

Anarchism

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1 Preliminary

By no means I, as a translator, take the copyright or ownership over the material presented below. It's been glued together from different sources (most notably posluchajohanarchizmie.tk - the website doesn't seem to work anymore). My work is limited to translating the text, fixing the wording, modifying the style, adding references and correcting small mistakes in the original.

My work was motivated by the possibility of spreading the word about anarchism, which is a brilliant political (and economical!) ideology.

2 What is anarchism?

Anarchy - what a terrible word! When one hears it, they probably think of nothing but the worst. Mess, filth, riots, bombs, a rifle aimed at the head of a child. Therefore, most of society expresses confusion when someone calls themselves an anarchist. Why would you want to identify with such a horrible thing? The media used to portray anarchists as lost youth, rebellious against everything. The media shows brawls, destruction, dangerous masses dressed in black, and then the heroic policemen who try to overwhelm this mess with batons and handcuffs. Aside from the media's participation, the bizarre picture of anarchism in the collective consciousness also results from the many conflicting definitions of the word "anarchy". Let's take a peek into the dictionary:

1. a situation in which state authorities have lost control over the situation in the country; immorality, lawlessness;
2. colloquially: non-compliance or lack of applicable rules; disorder, lawlessness, chaos;
3. a political and social system without state authorities, in which the law does not apply;

So, as you can see, we have chaos and disorder first, then ideology, and then ignoring the law as a cherry on top - that is, chaos and disorder again. Anarchy, in its original sense, simply means the opposite of hierarchy. No authority whatsoever. This is the definition that anarchists use. Anarchists believe that freedom is the most important value in human life. An ideal anarchist society is one that ensures that each person achieves the maximum possible freedom, limited only by the freedom of another human. Hence, anarchists advocate the abolition of two major sources of slavery and hierarchy: the state and capitalism. Anarchists share a common goal: an egalitarian society stripped of all hierarchies and all forms of oppression. Hence, anarchists oppose authoritarianism, capitalism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and all other splits that create artificial hierarchies in society that stand in the way of freedom and equality. Therefore, Anarchism always remains anti-totalitarian, anti-state, anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, feminist, egalitarian and democratic.

However, anarchists are not satisfied with the destruction of the present social order, as their opponents portray it. They want to build a new one. The anarchist vision of society is as follows:

- Instead of the state, its hierarchical organization and the contemporary representative democracy, anarchists propose a horizontal structure based on free associations and direct democracy.
- Free associations are made out of collectives consisting of all members of a given district, for example, residents of a single town, neighborhood, or workplace.
- These people gather and together make decisions on matters important to them: for example - Who will repair the pavements? Which color to paint the walls of the buildings with?

- The collective selects its delegates who will present the decisions taken together at the free association's congress with the participation of representatives of other collectives.
- The delegates are under the direct control of the collective and can be dismissed at any time to prevent them from seizing power to ensure the horizontal structure's relevancy.
- Such decisions may concern matters of any scale. From the tiniest (like the cases mentioned above) to the global/international scope.

It might be tiresome to be constantly selecting and sending delegates. Fortunately, modern technologies makes this process easier. For less important or more urgent matters, it is easier to use electronic communication, for example via the Internet (*NB: electronic voting is prone to manipulation and mildly inaccessible, so I emphasize on **the less important ones***).

Cooperativity is anarchist's response to capitalism. It simply means getting rid of the hierarchical capitalist-worker structure. Decisions related to production are made by labor collectives on the basis of direct democracy. Now you ask - but what about jobs where a manager is needed when decisions have to be made immediately? No problem - anarchists have a solution for that too. The collective selects a coordinator who can be dismissed at any time if he does his job poorly or exceeds his powers. There are movements calling themselves anarchist that support capitalism and even believe that it should be the basis of building an anarchist society. However, they are not considered by most as a part of anarchist tradition and ideology, as capitalism is the cause of hierarchical social relations.

3 What's wrong with capitalism in context of anarchism?

Many have asked how can capitalism be hierarchical, when it's only a form of trade based on the so-called voluntary agreements. This perfectly reflects our level of knowledge about the system in which we live now and the absurdities that occur in it. Most of us don't see its flaws, because we have been brainwashed in some way from the very first years of elementary school. Nobody presented us with an analysis of capitalism, but history lessons happily talked about the horrors of all the revolutions and social upheavals that opposed it. In particular, emphasis is placed on the October Revolution, the seizure of power in Russia by the Bolsheviks and all the crimes they have committed. On the other hand, there is practically no mention of the causes of the revolution, that is, unrestricted capitalism - exploitation and repression of the working class. There is also no mention of the revolution's course (the elimination of real revolutionary and libertarian movements by the Bolsheviks, and then introducing the continuation of the old system, replacing only the elites in charge).

Speaking from a perspective of a citizen of a post-soviet country, the general public also talks about the Soviet aggression towards Poland and the introduction of Stalinism, then the so-called a "socialist paradise" where there was nothing to eat, and the opposition was imprisoned and murdered in contrast to a free, happy, capitalist Western society in which freedom of thought and speech is respected. And, of course, the great success of the Polish Nation, which in 1989 freed itself from the so-called "socialism" and has since been completely free. Students in Poland are expected to read, among others, Orwell's "Animal Farm", which uses a brilliant parable to describe the state-communist totalitarianism. Rarely, however, the much more outstanding work of this author - *1984* is mentioned¹. Then we jump into conclusions - *"You see, this is what socialism looks like - some are equal and some are more equal"* (*sic*). Of course, they don't even mention that Orwell himself was a libertarian socialist since forever, and that he fought alongside the the anarchists of the CNT-FAI during the Spanish Revolution. It's no wonder then that the majority of society has no idea what capitalism really is and whether there is any alternative to it that doesn't involve murdering millions of people or building gulags.

