiply their number and strength in such unions, and make them more militant.

Unemployment and Homelessness

In the first three months of 1993, the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics listed official unemployment rates at about six million persons or just

seven of the labor force. Under Capitalism half that figure is “normal” and nonsensically is considered by Capitalist economists as “full employment” even though this is millions of people consigned to economic poverty of the worst sort. But the government figures are intentionally conservative, and do not include those who have given up actively searching for jobs, the under employed (who can’t make enough to live on), the part-time workers (who can’t find a full time or steady job) and the homeless of which there are now between 3–5 million alone.

Of the 6 million people that the government does count as jobless now, less than 3 million are given any unemployment compensation or other federal or state aid; the rest are left to starve, steal or hustle for their survival. A person without a job under the Capitalist system is counted as nothing. Every worker has the human right to a job; yet under Capitalism, workers are dismissed from employment in times of business crisis, overproduction, depression or just to save labor costs through less workers and more speed-up. And some workers cannot find jobs in the Capitalist labor market because of lack of skills, or racial or social discrimination.

But the government’s figures lie, private researchers state that the total number of people who want full time jobs and thus cannot find them amounts to nearly 14.3 million persons. Clearly then this is a crisis situation of broad proportions, but all the government is doing is juggling and hiding figures. But the figures do show that Blacks, Latinos, and women are bearing the brunt of the current depression. The National Urban League in its “Bidden Unemployment Index” (included as part of its annual “State of Black America” report) reports levels of 15–38 percent for Black adults 25 and older and incredible levels of 44–55% for teens and young adults 17–24 years. In fact, Black youth unemployment has not declined at all since the 1974–1975 recession. It has stayed at an official level of 35–40 percent, but in the major cities like Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, the real unemployment rate is more like 70 percent. For Black youth the unemployment rate is three to five times higher than that of white youth. Capitalism is making economic exiles of Black people as a whole. The fact is that unemployment is concentrated in the Black and Hispanic communities, and is greatly responsible for the most destructive tendencies inhuman relations and deteriorating neighborhoods. Crime, prostitution, suicide, drug addiction, gang fighting, mental illness, alcoholism, and the break up of the Black family, and other social ills — all are rooted in the lack of jobs and the denial of essential social services in their communities. It is actually racial genocide in the form of social neglect.

Unemployment is profitable for the bosses because it drives down the wages of workers and helps the employers to keep the workforce under control through this “reserve army of labor,” which are allegedly always ready to scab. Because of pervasive discrimination against Blacks, Latinos and other nationally oppressed workers, including higher levels unemployment — the jobs they do get are generally on the bottom rung. This is also profitable for the boss, and divides the working class.

Homelessness is just the most intensified form of unemployment, where in addition to loss of job or income, there is loss of housing and lack of access to social services. There are now millions of people homeless since the last 15 years, because of the Capitalist offensive to destroy the unions, beat back the gains of the civil rights struggle, and do away with the affordable housing sector in favor of yuppie gentrification in the cities. You see them in cities, big and small, and what this reflects is a total breakdown in the Capitalist State's social services system, in addition to the heating up of the class war waged by government and the major corporations. It shows, more than anything, that Capitalism worldwide is undergoing an international financial panic, and is really in the beginning stages of a world depression. In addition to the 90 million persons who live below the poverty line and three to five million homeless in the U.S.; there are another 2.7 million homeless in the twelve nations of the European community, and 80 million people are living in poverty there, with millions more in the Capitalist countries of Japan, Korea and other parts of Asia. So although Black workers must organize and fight against homeless and unemployment in the U.S., clearly there must be an international movement of workers to fight this economic deprivation, as part of the overall class struggle. In every city in North America, the Black workers movement should organize unemployment councils to fight for unemployment benefits and jobs for the jobless, the building of decent, affordable low-income housing and an end to homelessness, as well as against racial discrimination in jobs and housing. Such councils would be democratic organizations, organized on a neighborhood basis, (to ensure that it would be under the control of the people, and against infiltration and takeover by liberal or "radical" political parties, or co-optation by the government), which would be federated into a citywide, regional, and national organization. That organization would be a national Black unemployment league, to create a mass fight back movement in this depression. It would be made up of Black community unemployed councils from all over the country, with delegates elected from all the local groups. Such a national organization could meet to map out a large-scale attack on unemployment, as well as serve as a national clearinghouse on Black unemployment conditions.

On the local level in the Black neighborhoods, it would be the community unemployment councils which would establish food and housing cooperatives, lead rent strikes and squatting, initiate land and building reclamation projects, establish producer and consumer cooperatives, distribute food and clothing, and provide for other services: they would establish neighborhood medical clinics for free treatment of the homeless and unemployed, rodent control programs, etc., and they would deal with community social problems (brought on by unemployment), and other issues of interest. They would build hunger marches and other demonstrations and carry the people's wrath to various government offices and to the businesses of the rich. Not only would the unemployment councils be a way of fighting for jobs and unemployment benefits, but also the councils would be a way to obtain a great deal of community self-sufficiency and direct democracy, instead of totally depending on city hall, Congress or the

President, and helps lead to the kind of confidence among the masses that a Black municipal commune becomes a serious possibility.

One of the most important functions of an unemployment movement is to obtain unity between the employed and unemployed or homeless, and workers solidarity across race lines. The employed and unemployed must work together to struggle against the Boss class if they are to obtain any serious gains during this period of economic crisis. Workers who are on strike or protesting against the boss would be supported by the unemployed, who would even man the picket lines with them and refuse to scab. In turn the workers would form unemployed caucus in their trade unions to allow union representation of these workers and also force such unions to provide food and other necessities, make funds and training available to the unemployed, as well as throw the weight of the unions in the fight for decent jobs and housing for all workers. The Capitalist bosses will not be moved otherwise. *Make the bosses pay for their economic crisis!*

Here is what a united movement of workers and homeless must demand:

- Full employment (zero unemployment) for all workers at union wage.
- Establishment of a shorter workweek, so that workers would be paid at the rate for 40 hours of work for 20–30 hours a week on the job.
- End homelessness, build and make available decent affordable housing for all. Repeal all loitering, anti-panhandling and other laws against the homeless.
- End the war budget, and use those funds for decent, low-income housing, better schools, hospitals and clinics, libraries, parks and public transportation.
- End racism and sexism in job opportunities and relief benefits.
- Jobs or a guaranteed income for all.
- Full federal and state benefits for unemployed workers and their families, including corporate and government funds to pay the bills, rents and debts for any laid off worker, and unemployment compensation at 100% of regular paid wage, lasting the full length of a worker's period of unemployment.
- National minimum wage set at prevailing union entry wage.
- Government and corporate funds to establish a public works program to provide jobs (with full union rights and wage scale) to rebuild the inner cities and provide needed social services. The program and its funds should be under the control of committees democratically elected from poor and Black neighborhoods, so as to avoid "poverty pimps" and rip off job agencies, or

government bureaucrats.

