

**STATE & ME?**



**FOR MORE ANARCHISM IN OUR LIVES**



This booklet was created for a workshop “*State & Me? For more anarchism in our lives!*” for Anarchist Days Dresden 2024.

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# WHY ARE WE MAKING THIS WORKSHOP AND BOOKLET?

We prepared this booklet and the workshop behind it to present an analysis and critique of states from an anarchist and abolitionist perspective. We wanted to present alternatives and explore together how people have self-organized themselves around the world without professional politicians telling them what to do. For this we provided different practical examples.

We find the word state to sometimes be a too abstract term and wanted to dissect it, demystify it and make it more tangible. We find it important to make this kind of theory accessible to many different people and not always be presented in a very academic and complicated language. We tried to provide many examples and quotes so it would be easier to understand what we mean with some terms.

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We strive to apply different anarchist principles in our lives and organizing while rethinking, improving them and seeing it all as a process to a more liberated world. It made us very disappointed and angry as we have had multiple negative experiences at some anarchist bookfairs around Europe in the last years. The only comfortable spaces were FLINTA\*/Queer spaces. Once we were outside that bubble, the activities and discussions that were supposed to be open and inviting, turned out to be platforms for white-cis-men to dominate the microphone over topics like war, police and repression (and then being mysteriously absent at feminist workshops/presentations), screaming and insulting each other to show they are “right”. They had no interest in hearing other perspectives...

Anarchism is not supposed to be a “shut-up-I’m-talking” conversation, but “hey, let’s hear what others have to say because we can learn from each other”. This is why it is very important for us to encourage inclusive, considerate ways of interacting, organising, and discussing. It is equally important who we are mentioning in anarchist theories, who has the focus and why. We are trying to get away from the focus on old or dead white european cis-dudes because we see that there are plenty more people, communities, groups to learn from, for example queer/feminist collectives and BIPoC communities and movements etc.

*Aren’t we ready to think about our own perspectives and ideas about how we want to live together and then also apply these ideas and knowledge? What is actually anarchism and what does it stand for? Is it possible, that we can already apply living by anarchist principles to our lives? Spoiler alert to last question: yes! <3*

# MODERN STATE & PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

- \* “modern state,” - sixteenth century. This century is often described as the beginning of capitalism.
- \* European states colonized Asia, Africa, and the Americas (and Ireland); waged genocidal wars against Indigenous peoples; kidnapped and enslaved Africans; looted the environment → primitive accumulation – Karl Marx + *The Conquest of Bread* by Peter Kropotkin
- \* Wealth and resources from European colonialism were among other things used to build up infrastructure like harbours and factories and develop the colonial companies further.
- \* land from European farmers was taken away - state generally promoted the centralization of wealth while creating a population of landless workers: - > transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode

# *STATE BLAH BLAH BLAH*

- \* State is predominant form of administration in society today. An assembly of institutions and bodies such as the government, the ministries, the school system, the tax office, the police, prisons and the army
- \* hierarchical - a chain of command from top to bottom. Decisions are made at the top and sent down to where they are to be implemented.
- \* Laws, punishments and elections are supposed to give us a feeling of security, order and participation, while we lose the sense of what justice, freedom and self-determination actually mean.

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- \* Germany: Form of government: Representative, parliamentary democracy -> voting professional politicians who decide about our lives without being directly affected by decisions, they are being usually well paid to decide for us.
- \* Interests of big companies and private people, lobbies
- \* around 10 millions of people in Germany who are migrants and refugees cannot vote; also minors, people under 18 years cannot vote
- \* The biggest alienation: theft of each person's ability to decide over their own lives, the suppression of self-organization so that power could be centralized, delegated, and institutionalized instead of letting people decide about their own matters. **Peter Gelderloos**

## How much we benefit from state depends on:

- \* our surname, appearance, passport, gender, availability for work, respect for private property and morality, or how much money we have in our pockets determine how good our chances are of getting something from the state -> institutional discrimination
- \* most of the benefits of the state only for citizens, especially the ones most conforming to the norms

# STATE MORALIZES

## What is solidarity for state?

- \* working/not receiving social welfare
  - \* paying taxes, paying insurance
  - \* corona lockdown (staying at home, socially isolating – while people have no homes or need to go to their factory jobs)
  - \* doing military service
- > *Jens Kastner: Solidarität zwischen Staat und Anarchie*

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## State punishes people who are not „solidary“

- \* with violence, incarceration, deportation, evictions, withdrawal of financial support like at jobcenter; people without insurances need to pay huge amounts when they get insured, etc.
- \* Capitalism takes Darwin's theory of evolution and applying it to society – **social darwinism**. It provided a convenient scientific legitimacy to competitive capitalism - If nature runs of principles on survival of the fittest and winner-takes-all, then it's natural that society would work that way and futile to resist it. In would be 'unnatural' to suggest anything different.

## Hääää?

- \* We cannot let the state and the right wing take the word solidarity!
- \* States spread individualism and nationalism – these prevent a worldwide solidarity against oppression and exploitation.
- \* **solidarity can only be voluntary and come from people themselves, recognizing other people's struggles and support them**

## *MUTUAL AID AND SOLIDARITY*

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- \* it has been shown that in the animal world, as well as in human society, cooperation has worked for the survival and evolution of the species.
- \* it was demonstrated that only mutual aid and voluntary co-operation can create the basis for a free individual and cooperation with others.

**Kropotkin: Mutual Aid, 1902**

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*"By anarchist spirit I mean that deeply human sentiment, which aims at the good of all, freedom and justice for all, solidarity and love among the people; which is not an exclusive characteristic only of self-declared anarchists, but inspires all people who have a generous heart and an open mind..."*

**Errico Malatesta, Umanita Nova, 1922**



# STATE HAS A MONOPOLY ON VIOLENCE

- \* state monopoly on violence - concept that the state alone has the right to use or authorize the use of physical force. It is widely regarded as a defining characteristic of the modern state.

