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# Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)



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## The Organisational Platform

activities of all the forces of the anarchist movement.

Each organisation affiliated to the Union represents a living cell that is part of the overall organism. Each cell will have its own secretariat to facilitate its activities and provide theoretical and political guidance.

In order to co-ordinate the activity of all of the Union's affiliated organisations, a special body is to be established in the form of an **Executive Committee of the Union**. The following functions will be ascribed to that Committee: implementation of decisions made by the Union, as entrusted; overseeing the activity and theoretical development of the individual organisations, in keeping with the overall theoretical and tactical line of the Union; monitoring the general state of the movement; maintaining functional organisational ties between all the member organisations of the Union, as well as with other organisations.

The rights, responsibilities and practical tasks of the Executive Committee are laid down by the Congress of the General Union.

The General Union of Anarchists has a specific and well-defined goal. For the sake of the success of the social revolution, it must above all choose the most critical and revolutionary elements from among the workers and peasants to join it.

As an organisation promoting social revolution (and also an anti-authoritarian organisation) which seeks the immediate destruction of class society, the General Union of Anarchists likewise relies upon the two fundamental classes of the present society – the workers and the peasants – and it equally facilitates the quest of both for emancipation.

As regards the urban workers' revolutionary labour organisations, the General Union of Anarchists must make every effort to become their pioneer and theoretical mentor.

The General Union of Anarchists sets itself the same tasks where the exploited peasant masses are concerned, and to serve as a basis, playing the same role as the urban working-class revolutionary trade unions, it must attempt to develop a network of revolutionary peasant economic organisations, and furthermore, a specific Peasant Union built on anti-authoritarian principles.

Born out of the mass of the workers, the General Union of Anarchists must take part in all aspects of their life, always and everywhere bringing the spirit of organisation, perseverance, militancy and the will to go on the offensive.

Only thus will it be able to fulfil its role, to carry out its theoretical and historical mission in the social revolution of the workers and become the organised cutting edge in their process of emancipation.

## ★ Translator's Introduction ★

Eighty years have passed since the publication in the pages of the Russian anarchist monthly *Delo Truda* of the **Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)**, but the question of anarchist organisation remains an open one even today, a question which sparks off ferocious debates with frightening ease.

Yet in reality it is a question which has long been solved: either we accept the need for anarchists to come together in their own specific organisations so as to allow greater unity and strength with which to face the struggles; or we don't accept it, and are happy to remain part of the world of "chaotic" anarchism which rejects such a need for one reason or another, considering it pointless or dangerous, or which accepts it, but choose anarchist unity in name, where the various hues of anarchism come together under an umbrella organisation without any serious political unity or strategies.

The Organisational Platform (often known in English-speaking circles as the "Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists") was the first attempt since the days of Bakunin to formulate a theoretical and practical platform of the positions and tasks of anarchists, which could provide anarchism with the necessary political and organisational unity to increase the influence of anarchist ideas within society in general and the workers' movements in particular, after the defeat of anarchism in the Russian Revolution made the grave faults of (what had by then become) "traditional" anarchism all too evident. The Platform not only deals with organisational questions. It tackles a whole range of problems: it clearly sets out the class nature of anarchism; it defines the role of anarchists in the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods; it establishes the role of syndicalism as an instrument of struggle; it sets out the basic tenets of anarchist theory such as anti-capitalism, the rejection of bourgeois democracy, the State and authority, and more.

For all these reasons, the Organisational Platform, though not exhaustive in its treatment of various questions, and requiring further development in some areas, is a document of great value, not only historical but also practical. It merits the serious consideration of all those who fight, or who want to fight, for a new world, a new society, a new humanity.

Previous English translations of the Platform have suffered from the fact that they were translated, not directly from the Russian, but via French. So, in order to commemorate the 80th anniversary of its publication, we set about preparing a new translation directly from Russian. However, in order to save time, this new translation is based on the existing translations, but we have made a detailed comparison with the Russian original in order to bring it as close as possible to the original. We have also observed the original paragraphs and replaced emphatic italics with bold type, for clarity.

As translations of the Platform into other languages (such as Dutch, Greek and Spanish) have generally been made from the existing English translations, we take this opportunity

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to suggest that translators revise their work on the basis of this new translation or, if possible, of the Russian original, available on the Archive.

Finally we wish to thank Will Firth and Mikhail Tsovma for their invaluable assistance (and patience!) with this new translation.

**Nestor McNab**  
Maintainer,  
The Nestor Makhno Archive  
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## Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad

The areas of revolutionary, social and political life are profoundly collective in nature. Revolutionary public activity in those areas cannot be based upon the individual responsibility of single militants.

The general anarchist movement's executive body – the Anarchist Union – takes a decisive stand against the tactic of unaccountable individualism and introduces the **principle of collective responsibility** into its ranks: the union as a whole is answerable for the revolutionary and political activity of each member of the union; likewise, each of its members is answerable for the revolutionary and political activity of the union as a whole.

### 4. Federalism

Anarchism has always rejected centralist organisation both where the social life of the masses is concerned as well as in the area of its political activity. The system of centralization relies upon the stifling of the spirit of criticism, initiative and independence of every individual and upon the masses' blind obedience to the "centre". The natural and inevitable upshot of this system is slavishness and mechanization, both in public life and in the life of parties.

Contrary to centralism, anarchism has always advocated and defended the principle of **federalism**, which combines the independence of the individual or organisation with their initiative and service to the common cause.

By combining the idea of the independence and fullness of each individual's rights with service of social requirements and instincts, federalism paves the way to every wholesome manifestation of the faculties of each individual.

But very often the federalist principle has been warped in anarchist ranks; too often has it been taken to mean primarily the right to display one's ego and neglect one's duties towards the organisation.

This distortion has caused a great deal of disorganisation within our movement in the past and it is time to put an end to it once and for all.

Federalism means the free agreement of individuals and entire organisations upon collective endeavour, in order to achieve a common objective.

Now, any such agreement and any federative union based thereon can only become a reality (rather than exist only on paper) if the essential condition is fulfilled that all parties to the agreement and to the union fully honour the obligations they take on and abide by the decisions reached jointly.