- Free all persons in prison for crimes of economic survival.

These, and the demands previously mentioned, are merely a survival program and agenda for unemployed workers; the real answer is Social revolution the elimination of Capitalism, and workers' self-management of the economy and society. This is a vital first step however. There would be no unemployment or social need for wage labor in an Anarchist-Communist society.

Crimes Against the People

It is the rich who decide what is or is not a crime; it is not a neutral designation. The laws are written to protect the rich and those who act as agents of the State. But most personal crimes are not committed against the rich, they are usually inaccessible. It is poor and working class Black people who are the major victims of violent crime. The Black female is the primary victim of rape and abuse by the Black male in this country. The Black male himself is the leading homicide victim in the U.S. by another Black man like himself, and sadly our children are among the leading victims of child abuse, many times by his or her own parents. We do not like to think of these things in the Black community, but we are battering and killing ourselves at an alarming rate. This is not to deny that the Capitalist social system has created frustrating, degrading conditions of life that contribute to this brutality and fratricide, but we would be lax in our humane and revolutionary duty if we did not try to correct this problem on the short-term, and also make Black people assume responsibility for our actions. I am not talking some Black conservative or "law and order" garbage here, but rather recognition of fact that we have a problem.

We have an external and an internal crisis situation facing us in our community. The external crisis is racism and colonialism, which works to systematically oppress us and is responsible for whatever internal crisis there is. The internal crisis is the result of an environment where drugs and violence (both social and physical) are rampant, and life is sometimes considered cheap. Black-on-Black crimes and internal violence are destroying our community. It is undoubtedly self-hatred and the desperate economic and social conditions we live under which makes us prey on each other. Drugs, frustrated rage, prostitution and other vices are symptoms of oppression.

We kill, beat, rape and brutalize each other because we are in pain ourselves. Thus we are acting out anti-social roles defined for us by someone else, not ourselves. In our pain and confusion we strike out at convenient and familiar victims; those like ourselves. There are ordinary Black people who steal and rob just to survive under this system, because of that unequal distribution of wealth. Further, for some of us, in our desire to "make it" in Capitalist society we will stop

at nothing, including murder. And finally, there are those who do whatever they do because of drug addiction or mental sickness.

Whatever the reasons, we have a serious problem that we must remedy because it is tearing away at the moral and social fabric of our community. It will be impossible to unite Black people if they are in fear and hatred of one another. It is also obvious that the police and government rectify this problem and that only the Black community can do so. The courts and prison prevent the situation from recurring. Therefore what can we do?

It is the community, through its own organizations of concern, which will have to deal with this problem. Community self-managed programs to work with Black youth gang members, (a source of much violence in the community), rather than the military approach of calling in the cops, empower the community rather than the racist prison bureaucracy and the cops. Also, the community-run drug rehabilitation groups, therapy and counseling groups, and other neighborhood organizing help us to effectively deal with the problem of internal violence and hopefully defuse it. Most importantly it involves the community in the effort.

But we cannot totally depend upon counseling or rehabilitation techniques, especially where there is an immediate threat of violence or where it has occurred. So, to insure peace and public security, a Black community guard service would be organized for this purpose, as well as to protect against the white Power structure. This security force would be elected by local residents, and would work with the help of people in neighborhoods. This is the only way it would work. It would not be an auxiliary of the current colonial occupation army in our community, and would not threaten or intimidate the community with violence against our youth. Nor would such a community guard protect vice and organized crime. This community guard would only represent the community that elected it, instead of city hall. Similar such units would be organized all over the city on a block-by-block basis.

Yet the Anarchists go further, and say that after a municipal commune is set up, the existing courts must be replaced by voluntary community tribunals of arbitration, and in cases of grave crimes, connected with murder, or offenses against liberty and equality, a special communal court of a non-permanent nature would be set up. Anarchists believe that antisocial crime, meaning anything that oppresses, robs, or does violence to the working class must be vigorously opposed. We cannot wait until after the revolution to oppose such dangerous enemies of the people. But since such antisocial crimes are a direct expression of Capitalism, there would be a real attempt to socialize, politically educate and rehabilitate offenders. Not by throwing them into the white Capitalist prisons to suffer like animals and where, because of their torture and humiliation, they will declare war on all society, but by involving them in the life of the community and giving them social and vocational training. Since all the "criminology experts" agree that crime is a social problem, and since we know that 88 percent of all crimes are

against property and are committed in order to survive in an economically unjust society, we must recognize that only full employment, equal economic opportunity, decent housing and other aspects of social justice will ensure an end to crime. In short, we must have radical social change to eradicate the social conditions that cause crime. An unequal unfair society like Capitalism creates its own criminal class. The real thieves and murderers, businessmen and politicians, are protected under today's legal system, while the poor are punished. That is class justice, and that is what Social revolution would abolish.

But understandably, many persons want to end the rape, murder, and violence in our communities today, and wind up strengthening the hands of the State and its police agents. They will not get rid of crime, but the cops will militarily patrol our communities, and further turn us against one another. We must stay away from that trap. Frustrated and confused, Black people may attack one another, but instead of condemning them to a slow death in prison or shooting them down in the streets for revenge, we must deal with the underlying social causes behind the act.

Anarchists should begin to have community forums on the cause and manifestations of crime in the Black community. We have to seriously examine the social institutions: family, schools, prisons, jobs, etc. that cause us to fuss, fight, rob and kill each other, rather than the enemy who is causing all our misery. While we should mobilize to restrain offenders, we must begin to realize that only the community will effectively deal with the matter. Not the racist Capitalist system, with its repressive police, courts and prisons. Only we have psychology and understanding to deal with it; now we must develop the will. No one else cares.

Instead of eye-for-eye punishment, there should be restitution to the victims, their families or society. No revenge, such as the death penalty will bring a murder victim back, nor will long-term imprisonment serve either justice or the protection of society. After all, prisons are only human trashcans for those that society has discarded as worthless. No sane and just society would adopt such a course. Society makes criminals and must be responsible for their treatment. White capitalist society is itself a crime, and is the greatest teacher of corruption and violence.

In an Anarchist society, prisons would be done away with, along with courts and police (except for the exceptions I have alluded to), and be replaced with community-run programs and centers interested solely with human regeneration and social training, rather than custodial supervision in a inhuman lockup. The fact is that if a person is so violent or dangerous, he is probably mentally warped or has some physical defect anyway, which causes him to commit violent acts after social justice has been won. If such people are mentally defective, then they should be placed in a mental health facility, rather than a prison. Human rights should never be stripped and he should not be punished. Schools, hospitals,

doctors and above all social equality, public welfare and liberty might prove the safest means to get rid of crimes and criminals together. If a special category such as “criminal” or “enemy” is created, then these persons may forever feel an outcast and never change. Even if he or she is a class enemy, they should retain all civil and human rights in society, even though they of course would be restrained if they led a counter-revolution; the difference is we want to defeat them ideologically, not militarily or by consigning them to a so-called reeducation camp or to be shot like the Bolsheviks did when assuming power in Russia in 1917.

