

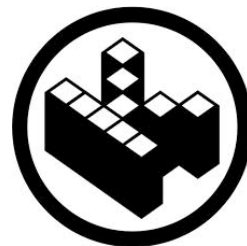
that “social organization has laws over-riding individual wills; and laws disregard of which must be fraught with disaster.” Leaving aside the pertinent question: disaster for whom? I can see what Spencer is driving at. Most people who call themselves anarchists assume that the disappearance of the State will mean the disappearance of authority. Indeed, a favorite answer to those who argue against the possibility of a society existing without a government is to give examples of primitive societies which are or were stateless and ask, if they can function like this, why can’t we? For example, Hubert Deschamps in his book *The Political Institutions of Black Africa* describes tribes in which “There is no necessity for command, nor coercive institutions; conflicts are reduced to a minimum by the absence of social differences, making it impossible for one to rise above another, and above all, by the natural obedience to ancestral customs” (My emphasis). In such societies, then, there is no vertical authority exercised by a State, but there is a horizontal authority exercised by “society” in the form of “ancestral customs”—customs that are often more ubiquitous and despotic than modern governments! That such a model of social control is in the minds of some professed anarchists is shown by Nicolas Walter in his pamphlet *About Anarchism*. Here he states that in “the most libertarian society” the “proper treatment of delinquency would be part of the educational and health system, and would not become an institutionalized system of punishment. The last resort would not be imprisonment or death, but boycott or expulsion.” The same “last resort” of many primitive societies against those who violate their customs is thus envisaged as a mechanism of an anarchist society, presumably on the grounds that we have a fine future in our past.

From what I know of history there does not seem to have been any organized collectivity which has been without authority, whether that of custom or of law. This is because all collectivizes need norms to which their members must conform if they are to function. And these norms need

sanctions to ensure that they are obeyed by any recalcitrant individual. These sanctions may be customary, religious, political, economic or moral, but they all add up to authority over the individual. Anarchism has never existed as a form of society, nor is it ever likely to. Indeed, I consider it a grave mistake to conceive of anarchism as a social theory; I do not expect any type of society to guarantee or to respect my individuality, for all societies seek to undermine the self-ownership which is its basis. All seek to principle my being and behavior by ideals of co-operation, or competition, or brotherhood, or mutual benefit, or love as the dominant group in each society defines them. In all societies, therefore, the individual who is supposed to be the focal point of benefit gets lost in the welter of generalities which stand over and above his particularity and concreteness. Thus the war between the individual and society will go on as long as both exist. Anarchism is not a form of society. It is the cutting edge of individualism, the negative side of an egoist philosophy. The anarchist is not a peddler of schemes of social salvation, but a permanent resister of all attempts to subordinate the uniqueness of the individual to the authority of the collective. The anarchist is someone who refuses to be seduced even by the most glittering or most rational vision of a society in which diverse egoisms have been harnessed into harmonizing one with another.

In the above-mentioned pamphlet by Nicolas Walter, the kind of anarchism I have outlined is rather scornfully dismissed as suitable for “poets and tramps,” as “anarchy here and now, if not in the world, then in one’s own life.”

Indeed, and where and when else can one expect it?



# My Anarchism

by SE Parker

In 1947, at 17 years of age, I began to call myself an anarchist. Having spent some three years in the socialist movement I naturally conceived of anarchism as a form of communism. I exchanged Bukharin for Bakunin, Kautsky for Kropotkin and Marx for Malatesta, but the goal of common ownership remained the same, even if the route was now a different one. And it was this goal to which I held for about the next ten years, despite changes in emphasis and tactics.

Towards the end of the 1950s I began to have serious doubts about the compatibility of anarchism and communism. At first my criticisms of anarchism as communism were mild and were mainly concerned to point out that there were other ways of viewing anarchism than the communist one. Then, in 1961, I read Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own* and became convinced that anarchism was not a communism, but an individualism. The conclusion I then reached, and to which I still hold, was that individualism, in the words of John Beverley Robinson, is "the recognition by the individual that he is above all institutions and formulas; that they exist only so far as he chooses to make them his own by accepting them," and further, it is "the realization by the individual that he is an individual; that, as far as he is concerned, he is the only individual." (This is not a claim for Solipsism. Robinson goes on to recognize there are "other individuals." "But none of these is himself. He stands apart. His consciousness, and the desires and gratifications that enter into it, is a thing unique, no other can enter into it.")