In any social project, however great the federalist basis on which it is built, there can be no rights without responsibilities, just as there cannot be decisions without these being implemented. That is all the more unacceptable in an anarchist organisation that takes only obligations upon itself with regard to the workers and their social revolution.

As a result, the federalist type of anarchist organisation, while acknowledging the right of every member of the organisation to independence, freedom of opinion, personal initiative and individual liberty, entrusts each member with specific organisational duties, requiring that these be duly performed and that decisions jointly made also be put into effect.

Only in this way will the federalist principle come to life and the anarchist organisation function properly and move towards the goal it has set.

The idea of the General Union of Anarchists raises the issue of the co-ordination of the

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### ★ The Principles of Anarchist Organisation

The general constructive positions set out above represent the organisational platform of the revolutionary forces of anarchism.

This platform is built around a specific theoretical and tactical outlook. This is the minimum around which all the militants of the organised anarchist movement must be rallied.

The platform's task is to assemble all of the healthy elements of the anarchist movement into a single active and continually operating organisation, the General Union of Anarchists. All of anarchism's active militants must direct their resources into the creation of this organisation.

*The basic organisational principles of a General Union of Anarchists are as follows:*

#### 1. Unity of Theory

Theory is the force that guides the activity of individual people and individual organisations along a specific route towards a specific goal. Naturally, it must be shared by all persons and all organisations that join the General Union. The activity of the general anarchist Union, both in general and in detail, must be perfectly consistent with the theoretical principles professed by the Union.

#### 2. Unity of Tactics or the Collective Method of Action

The tactical methods employed by the individual members or groups within the Union must likewise be united, strictly consistent with one another as well as with the overall theory and tactics of the Union.

Sharing a general (common) tactical line within the movement is of crucial importance for the existence of the organisation and of the entire movement: it rids the movement of the confusion arising from the existence of multiple mutually antagonistic tactics and focuses all the movement's forces on a common direction leading to a specific objective.

#### 3. Collective Responsibility

The practice of operating on one's individual responsibility must be strictly condemned and rejected within the ranks of the anarchist movement.

## ★ Introduction ★

*Anarchists!*

Despite the force and unquestionably positive character of anarchist ideas, despite the clarity and completeness of anarchist positions with regard to the social revolution, and despite the heroism and countless sacrifices of anarchists in the struggle for Anarchist Communism, it is very telling that in spite of all this, the anarchist movement has always remained weak and has most often featured in the history of working-class struggles, not as a determining factor, but rather as a fringe phenomenon.

This contrast between the positive substance and incontestable validity of anarchist ideas and the miserable state of the anarchist movement can be explained by a number of factors, the chief one being the absence in the anarchist world of organisational principles and organisational relations.

In every country the anarchist movement is represented by local organisations with contradictory theory and tactics with no forward planning or continuity in their work. They usually fold after a time, leaving little or no trace.

Such a condition in revolutionary anarchism, if we take it as a whole, can only be described as chronic general disorganisation. This disease of disorganisation has invaded the organism of the anarchist movement like yellow fever and has plagued it for decades.

There can be no doubt, however, that this disorganisation has its roots in a number of defects of theory, notably in the distorted interpretation of the principle of individuality in anarchism, that principle being too often mistaken for the absence of all accountability. Those enamoured of **self-expression with an eye to personal pleasure** cling stubbornly to the chaotic condition of the anarchist movement and, in defence thereof, invoke the immutable principles of anarchism and its teachers.

However, the immutable principles and teachers show the very opposite.

Dispersion spells ruination; cohesion guarantees life and development. This law of social struggle is equally applicable to classes and parties.

Anarchism is no beautiful fantasy, no abstract notion of philosophy, but a social movement of the working masses; for that reason alone it must gather its forces into one organisation, constantly agitating, as demanded by the reality and strategy of the social class struggle.



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As Kropotkin said:

*“We are convinced that the formation of an anarchist party in Russia, far from being prejudicial to the general revolutionary endeavour, is instead desirable and useful in the highest degree.”*

(Foreword to Bakunin’s **Paris Commune**,  
[Russian edition], 1892)

Nor did Bakunin ever oppose the idea of a general anarchist organisation. On the contrary, his aspirations with regard to organisation, as well as his activities within the first workingmen’s International, give us every right to view him as an active advocate of precisely such a mode of organisation.

Broadly speaking, nearly all of the active militants of anarchism were against dissipated action and dreamed of an anarchist movement united by a common purpose and common tactics.

It was during the Russian revolution of 1917 that the need for a general organisation was felt most acutely, since it was during the course of that revolution that the anarchist movement displayed the greatest degree of fragmentation and confusion. The absence of a general organisation induced many anarchist militants to defect to the ranks of the Bolsheviks. It is also the reason why many other militants find themselves today in a condition of passivity that thwarts any utilization of their often immense capacities.

We have vital need of an organisation which, having attracted most of the participants in the anarchist movement, would establish a common tactical and political line for anarchism and thereby serve as a guide for the whole movement.

It is high time that anarchism emerged from the swamp of disorganisation, to put an end to the interminable vacillations on the most important questions of theory and tactics, and resolutely move towards its clearly understood purpose and an organised collective practice.

It is not enough, though, to simply state the vital need for such an organisation. It is also necessary to establish a means for creating it.

We reject as theoretically and practically unfounded the idea of creating an organisation using the recipe of the “synthesis”, that is to say, bringing together the supporters of the various strands of anarchism. Such an organisation embracing a pot-pourri of elements (in terms of their theory and practice) would be nothing more than a mechanical assemblage of persons with varying views on all issues affecting the anarchist movement, and would inevitably break up on encountering reality.

The anarcho-syndicalist approach does not solve anarchism’s organisational difficulty, since anarcho-syndicalism fails to give it priority and is mostly interested in the idea of penetrating and making headway into the world of labour. However, even with a foothold there, there is nothing much to be accomplished in the world of labour if we do not have a general anarchist organisation.