There are two major reasons why activists in the Black community as we move to change society, its values and conditions, must immediately take a serious look and act to change the political debate around crime, prisons and the so-called criminal justice system. Those two reasons hit right home! One is because during any given year, one out of four Black men in this country is in prison, in jail on parole, or probation, compared to just one of every fifteen white men. In fact Blacks make up 50–85 percent of most prison populations around the U.S., making a truism of the radical phraseology that “Prisons are concentration camp for the Black and poor.” It may be your brother, sister, husband, wife, daughter or son in prison, but I guarantee you we all know someone in prison at this very minute! The other primary reason Blacks have a vested interest in crime and penal institutions is because by far, most Blacks and other non-whites are in prison for committing offenses against their own community.

Prisons are compact duplicates of the Black community, in that many of the same negative and destructive elements that are allowed to exist in our community and cause crime, especially drugs, are in poison in a more blatant and concentrated form. To call such places ‘correctional’ or ‘rehabilitative’ institutions is a gross misnomer. Death camps are more like it. These prisons do not exist to punish everyone equally, but to protect the existing Capitalist system from you and I, the poor and working class.

The high rate of recidivism proves, and the so-called authorities all agree, that the prison system is a total failure. About 70 percent of those entering prison are repeat offenders who commit increasingly serious crimes. The brutality of prison experience and the “ex-con” stigma when they are finally released make them worse. Basic to solving these crucial problems is organization. The Black community and the Black Liberation movement must support the prisoners in their fight for prisoners human rights. They should fight for the release of political prisoners and victims of racial injustice. They should also form coalitions of groups in the Black community to fight against the racist penal and judicial system, and especially the unequal application of the death penalty, which is just another form of genocide against the Black race. And finally, and maybe most importantly, local community groups must begin programs of re-education with brothers and sisters in prison because only through planned, regular, and constant contact can we begin to resolve this problem that so directly touches our lives. Abolish prisons.

The Drug Epidemic: A New Form of Black Genocide?

One of the worst forms of criminality is drug dealing, and it deserves same separate comments all its own. There is a negative drug subculture in the Black community that glorifies, or at least makes acceptable, drug use, even though it is killing us and destroying our community. In fact, every day we read of some junkie in our communities dying over an overdose of drugs, or of some street corner drug dealer dying from a shootout over a dispute or tip-off during a drug deal “gone sour.” The tragedy of the latter is that, these days, innocent victims — children or elderly people — have also been gunned down in the crossfire. The drug addict (the new term seems to be “crack-head”) is another tragic figure; he was a human being just like anyone else, but because of his oppressed social environment, sought drugs to ease the pain or to escape temporarily from the “concrete jungles” we are forced live in the urban ghettos of America.

With the introduction of crack, a more powerful derivative of cocaine, which made its appearance in the 1980s, even more problems and tragedies of this sort had developed — more addicts, more street gang killings, and more deterioration of our community. In the major urban areas there have almost always been drug uses, what is new is the depth of geographical penetration of crack to Black communities in all areas of the country. But the spread of crack is just a follow-up to massive government drug peddling that began at the end of the decade of the 1960s. The white House is the “rock house,” meaning the U.S. political administration is behind the whole drug trade. The U.S. government has actually been smuggling drugs into this country for many years aboard CIA and military planes to use as a chemical warfare weapon against Black America. These drugs were mostly heroin imported from the so-called “Golden Triangle” of Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. But with the introduction of crack cocaine, there was no need to import drugs into the country at the same extent as before, because it could be chemically prepared in a mainland lab, and then distributed immediately. Crack created a whole new generation of drug clients and customers for the drug dealers; it was cheap and highly addictive.

Crack and other drugs are a huge source of profits for the government, and it keeps the Black community passive and politically indifferent. That is the main reason why we cannot depend upon the police force and or the government to stop the drug traffic or help the victims hooked on drugs. They are pushing the drugs to beat us down, on the one hand, but the State is also made more powerful because of the phony “war on drugs” which allows police state measures in Black and oppressed communities, and because of millions of dollars in government monetary appropriations made of “law enforcement” agencies, who supposedly are putting down the traffic in drugs. But they never go after the bankers or the big business pharmaceutical companies who fund the drug trade, just the street level dealers, who are usually poor Blacks.

Unemployment is another reason that drug trafficking is so prevalent in our communities. Poor people will desperately look for anything to make money with, even the very drugs that are destroying out communities. But if people have no

jobs or income, drugs look very lucrative and the best way out of the situation. In fact, the drug economy has become the only income in many poor Black communities, and the only thing that some people perceive will lift them out of lives of desperate poverty. Clearly, decent jobs at a union wage are part of the answer to ending drug trafficking in our community, rather than a dependence on police, courts and the State. The cops are not our friends or ally, and must be exposed for their part in protecting the trade, rather than suppressing it.

Only the community can stop drug trafficking, and it is our responsibility however you look at it. After all, those junkies are our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, neighbors and friends; they are no strangers. We must organize to save their lives and the life of our community. We must establish anti-dope programs in Black communities all over the country. We must expose and counter the government's role as pusher of dope, along with that of the police as protector of the drug trade. But also we must be prepared to help the drug victims with street counseling, street clinics (where they can clean-up and learn a trade and the sociopolitical reasons for drug use), propaganda against drug use, and other activities.

Junkies are the victims of the drug society, which thinks its cool to use drugs. Children are some of the biggest victims of drug dealing, when they are tricked or forced (by economic necessity) into using or selling it. The users and dealers both are victims, but the dealers are something else than entirely innocent. Even though that Black man on the corner selling dope bags is a victim himself of the economic and political system which makes him do it, dope dealers are a corrupt, dangerous breed who must be stopped. Many people have been killed or seriously injured for naively trying to oppose dope dealers, and make them leave their neighborhoods. Therefore, whereas the policy with junkies would be more benevolent and understanding, with dope dealers we must be cautious, and even ruthless when it is called for. We need to try to win them over first with an economic and political program to draw them away from the drug trade, but many of the dealers are so violence prone, especially the "big shots" (who are also protected by the cops) they must be opposed by both military and political means.

We are not advocating the summary murder of people, but we are saying if it takes death to bring about a change in the community, so be it! The issue of death is essentially an issue of who is doing the dying. It can be direct and exercised against the death merchant, or it can be indirect and exercised against our youth — if we let it. To be aware of a dangerous situation and not move to change it is to be as responsible for that dangerous situation as those who created it in the first place.