- > **Read Max Weber, Politics as a Vocation, 1919**

- \* particularly for maintaining democracies you need a monopoly of violence so it guarantees legitimate decisions have the chance to be enforced -> otherwise: expropriation, imprisonment, humiliation, financial fees, other kind of repression

- \* this monopoly limited to a certain geographical area is one of the things that defines a state

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## What is permitted to the State is forbidden to the individual.

### **Examples:**

- \* shooting and killing people at national borders
- \* death penalties (in some countries)
- \* violent evictions of poor and vulnerable people from their flats
- \* deportations of refugees, taking freedom from people away and putting them to prisons
- \* demonstrations: even self-defence in case of police violence or even wearing protective clothing is not allowed, you will be punished for it, meanwhile cops with their full on gear
- \* wars (wars are inherent to states – state territories are made by wars - when it is done for the greater glory of the State in order to conserve or to enlarge its power, all that becomes a duty and a virtue)

*„...that particularly for democracies the maintaining of the monopoly of violence is of fundamental importance since it guarantees that legitimate decisions have the chance to be enforced.“ „As such, states can resort to coercive means such as incarceration, expropriation, humiliation, and death threats to obtain the population's compliance with its rule and thus maintain order. However, this monopoly is limited to a certain geographical area, and in fact this limitation to a particular area is one of the things that defines a state.“*

**Max Weber in his essay Politics as a Vocation, 1919**

- \* The task of the military, police and the justice system is therefore not to protect all people, but to protect the current power and property relations.
- \* Police violence and racism are not individual cases or individual misconduct, but the structural basis of the police and the justice system.
- \* Police cannot be reformed because it is built upon hierarchy, violence, oppression and exclusion of marginalized.

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*„Uniformity is a tool of the state, It is everywhere present, in habits, tastes, dress, thoughts and ideas. State needs to train an individual to respect “law and order;” teaching him obedience, submission and unquestioning faith in the wisdom and justice of government; above all, loyal service and complete self-sacrifice when the State commands it, as in war.“*

**Emma Goldman, The Individual, Society and the State, 1940**

# *CAPITALISM VERY SHORTLY EXPLAINED*

- \* Capitalism is an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit.
- \* Means of production: examples: land, infrastructure, factories, mines, machines, resources
  - \* they are owned by private people, sometimes also by state which get rich by exploiting workers and making profit out of their work
- \* the more exploitation, the worse working conditions – the more profit
- \* even „good companies“ have to compete on the market to offer good prices so they cannot really „fairly“ pay people
- \* not a matter of a wrong leader or a bad company - it is inherent to capitalism that workers need to be exploited to produce more value than they are paid for

# *WHAT DOES STATE HAVE TO DO WITH CAPITALISM?*

- \* The State is an economic entity, just as much as a corporation.
- \* The State is built on the creation of wealth, primitive accumulation, taxes

## **Modern capitalism couldn't exist without the State**

- \* The state needs capitalism to provide the wealth of society, while capitalists need the state to protect them from the working population as well as from each other.

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- \* state supplies the rules, laws and creates a framework and legality for companies and corporations f.e. for labour area (work contracts, minimal wages, working time), laws about environmental damage and provides enforcement for them
- \* state gives credits and subsidies companies to keep them profitable, saves banks out of bankruptcy

## **Most of the laws are not for common good of all people but about private property**

- \* State provides police for evictions of private owned houses, flats
- \* state puts poor people to prisons who shoplifted food or other stuff or could not pay for public transport
  
- \* because there is no other economy at the moment - The capitalist economy produces necessary goods and services so state is dependent on it
  
- \* The state also produces some goods and services to support the economy like roads and public schools.
  
- \* “products and services” of the state are economic waste: armaments, prisons, deportations, police repression, military bases, or regulation of the already existing capitalist firms.

> *Eric Laursen: The Operating System, 2021*

# *STATES DO A TERRIBLE JOB AT MANAGING THINGS*

## \* **COVID**

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- \* outbreak in China originally denied, due to bureaucratic face-saving
- \* Different governments around the world denying the emergency
- \* unwillingness of states to share supplies and patents of vaccinations with all nations
- \* meanwhile, state-encouraged industrial agriculture prepares future pandemics as it ravages wild lands.

## \* Climate Change

- \* capitalist health system which needs to be profitable and is not oriented on human needs - like closing hospitals in smaller towns because they are not profitable
- \* education/school to prepare people for capitalism and learn traditional values which enforce states
- \* surveillance, repression of activists and restricting public assembly laws to limit demonstrations and actions against the state
- \* wasting money on prisons and deportations

# WHAT SOME ANARCHISTS AND OTHER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT STATES

*„The state then is the most flagrant negation, the most cynical and complete negation of humanity. It rends apart the universal solidarity of all men upon earth, and it unites some of them only in order to destroy, conquer, and enslave all the rest. It takes under its protection only its own citizens, and it recognizes human right, humanity, and civilization only within the confines of its own boundaries. And since it does not recognize any right outside of its own confines, it quite logically arrogated to itself the right to treat with the most ferocious inhumanity all the foreign populations whom it can pillage, exterminate, or subordinate to its will.“*

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**Michail Bakunin (1814-1876), The Immorality of the State, 1953**

*„The inherent tendency of the State is to concentrate, to narrow, and monopolize all social activities; the nature of revolution is, on the contrary, to grow, to broaden, and disseminate itself in ever-wider circles. In other words, the State is institutional and static; revolution is fluent, dynamic. These two tendencies are incompatible and mutually destructive. The State idea killed the Russian Revolution and it must have the same result in all other revolutions, unless the libertarian idea prevail.“*

**Emma Goldman, My 2 Years in Russia, 1923**

*"Just as the capitalist system is not a capitalist plot, so racial oppression is not the work of "racists". It is maintained by the principal institutions of society, including schools (which define "excellence"), the labor market (which defines "employment", the legal system (which defines "crime"), the welfare system (which defines "poverty"), the medical industry (which defines "health") and the family (which defines "kin-ship"). Many of these institutions are administered by people who would be offended if accused of complicity with racial oppression. [...] The simple fact is that the public schools and the welfare departments are doing more harm to black children than all the "racist" groups combined. The abolitionists seek to abolish the white race."* **Abolish Whiteness**  
**Anti-racist zine collection**