The only approach which can lead to a solution of the general organisational problem is, as we see it, the recruitment of anarchism’s active militants on the basis of specific theoretic, tactical and organisational positions, which is to say on the basis of a more or less perfected, **homogeneous programme**.

Drawing up such a programme is one of the primary tasks that the social struggle of re-

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pline are mutually complementary in every way, and serve to make the revolutionary army psychologically stronger than any state army);

**4. total subordination of the revolutionary army to the worker and peasant masses** as represented by the general worker and peasant bodies throughout the land, which will be created by the masses at the moment of revolution and given the task of overseeing the country’s economic and social life.

In other words, the organ for the defence of the revolution, which is charged with combating the counter-revolution both on the open military fronts as well as on the covert fronts of the civil war (plots by the bourgeoisie, the preparation of rebellions, etc.), will be under the complete control of the highest workers’ and peasants’ productive organisations – it will be answerable to them and under their political direction.

**NB:** *While the revolutionary army must of necessity be structured in accordance with specifically anarchist principles, it should not be regarded as a point of principle. It is merely the consequence of military strategy in the revolution, a strategic measure that the process of civil war will inevitably force the workers to take. ow so as to avoid any fatal delays in protecting and defending the revolution, for in times of civil war, delays can prove fatal to the outcome of the whole social revolution.*



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As successful as the workers' first steps may be at the outset of the revolution, the ruling classes will nonetheless retain a huge capacity for resistance for quite some time, and over a period of several years they will unleash attacks on the revolution, trying to snatch back the power and privileges that have been taken from them.

A sizeable and well-equipped army, supported by military strategists and backed by capital – all this will be pitted against the victorious workers.

If the workers are to preserve the gains of the revolution, they will have to set up organs for defence of the revolution, in order to field a fighting force that is equal to the task, against the onslaught of the reaction. In the earliest days of the revolution, that fighting force will be made up of all the workers and peasants in arms. But that makeshift armed force will only be viable in the earliest days, when the civil war has not yet reached its peak and the two opposing sides have not yet established regular military organisations.

The most critical juncture in the social revolution is not the moment when authority is overthrown, but the time thereafter when the forces of the ousted regime unleash a general offensive against the workers, when the gains that have been achieved must be safeguarded.

The nature of that offensive, the weaponry used and the course of the civil war will require that the workers create specific military revolutionary bodies. The nature and underlying principles of these units must be laid down in advance. In rejecting statist and authoritarian methods of controlling the masses, we consequently reject the statist manner of organising the workers' military forces, i.e. we reject the principle of an army based on compulsory military service. It is the volunteer principle, in accordance with the basic tenets of anarchism, which should provide the basis for the workers' military bodies. The revolutionary partisan detachments of workers and peasants during the Russian revolution might be cited as examples of such structures.

Yet voluntary revolutionary service and partisan activity should not be construed in the narrow sense, i.e. as a struggle waged by worker and peasant forces against a local enemy, without co-ordination in the shape of an overall operational plan, each unit acting on its own initiative. When they are fully developed, partisan action and tactics in the revolution should be guided by a common military and revolutionary strategy.

Like any war, civil war can only be waged successfully by the workers if two principles fundamental to all military activity are observed: unity of operational planning and unity of common command. The most critical time for the revolution will be when the bourgeoisie marches as an organised force against the revolution and will require the workers to have recourse to these principles of military strategy.

Thus, given the requirements of military strategy and the strategy of the counter-revolution, the armed forces of the revolution will inevitably have to amalgamate into a common revolutionary army with a common command and a common operational plan.

*That army will be founded on the following basic principles:*

- 1. the class nature of the army;**
- 2. voluntary military service** (all coercion is excluded in the matter of the defence of the revolution);
- 3. revolutionary self-discipline** (voluntary military service and revolutionary self-disci-

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cent decades demands of anarchists. And it is to this task that the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad has dedicated a substantial part of its efforts.

The "Organisational Platform" published below represents the outline, the skeleton of such a programme and must serve as the first step towards gathering anarchist forces into a single active, revolutionary anarchist collective capable of struggle: the General Union of Anarchists.

We have no illusions about the various deficiencies in the platform. As in any new, practical and, at the same time, critical departure, there are undoubtedly gaps in the platform. It may be that certain essential positions have been left out of the platform, or that certain others have not been developed adequately, or that still others may be too detailed or repetitive. All of this is possible, but that is not the issue. What is important is that the groundwork be laid for a general organisation, and that aim is achieved, to the necessary extent, by this platform. It is the task of the general collective – the General Anarchist Union – to further elaborate and improve the platform so as to turn it into a complete programme for the whole anarchist movement.

We also have no illusions on another score.

We anticipate that a great many representatives of so-called individualism and "chaotic" anarchism will attack us, foaming at the mouth and accusing us of infringing anarchist principles. Yet we know that these individualist and chaotic elements take "anarchist principles" to mean the cavalier attitude, disorderliness and irresponsibility that have inflicted all but incurable injuries upon our movement and against which we struggle with all our energy and passion. That is why we can calmly parry any attacks from that quarter.

Our hopes are vested in others – in those who have remained true to anarchism, the workers, who have lived out the tragedy of the anarchist movement and who are painfully searching for a way out.

And we have high hopes of the anarchist youth, those young comrades born on the winds of the Russian revolution and absorbed from the outset by the whole gamut of constructive problems, who will undoubtedly insist on the implementation of positive organisational principles in anarchism.

We invite all Russian anarchist organisations, scattered throughout the various countries of the world, as well as individual anarchist militants, to come together into a single revolutionary collective, on the basis of a general organisational platform.

May this platform be a revolutionary watchword and rallying point for all the militants of the Russian anarchist movement and may it mark the birth of the General Union of Anarchists!

**Long Live the Organised Anarchist Movement!  
Long Live the General Anarchist Union!  
Long Live the Social Revolution of the World's Workers!**

**The Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad**

Petr Arshinov, Group Secretary

20 June 1926

## ★ General Part ★

### I. Class Struggle, its Role and its Value

*“There is no ONE humanity.  
There is the humanity made up of classes:  
slaves and masters.”*

Like all the societies that preceded it, contemporary bourgeois capitalist society is not united. It is split into two distinct camps, differing sharply in their social position and social function: the proletariat (in the broadest sense of the word) and the bourgeoisie.