Listen, I don't want to simplify this problem by saying that just kill a few street-level dealers and that will end it. No it won't, *and we don't want to do that anyway!* They are just poor people trying to survive this system, just pawns in the drug game whose lives don't matter to the big Capitalists or government. When they say so these street level dealers will be killed or imprisoned, but the drug peddling system will go on. This is a sociopolitical problem, which can best be addressed by grassroots organizations. But it's the corporate and industrial

backers of the drug trade (not just the corner dealer) that not only must not only be exposed, but must be moved on. In addition to educational, agitation and other action, there must be military action by revolutionary cells.

The underground actions which we are asking people to move an can be carried out by a relatively small group of dedicated people, a revolutionary cell of armed fighters, who have been trained in guerilla tactics But even these small groups of people must have the support of the neighborhoods in order to function, otherwise people will not know it from another violent gang. Once this social cohesiveness exists among the community, then we can begin to put this proposal into action against the most violent, high-level drug dealers. We are addressing ourselves to what can be more or less be considered to be guidelines for dealing with the problem on a neighborhood or community-wide level then at a national level:

- Set up drug education classes in the community, for the youth especially, to expose the nature of the drug trade, who it hurts, and how the government, banks, and pharmaceutical companies are behind it all.
- Exposure of the death merchants and their police protectors. (Photos, posters, fliers, newsletters, etc.)
- Harassment of the dealers; i.e., threatening phone calls, knocking the drug “product,” have citizens marching inside their “place of business,” and other tactics.
- Set up drug rehabilitation clinics so that junkies can be treated, can study the nature of their oppression, and can be won over to revolutionary politics. We must win people away from drug use and to the revolution.
- Physical elimination of the dealer; intimidation driving him out a neighborhood or out of town, beatings, and assassination, where necessary.

Dope is death! We must fight dope addiction by any means necessary! Do all you can to help your people in the anti-dope war!

African Intercommunalism

The Anarchist ideals lead logically to internationalism or more precisely transnationalism, which means beyond the nation-state. Anarchists foresee a time when the nation-state will cease to have any positive value at all for most people, and will in fact be junked. But that time is not yet here, and until it is, we must organize for intercommunalism, or world relations between African people and their revolutionary social movements, instead of their governments and heads of state.

The Black Panther Party first put forward the concept of intercommunalism in the 1960s and, although slightly different, is very much a libertarian concept at its core. (This used to be called “Pan Africanism,” but included mainly “revolutionary” governments and colonial or independence movements as allies). Because of the legacy of slavery and continuing economic neocolonialism, which has dispersed Blacks to every continent, it is feasible to speak of Black international revolutionary solidarity.

Here is how Anarchists see the world: the world is presently organized into competing nation-states, which though the Capitalist Western nations have been responsible for most of the world’s famine, imperialism and exploitation of the non-white peoples of the earth. In fact, all states are instruments of oppression. Even though there are governments that claim to be “workers states,” “Socialist countries” or so-called “Revolutionary governments,” in essence they all have the same function: dictatorship and oppression of the many over the few. The bankruptcy of the state is further proven when one looks at the millions of dead over two world wars, sparked by European Imperialism, (1914–1918 and 1939–1945), and hundreds of “brush wars” incited by the superpowers of the West or Russia in the 1950s and continuing to this day. This includes “workers’ states” like China-Russia, Vietnam-China, Vietnam-Cambodia. Somalia- Ethiopia, Russia-Czechoslovakia and others who have gone to war over border disputes, political intrigue, invasion or other hostile action. As long as there are nation-states, there will be war, tension and national enmity.

In fact, the sad part about the decolonization of Africa in the 1960s was that the countries were organized into the Eurocentric ideal of the nation-state, instead of some sort of other formation more applicable to the continent, such as a continental federation. This, of course, was a reflection of the fact that although the Africans were obtaining “flag independence” and all the trappings of the sovereign European state, they in fact were not obtaining freedom. The Europeans still controlled the economies of the African continent, and the nationalist leaders who came to the fore were for the most part the most pliable and conservative possible. Tire countries of Africa were like a dog with a leash around its neck; although the Europeans could no longer rule the continent directly thorough colonial rule, it now did so through puppets it controlled and defended, like Mobutu in the Congo, Selassie in Ethiopia, and Kenyatta in Kenya. Many of these men were dictators of the worst sort and their regimes existed strictly because of European finance capital. In addition, there were white settler communities in the Portuguese colonies, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, who oppressed the African peoples even worse than the old colonial system. This is why the national liberation movements made their appearances in the 1960s and 70s.

Anarchists support national liberation movements to the degree that they struggle against a colonial or imperialist power; but also note that in almost every instance where such liberation fronts have assumed state power, they have become “State Communist” parties and new dictators over the masses of the people. These include same who had engaged in the most epic struggles, but also include many based on the most obvious military dictatorship from the start. They are not

progressive and they tolerate no dissent For instance, no sooner had the MPLA government been in power in Angola, than it began to arrest all its left-wing ideological opponents (Maoists, Trotskyites, Anarchists, and others) and to forcibly to quell strikes by workers for higher pay and better working conditions, calling such job actions “blackmail” and ‘economic sabotage.” And with the Nito Alves affair and his alleged coup attempt, (Alves was a hero of the revolution and a popular military leader), there was the first party purge of opponents in the new government. Something similar to this also took place when the Sandinista National Liberation movement took over in Nicaragua in the 1980s. None of this should seem strange or uncharacteristic to Anarchists, when we consider that the Bolshevik party did the same thing when it consolidated state power during the Russian Revolution (1917–1921).

Countries such as Benin, Ethiopia, the People’s Republic of the Congo and other “revolutionary” governments in Africa, are not in power as the result of a popular social revolution, but rather because of a military coup or being installed by one of the major world powers Further; many of the national liberation movements were not independent social movements, but were rather under the influence or control of Russia or China as part of their geopolitical struggle against Western imperialism and each other. This is not to say that revolutionary movements should not accept weapons and other material support from an outside power, as long as they remain independent politically and determine their own policies, without such aid being conditional on the political dictates and the “party line” of another country.

But even though we may differ with them politically and tactically in many areas, and even with all their flaws after assuming State power, the revolutionary liberation fighters are our comrades and allies in common struggle against the common enemy — the U.S. imperialist ruling class, while the fight goes on. Their struggle releases the death grip of U.S. and western imperialism or as Anarchists more precisely call it Capitalist world power), and while the fight goes on we are bound together in comradeship and solidarity. Yet we still cannot overlook atrocities committed by movements like the Khmer Rouge, a Marxist-Leninist guerilla movement in Cambodia, which just massacred millions of people to carry out rigid Stalinist political policies and to consolidate the country. We must lay this butchery and other crimes committed by State Communism bare for all to see. We do not favor this kind of revolution, which is just sheer power seeking and terrorism against the people. This is why Anarchism has always disagreed with how the Bolsheviks seized power in Soviet Russia; and Stalin’s butchery of the Russian people seems to have set a model for the State Communist movements to follow over the years.