It followed from this that, because they recognized no institution or formula as having authority over them, individualists were logically anarchists. And, because they denied the validity of any authority over the individual, anarchists were logically individualists, since this denial affirmed the primacy of the individual. My

anarchism then became freed from the last vestiges of that altruistic idealism which casts out service to God and the state only to replace it with service to Society and Humanity. Not only this, but anarchism as I now saw it, drove authority out of its final hiding place in such spooks as 'duty' and "moral obligation" and became firmly grounded in conscious egoism.

My former goal of a stateless communist society became repellent to me. Jealous of preserving my individuality I had no wish to have my ego dissolved into the amorphousness of an egalitarian herd. Communism would render me powerless before the economic collectivity. The common ownership of the means of production would confront me with the choice: integrate or perish. Any group, or federation of groups, can be as powerful as any State if it monopolizes in any given area the possibilities of action and realization. The result would be social totalitarianism, even if it were done in the name of "anarchism." In practice stateless communism would vest all executive power in the hands of mass assemblies or elected delegates. Either way it would be expressed *de facto* government of the individual by the majority. What power could I exercise for example if I were stuck at the base of the pyramid of workers' councils proposed as the administrative structure for industries in the communist society? At best, and in its purest form, such a system might produce an "anarchism" of groups. It would not produce an anarchism of individuals.

But this rejection of the communist utopia did not end my formulation of anarchism as an individualism. Communism was certainly incompatible with anarchism, but was anarchism compatible with any normative social order? In other words, was it possible to realize anarchism as a form of society?

In *Man vs The State* Herbert Spencer remarks

I am not a pacifist. I believe in armed self-defense as needed. But individuals and voluntary groupings fighting back against the attacks of others who wish to coerce them has nothing in common with an army or other military institution. Looking back on the events that took place in the *makhnovshchina*, Voline/Eichenbaum, one of the anarchists involved in this project, made exactly this point when he wrote at the end of *The Unknown Revolution*: “Any army, of whatever kind, is an evil, and even a free and popular army, composed of volunteers and dedicated to the defense of a noble cause, is by its very nature a danger...it becomes a collection of idlers who acquire antisocial, authoritarian and even dictatorial leanings, acquire also a taste for violence as a thing in itself, for the use of brute force even in cases where recourse to such means is contrary to the very cause it purports to defend.”

This point is too often lost on libertarians who seem drawn to guerrilla movements and people’s militias which use anarchist (or even socialist)–sounding rhetoric while simultaneously maintaining a command structure within their organizations, universally pushing charismatic leaders up to the top to direct the struggle of the “masses.” Anarchists, like everyone else seem to need heroes, and like others are all too willing to look the other way when these idols do not live up to their principles or promises. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.*

## Malatesta on *The Platform*

I am not doubting the sincerity of the anarchist proposals of those Russian comrades. They want to bring about anarchist communism and are seeking the means of doing so as quickly as possible. But it is not enough to want something; one also has to adopt suitable means; to get to a certain place one must take the right path or end up somewhere else. Their organization, being typically authoritarian, far from helping to bring about the victory of anarchist communism, to which they aspire, could only falsify the anarchist spirit and lead to consequences that go against their intentions.

In fact, their *General Union* appears to consist of so many partial organizations with *secretariats* which *ideologically* direct the political and technical work; and to coordinate the activities of all the member organizations there is a *Union Executive Committee* whose task is to carry out the decisions of the Union and to oversee the ‘ideological and organizational conduct of the organizations in conformity with the ideology and general strategy of the Union.’

Is this anarchist? This, in my view, is a government and a church...The spirit, the tendency remains authoritarian and the educational effect would remain anti-anarchist.

anarchists was compelled to make use of weapons and mechanisms of ‘the old society’ in order to pave the way towards an anarchical future. Compelled for the simple reason that there were no other effective mechanisms. The main question here is whether the anarchists could control these mechanisms or would there be yet another State generated under their, albeit black, banners.” The answer to that question is that Makhno’s army *did* constitute a state.