The lot of the proletariat has for centuries been to bear the burden of hard physical labour, the fruits of which, however, devolve not to itself but to another, privileged class that enjoys property, authority and the products of spiritual culture (science, education, art) – the bourgeoisie.

The social enslavement and exploitation of the working masses form the basis upon which modern society stands and without which it could not exist.

This fact has given rise to a centuries-long class struggle sometimes assuming an open, tempestuous form, sometimes undetectable and slow, but always fundamentally directed towards transforming the existing society into a society that would satisfy the workers' needs, requirements and conception of justice.

In social terms, the whole of human history represents a continuous chain of struggles waged by the working masses in pursuit of their rights, freedom and a better life. At all times throughout the history of human societies, this class struggle has been the principal factor determining the form and structure of those societies.

The socio-political system of any country is primarily the product of the class struggle. The structure of any society is an indication of what stage the class struggle has reached. The slightest change in the tide of the class struggle and the relative strengths of the antagonistic classes immediately produces changes in the fabric and structure of class society.

This is the general, universal significance of the class struggle in the life of class societies.

### II. The Necessity of Violent Social Revolution

The principle of the enslavement and exploitation of the masses through force lies at the root of modern society. All areas of society – economics, politics, social relations – rely on class violence, whose official organs are state bodies, the police, the army and the courts.

torical circumstances, every worker (peasant) has become accustomed to working alone, selling their produce independent of other producers. While in industry the collective (communist) mode of labour is vitally necessary and the only feasible one, in agriculture in our day it is not the only feasible method. The majority of peasants work the land using individual methods.

As a result, when the land and the means to work it pass into the hands of the peasants, with no possibility of sale or lease, the issue of how it should be used and what should be cultivated (on the level of commune or family) will not be wholly and definitively resolved right away, as will be the case with industry. To begin with, we will probably resort to both of these methods.

The ultimate pattern of land tenure and land use will be determined by the revolutionary peasantry itself. There can be no external pressure in this matter.

However, since we consider that only a communist society, in whose name the social revolution will be made, can free the workers from slavery and exploitation and endow them with full freedom and equality; since the peasants account for the overwhelming majority of the population (nearly 85% in Russia) and since, as a result, the agrarian system adopted by the peasants will be the crucial factor in determining the fate of the revolution; and finally, since private enterprise in agriculture, just like private enterprise in industry, leads to commerce, accumulation of private property and the restoration of capital, it is our responsibility right now to do all in our power to ensure that the agrarian question be resolved along collective lines.

To this end we should begin now to conduct intensive propaganda among the peasants on behalf of communist land tenure and communist cultivation of the soil.

The creation of a specific peasant union with an anarchist outlook will be of considerable assistance in this undertaking.

In this regard, technical advances will have enormous significance in facilitating the development of agriculture and likewise the achievement of communism in the towns, above all in industry. Apply each village, not just with everyday necessities, but also with tools and machinery for the collective cultivation of the land, this will undoubtedly incline the peasants towards communism in agriculture.

### ★ Defence of the Revolution

The defence of the revolution is also one of the problems of “day one”. Essentially, the revolution's mightiest defence is the successful resolution of the challenges facing it: the problems of production and consumption, and the land question. Once these matters have been correctly resolved, no counter-revolutionary force will be able to change or shake the workers' free society. However, the workers will nonetheless have to face a bitter struggle against the enemies of the revolution in order to defend its physical existence.

The social revolution, which threatens the privileges and the very existence of the non-working classes of the present society, will inevitably provoke the desperate resistance of these classes that will take the form of a vicious civil war.

As the Russian experience has shown, such a civil war will not be a matter of a few months, but rather of several years.

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on counter-revolutionary grounds. But, broadly speaking, and with the exception of this last category of people, all the needs of the entire population in the region where the social revolution has taken place will be met out of the revolution's general stock of food supplies. Should the quantity of goods prove insufficient, they will be allocated according to need, with priority being given to children, the infirm and workers' families.

A more difficult problem will be that of organising the revolution's general stock of food supplies.

Without a doubt, in the early days of the revolution, the towns will be affected by shortages of some of the basic essentials required by the population. At the same time, the peasants will have an abundance of the produce in short supply in the towns.

For anarchists, there can be no doubt as to the mutuality of relations between workers in the towns and workers in the countryside. Anarchists believe that the social revolution cannot be accomplished except through the concerted efforts of the workers and the peasants. Consequently, the solution to the problem of consumption in the revolution will be possible only through close revolutionary co-operation between these two classes of workers.

In order to establish this co-operation, the urban working class, having assumed control of production, must immediately consider the basic needs of those in the countryside and endeavour to supply them with everyday consumer goods as well as the means and instruments for collective cultivation of the land. Gestures of solidarity from the urban workers in fulfilling the needs of the peasants will elicit a like response, and in return the peasants will collectively supply the towns with the produce of rural production, in particular foodstuffs.

General worker-peasant co-operatives will be the primary organs for satisfying the food requirements and economic needs of town and countryside. Later, given the responsibility to handle a wider and more regular range of tasks, most notably for supplying everything necessary to support and develop the economic and social life of the workers and peasants, these co-operatives can be converted into permanent supply agencies for town and country.

This solution to the food-supply problem will enable the urban proletariat to establish a permanent fund of provisions which will have a favourable and crucial impact on the fate of the the new system of production.

### ★ The Land

In the solution of the agrarian question, we consider the peasant workers – those who exploit no one else's labour – and the wage-earning rural proletariat as the main revolutionary creative forces. We re-division of lands, so that the land may be put to use and cultivated along communist lines.

Just like industry, the land, tilled and cultivated by generations of workers, is the product of the efforts of these workers. It also belongs to the working people as a whole, and to no one in particular. As the common and inalienable property of the workers, the land cannot be subject to purchase or sale. Neither can it be leased by one to another, nor serve as the means to exploit the labour of another.