- 16 *"Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote begging, nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals.*  
*We look away from government for relief, because we know that force (legalized) invades the personal liberty of man, seizes upon the natural elements and intervenes between man and natural laws; from this exercise of force through governments flows nearly all the misery, poverty, crime and confusion existing in society. "*  
**Lucy Parsons, around 1890s**



*„Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others – even by those allegedly acting on their behalf.“*

*„Socialism, for us, is not about transistors for the prisoners. It is about the destruction of the industrial prison itself. It is not only about more bread, but about who runs the bakery.“*

**Solidarity, „As we See It“, 1967**

-> with „socialism“ they mean anarchism/socialism without states

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*„The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behavior; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another....We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community and society of men.“*

**Gustav Landauer, 1910**

-> On this topic read also Bini Adamczak:  
*Beziehungsweise Revolution, 2017*

# BUT WHAT ABOUT RACISM AND SEXISM AFTER STATES ARE GONE?

## WHAT ARE HIERARCHIES?

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\* They are a system in which people or things are put above and below something/someone else, at levels or ranks according to their “importance” or someone’s convenience (chosen by the state). By creating unequal relationships between people, this produces levels of dominance, (power) abuse, “entitlement” to authority and discriminations (racism/antisemitism, sexism, queer-hostility, ableism, sexism, ageism...) and entitlement to violence.

\* Reflecting on the types of relationships we have with eachother, how much influence we have over eachother (why?), how much physical, emotional, or talking space we are taking, what positions or tasks we have in groups and relationships (and why?)... in this way we can start to understand/recognize state structures we carry inside us and do things differently. The next steps can look like: redistributing resources/tasks, privileges, space, lifting eachother up and empowering one another... this is all a good start to deconstructing hierarchies.

\* *“It is not one singular hierarchy, but a web of domination systems which hurts any given society. One may be privileged within one hierarchy and not within another, in extreme danger within one environment and completely safe in another. No one is safe within hierarchy.” It is not at all smart to think we are safe from them.” -*

**The Same Old Song - What is Europe, Russel Means, 1980**

# ANARCHISTS SAYING STUFF ABOUT ANARCHISM

*„Anarchism, therefore, has been able to grow beyond the European workers' movement in which it first achieved a named existence, to recognize parallel roots in anti-authoritarian struggles on other continents, to become a part of early anti-colonial struggles, and to play a leading role in the fight against patriarchy. This latter is an important example; patriarchy, it turns out, is a system of oppression that precedes and can exist independently of the State. Anarchism, as the formulation of a desire to combat all domination, is best served by a broad definition based on opposition to any impediment to freedom rather than to a specific historical structure.“*

**Peter Gelderloos**

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*„Anarchism rejects the state and any rule by a “monarch” (whether an actual king, a dictator, an oligarchy, or a “democratically” elected president and congress). Anarchism is not only against the state but opposes all forms of domination, exploitation, elitism, and hierarchy—including capitalism, white supremacy, sexism, nationalism, anti-ecology, and homophobia, among others. Yet its opposition to the state is a major theme.“* **Wayne Price**

*„Anarchism is organisation, organisation and more organisation.“*  
**Errico Malatesta**

*“We anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; we want the people to emancipate themselves.”*

**Errico Malatesta, published in l’Agitazione, 1897**

*"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 longterm 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."* **Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, Anarchism and the Black Revolution, 1993**

*"The anarchist revolution can only become actualized if it is a feminist and antiracist revolution, which is to say, succinctly: anarchism that is not Black feminist is not doing anarchic work."*

**Combahee River Collective (CRC), 1970/1980**

*"Let every dirty, lousy tramp arm himself with a revolver or a knife, and lay in wait on the steps of the palaces of the rich and stab or shoot the owners as they come out. Let us kill them without mercy and let it be a war of extermination without pity."* **Lucy Parsons, Chicago Tribune in 1885**

*"Never be deceived that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth."* **Lucy Parsons: Freedom, Equality & Solidarity - Writings & Speeches, 1878-1937**

# AND NOW?

*"We resist not to overthrow a government or to take political power, but because it is natural to resist extermination, to survive. We don't want power over institutions; we want institutions to disappear. That's revolution."*

**Russel Means, The Same Old Song, 1980**

*-> critiques western/european "revolutions" and how the "redistribution" of power never goes very far/never reaches the people... How is it a revolution if you continue with the same authoritarian, patriarchal, capitalist structures..?*

## **What was important/stands out in Non Western Anarchisms of 20th Century?**

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In the 20th century, many anarchist movements started off as social struggles: fighting for labor/working rights, against colonial/imperial rule/invasion, racist institutions and structures, capitalist institutions/structures, industrialization/urbanization, environmental destruction, against borders, for freedom and for self-determination.

Again and again, what kept popping up for each group was the importance of solidarity, building community and awareness. This means sharing knowledge and support between anarchist movements, whether neighbors or around the world; people literally moved to different countries to support movements. During the 20th Century, Non-Western anarchisms prioritized networking, distributing information/news/resources. This was the key factor that strengthened these movements and brought more people together.

# PRINCIPLES OF ANARCHISM

## **Autonomy and horizontality:**

- \* all people deserve the freedom to define and organize themselves on their own terms.
- \* Decision-making structures should be horizontal, so no one dominates anyone else
- \* anarchism opposes all coercive/forced hierarchies including capitalism, the state, white supremacy, patriarchy...

Accessibility: sharing resources, privileges, knowledge, experiences, adapting, integrating, rethinking...

## **Mutual Aid and Solidarity:**

- \* people help one another voluntarily
- \* both giver and receiver are equal (no charity)
- \* international networking: supporting anti-state movements
- \* giving gifts (Semai in Malaysia – gift-giving not barter trade/exchange)

## **Voluntary association and cooperation:**

- \* people should be free to cooperate and organize themselves with whomever and however they want.
- \* Anarchists oppose borders of all kinds and involuntary categorization by citizenship, gender, race...