The author goes even further, though. He not only makes excuses, but in fact goes on to endorse the makhnovist approach. He writes: “[W]ithout the *kontrrazvedka* ... the *makhnovshchina* would generally not have been able to develop its full strength and show the world the heights of the human spirit liberated from authority...The makhnovist

*kontrrazvedka*...shows better than any other structure how competent, sensible, composed, and resourceful people can be who are true to the anarchist ideal.” Really? A top-down, thoroughly authoritarian army run by one person better demonstrates how libertarians could live freely together than do the numerous examples of anarchists engaging in workaday mutual aid, libertarian labor organizations, intentional communities like Modern Times, etc? The word doublespeak springs to mind.

### Other Voices, Other Rooms

The core problem with the *makhnovshchina* was that the participants never challenged the conventional model of statist societies and economies. They continued to have leaders and followers, officers and recruits, those who gave orders and those who obeyed them at risk of punishment including death. The most common excuse for this is that there was a war going on against the red and white authoritarians. The argument goes that if the libertarians didn’t win the war they would not have had any chance of setting up their anarchist society. In other words, the ends justify the means. This flies in the face of the anarchist insight that the means are just as important as the ends—that if you have to treat people like shit to get to a place where you believe they will be treated well, there is something wrong with your project. The free society will never be achieved by adopting the methods of the enemies of liberty.

articles that criticized him but was “talked...out of this with difficulty.”

### The Road to Unfreedom

Azarov clearly demonstrates that the *makhnovshchina* was run by a military hierarchy which had more in common with the red army than it had differences from it. And this oxymoronic anarchist military was dominated by one person—Makhno. In a society supposedly striving for freedom and equality the *batko* was clearly more equal than others. There were commanders and those who obeyed, there were police, there were neighborhood spies, there were executions. The army took what it wanted from those it ruled and killed those it considered enemies. And all this time the makhnovists and their supporters spouted libertarian-sounding slogans, while behaving like authoritarians.

There were critics at the time all this was happening, including among the *Nabat* federation anarchists in Ukraine. However, they tended to mute their criticism or offer “critical support,” under the misguided assumption that these quasi-anarchists following the *batko* might somehow evolve into real libertarians when they had won the war. Since that never happened, there is no way to know if, in fact, there would have been an epiphany in the *makhnovshchina* and Makhno would either have relinquished his authority or would have been forced from power by his former acolytes. His later advocacy of the

platformist approach to anarchist organizing argues against that. As does the sad example of so many others, from bolsheviks to *sandinistas*, who justified their wartime authoritarianism as a requirement for victory, but continued to embrace the same statist approach even after the fighting was over and they had consolidated their power.



But Azarov, as others have done before him, continues to give Makhno a pass. While acknowledging the brutality of some of Makhno’s actions, the writer defends them on the basis that they weren’t as bad as those of Makhno’s opponents. He cites the numbers killed by the anarchists, reds, and whites in various situations to demonstrate that the libertarians killed far fewer people than did their enemies, as if there is some magic number at which murder morphs from justifiable to indefensible. A quote from the book illustrates Azarov’s view: “Nevertheless, any active organization of

and the other leaders with both red and white armies, noting that Makhno actually served as an officer in the red army at times. He documents that the supposedly libertarian military stole (expropriated or requisitioned in the words of the author) food, clothing and other supplies from the people in areas they controlled.

And he goes on. Summary executions (liquidations according to Azarov) with or without the pretense of a trial appear to have been not uncommon when someone was identified as an enemy, but in other cases officers from the red army were absorbed by the makhnovist military and were allowed to retain their positions of authority. They sometimes allowed oppositional press and agitation, but other times suppressed it, dismissing officers for spreading bolshevik propaganda. The leaders appear to have based their decisions on some calculation of which approach best promoted their ends in the different situations, not on any ethical principles.