The land is also a sort of common public workshop where the working people produce the means of sustenance. But it is a type of workshop where, as a result of particular his-

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Everything in this society, from each individual factory right up to the entire political system of the state, is nothing but a **fortress of capital**, where the workers are forever being monitored, and where special forces are on constant alert to crush any movement of the workers that may threaten the foundations of the present society or as much as disturb its tranquillity.

At the same time, the structure of present society automatically keeps the working masses in a state of ignorance and mental stagnation; it forcibly prevents their education and enlightenment so that they will be easier to control.

The advances of contemporary society – the technological development of Capital and the perfecting of its political system – reinforce the might of the ruling classes and make the struggle against them increasingly difficult, thereby postponing the crucial moment when labour achieves its emancipation.

Analysis of contemporary society shows that there is no other way to achieve a transformation of capitalist society into a society of free workers except through violent social revolution.

## III. Anarchism and Anarchist Communism

The class struggle, born in violence out of the age-old desire of working people for freedom, gave rise among the oppressed to the idea of anarchism – the idea of the complete negation of the social system based on classes and the State, and of the replacement of this by a free, stateless society of self-governing workers.

Anarchism thus developed, not from the abstract reflections of some scientist or philosopher, but out of the direct struggle waged by the working people against capital, out of their needs and requirements, out of their psychology, their desire for freedom and equality, aspirations that become especially vivid in the most heroic stages of the working masses' life and struggle.

Anarchism's outstanding thinkers – Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others – did not invent the idea of anarchism, but, having discovered it among the masses, merely helped develop and propagate it through the power of their thought and knowledge.

Anarchism is not the product of individual creation, nor the object of individual experiments.

Likewise, anarchism is in no way the product of general humanitarian aspirations. There is no "single" humanity. Any attempt to make anarchism an attribute of the whole of humanity, as it presently stands, or to credit it with a generally humanitarian character, would be a historical and social falsehood that would inevitably result in justification of the current order and fresh exploitation.

Anarchism is broadly humanitarian only in the sense that the ideals of the working masses improve the lives of all people, and that the fate of humanity today or tomorrow is bound up with the fate of enslaved labour. Should the working masses prove victorious, the whole of humankind will be reborn. If they should fail, then violence, exploitation, slavery and oppression will prevail in the world as before.

The inception, unfolding and realisation of anarchist ideals have their roots in the life and struggle of the working masses and are indissolubly bound up with the general fate of the latter.

Anarchism aims to turn today's bourgeois capitalist society into a society that will guar-

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antee working people the fruits of their labour, freedom, independence and social and political equality. This society is Anarchist Communism. It is in Anarchist Communism that there will be the fullest expression not only of social solidarity, but also the idea of free individuality, and these two notions will develop together closely, in perfect harmony.

Anarchist communism believes that the sole creator of all social assets is labour – physical and intellectual – and, as a result, that only labour has any entitlement to manage the whole of economic and public life. That is why Anarchist Communism in no way justifies or countenances the existence of non-working classes.

If these classes survive and co-exist with Anarchist Communism, the latter will recognize no responsibility towards them. Only when the non-working classes decide to become productive and wish to live within the social system of Anarchist Communism on the same footing as everyone else will they occupy a position in it, i.e. the position of free members of society equal to everyone else, enjoying the same rights of this society and having the same general responsibilities.

Anarchist Communism seeks the eradication of all exploitation and violence, whether against the individual or against the working masses. To that end it creates an economic and social basis that fuses the country's economic and social life into a harmonious whole and guarantees every individual parity with everyone else and affords the maximum well being to all. This basis is common ownership in the form of the socialization of all of the means and instruments of production (industry, transport, land, raw materials, etc.) and the construction of national economic agencies on the basis of equality and the self-management of the working classes.

Within the parameters of this self-managing workers' society, Anarchist Communism lays down the principle of the equal worth and equal rights of every individual (not of "abstract" individuality, or "mystic individuality", or the concept of "individuality as an idea").

It is from this principle of the equal worth and equal rights of every individual, and also the fact that the value of the labour supplied by each individual person cannot be measured or established, that the underlying economic, social and juridical principle of Anarchist Communism follows: "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs".

## IV. The Negation of Democracy

Democracy is one of the forms of bourgeois capitalist society.

The basis of democracy is the retention of the two antagonistic classes of contemporary society – labour and capital – and of **their collaboration on the basis of capitalist private property**. Parliament and national representative government are the expressions of this collaboration.

Formally, democracy proclaims freedom of speech, of the press, of association, as well as universal equality before the law.

In reality, all these freedoms are of a very relative nature: they are tolerated as long as they do not contradict the interests of the ruling class, i.e. the bourgeoisie.

Democracy preserves intact the principle of capitalist **private** property. In so doing, it reserves the right of the bourgeoisie to control the entire economy of the country, as well as the press, education, science and art, which in practice makes the bourgeoisie the ab-

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### ★ Production

Bearing in mind that a country's industry is the result of the efforts of many generations of workers and that the various branches of industry are closely interconnected, we look upon production in its entirety as one big workshop of the producers, completely belonging to the workers as a whole and to no one in particular.

The country's productive machinery is a whole and belongs to the entire working class. This determines the character and form of the new system of production. It too is to be a united whole, common in the sense that the products, manufactured by the producers, will belong to everybody. Those products, of whatever type they may be, will represent the general supply fund for the workers, from which every participant in the new system of production will receive everything that they may need, on an equal footing with everyone else.

The new system of production will utterly dispense with wage slavery and exploitation in all their forms and will in their place establish the principle of comradely co-operation between workers.

The intermediary class, which in modern capitalist society performs intermediary functions (commerce, etc.), as well as the bourgeoisie, will have to play its part in the new system of production on the very same footing as everyone else. Otherwise, these classes will be placing themselves outside working society.