The national liberation fronts make one basic mistake of many nationalist movements of oppressed peoples, and that is to organize in a fashion that class distinctions are obliterated This happened in America, where in the fight for democratic rights, the civil rights movement included Black middle class preachers, teachers and others, and every Black persons was a “brother” or “sister,” as long as they were Black. But this simplistic analysis and social reality

did not hold for long, because when the Civil rights phase of the American Black struggle had spent itself, class distinctions and class struggle came to the fore. They have been getting sharper ever since. Although there are Black mayors and other bureaucrats, they merely serve as pacification agents of the State, “Black faces in high places.” This neocolonial system is similar to the type of neocolonialism which took place in the 3rd World, after many countries had obtained their “independence” in the 1960s. Europe still maintained control through puppet politicians and a command of petty bourgeois class, who were willing to barter the freedom of the people for personal gains. These people merely preside over the misery of the masses. They are not a serious concession to our struggle. They are put in office to co-opt the struggle and deaden the people to their pain.

So while Black revolutionaries generally favor the ideas of African intercommunalism, they want principled revolutionary unity. Of course, the greatest service we can render the peoples of the so-called “Third World” of Africa, Asia and Latin America, is to make a revolution here in North America — in the belly of the beast. For in freeing ourselves, we get the U.S. imperialist ruling class off both our backs. We wish to build an international Black organization against Capitalism, racism, colonialism, imperialism, and military dictatorship, which could more effectively fight the Capitalist powers and create a world federation of Black peoples. We want to unite a brother or sister in North America with the Black peoples of Australia and Oceania, Africa, the Caribbean and South America, Asia, the Middle East, and those millions of our people living in Britain and other Western European countries. We want to unite tribes, nations and Black cultures into an international body of grassroots and struggling forces.

All over the world, Black people are being oppressed by their national governments. Some are colonial subjects in European countries, and one or another of the African States exploits some. Only a Social revolution will lead to Black unity and freedom. However this will only be possible when there exists an international Black revolutionary organization and social movement. An organization which can coordinate the resistance struggles everywhere of African peoples; actually a network of such organizations, resistance movements, which are spread all over the world based on a consensus for revolutionary struggle. This concept accepts any level of violence that will be necessary to enforce the demands of the people and workers. In those countries where an open Black revolutionary movement would be subjected to fierce repression by the state, such as in South Africa and in some Black puppet dictatorships in other parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia, it would be necessary to wage an underground resistance struggle. Further, the state has grown more and more violent, with widespread torture and executions, prisons and maximum police controls, spying and deprivation of democratic rights, police brutality and murder. Clearly such governments — and all governments — must be overthrown. They will not fall due to internal economic or political problems, but must be defeated and dismantled. So we call for an international resistance movement to overthrow governments and the system of Capitalist world government.

But even in the Western imperialist countries, we must recognize the legitimacy of revolutionary violence. When such forms of revolutionary action are required, however, a clear difference should be seen among revolutionaries between simple terrorism without popular support and coherent political program and guerilla warfare arising out of the collectively felt frustrations of the common people and workers. The use of military methods would be necessary in a case where the violence of the state made it imperative for Black revolutionaries to defend themselves by taking the armed offensive against the state and the ruling class, and to expropriate the wealth of the Capitalist class during the Social revolution.

The Black liberation movement needs an organization capable of international coordination of the Black liberation struggle, a world federation of African peoples. Although this would not just be an Anarchist movement a federation like this would be made effective than any group of states, whether the United Nation or the Organization of African Unity, in freeing the Black masses. It would involve the masses of people themselves, not just national leaders or nation states. The military dictators and government bureaucrats have only proven that they know how to spend money on pomp and circumstance, but not how to dismantle the last vestiges of colonialism in South Africa or defeat Western neocolonialist intrigues. Africa is still the poorest of the World's continents, while materially the richest. The contrast is clear: millions of people are starving in much of Equatorial Africa, but the tribal chiefs, politicians and military dictators, are driving around in Mercedes and living in luxury villas, while they do the bidding of West European and American bankers through the International Monetary Fund. They are part of the problem, not part of the solution!

Our ideas about the importance of intercommunalism are based on a firm belief that only a federation of free peoples will bring true Black power to the masses "Power to the people" does not mean a government or political party to rule in their name, but social and political power in the hands of the people themselves. The only real "people's power" is the power to make their decisions on matters of importance, and to merely elect someone else to do so, or to have a dictatorship forced down their throats. True freedom is to have full self-determination about one's social economic and cultural development. The future is Anarchist Communism, not the nation-state, bloody dictators, Capitalism or wage slavery.

Armed Defense of the Black Commune

Our insistence on military action, defensive and retaliatory, has nothing to do with romanticism or precipitous idealist fervor. We want to be effective. We want to live. Our history teaches us that the successful liberation struggles require an armed people, a whole people, actively participating in the struggle for their liberty!

— George Jackson, quoted in *Blood in my Eye*

We must organize self-defense units to protect the Black community and its organizations. It is the police and the government who are the main perpetrators

of violence against Black people. Every day we read of the police murdering and maiming the people in our community, all in the name of “law and order.” This police brutality has included the use of deadly force against children as young as five years old and elderly persons over 75 years old! We must disarm and demilitarize the police, and force them to leave our community. Perhaps this can be done after a rebellion or insurrection drives them out, or perhaps they will have to be driven out by a street guerilla force, like the Black Liberation Army tried to do in the 1970s. I have no way of knowing. I just know that they have to go. They are an oppressive occupying army, are not of our community, cannot understand its problems, and do not identify with its people and their needs. Further, it is the corruption of the cops that protects organized crime and vice in our community, and Capitalism with its exploitative economic conditions which is responsible for all crime.

Existing police forces should be replaced with the Black community’s own self-defense force, made up of members of our community elected or appointed by their neighbors to that position, or from an existing street guerilla force or political organization if the people agree. They would be subject to immediate recall and dismissal by the Community Control boards of an area. This is only so that we will have community control of the self-defense force, begin to deal with fratricidal Black-on-Black crime, and be able to defend ourselves from white racist or police attacks. With the increase of white racist violence today, and the possibility of white mob action in the future, usually in the name of “law and order,” this community self-defense force is most important. The only question is: can we do this now?