## **Direct Action:**

- \* it is more empowering and effective to accomplish goals directly than to rely on authorities or representatives
- \* you are the person who knows your needs best

## **Revolution:**

- \* today's systems of repression cannot be reformed away and changed with elections
- \* no political party can represent everybody and their needs
- \* anarchist revolution means fighting to overthrow authorities in order to create a free society
- \* no recipes for this - but many theories
- \* Documenting/Publishing/Spreading Information

## **Self-liberation:**

- \* Freedom cannot be given, it must be taken (because it's already yours)
- \* People must be at the forefront of their own liberation.
- \* to free ourselves we need to regain control over every aspect of our lives, our culture, our entertainment, our relationships
- \* our housing, education, healthcare
- \* the way we produce food
- \* the way we protect our communities

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**What you can do:** meeting, discussing, demonstrations/rallies, checking in on people, making food for your neighbors, raising money, skill-sharing... All this and more brings your community together and makes it stronger. Founding/regularly meeting in collectives, federations, unions, syndicates, neighborhood councils, affinity groups, other A-organizations and communities...

## **Actively Anti-fascist, Queer-Feminist, anti-discrimination/discrimination-critical:**

- \* within our limits, defend each other when we are being oppressed;
- \* check how we interact with each other, checking our privileges, the space we take or have, who we help or don't help, who we surround our self with or don't, who we live with or don't... how we live our lives is a big part starting to deconstruct state/authoritarian structures.

## TEXT 1

# *Without wages, what is the incentive to work?*

*An excerpt out of Peter Gelderloos: Anarchy Works, 2010*

Some worry that if we abolish capitalism and wage-labor, no one will work anymore. It is true that work as it exists now for most people would cease to exist; but work that is socially useful offers a number of incentives besides the paycheck.

[...]

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The idea that without wages people would stop working is baseless. In the broad timeline of human history, wages are a fairly recent invention yet societies that have existed without currency or wages did not starve to death just because no one paid the workers. With the abolition of wage labor, only the kind of work that no one can justify to himself [themselves\*] as useful would disappear; all the time and resources put into making all the useless crap that our society is drowning in would be saved. Think of how much of our resources and labor go into advertising, mass mailings, throw-away packaging, cheap toys, disposable goods — things no one takes pride in making, designed to fall apart in a short time so you have to buy the next version.

Indigenous societies with less division of labor had no problem doing without wages, because the primary economic activities — producing food, housing, clothing, tools — are all easily connected to common needs. In such circumstances, work is a necessary social activity and an apparent obligation from every member of



the community who is able. And because it takes place in a flexible, personal setting, work can be adapted to every individual's capabilities, and there is nothing to keep people from transforming work into play. Fixing up your house, [...], wandering in the woods identifying plants and animals, knitting, cooking a feast – aren't these the things that bored middle-class people do in their leisure hours to forget their loathsome jobs for a moment?

[...]

In the European squatter's movement, some cities have had or continue to have so many squatted social centers and houses that they constitute a shadow society. In Barcelona, for example, as recently as 2008 there were over forty occupied social centers and at least two hundred squatted houses. The collectives of people who inhabit these squats generally use consensus and group assemblies, and most are explicitly anarchist or intentionally anti-authoritarian. To a large extent, work and exchange have been abolished from these people's lives, whose networks run into the thousands. Many do not have waged jobs, or they work only seasonally or sporadically, as they do not need to pay rent. [...] They occupy abandoned buildings left to rot by speculators, as a protest against gentrification and as anti-capitalist direct action to provide themselves with housing. Teaching themselves the skills they need along the way, they fix up their new houses, cleaning, patching roofs, installing windows, toilets, showers, light, kitchens, and anything else they need. They often pirate electricity, water, and internet, and much of their food comes from dumpster-diving, stealing, and squatted gardens.

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In the total absence of wages or managers, they carry on a great deal of work, but at their own pace and logic. The logic is one of mutual aid. Besides fixing up their own houses, they also direct

their energies towards working for their neighborhoods and enriching their communities. They provide for many of their collective needs besides housing. Some social centers host bicycle repair workshops, enabling people to repair or build their own bicycles, using old parts. Others offer carpentry workshops, self-defense and yoga workshops, natural healing workshops, libraries, gardens, communal meals, art and theater groups, language classes, alternative media and counterinformation, music shows, movies, computer labs where people can use the internet and learn email security or host their own websites, and solidarity events to deal with the inevitable repression. Nearly all of these services are provided absolutely free. There is no exchange — one group organizes to provide a service to everyone, and the entire social network benefits.

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One potential pitfall of any movement powerful enough to create an alternative to capitalism is that its participants can easily become complacent living in their bubble of autonomy and lose the will to fight for the total abolition of capitalism. Squatting itself can easily become a ritual, and in Barcelona the movement as a whole has not applied the same creativity to resistance and attack as it has to many of the practical aspects of fixing up houses and finding subsistence with little or no money. The self-sustaining nature of the network of squatters, the immediate presence of freedom, initiative, pleasure, independence, and community in their lives have by no means destroyed capitalism, but they do reveal it to be a walking corpse, with nothing but the police, in the end, preventing it for going extinct and being replaced by far superior forms of living.

*\* inclusive form of reflexive pronouns*

## TEXT 2

# *Building a mass anarchist movement: the example of Spain's CNT*

2015 / Sifuna Zonke

*Thabang Sefalala\* and Lucien van der Walt (ZACF)*

One of the crucial themes highlighted by recent works is that the construction of a mass anarchist and syndicalist movement based on anarchist principles of anti-authoritarianism, equality, freedom, liberty, justice, and democracy is possible – and is something of which ordinary working class and poor people are capable. 27

This is wonderfully demonstrated by the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (the National Confederation of Labour) of Spain. It was formed in 1910 in Barcelona, in the Catalonia province of Spain – the country's industrial hub. The CNT emerged out of difficult social, political and economic conditions that characterised Spain, and grew, despite severe repression, into the 1930s. Embodying the central anarchist principles of individual freedom, cooperation, and democracy, the CNT became the most powerful union – and mass – movement in the country.