There will be no bosses, neither entrepreneur, proprietor nor proprietor-State (as one finds today in the Bolshevik State). In the new system of production, the functions of organisation will devolve upon specially created agencies, purpose-built by the working masses: workers' councils, workplace committees or workers' administrations of factories and plants. These agencies, liaising with one another at the level of municipality, province and then country, will make up the municipal, provincial and thereafter general (federal) institutions for the management and administration of production. Appointed by the masses and continually subject to their supervision and control, these bodies are to be constantly renewed, thereby achieving the idea of genuine self-management of the masses.

Unified production, in which the means of production and their output belong to all, with wage slavery replaced by the principle of comradely co-operation and equality of rights for all producers an established fact, production overseen by workers' administration bodies elected by the masses: these are the practical first steps along the road to the realisation of anarchist communism.

### ★ Consumption

The problem of consumption will arise during the revolution as a dual issue. Firstly, the principle of establishing sources of food supplies. Secondly, the principle of the distribution of these supplies.

As far as the distribution of food supplies is concerned, the solution to this question will hinge primarily upon the quantity of goods available, the principle of expediency, etc.

In tackling the reconstruction of the entire established social order, the social revolution thereby assumes an obligation to look to everyone's essential needs. The sole exception will be those who do not work, who refuse to play their part in the new system of production



## ★ Constructive Part ★

### ★ The Problem of day one of the Social Revolution

The essential objective of the labour movement and its struggle is the foundation, through revolution, of a free, egalitarian anarcho-communist society based upon the principle: "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs".

However, such a society in its completed form will not come about of itself, but only by dint of radical social change. Its realisation requires a more or less prolonged social revolutionary process; one steered by the organised forces of victorious labour along a specific path.

Our task is to point out that path here and now, to determine the positive, practical problems that will confront the workers from day one of the social revolution. The very fate of the social revolution will hinge upon proper resolution of these problems.

It goes without saying that the construction of the new society will only be possible after the workers have triumphed over the present bourgeois capitalist system and its representatives. The construction of a new economy and new social relationships cannot be begun until the power of the State defending the rule of slavery has been smashed, until such time as the industrial workers and peasants have taken charge of the country's industrial and agrarian economy by way of revolution.

As a result, the very first task of the social revolution is to destroy the State machine of capitalist society, to strip the bourgeoisie, and more generally, all socially privileged elements of their power, and to universally establish the will of the rebellious workers as articulated in the underlying principles of the social revolution. This destructive and belligerent side of the revolution will merely clear the way for the positive tasks that are the true meaning and essence of the social revolution.

*Those tasks are as follows:*

1. To find an anarchist solution to the problem of the country's (industrial) production.
2. To resolve the agrarian question in the same manner.
3. To resolve the problem of consumption (food supplies).

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solite master of the country. As it enjoys a monopoly in the realm of the country's economic affairs, the bourgeoisie is free to establish its complete and unlimited authority in the political realm too. Indeed, parliament and representative government are, in democracies, merely executive organs of the bourgeoisie.

As a result, democracy is merely one variety of bourgeois dictatorship, its fictitious political freedoms and democratic guarantees are a smokescreen designed to conceal its true identity.

### V. The Negation of the State and Authority

Bourgeois ideologues define the State as the organ regulating the complex socio-political, civil and social relations of people within contemporary society, protecting the law and order of this society. Anarchists are in perfect agreement with that definition but add that the law and order on which this society is founded hides the enslavement of the vast majority of the people by an insignificant minority, and that the modern State serves to maintain this enslavement.

**The State is both the organised violence of the bourgeoisie against the workers and the system of its executive organs.**

The left socialists and in particular the Bolsheviks also look upon bourgeois power and the bourgeois State as the tools of capital. But they believe that, in the hands of the socialist parties, State power can become a powerful weapon in the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. They are therefore in favour of socialist power and the proletarian State. Some of them (the Social Democrats) seek to reach a position of authority by peaceful, parliamentary means, while others (the Communists, the Left Social Revolutionaries) seek to seize power by revolutionary means.

Anarchism considers both these positions fundamentally wrong and detrimental to the emancipation of labour.

State power always goes hand in glove with exploitation and enslavement of the masses. It arises out of that exploitation, or is created for it. State power without violence and exploitation loses all reason to exist.

The State and authority rob the masses of their initiative and kill their spirit of independent activity, nurturing in them the slavish mentality of submission, expectation and a belief in rulers and bosses. Thus, the emancipation of the workers is only possible through the process of direct revolutionary struggle by the working masses and their class organisations against the capitalist system.

The conquest of power by the social democratic parties through parliamentary methods in the framework of the present system will not further the emancipation of labour one little bit for the simple reason that real power, and thus real authority, will remain with the bourgeoisie, which has full control of the country's economy and politics. The role of the socialist authorities will in that case be confined to reforms, to **improving that same bourgeois system** (see the example of MacDonald, the Social Democratic parties of Germany, Sweden and Belgium which have attained state power under a capitalist system).

Neither can the seizure of power by way of social revolution and the organisation of a so-called proletarian State further the cause of the genuine emancipation of labour. The

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State, supposedly created initially for the purposes of defending the revolution, inevitably accumulates its own specific needs and becomes an end in itself, spawning privileged social castes upon which it relies, and it forcibly subjugates the masses to its needs and those of the privileged castes, thus restoring the basis of capitalist authority and the capitalist State: the enslavement and the exploitation of the masses by violence (an example being the “workers’ and peasants’ State” of the Bolsheviks).

## VI. The Masses and the Anarchists: the Role of each in the Social Struggle and the Social Revolution

The principal forces of social revolution are the urban working class, the peasantry and, partly, the working intelligentsia.

**NB:** *While being, like the urban and rural proletariat, an oppressed and exploited class, the working intelligentsia is comparatively more stratified than the workers and the peasants, thanks to the economic privileges which the bourgeoisie awards to certain of its members. That is why, in the early days of the social revolution, only the less well-off strata of the intelligentsia will take an active part in the revolution.*

The role of the masses in the social revolution and the construction of socialism is noticeably different from that foreseen for them by the statist parties. While bolshevism and its kindred currents take the line that the working mass possesses only destructive revolutionary instincts, and is incapable of creative and constructive revolutionary activity – the main reason why the latter should be placed in the hands of the people making up the government or the Party Central Committee – anarchists think instead that the working masses carry within themselves vast creative and constructive potential, and they aspire to sweep aside the obstacles preventing its manifestation.