We exist now under conditions of nominal legality and civil rights, but at some stage in the process of building up our farces, it is inevitable that the white power structure will recognize the danger to itself represented by such a free Black commune, and will then try to forcibly repress it. We must have the self-defense capability to resist. This concept of organizing a self-defense force accepts any level of violence that will be necessary to enforce the demands of the people and workers. Yet these self-defense forces would not be a ‘party vanguard,’ a police force, or even a standing army in the Statist or usually thought of sense; they would be a Black Peoples’ militia, self-managed by the workers and community itself: in other words, the people-in-arms. These militia organizations will allow us to engage in offensive or defensive actions, either in general community defense, or as part of an insurrection or underground resistance.

But what do we do right now in conditions of legality, to reclaim our community from violent racist cops? Do we sit around and debate the appropriateness of military preparation, when the enemy is our community now, committing rape

and murder of Black people or do we hit back? How do we even get the idea across to our people and start to train them for paramilitary operations? On a mass scale, I advocate the immediate formation of defense and survival skills study groups, under the guise of gun clubs, martial arts societies, wilderness survival clubs or whatever we need to call them. A thorough understanding of marksmanship, ammunition fabrication, demolition and weapon manufacturing is minimal for everyone. In addition, we should study first aid pertaining to the rather traumatic injuries sustained from gunfire and explosives, combat communications, combat weapons, combat tactics for the small group, combat strategy for the region or nation, combat intelligence of police and military activities among other subjects. These subjects are indispensable if we live underground or during a general insurrection.

We should put emphasis on the purchase, collection, duplication and dissemination of military manuals, gunsmithing textbooks, explosive and improvised demolitions manuals, police and government technical manuals, and pirated editions of right-wing manuals on the subject (since they seem to write the best material in this area), and also begin the study of how to build intelligence networks to collect information on the rapidly growing Skinhead and other totalitarian racist organizations, along with intelligence and counter-intelligence information on the government secret police and law enforcement agencies, like the FBI, CIA, ATF, etc., and on any and every other subject which could be of use to us in the coming struggle.

Even though in the United States, development of military skills and self defense is simpler than many other countries because arms and ammunition are widely available, it is logical to assume that the arms situation will soon be so tight so as to make firearms virtually unobtainable, except through an expensive Black market because of the government's "war on drugs" and other proposed gun control legislation to prevent street violence," or so they say (Do you think the sporting goods stores will be open during an insurrection?) Therefore we should learn to use machine tool technology to produce our own weapons. Perfectly adequate firearms may be produced using a minimum of machine tools, providing the individual or group is willing to do the necessary studying and preparation. It is not enough to know a little about these subjects; it is a matter of future survival — of life and death that one be highly proficient.

I am not advocating the immediate waging of urban guerilla warfare, especially where there is no mass base for such activities. What I am advocating at this stage is armed self-defense and the knowledge of tactics to resist military aggression against the Black community. It is a foolish and unfortunate trait among Anarchists, the white left and sections of the Black movement to condemn the

study of military tactics as premature or adventuristic, or on the other hand, to cast oneself into a blind fury of bank expropriations, kidnappings, bombings or plane hijackings. Too many people in the movement have a death trip approach to guns — they assume if you are not “fooling around,” then you should prove your convictions via a suicidal shootout in the streets. It doesn’t have to be that way.

But the Black movement doesn’t even have the luxury of such tepid debates, and must have an armed defense policy because America has a long tradition of government political repression and vigilante paramilitary violence. Although such attacks have been directed primarily at Blacks and other oppressed nationalities in the past, they have also been directed at labor unions and dissident political groups. Such violence makes it absolutely necessary to acquire familiarity with firearms and military tactics. In fact, the Black Resistance movement that I spoke of earlier should think of itself as a paramilitary movement, rather than a strict political association.

We must assert our rights to armed self-defense and revolution, even though it is true that there is a lot of loose talk about guns, self defense, revolution, “urban guerilla warfare,” etc., in the Black and radical movements, but with very little study and practice in handling and using weapons. Some of the same folks think “picking up the gun” means that you pick one up for the first time on the day of an insurrection or confrontation with police. This is nonsense and is the real “revolutionary suicide,” you could get led not knowing what you are doing. But many instances attest to the fact that armed community self defense can be carried out successfully, such as the MOVE resistance in Philadelphia, the Republic of New Africa armed resistance in Detroit and Mississippi and the Black Panther cases. Even as important as the act of defense itself is, is the fact that these instances of successful self-defense have made a tremendous impact on the Black community, encouraging other acts of resistance.

Insurrection

But what is a rebellion and how does it differ from an insurrection? An insurrection is a general uprising against the power structure. It is usually a sustained rebellion over the course of days, weeks, months or even years. It is a type of class war that involves a whole population in an act of armed or semi-armed resistance. Sometimes mistakenly called a rebellion, its character is far more combative and revolutionary. Rebellions are almost totally spontaneous, short-term affairs. An insurrection is also not the revolution, *since revolution is a social process, rather than a single event*, but it can be an important part of the revolution, maybe its final phase. An insurrection is a planned violent protest campaign which takes the spontaneous revolt of the masses to a higher level. Revolutionaries intervene to push rebellions to insurrectionary stage, and the

insurrection an to a social revolution. It is not small, isolated pockets of urban guerillas taking actions, unless those guerillas are part of a larger revolt.

The importance of recognizing the true differences of each level can define our strategy and tactics at that stage, and not lead us prematurely into a full offensive, when the enemy is not yet weakened enough by mass action or political attacks. The importance of also recognizing the true causes of the revolt cannot be understated Anarchist revolutionaries intervene in such struggles to show people how to resist and the possibilities of winning freedom. We want to take the people's rebellions against the state and use them to weaken the rule of Capital We want to create resistance on a longer term and to win liberated zones To disconnect these communities from the state means that these rebellions will assume a conscious political character like the Palestinian Intifada in the occupied territories controlled by Israel in the Middle East. Creating the possibility of a Black insurrection means popularizing and spreading the various rebellions to other cities, towns and even countries, and increasing them in number and frequency. It also means consciously nullifying the power of the state, instead of temporary revolts against it, which ultimately preserves its power. There must be a deliberate attempt to push the government out of existence, and establish People's Power. This has not yet happened with the various Black revolts we have seen since 1964, when the first such modern revolt erupted in Harlem, NY.

In the 1960s, the Black communities all over the U.S. rose up angrily with massive rebellions against the state demanding racial justice. After the Harlem revolt, for the next four years major rebellions shook the U.S. in the Watts section of Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, and hundreds of other North American cities. Isolated acts of police brutality, racial discrimination substandard housing, economic exploitation, "the hoodlum element," a breakdown in family values, and a host of other "explanations" have been put forward by liberal and conservative sociologist and others commissioned by the state to whitewash the true causes. Yet none of these revealed this as a protest against the Capitalist system and colonial rule, even though the social scientists "warned" of the possibility of a new outbreak of violence.