Spain was marked by high level of inequality, and a social system that favored the elite; a rightwing Church often operated as an institution of oppression, as did the state. The activities by the CNT were heavily repressed through armed force. State power was continually used to smash working class and farmer resistance; this was essential for the ruling class to maintain their privileges.

Despite these conditions – and in contradistinction to the notion that repression, authority, exploitation, crippling poverty, hunger and misery, as well as wealth and power for people numbering no more than the fingers on one hand, are necessary evils – the CNT provided a practical example of ordinary human beings possessing profound capacities and intelligence. It built a mass union movement that defended and advanced workers' conditions, that educated millions of people in an alternative worldview, that worked alongside communities against evictions and for lower rents, and that allied with working class, the peasant youth and women fighting for the anarchist cause.

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Through its structures, its militancy, its education and its alliances, the CNT helped develop and nurture, on a mass scale, the capacities and innate intelligence of the masses – capacities and intelligence that nullified the need for mastery of the many by an elite. This was demonstrated most dramatically in the 1930s, when the CNT (and the allied Anarchist Federation of Iberia, the FAI, an anarchist political organization linked to it) launched or supported a series of popular rebellions. In 1936, the CNT and FAI helped stop a military coup, unleashing a massive and profound social revolution that saw millions of hectares of land, and vast parts of industry and services placed under worker and community control. Often governed through CNT structures, the “collectives” were self-managed, highly efficient, and rejected the logic of production for profit; they moved towards the implementation of the maximum programme of anarchist communism.

Unfortunately, failures by the CNT and FAI stalled this programme, and opened the door to its defeat.

That said, the CNT's experience from the 1910s to the 1930s highlights the reality that we are, at this current conjuncture, in fact

settling for far less than human beings are capable of creating. It is in the hands of ordinary people to remake the world. This should be remembered in movement building: the CNT model that, following in the footsteps of anarchist luminary Mikhail Bakunin, insisted crisply that "Future social organization must be made solely from the bottom upwards, by the free association or federation of workers," first local, then finally, "in a great federation, international and universal," embracing all suffering humanity, and capable of re-making the world into one based on social justice, equality and freedom.

### TEXT 3

## *Meeting our needs without keeping count*

*An excerpt out of Peter Gelderloos: Anarchy Works, 2010*

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Capitalism has failed horribly at meeting people's needs and arranging a fair distribution of goods. Throughout the world, millions die from treatable diseases because they cannot afford the medicine that would save them, and people starve to death while their countries export cash crops. Under capitalism, everything is for sale — culture is a commodity that can be manipulated to sell lingerie or skin cream, nature is a resource to be sucked dry and destroyed for profit. People must sell their time and energy to the owning class in order to buy back a fraction of what they produce. This is a deeply rooted system that shapes our values and relationships and defies most attempts to abolish it.

[...]

Power and alienation must be pursued to their roots. It is not enough for the workers to own their factories collectively if they are controlled by managers and the work still reduces them to machines. Alienation is not simply the absence of legal ownership of the means and fruits of production — it is the lack of control over one's relationship with the world. Worker ownership of a factory is meaningless if it is still administered by others on their behalf. The workers must organize themselves and control the factory directly. And even if they control the factory directly, alienation persists where the broader economic relationships, the factory itself, dictates the form their labor takes. Can a person truly be free working on an assembly line, denied creativity

and treated as a machine? The form of work itself must change, so that people can pursue the skills and activities that give them joy.

The separation of work from other human activities is one of the roots of alienation. Production itself becomes a sort of obsession that justifies exploiting people or destroying the environment for the sake of efficiency. If we view happiness as a human need no less than food and clothing, then the division between productive and nonproductive activity, between work and play, melts away.

[..]

In a free society, exchange is simply a symbolic assurance that everyone is contributing to the common resources — people don't hoard resources or take advantage of others, because they have to give in order to receive. But exchange can present problems by attaching a quantitative value to every object and experience, thus stripping them of their subjective value.

31

[...]

In addition to alienation, exchange creates power-over: if one person accumulates more quantitative value, they have accrued the right to a greater portion of the community's resources. Systems of exchange and currency, like the barter network in Argentina or the coupon system for purchasing goods in parts of anarchist Spain, rely on customs and social arrangements to prevent the reemergence of capitalism. For example, a gift economy could function at a local level, with exchange used only for regional trade. People could deliberately set up work environments that encourage personal development, creativity, fun, and self-organization, while decentralized federations of such workplaces could award one another with coupons for the goods they produce so each person

has access to the wealth created by all.

But it is a worthwhile challenge to do away with exchange and currency altogether. Within free stores or Freecycle, the symbolic assurance provided by exchange or barter is unnecessary. The assurance that everyone will contribute to the common wealth springs from the culture of the spaces themselves. As a participant, you express the desire to give and to receive, and your inclusion in the social space increases as you carry out both of these activities. In such contexts, giving pleases a person just as much as receiving.

32 The world is bountiful enough to provide for everyone's needs. Scarcity is a dangerous illusion that functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once people stop giving and begin hoarding, collective wealth declines. If we overcome the fear of scarcity, scarcity itself disappears. Common resources will be bountiful if everyone shares and contributes, or even if most people do. People like to be active, to create and improve things. If people are ensured access to common resources and spared the poverty of wage slavery, they will create plenty of the things they need and that give them pleasure, as well as the infrastructure required to make and distribute these things.



## TEXT 4

# Revolution

*An excerpt out of Wayne Price: Review of Laursen's book on anarchism and the state: "The Operating System: An Anarchist Theory of the Modern State", 2021*

[...] The state is the central institution in this society. It has drives of its own but is intimately tied up with capitalism in all aspects. It is also integrated with all other subsystems of oppression. To get rid of capitalism, to avoid climate catastrophe, to end racial and gender and all other oppressions, it will be necessary to overthrow the state.