Makhno was referred to as *batko* or *ataman*, both of which are ukrainian names for authoritarian military leaders. And he happily lived up to this description. He gave orders, expected obedience, and had his own personal security service. The army had a representative, not participatory, structure where leaders were elected by some larger group but once in power acted like any other authoritarian leaders, expecting discipline, requiring obedience, and meting out punishment for those who

would not comply. That the differences between the various military organizations at-large were largely lost on rank-and-file soldiers is demonstrated by Azarov's stories of the periodic realignment of some army units from red to white to anarchist. The military was the core institution of the *makhnovshchina* and constituted a government in all but name.



Both inside and outside the army, this supposed anarchist experiment was riddled with spies. In the non-military sphere there were networks of loyalists not unlike the committees for the defense of the revolution in cuba, always seeking to uncover hidden “anti-makhnovist elements” and ready to narc on their neighbors. In addition to the *kontrrazvedka* there was a military police force that was responsible for the maintenance of order and discipline in places where troops were stationed, as well as a commission for anti-makhnovist activities. While Azarov claims that Makhno allowed freedom of the press, he tells us of an episode where Makhno wanted to arrest and shoot the authors of

# Heroes and Villains

A Review of *Kontrrazvedka* by Vyacheslav Azarov

Anarchists can't seem to give up their heroes, no matter how badly they are shown to have behaved. When anarchists rule or kill or silence or tax others there is always some justification for these actions. Often the excuse is wartime conditions, but in other cases the misdeeds are seen as simple mistakes by well-intended class warriors. Apparently anarchists, especially anarchist leaders, are not to be held to the same standards as mere mortals or the "class enemy."

The root of this willingness to justify unlibertarian actions by anarchists lies in the need for examples of supposedly successful anarchist experiments, for movements to look back at for inspiration, for larger-than-life leaders to admire and emulate. One sees this in the anarchist proclivity for naming their projects after anarchist icons like Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, Lysander Spooner, or Errico Malatesta. Other anarchists reanimate once-dead (one had hoped) anarchist tendencies like platformism or syndicalism. And anarchist authors continue to lionize and make excuses for hopelessly flawed historical anarchists and movements, whether it is Bakunin, the Spanish revolution, or the Ukrainian *makhnovshchina*. This tradition of apologizing for authoritarian anarchists continues in the 2008 book *Kontrrazvedka* by anarchist Vyacheslav Azarov.

## The Libertarian KGB

When I ordered this book, subtitled *The Story of the Makhnovist Secret Service*, I was laboring under the illusion that this would be a critique of the authoritarianism of Makhno and his associates, of which the existence of an "anarchist" spy service serves as a perfect example. Imagine my surprise when this book turned out to be a glorification of the secretive, military style organization of the makhnovist apparatus which ruled over a large area of Ukraine for a number of years early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Just as the details provided about the conduct of Makhno and his associates were either not new or not unexpected, the largely uncritical acceptance of their statist and hierarchical behavior was, sadly, quite predictable.



Throughout this book, as the author describes the structure of both the makhnovist army and its secret police he talks of officers, subordinates, directors. He describes alliances made by Makhno

Luxemburg. I believe that all of these writers have things to say that are worth presenting and discussing. But that does not mean that I necessarily agree with all the things I have published. Just as I believe in a free market in goods and services, I favor a free market in ideas.

### A Rose by Any Other Name

Mainstream newspapers talk of anarchy in the streets in “failed states,” but that has not dissuaded libertarians from continuing to use the word to describe their goal. The fact that there were and are (authoritarian) collectives in state socialist/communist societies doesn’t keep some anarchists from using that word to describe their own projects. And though feminist can mean almost anything to anyone, anarchists still use it to describe themselves as well.

I realize that non-socialist, non-collective, non-syndicalist, non-feminist visions of a libertarian world are difficult for the typical anarchist to wrap their head around. And that, I believe, is the real problem here. Many socially-oriented anarchists are and have been tolerant and understanding of the individualist approach, but others are suspicious of any libertarian who doesn’t see the beauty in cooperatives and collectives and federations. Using different words to talk about what I think and believe will not change that. To me, market is shorthand for exactly what my correspondent described above: an unstructured, unsupervised method of exchange

between free people. While that may not be the first thing that comes to mind when some of my readers see it in print, I know of no more appropriate one-word description of such a complex set of freely-chosen interactions. Neither capitalism nor socialism are models for a free society, so I will continue, at the risk of misinterpretation, to write about the anarchist alternative of free people, free exchange, free minds, and free markets.