Once again in the Spring, 1992, we saw a massive revolt in Los Angeles, whose immediate causes were related to the outrageous acquittal of 1 Angeles policemen who had brutally beaten Rodney King. But there again this was just an immediate cause acting as a trigger; this revolt was not a sympathy revolt on behalf of Rodney King personally. The cause of this rebellion was widespread social inequality in the Capitalist system and police terrorism. This time the rebellion spread to 40 cities and four foreign countries. And it was not just a so-called "race riot," but rather a class revolt that included a large number of Latinos, whites and even Asians. But it was undeniably a revolt for racial injustice first and foremost, even if it was not just directed against white people in general but the Capitalist system and the rich. It was not limited to just even the inner city in the Las Angeles area but spread even to white upper crust areas in Hollywood, Ventura, and beyond This was the beginning stage of class warfare.

If an underground military force existed or a militia was assembled, it could have entered the field of battle with more weaponry and advanced tactics. As it was the gangs played that role, and played it very well. Their participation is why it took so long to put the rebellion down, but even they could not prevent the reestablishment of white power in South Central Los Angeles. Not just because of being militarily outgunned, but because they had no revolutionary political program despite all their rhetoric of having been radicalized. Also the state came down extremely hard on the rebels. Over 20,000 persons were jailed, 50 were killed and hundreds wounded.

Could a liberated zone have been won, so that dual power could have been established? That possibility existed and still does exist if the people are properly armed and educated. Mass resistance with heavy military weaponry may have won serious concessions, one of which is to pull back the cops. We don't know that, this is purely speculation. We do know that this is not the last rebellion in L.A. and other cities. They may come much quicker now that the genie of urban revolution of the bag again. We can only hope and prepare. *Onward to the black revolution!*



Chapter 3. Anarchist Theory and Practice

The major aim of this chapter is to list the major elements of Anarchist thought and to give examples of what some Anarchists think about them. Unlike other streams of political thought, Anarchists do not elevate certain texts or individuals above others. There are different types of Anarchists with many points of disagreement. The primary areas of debate among Anarchists relate to what form of organization should be struggled for and what tactics we should use. For instance, some of their most significant differences concern the economic

organization of future society. Some Anarchists reject money, and substitute a system of trade in which work is exchanged for goods and services. Others reject all forms of trade or barter or private ownership as Capitalism, and feel that all major property should be owned in common.

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

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

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

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

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

Though there are several different “schools” of Anarchist thought, revolutionary Anarchist or Anarchist-Communism is based upon the class struggle, but it does not take a mechanist view of the class struggle taken by the Marxist-Leninists. For instance, it does not take the view that only the industrial proletariat can achieve Socialism, and that the victory of this class, led by a “communist working class party” represent the final victory over Capitalism. Nor do we accept the idea of a

“worker’s state.” Anarchists believe that only the peasants, workers and farmers can liberate themselves and that they should manage industrial and economic production through workers’ councils, factory committees, and farm cooperatives, rather than with the interference of a party or government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Types of Anarchists

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

Individualist Anarchists hope for a future society in which free individuals do their duty and share resources “according to the dictates of abstract justice.” Generally speaking, Individualists are mere philosophers rather than revolutionary activists. They are civil libertarians who want to reform the system to make it work “fairly.”

They were prevalent in the past century, but are still seen in “counter-cultural” Anarchist formations, middle class philosophers, or right-wing Libertarians.

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

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

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

Anarchist-Communists are revolutionary Anarchists who believe in the philosophy of class struggle, an end to Capitalism, and all forms of oppression. Contrary to Anarchist-Syndicalism it does not limit itself to workplace organizing. The

philosophy is based on the theories of Peter Kropotkin, another Russian Anarchist. Kropotkin and his fellow Anarchist-Communists not only envisaged the commune and workers' councils as the, proper guardians of production; they also attacked the wage system in all its forms, and revived the ideas of Libertarian communism. This type of Anarchism is known as Libertarian Socialism also, and includes Mast Socialists who are also opposed to the State, dictatorship, and party rule, though they are not Anarchists.

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

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

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

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

Anarchist Versus Marxist-Leninist Thought on Organization of Society

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

It is very difficult for the Marxist-Leninists to make an objective criticism of Anarchism as such, because by its nature it undermines all the suppositions basic to Marxism. If Marxism and Leninism, its variant which emerged during the Russian revolution, is held out to be the working class philosophy and the proletariat cannot owe its emancipation to anyone but itself, it is hard to go back on it and say that the working class is not yet ready to dispense with authority over it. Lenin came up with the idea of a transitional State, which would "wither away" over time, to go along with Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat." The Anarchists expose this line as counter-revolutionary and sheer power grabbing. Over 75 years of Marxist-Leninist practice has proven us right. These so-called "Socialist States" produced by Marxist-Leninist doctrine have only produced Stalinist police states where workers have no rights, a new ruling class of technocrats and party politicians have emerged, and the class differential between those the state favored over those it didn't created widespread deprivation among the masses and another class struggle. But instead of meeting such criticisms head on, they have concentrated their attacks not on the doctrine of Anarchism, but on particular Anarchist historical figures, especially Bakunin, an ideological opponent of Marx in the First International of Socialist movements in the last century.

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

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

structural alternatives of the Catalyst, Group, Anarchist Consensus, and the Mass Commune.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

a mutually agreed upon consensus between conflicting views. As always, if there should be an impasse or dissatisfaction with the consensus, a vote would be taken and with a 2/3 majority, the matter would be accepted, rejected or rescinded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

General Principles of Anarchist-Communism

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

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

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

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

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

Capitalism, the State and Private Property

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

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

However, the State itself is always an elitist position structure between the rules and the ruled order-givers and order-takers, and economic haves and have-nets.

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

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

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

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

Where there is a high social division of labor and complex industrial organization, money is necessary to perform transactions. It is not simply that this money is legal tender, and it is used in place of direct barter of goods. That is not what we are limited to here: Capital is money, but money as a process, which reproduces

and increases its value. Capital arises only when the owner of the means of production finds workers on the market as sellers of their own labor power. Capitalism developed as the form of private property that shifted from the rural agricultural style to the urban, factory style of labor. Capitalism centralizes the instruments of production and brings individuals closely alongside of others in a disciplined work force. Capitalism is industrialized commodity production, which makes goods for profit, not for social needs. This is a special distinction of capital and capital alone.