[...]

33

Laursen concludes that an anarchist transformation "is not just a socially desirable outcome to work toward, but an existential necessity". We face economic decline, pandemics, and wars (with the danger of nuclear war), as well as other social evils: "today with catastrophic climate change looming, we are fighting for more than a just society; we are fighting for survival"

[...] The state cannot be taken over through elections and then used to change the very system it exists to maintain. The same rejection applies to "revolutionary" programs of overthrowing the existing state and replacing it with a new state—and then using the new state to change society. Laursen compares this to "replacing iOS with Windows—swapping one version of the State for another.

[...] But a state remains a state, a bureaucratic-military socially alienated machine standing over and above the rest of society,

serving a minority elite in exploiting the mass of the population. Laursen points out that "anarchism" is one of "the forms of socialism". It is anticapitalist and in favor of a collective, cooperative, and nonprofit economy. But "to get rid of capitalism requires getting rid of the State". Similarly, Laursen rejects reformist and gradualist strategies of anarchism. Many anarchists propose to live alternate lifestyles and to build alternate institutions, intending to ignore the state and big capital. They hope to work around the state and to peacefully create a new society with minimal, if any, direct clashes with the elite and its armed forces.

34

Still, Laursen favors building alternate organizations that do not depend on the government or big business, such as co-ops. And he favors building social forces in opposition to the establishment: community organizations; unions; movements against war, racism, or sexism. Even reforms are most likely to be won when the state is challenged from outside and below: "every important advance in working people's material well-being and political status, from ... decent pay and dignity for industrial workers to racial equality, has been thanks to social movements that first formed outside the State and in opposition to its power structure, and ... those advances were lost when those social movements atrophied or were subsumed by the State."

[...]

A revolution will require a period of build-up, when independent popular organizations and mass movements are growing, and a period afterwards, when new systems take root and solidify. In between, there will have to be some sort of insurrection, some kind of clash: "the State ... will fight to preserve itself at all costs.... There will almost certainly be an armed struggle at some point.... The State will not go away until we force it to."

## **TEXT 5**

# *Understanding the Zapatistas*

*Understanding the Zapatistas: Five years of rebellion in Mexico. Andrew Flood (1999)*

It is now 30 years since the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) came to the attention of the world when they seized five towns in Chiapas on New Year's day in 1994. This article describes the democratic assemblies and other decision making processes in the Zapatista community of Diez de Abril.

## **Origins of the Zapatistas**

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It was the radicalisation of the indigenous people of Chiapas from the 1970's that created the conditions for rebellion. They have much to rebel against. The state is controlled by nine wealthy families and, particularly in the highlands, the ordinary people have no rights and no security. Resistance is inevitable.

Three factors were influential in inspiring the uprising in Chiapas. Initially hostile to social radicalism, the Church began to identify social problems and encourage people to non-violently demand justice.

The second factor is what the EZLN term 'Civil Society'. By this they mean a combination of NGO's (Non-Government Organisations), unions, community projects, political parties and individuals. Many of these organisations were formed locally. Following the 1968 massacre of students in Mexico city many urban activists left to organise in the poor rural areas of Mexico. The result was a blossoming of education projects and farmer organisations

all aimed at empowering a section of Mexican society that was previously voiceless.

The third factor was a new found confidence and politicisation amongst the indigenous people. The Mexican government organised a national indigenous congress, intended to bring together the indigenous people from all over Mexico so they could improve their handicraft production. This also, unwittingly, provided a platform for the indigenous to exchange their grievances and begin a process of national co-ordination that would politicise many.

36

The process greatly escalated in the face of government plans across the Americas to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the “discovery” of America. For indigenous people of course this represented the start of 500 years of enslavement and genocide. Their response was to organise national and then continental meetings which opposed the official celebrations in the 1989 to 1992 period. This became the moment at which they turned from a movement of a couple of dozen into hundreds and then thousands. The communities ordered the EZLN to go on the offensive against the state. The one compromise the army command got was a years delay to train for offensive operations. And so on New Years day 1994 the EZLN emerged from the jungle and seized the major cities of the Chiapas highlands.

From the time of the rising the Zapatista have insisted that be understood as Mexican revolutionaries. Mexico has a strong and often unique revolutionary tradition of its own. From the time of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 it has been common for revolutionaries to form alliances with indigenous communities. Many of the writings of Mexican leftists, in particular from the anarchist tradition, focus on the communal and democratic aspects of indigenous culture as the beginnings of a model of free society.

The most successful of these alliances was the movement of Emiliano Zapata. This movement adopted the anarchist slogan 'Land and Liberty' and explicitly refused to seize state power, most famously when, on capturing Mexico city Zapata refused to even try out the presidential throne.

The common feature of all the Zapatista communities is an agreed structure of decision making. These structures combine a radical democracy with more traditional indigenous assemblies. The communities have an assembly meeting once or more per week where all members of the community can talk and vote. Within the community there is often a community council of delegates who have responsibility for particular tasks and these meet more frequently. There may also be sub- assemblies related to particular groups, (for instance women's assemblies) or to particular jobs like sewing.

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The Councils are elected and renewed every one or two years. Those who hold a position on the Municipal Council do not receive a salary for it. In some cases, members of the Council are supported in their farm work, so they can dedicate themselves to their [Council] work, and not have to go the fields. The autonomous municipalities resolve local problems of coexistence, relations and exchanges between communities, and they attend to minor crimes. The application of justice is based on customary law. For example, in cases of common crimes, the punishment imposed by the Autonomous Council is reparation of the damages: instead of punishment by jail or fines, a sentence is imposed of working for the community, or for the aggrieved family.