Anarchists, in fact, look upon the State as the chief obstacle, since it usurps all the rights of the masses and divests them of all their functions in social and economic life. The State must wither away, but not one fine day in the society of the future. It must be destroyed by the workers on day one of their victory and must not be restored in any other guise whatsoever. Its place will be taken by a system of self-managed workers’ organisations of producers and consumers, unified on a federative basis. This system rules out both the organisation of State power and the dictatorship of any party whatsoever.

The Russian revolution of 1917 exemplifies this approach to the process of social emancipation through the creation of the system of workers’ and peasants’ soviets and workplace committees. Its sad error was not to have liquidated the state organisation of power at an early stage – at first the authority of the provisional government, then that of the Bolsheviks. The latter, exploiting the trust of the workers and peasants, reorganised the bourgeois State in accordance with the circumstances of the time and then, with the aid of that State, killed off the creative activity of the revolutionary masses by strangling the free system of soviets and workplace committees that represented the first steps towards constructing a stateless society.

The activity of anarchists is divided into two phases: the pre-revolutionary period and

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anarchist organisation for our work inside the syndicalist unions, and receiving guidance from that organisation.

Without limiting ourselves to the establishment of anarchist syndicalist unions, we must seek to exert our theoretical influence on revolutionary syndicalism as a whole in all its forms (the Industrial Workers of the World, the Russian trade unions, etc.). But we can only accomplish this by setting to work as a rigorously organised anarchist collective, and certainly not as tiny amateurish groups, without organisational links or a common theoretical base.

Groups of anarchists in the workplace, working to create anarchist syndicalist unions, campaigning within revolutionary syndicalism for the prevalence of anarchist ideas within syndicalism and its theoretical orientation and themselves guided in their activity by the general anarchist organisation to which they belong – this is the significance of the relationship between anarchists and revolutionary syndicalism and the related revolutionary syndicalist movements (and the form it should take).

### VIII. Anarchism and Syndicalism

The tendency to contrast anarchist communism with syndicalism, and vice versa, is one that we consider totally artificial and bereft of all basis and meaning.

The ideas of communism and of syndicalism occupy two different planes. Whereas communism, i.e. the free society of equal workers, is the goal of the anarchist struggle, syndicalism, i.e. the revolutionary movement of industrial workers based on trades, is but one of the forms of the revolutionary class struggle.

In uniting the industrial workers on the basis of production, revolutionary syndicalism, like any trade-union movement, has no specific ideology: it has no world view embracing all the complex social and political issues of the current situation. It always reflects the ideologies of a range of political groupings, notably of those most intensively at work within its ranks.

Our standpoint with regard to revolutionary syndicalism follows from what has just been said. Without wanting to resolve in advance the question of the role of revolutionary syndicalist organisations on day two of the revolution (i.e. are they to be the organisers of the new system of production in its entirety, or will they leave that role to the workers' councils or workplace committees?), it is our view that anarchists must be involved in revolutionary syndicalism as one of the forms of the workers' revolutionary movement.

However, the question now is not whether anarchists should or should not play a part in revolutionary syndicalism, but rather, how and to what end they should play a part.

We regard the whole period up to our own times, when anarchists were part of the revolutionary syndicalist movement as individual workers and propagandists, as a period when relations with the industrial labour movement were amateurish.

Anarcho-syndicalism, which attempts to firmly establish anarchist ideas within the left wing of revolutionary syndicalism through the creation of anarchist-type unions, represents a step forward in this respect, but it has not yet improved on its amateurish methods. This is because anarcho-syndicalism does not link the drive to "anarchise" the syndicalist movement with the organisation of anarchist forces outside of that movement. Only if just such a link is established does it become possible to "anarchise" revolutionary syndicalism to prevent any slide towards opportunism.

We regard revolutionary syndicalism solely as a trade-union movement of the workers with no specific social and political ideology, and thus incapable by itself of resolving the social question; as such it is our opinion that the task of anarchists in the ranks of that movement consists of developing anarchist ideas within it and of steering it in an anarchist direction, so as to turn it into an active army of the social revolution. It is important to remember that if syndicalism is not given the support of anarchist theory in good time, it will be forced to rely on the ideology of some statist political party.

A striking example of this is French syndicalism, which once shone out on account of its anarchist slogans and anarchist tactics, before falling under the sway of the communists and, above all, the right-wing opportunist socialists.

But the task of anarchists within the ranks of the revolutionary labour movement can only be performed if their efforts there are closely connected and co-ordinated with the activity of the anarchist organisation outside the syndicalist union. Put differently, we must enter the revolutionary labour movement as an organised force, answerable to the general

the revolutionary period. In each case, anarchists can only carry out their role as an organised force if they have a clear understanding of the goals of their struggle and the methods leading to their attainment.

In the pre-revolutionary period, the basic task of the General Anarchist Union is to prepare the workers and peasants for the social revolution.

By rejecting formal (bourgeois) democracy and State authority and by proclaiming the full emancipation of labour, anarchism places the utmost emphasis on the rigorous principles of class struggle, awakening and nurturing revolutionary class consciousness and revolutionary class intransigence in the masses.

The anarchist education of the masses must be conducted in the spirit of class intransigence, anti-democratism and anti-statism and in the spirit of the ideals of Anarchist Communism, but education alone is not enough. A degree of anarchist organisation of the masses is also required. If this is to be accomplished, we have to operate along two lines: on the one hand, by the selection and grouping of revolutionary worker and peasant forces on the basis of anarchist theory (explicitly anarchist organisations) and on the other, on the level of grouping revolutionary workers and peasants on the basis of production and consumption (revolutionary workers' and peasants' production organisations, free workers' and peasants' co-operatives, etc.).