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

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

Anarchism, Violence and Authority

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

Because a Social revolution is an Anarchist revolution, which not only abolishes one exploiting class for another, but all exploiters and the instrument of exploitation, the State. Because it is a revolution for people's power, instead of political power; because it abolishes both money and wage slavery; because Anarchists are for total democracy and freedom instead of politicians to represent the masses in Parliament, Congress, or the Communist Party; because Anarchists are for workers' self-management of industry, instead of government regulation; because Anarchists are for full sexual, racial, cultural and intellectual diversity,

instead of sexual chauvinism, cultural repression, censorship, and racial oppression; lies have had to be told that the Anarchists are killers, rapists, robbers, mad bombers, unsavory elements, the worst of the worst.

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

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

— Alexander Berkman, in *ABC of Anarchism*

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

You don't question the right of the government to kill, to confiscate and imprison. If a private person should be guilty of the things that the government is doing all the time, you'd brand him a murderer, thief and scoundrel. But as long as the violence committed is "lawful" you approve of it and submit to it. So it is not real violence that you object to, but people using violence unlawfully.

— Alexander Berkman, in *ABC of Anarchism*

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

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

Basically, we would all choose to be pacifists. And like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. counseled, we would rather resolve our differences with understanding, love and moral reasoning. We will attempt these solutions first, whenever possible. In the insanity that reigns, however, our movement acknowledges the utility of preparedness. It is too dangerous a world to be ignorant of the ways to defend ourselves so that we can continue our revolutionary work. Bring acquainted with a weapon and its uses does not mean that you must immediately go out and use that weapon, but that if you need to use it, you can use it well. We are forced o

acknowledge that the American progressive and radical movements have been too pacifist to be truly effective. We also realize that open groups that proposed cooperative change and were basically nonviolent like the IWW, were crushed violently by the government and finally we have unfortunate example of Dr. King, Jr. himself, who was assassinated in 1968 by a conspiracy of agents of the State, most likely the FBI.

Understand that the more we succeed at our work, the more dangerous will our situation become, because we will then be recognized as a threat to the State. And, make no mistake, the insurrection is coming. An American Intifada that will destabilize the state. So we are talking about a spontaneous, prolonged, rising of the vast majority of the people, and the necessity to defend our Social revolution. Although we recognize the importance of defensive paramilitary violence, and even urban guerilla attacks, we do not depend upon war to achieve our liberation, for our struggle cannot be won by the force of arms alone. No, the people must be armed beforehand with understanding and agreement of our objectives, as well as trust and love of the revolution, and our military weapons are only an expression of our organic spirit and solidarity. Perfect love for the people, perfect hate for the enemy. As the Cuban revolutionary, Che Guevara, said: "When one falls, another must take (their) place, and the rage of each death renews the reason for the fight"

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

Anarchists and Revolutionary Organization

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Murray Bookchin, in *Post Scarcity Anarchism*

We could also refer to these affinity formations as "groups for living revolution" because they live the revolution now, even though only in seed form. Because the

groups are small — from three to fifteen — they can start from a stronger basis of solidarity than mere political strategy alone. The groups would be the number one means of political activity of each member. There are four areas of involvement where affinity groups work:

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

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

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

This leads us to the next level of Anarchist organizations, the area and regional federation. Federations are the networks of affinity groups who come together out of common needs, which include mutual aid education, action, and any other

work deemed to be needed for the transformation of current society from the authoritarian state to Anarchist-Communism. The following is an example of how Anarchist-Communist federations could be structured. First, then is the area organization, which could cover a large city or county. All like-minded affinity groups in the area would associate themselves in a local federation. Agreements on ideology, mutual aid, and action to be undertaken would be made at meetings in which all can come and have equal voice.

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

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

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

Third, Anarchists would have to deal with social illness. Not only do we organize for the physical needs of the people, but must also work and propagandize to cure the ills sprouted by the State, which has warped the human personality under Capitalism. For instance, the oppression of women must be addressed. No one can be free if 51 percent of society is oppressed, dominated and abused. Not only must we form an organization to deal with the harmful effects of sexism, but work to ensure patriarchy is dead by educating society about its harmful effects. The same must be done with racism, but in addition to reeducation of society, we work

to alleviate the social and economic oppression of Black and other nonwhite peoples, and empower them for self-determination to lead free lives. Anarchists need to form groups to expose and combat racial prejudice and Capitalist exploitation, and extend full support and solidarity to the Black liberation movement.

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

Why Am I An Anarchist?

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

I wrote the pamphlet to:

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

I thought that if a serious, respected libertarian revolutionary put these ideas forth they would be more likely to be considered than just by a white Anarchist, no

matter how well motivated. I believe I am correct about that. So here is why I am an Anarchist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SNCC was also a non-secular organization, in contrast to SCLC, which was formed by Black preachers and had co-opted their style of organizing from the Black church, with a religious authority figure who gave orders to the troops. Today

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

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

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

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

I wrote a succession of articles for the Anarchist press, and was a member of the Social revolutionary Anarchist Federation, the IWW, and a number of other

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

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

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

What I Believe

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

I believe in Black liberation, so I am a Black revolutionary. I believe that Black people are oppressed both as workers and a distinct nationality, and will only be freed by a Black revolution, which is an intrinsic part of a Social revolution. I believe that Blacks and other oppressed nationalities must have their own agenda, distinct world-view, and organizations of struggle, even though they may decide to work with workers.

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

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

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

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

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



I dedicate this second edition of *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* to Comrade Ginger Katz, one of the founders of the original North American Anarchist Black Cross almost 15 years ago. It was Ginger Katz who almost single-handedly arranged for the typesetting, publishing and printing of the first edition, and then she went out and sold them by the thousands. Without her, this second edition would not have been possible.

She had to fight to get the books published, and to get a hearing for myself and other Black Anarchists, who had things to say about the direction of the movement. The "Anarchist purists," who wanted to keep the movement all white and as an Individualist, counter-cultural phenomenon, fought her tooth and nail. Some of these criticisms and struggles were thinly veiled racism, and I am sure that they frustrated and exhausted Comrade Ginger. If so, she never relayed it to me, but I heard it from other sources. I remember my dealings with Anarchists in the movement during the 1970s, who denied the existence of racism as something we should fight entirely. But not Comrade Ginger. She was one of the few Anarchists who understood how the American state was organized, and how it used white skin privilege to split the working class, and to continue the dictatorship of Capitalism through such "divide and rule" tactics.

I still have some of the letters that Ginger wrote me 15 years ago when I was in prison. But I lost contact with her since the early 1980. In 1983, I was released from prison, and became estranged from the Anarchist and prison movements, so I do not know where she is. But wherever she is, I hope she will know how much I appreciate what she did to make this project a reality, and how she laid the seeds for the growth of the present and future Libertarian Socialist movement on this continent, and hopefully around the world. I am hopeful that I might one day meet her, maybe when I am on a national book tour for this and other books I have written, and just thank her for helping me, when I could not help myself. To this comrade, I will give my love and respect always. Thank you.

Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, September 1993



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