## TEXT 6

# Anarcho-Blackness

*Anarcho-Blackness. Notes Toward a Black Anarchism: Marquis Bey, 2020 and Combahee River Collective Statement 1977*

38 But what is more apropos to anarcho-Blackness's concerns is how Blackness and those in proximity to its work and histories operate anarchically. On one register, Black communities themselves are, one might say, anarchist communities: they don't "involve the state, the police, or the politicians. We look out for each other, we care for each other's kids, we go to the store for each other, we find ways to protect our communities." Racial and gendered capitalism rest at the heart of the will to possess and privatize the ownership of possessable things. Thus, anarchism demands its abolition, not a conciliatory reform, for "it is impossible to reform the system of racial capitalism."

### **Combahee River Collective (CRC). The CRC's "Black Feminist Statement"**

The State and the governmental/material ills of the world are the product of "white male rule" that they feel viscerally. There is no saving it; through and through, it is toxic. No reforming white male rule. So it becomes appropriate, on a certain reading, to see "white male rule" as not merely about people who are white and cis men at the top (though this is certainly very much the case), but as a name for the oppressiveness of the State and authority. State and authority are metonymized by reference to white male rule, which the CRC, as Black and woman—as operating through Black feminism—feels acutely and wants no part of. They are uninterested in seizing the State or capital; they are uninterested in flipping the racialized and gendered script and becoming the master class.

"We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind," they write in their Statement. "To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough."<sup>6</sup> A horizontal, mutually aiding, radically non-hierarchical world is what they seek. An anarchic world.

[...]

This is all to say something quite profound: Black radical feminisms, with their embedded queer and trans circulatory systems, refuse subsumption into neoliberal markets or mainstream notions of revolution. They reject the creation of another nation-state; they reject a female-headed ruling class—it is a radical feminism for the 99%, which is "Far from celebrating women CEOs who occupy corner offices"; "we want to get rid of CEOs and corner offices." It continually questions, refusing an end point or knowable future.

39

[...]

That is, if it is indeed true that the State bears a hostile relationship to those it controls, there are some who are controlled in different ways and who feel the force of the State in more acute ways. To rest at the nexus of Black and trans, for example, is to feel the brunt of the State in scrutinizing, gender binaristic, and racializing ways, which give one over to the likelihood of poor housing conditions, lack of job access, increased rates of incarceration which then subjects one to the gendered carcerality of prisons and its pervasive mis-gendering violence), and the like.

[...]

Flipping the script is not enough; it is not enough to simply insist on the femaleness of the future or yearn for Black people to rule the world. Wanting a representational subject that embodies all the

marginalized demographics we can (and can't) imagine will not—I repeat: will not—actualize a radical anarchic world. Representation is not our end goal, not only because representation implies the non-participation of those whom the representative ultimately represents (that is, the representative holds power only when those they represent are absent, which is antithetical to the anarchic drive for direct participation); representation also assumes a legible subject, which must align with normative logics of socio-ontological existence—to represent someone or something, that someone or something has to already be known. But if anarchism wants to destroy the extant system, and if the extant system dictates what is and can be known, its destruction means that what arises after cannot be known or represented.

[...]

40

And abolish the police. Abolish prisons. Abolish the gender binary. Full stop. We offer dances of thought, possibilities for how you, who hold this text in your hands, and those who your hands guide and nurture and build with, might go out into the world you find yourself in and begin, or continue, to manifest the fact that we are not yet broken. We are not subdued at the present time and are still here loving others, loving ourselves, loving those who may not yet be able to appear, and yes, loving those who have orchestrated this mess. It is a multifaceted love, caressing some while slapping the shit out of others. We want you, yes you, are you listening? We want you to demand better by planting a garden and calling out white supremacist patriarchal cisheteropatriarchy; demand better by asking comrades and accomplices “You good?” and punching Nazis; demand better by opening the door for the many-and-non-gendered kinfolk who you’ve just met for the first time and literally stealing from universities and jails and corporations. Do what you can, do all you can, where you’re at right now and wherever else you might end up.



**THE ENTIRE GODDAMN  
PLANET**



**LIBERAL REFORMISM**



PICTURE 1

*WHO WANTS TO BOTTOMLINE  
DOING THE DISHES FOR THEIR  
LOCAL MUTUAL AID BASED  
FOOD DISTRO?*

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**What do you see on the picture?**

**What are the problems on the picture?**

**Do you notice something strange or contradictory?**

**To which anarchist principles can you connect the picture? Does it oppose some of the principles? If yes, why?**



# *Literature / Further Reading*

- \* Solidarity As We See It / As We Don't See It, 1967
- \* WIR KÖNNEN AUCH ANDERS: Konkrete Schritte in die gelebte Utopie
- \* Peter Gelderloos: Anarchy Works. Examples of Anarchist Ideas in Practice, 2018
- \* Peter Gelderloos: Worshiping Power. An anarchist View of Early State Formation
- \* Emma Goldman: The Individual, Society and the State, 1940
- \* Perspektive Selbstverwaltung: Programm für eine libertäre Gesellschaft
- \* Frantz Fanon: Wretched of the Earth, 1961
- \* Scott Branson: Practical Anarchism. A Guide for Daily Life, 2022
- \* Leanne Betasamosake Simpson: As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance, 2017
- The Combahee River Collective Statement 1977
- \* Thomas Stölner, Uwe H. Bittlingmayer, Gözde Okcu: Anarchistische Gesellschaftsentwürfe. Zwischen partizipatorischer Wirtschaft, herrschaftsfreier Vergesellschaftung und kollektiver Entscheidungsfindung, 2024
- \* Non Western Anarchisms: Rethinking the Global Context. Jason Adams
- \* Practical Anarchism: A Guide for Daily Life. Scott Branson 2022
- \* Understanding the Zapatistas: Five years of rebellion in Mexico. Andrew Flood (1999) <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/andrew-flood-understanding-the-zapatistas>
- \* Building a mass anarchist movement: the example of Spain's CNT. Thabang Sefalala\* and Lucien van der Walt (ZACF) (2015)
- \* Russel Means, The Same Old Song - What is Europe. 1980 <https://www.countercurrents.org/means181010.htm>
- \* Against an Indigenous Anarchy (2021) by Klee Benally, Ya'iish-

jááshch'ilí (June 2021)