The worker and peasant classes, organised on the basis of production and consumption and imbued with the ideology of revolutionary anarchism, will be foremost among the strong points of the social revolution, and the more anarchist consciousness and anarchist organisation is introduced among them now, the more they will demonstrate anarchist purpose, anarchist firmness and anarchist creativity in the hour of revolution.

As far as the working class of Russia is concerned, after eight years of Bolshevik dictatorship, which has bridled the masses' natural appetite for independent activity, and glaringly demonstrated the true nature of all authority, it is clear that the class harbours within itself enormous potential for the formation of a mass anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement. Organised anarchist militants must immediately and with all available resources set about cultivating that appetite and potential, lest it be allowed to degenerate into Menshevism.

Anarchists must therefore, without delay, dedicate all their efforts to organising the poor peasantry, which is oppressed by the authorities, but is searching for emancipation, and harbours enormous revolutionary potential.

The anarchists' role in the revolutionary period cannot be confined to merely preaching anarchist slogans and ideas.

Life can be seen as an arena not just for the preaching of this or that idea, but also and equally as an arena for struggle, where forces aspiring to influence society manoeuvre to gain the ideological high ground. More than any other outlook, anarchism must become the leading idea in the social revolution, for it is only thanks to anarchist ideas that the social revolution will achieve the complete emancipation of labour.

The leading position of anarchist ideas in the revolution implies, at the same time, that anarchists and anarchist theory play an influential role in events. However, this influence must not be confused with the political leadership of statist parties, which only culminates in state power.

Anarchism does not aim to seize political power, to create a dictatorship. Its chief aspi-



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ration is to assist the masses in choosing the genuine path of social revolution and socialist construction. But it is not enough just for the masses to **embark** on the road to social revolution. It must also be ensured **that the revolution holds true to its path and objective** – the overthrow of capitalist society in the name of the society of free workers. As the experience of the Russian revolution of 1917 has shown us, this is no easy task, mainly on account of the many parties attempting to steer the movement in the opposite direction to that of social revolution.

Although the masses in social upheavals are prompted deep down by anarchist tendencies and slogans, these are not co-ordinated in any way, and as a result they do not have the coherence and appeal to become leading ideas, which is essential if the social revolution is to retain an anarchist orientation and anarchist objectives. This driving force of ideas can only find expression in a specific collective established by the masses for that express purpose. Organised anarchist elements and the organised anarchist movement will constitute that collective.

During the revolution, that collective, i.e. the General Anarchist Union, will bear great theoretical and practical responsibilities.

It will have to display initiative and demonstrate complete commitment in every aspect of the social revolution, encompassing the orientation and character of the revolution, the civil war and defence of the revolution, the positive tasks of the revolution, the new system of production, consumption, the agrarian question, etc.

On all these and many other issues, the masses will demand clear and precise answers from the anarchists. And once anarchists bring the concept of anarchist revolution and of an anarchist structure of society to public attention, they will **have** to present a precise answer to all such questions, link the resolution of these problems to the general concept of anarchism and commit all their resources to its effective realisation.

Only thus can the General Anarchist Union and the anarchist movement successfully perform their role as a leading force of ideas in the social revolution.

## VII. The Transition Period

Socialist political parties use the term “transition period” to refer to a specific phase in the life of a people, the essential features of which are a break with the old order and the introduction of a new economic and political system, which does not yet imply, however, the full emancipation of all workers.

In this respect, all the minimum programmes of the socialist political parties, for instance the democratic programme of the opportunistic socialists, or the communist programme of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, are programmes for the transition period.

The essential feature of these minimum programmes is that they regard the complete realisation of the workers’ ideals – their independence, freedom and equality – as unrealisable in the short term, and as a result they retain a whole series of the capitalist system’s institutions: the principle of State coercion, private ownership of the means and instruments of production, wage-slavery and much else, according to the goals of each political party’s programme.

Anarchists have always been principled opponents of such programmes, taking the view

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that the construction of transitional systems retaining the principles of exploitation and coercion of the masses unavoidably leads back to slavery.

Instead of political minimum programmes, anarchists have only ever championed social revolution that would strip the capitalist class of political and economic privileges and place the means and instruments of production, and all other functions of social and economic life, in the hands of the workers.

And that is a position that anarchists have stood firm on to this very day.

The idea of the transition period, according to which the social revolution should culminate not in an anarchist society, but in some other form of system retaining elements and relics of the old capitalist system, is anti-anarchist in its essence. It contains in itself the threat of bolstering and developing these elements to their former proportions, thus sending events into reverse.

One clear example of this is the “dictatorship of the proletariat” regime established by the Bolsheviks in Russia, which according to them was to be only a transitional stage in the march to complete communism, but which in point of fact resulted in the restoration of class society, at the bottom of which, just like before, we find the industrial workers and poorest peasants.

The main focus in the construction of the anarchist society does not consist of guaranteeing every individual, right from day one of the revolution, boundless freedom to seek satisfaction of their needs, but in the conquest of the social basis for that society and in establishing the principles of relations between people. The question of the greater or lesser abundance of resources is not a matter of principle but a technical issue.

The underlying principle upon which the new society will be built, the precept upon which it will rest, so to speak, and which must not be restricted even to the slightest degree is **the equality of relations, the freedom and the independence of the workers**. This principle encapsulates the prime basic requirement of the masses, in the name of which alone they will rise up in social revolution.

Either the social revolution will end in the defeat of the workers, in which case we have to start all over again to prepare for another struggle, a fresh offensive against the capitalist system; or it will lead to the victory of the workers, in which case, having seized the wherewithal to fend for themselves – the land, production and social functions – they will set about building a free society.

That moment will be the **beginning of the construction** of an anarchist society which, once started, will then develop continuously, gathering strength and constantly being improved upon.

Therefore, the takeover of production and social functions will be the watershed between the statist and the non-statist eras.

In order to become the rallying point of the struggling masses and the social revolutionary epoch, anarchism must not hide its basic principles nor accommodate its programme to assimilate vestiges of the old order, opportunistic tendencies of transitional systems and periods; instead, it must develop its principles and refine them as far as possible.