## Recommended Periodicals

### Anarchist Voices

c/o J Simcock  
47 High Street  
Belper  
Derbyshire DE56 1GF  
UK

*Evolutionary anarchism, non-sectarian*

\$20 (cash)/£8 (cash/check payable to J Simcock) for 4 issues

### Free Voices

[www.freevoicesmagazine.com](http://www.freevoicesmagazine.com)

*Opinion from all parts of the anarchist spectrum*

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### My Own

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PO Box 34  
Williams, OR 97544

*Egoist, anarchist, individualist*

Available on a basis of mutuality, eg, cash, stamps, love mail, hate mail, etc

### The Individual

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Bromley BR1 4WG  
UK

*Classical liberal*

Subs £15 (check payable to Society for Individual Freedom)





between people in different regions and criticized what passes for “free trade” in today’s world, I make my best effort to explain that there can be trade that is both free and fair, but it would look nothing like NAFTA or the European Union. And when I speak of privatization I make it clear that I mean eliminating the role of government in the affairs of individuals and allowing people to provide goods and services to each other without intervention in and oversight of their interactions by the state—I do not mean handing over firefighting and health care to capitalist corporations.



But words are obviously loaded. Simply using words like market, free trade, privatization makes my viewpoint suspect to some anarchists. They cannot envision truly anarchist exchange and trade and assume that anyone who does is some sort of closet capitalist. This is remarkable to me since these same anarchists do not similarly suspect anarchist communists of harboring

Leninist tendencies (despite the fact that some clearly do) even though they use a word to describe themselves that was also used by some of the worst butchers ever to exercise power over other people.

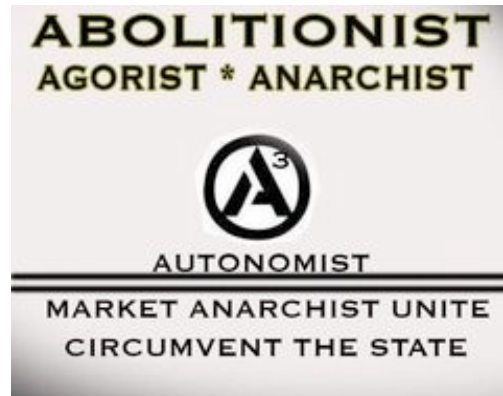
Under capitalism, man exploits man. Under communism, it's just the opposite.

I have written in multiple publications that I oppose state-sponsored monopoly capitalism because it is based on force and is by its nature coercive. I advocate an economic arrangement where people, whether as individuals or as voluntary groupings of individuals, freely exchange goods and services with each other either by barter or utilizing some form of money (another touchy term). But I oppose interest, profit, rent and absentee land ownership because they are unjust and constitute a form of theft of the wealth of others and are not the product of equitable exchange. No matter how many times I explain what I mean when I use the word market or exchange, or the expression free trade, and no matter how strongly I criticize the state and capitalism some anarchists refuse to take me at my word.

Part of this suspicion may be due to the fact that I have published articles written by anarchists who believe in a form of stateless, libertarian capitalism. But I have also published articles by anarchists from the other end of the economic spectrum, like Malatesta, and even non-anarchists like Rosa

This may breed confusion and misinterpretation, but the only alternatives are to either make up new words, or reuse words from other languages or eras to symbolize a specific school of thought. Marx was very successful using the latter approach when he gave life to the latin word *proletarius* in the form of the terms proletarian and proletariat. Sam Konkin, a capitalist anarchist tried something similar with the word agorist, from the greek word for market, *agora*. In neither case, however, did these new-fangled terms for workers and markets add any clarity to the arguments of the writers. Proletarian was all the rage in marxist circles for quite a while but has largely been replaced by the word worker, for which it was designed as a substitute, except when the writer or speaker is trying to emphasize their leftist credentials. Agorist and agorism never took off the way Marx's terms did in the first place and remain only as a form of insider-speak among some market anarchists.