- \* <https://www.radical-guide.com/> (Podcasts, info/texts/books, find other radical places)
- \* Radical Guide Map: A-Projects around the World <https://www.radical-guide.com/listing-category/all-listings/>
- \* Cindy Milstein: Deciding for Ourselves. The Promise of Direct Democracy.
- \* A Collection of Essays on... Feminism and Sexism in the Anarchist Movement
- \* Saint Andrew: What is Black Anarchism?
- \* Zoe Baker: Bakunin Was a Racist
- \* C.B. Daring, J.Rogue, Deric Shannon, Abbey Volcano: Anarchismus queeren. Über Macht und Begehren in queeren und herrschaftskritischen Kontexten
- \* Lucy E. Parsons „I am An Anarchist“ (1886) <https://www.black-past.org/african-american-history/1886-lucyparsons-i-am-anarchist/>
- \* The Operating System: An Anarchist Theory of the Modern State. Review of Laursen's new book on anarchism and the state

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**You can find lots of free anarchist and anti-authoritarian literature on [www.theanarchistlibrary.org](http://www.theanarchistlibrary.org)**



normal-horoscopes

**NOBODY BURNS DOWN A POLICE STATION BECAUSE THEY  
WANT A 10% REDUCTION IN POLICE FUNDING**



# *Read on about Non-Western Anarchisms and Anti-authoritarian activist, fights, solidarity actions:*

## **China:**

- \* Mao and the anarchist People's Voice Society
- \* Shifu (anarchist leader 1920) ?
- \* Truth Society in Guangzhou (1st anarchist organisation)
- \* World Society 1906 by Li Shizeng and Wu Zhihui (anti-tradition)
- \* Liu Shipei (anti-modernist)

## **Korea:**

- \* Liberation Movement 1920's (against imperialism/China)
- \* Korean Anarchist Communist Federation 1924 (KACF)  
antiimperial and organised anarchist labor union
- \* Shinmin Rebellion
- \* East Anarchist Federation

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## **Japan:**

- \* Kotoku Shusui and Osugi Sakae (class struggles)
- \* Antiwar Common People's Newspaper (Heimin Shinbun)
- \* Hatta Shuzo
- \* Noe Ito (brought anarcho-feminism to Japan)
- \* All-Japan-Libertarian Federation of Labor Unions  
(Zenkoku Jiren) 1926
- \* Tetsu Kato (painter, captured spirit of anarcho-movement)
- \* Black Youth League (Kokuren)
- \* East Anarchist Federation
- \* 1894 Invasion of Japan in Korea (to "protect" it from China)
- \* "High Treason Incident/Case" 1920's, tried to assassinate  
Emperor allegedly., 1919 Independence struggle

## **India:**

- \* Satyagraha Movement
- \* Satya Yuga (anarchist society)
- \* Bhagat Singh (anarchist-syndicalist)

## **Egypt:**

- influenced by Italian anarchist immigrants and literature: Lavoratore, La Questions Sociale

## **Tunisia:**

Italian anarchist influence: L'Operaio, La Protesta Umana

## **Algeria:**

Italian anarchist influence: L'Action Révolutionnaire, Le Tocsin, Le Libertaire, and La Marmite Sociale

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## **Nigeria:**

- \* Sam Mbah
- \* Igbo, Niger Delta Peoples and Tallensi (anti-authoritarian, direct democracy)

## **South Africa:**

- \* Social Democratic Federation
  - South African IWW (Industrial Workers of the World)
  - Industrial Socialist League born for direct and anti-electoral actions



## ***Latin America:***

### **Argentina:**

Resistance Societies 1904 (worker's group)

- Baker's Union 1887
- La Semana Tragica 1919: General worker's strike
- Intense repression period "Eighteen Months of MilitaryTerror"
- La Protesta Humana, Agitación (anarcho-publications)

### **Uruguay:**

FORU large revolutionary movement from 1905

- Center for International Social Studies (CIES)  
anarchy-press
- La Batalla

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### **Brazil:**

Centro de Cultura Social

- Anarchist labor activists in Congress Operario do Brasil (COB)
- Anarchist activity in Sao Paolo General Strike 1917
- Flinta\* Textil Workers organized the strike

### **Mexico:**

- Zapatistas and Magonistas

- Emiliano Zapata, Ricardo Flores Magon
- Club Socialista de Estudiantes (CSE) 1863
- La Social
- Social Revolution 1910
- Regeneracion newspaper 1900
- Mexican Liberal Party (PLM) 1905
- Plan de Alaya: against land reform and people's autonomy

## **Cuba:**

- Roig San Martin
  - El Productor paper
  - Alianza Obrera (national anarchist organization)
  - Jose Marti, Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC) (for decentralization)
  - Elisee Reclus (international solidarity organisations to support independence movement)
  - October Revolution

## **Middle East:**

### **Armenia:**

- 50 Alexandre Atabekian  
Commonwealth (Hamaink) anarcho-journal  
Revolutionary Armenian Federation (Dashnaktsouthian)

### **Palestinian and Jewish Societies:**

Gustav Landauer, Rudolph Rocker, Joseph Trumpeldor  
Problemen anarcho-newspaper





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*"Just as the capitalist system is not a capitalist plot, so racial oppression is not the work of "racists". It is maintained by the principal institutions of society, including schools (which define "excellence"), the labor market (which defines "employment", the legal system (which defines "crime"), the welfare system (which defines "poverty"), the medical industry (which defines "health") and the family (which defines "kin-ship"). Many of these institutions are administered by people who would be offended if accused of complicity with racial oppression. [...] The simple fact is that the public schools and the welfare departments are doing more harm to black children than all the "racist" groups combined. The abolitionists seek to abolish the white race."*

**Abolish Whiteness, Anti-racist zine collection**

*"We anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; we want the people to emancipate themselves."*

**Errico Malatesta, published in l'Agitazione, 1897**

*"If I can't dance, it's not my revolution."*

**Emma Goldman, 1931**