As for making up words *de novo* to solve the problem of how to communicate when words have more than one meaning, the best example of this fool's errand is *bolo'bolo*. This book came out in 1983 and was a description of or recipe for a new type of society based on autonomous communities that would set their own rules. Similar to the theories of the panarchists, the writer envisioned a world where people could choose from all sorts of different communities with their own social and economic setups and could



move from *bolo* to *bolo* as their needs and wants changed over time. But in describing the features of this society he used a bunch of made-up words to label objects and groupings of people which could be more than adequately described using conventional words and phrases. Whatever the merits of the ideas contained in this book, the writer's neologisms created more confusion than clarity for readers.

### Plain Words

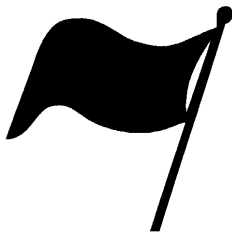
So I have generally chosen to use ordinary words to describe my ideas and my vision of the free society. I use the term market when I talk about how people could fairly and freely exchange goods and services because the word can mean just such equitable commerce. I am careful to differentiate between a true free market, where the state would play no role and monopolies would not exist, and the mainstream concept of a free market which includes the new york stock exchange and general motors. When I have written about economic exchanges

has two quite different meanings: “the phenomena of the physical world collectively” and “the basic or inherent features of something.” Despite this, most of the time people are able to figure out the meaning intended by the speaker or writer from the context in which the word is used and confusion seldom ensues.

When we discuss social and economic ideas and institutions, however, things become more complicated. People of very different viewpoints commonly use the same word to describe quite different interactions and arrangements, even though the word itself really has only one meaning. The word socialism is a perfect example. Stalin and Hitler both called the

political systems they ruled forms of socialism, mildly left members of the American Democratic Party call themselves socialists, social democratic parties in Europe are part of the Socialist International, and some anarchists use the word socialist to describe their outlook. In discussing these various forms of socialism, different descriptors are often tacked on to clarify the differences between these institutions and/or schools of thought: state socialism, democratic socialism, libertarian socialism, etc. So even though the word socialism was used by Nazis to describe themselves, libertarian socialists continue to use the word because they believe both that it accurately describes the type of world they strive for and that they are able to adequately explain to others that the society they envision has nothing in common with national socialism.

This is not unreasonable. Although new words and new meanings for old words are added to languages all the time, this generally happens gradually and unpredictably. Which means there are only so many words out there to use in any language to describe interactions and relationships between people. Since it is very convenient in both writing and speaking to have a word or two one can use to describe a set of ideas or a type of social arrangement, people tend to use old words which may have multiple meanings, but have at least one definition that encompasses the ideas which they are attempting to communicate about.



## ***anchorage anarchy***

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# *anchorage anarchy*

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## To Market, To Market

In a review of *anchorage anarchy* in a recent edition of *Anarchy, A Journal of Desire Armed*, I am described by the author as a “non-anti-capitalist anarchist.” Around the same time I read this article, I also received a letter from a contributor to *aa* in which I was called to task for my use of the word market to describe the sort of economic relations I think would best serve free people. While the *Anarchy* writer did not elaborate on why he chose the description he did, my correspondent did go on to say that he thinks “free people would determine the means of exchange/sharing/distribution that is most suitable for them & it would tend to be disorganized and fluid, where market implies a more structured approach.”

Both the reviewer and the letter-writer are people who have read a lot of what I have written about social and economic matters, yet one believes that I do not oppose capitalism despite my frequent statements to the contrary over the years, while the other thinks I use the wrong word to describe my vision of free economic exchange even though I have taken great pains on numerous occasions to clarify what I mean by the word market. Which leads me to believe that there must be others out there less familiar with my ideas who are also misinterpreting what I write. This leaves me in somewhat of a bind. If I continue to express my ideas using the words I customarily do, I apparently run the risk of not communicating my ideas clearly. But I am not convinced that if I simply start using other terms to talk about social and economic interactions between free individuals that I will be understood any better. What’s an anarchist to do?

### Word Games

All of us use words that can be interpreted in more than one way. Sometimes this is just in the nature of the word itself. If one looks up the word nature, for instance, you will find that it