Let's start with the definition of capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and, consequently, the profit from them, and on the free circulation of goods in a free market. By this definition, capitalism is primarily a system based on private ownership of the means of production. The means of production are simply all the means required to produce any thing: raw materials, machinery for production, tools, etc. Under capitalism, these items belong to the capitalist². Capitalists usually don't work or use the means of production

¹in multiple contexts it's happily brought up - *1984 is when I can't harass minorities and the fewer minorities I can harass the more 1984 it is*

²Capitalist is a person owning a (big) capital.

themselves, but borrow them to their own workers. Employees (who constitute the vast majority of society) receive in return for their work a part of the income earned by the company. However, a disproportionately larger proportion of them goes to the owner(s), who practically always work much less or not at all.

The capitalist has a great advantage over the workers: the means of production belong to him according to the law. If employees don't like the fact that they are treated like garbage and show their dissatisfaction (e.g. by striking), the capitalist may simply fire them out of work. If they try to recover the means of production, they will be pacified by the state in the form of the police or the army, which will justify it as "upholding the law". Of course, we must focus on who makes the law even in the so-called "democracies" - it's due to the corrupt elites in charge who have an interest in keeping the capitalist system (often belonging to the class of owners themselves). Therefore, the law is no determinant of what is right, but simply of what is in the interest of the people in charge. Thanks to this arrangement, the capitalists have complete power over the working class, which, although much larger than them, lacks the means of production or the support of the elites in charge.

"Legally anyone can start their own business. Just launch a company!". These words often mentioned by the fans of capitalism are very easy to counter, because they have a huge flaw. Namely, if everyone started a company, who would work for all these companies?

"If you dislike working half-free, why don't you find another, better paid job?". Capitalism is plagued by unemployment. This means that it is usually not capitalists who fight for workers by offering them competitive wages, but vice versa - workers will gladly take any job for money, because if they are not satisfied with their wages, the capitalist will simply find a more desperate person who will agree to the imposed wages, which refutes the myth of "voluntary" capitalism. Alexander Berkman describes it better than I'll ever be able to:

The law says that your employer does not steal anything from you, because it is done with your consent. You have agreed to work for your boss for certain pay, he to have all that you produce. Because you consented to it, the law says that he does not steal anything from you. But did you really consent? When the highwayman holds his gun to your head, you turn your valuables over to him. You 'consent' all right, but you do so because you cannot help yourself, because you are compelled by his gun. Are you not compelled to work for an employer? Your need compels you, just as the highwayman's gun. You must live, and so must your wife and children. You can't work for yourself, under the capitalist industrial system you must work for an employer. The factories, machinery, and tools belong to the employing class, so you must hire yourself out to that class in order to work and live. Whatever you work at, whoever your employer may be, it always comes to the same: you must work for him. You can't help yourself. You are compelled. In this way the whole working class is compelled to work for the capitalist class. In this manner the workers are compelled to give up all the wealth they produce. The employers keep that wealth as their profit, while the worker gets only a wage, just enough to live on, so he can go on producing more wealth for his employer. Is that not cheating, robbery? The law says it is a 'free agreement'. Just as well might the highwayman say that you 'agreed' to give up your valuables. The only difference is that the highwayman's way is called stealing and robbery, and is forbidden by law. While the capitalist way is called business, industry, profit making, and is protected by law. But whether it is done in the highwayman's way or in the capitalist way, you know that you are robbed. The whole capitalist system rests on such robbery.

Capitalism always mandates a compulsory class division that generates extreme inequalities. But what are the consequences of this on a larger scale? Unfortunately, it is thanks to the global capitalist system that the 1% of the richest people now own about half the wealth of the world, and the 62 richest people own the same as the poorest 3.6 billion. It is also worth considering how these people acquired such wealth. It wasn't because of the "hard work" that most of them love to brag about. They earned their money primarily from the much harder work of others who received only a fraction of generated income. The rest went to their employers, of which the state took a small part for its needs.

The conclusion is therefore obvious: capitalism is contrary to anarchism and to freedom in general. It's impossible to combine these two things without creating an oxymoron. Therefore, there is no such thing as "anarchocapitalism". It's an artificial ideology created to take over some radicalism and

anti-state sentiment of anarchist social movements and pool this energy in the interests of another elite (which seems ironic compared to what Bolsheviks achieved).

Anarcho-capitalists don't fight to improve people's living conditions, but to overthrow these elements of the state system that limit the development of big business - *id est*, taxes and labor law regulations the working class fought for in over decades of struggles during which many gave away their lives. However, they do not want to abolish those elements of the state that ensure capitalism's survival - the army and the police. They only want them to change the owner, so that they no longer belong to the state, but to (some) capitalist instead. This way, they will even more directly and unscrupulously (not that they have any more scruples presently) serve the class of capitalists who, with their help, will be able to oppress the working class even more effectively.

Collectivization will take place naturally as soon as state coercion is over, the workers themselves will own their workplaces as the capitalists will no longer have any control over them. This is what happened during the Spanish Revolution of 1936, during which workers and farmers seized and managed the means of production collectively. For those capitalists who had a good attitude towards workers before the revolution, there was also a place - they joined the horizontal labor collectives.

Don't confuse private and personal property. Private property concerns only the means of production and is based on state coercion. Private property under capitalism is the factory, the means used in it for production, real estate that belongs to the capitalist who lives in a completely different town and demands the inhabitants to pay for its use. Personal property, the development of which is collective property, is based on use. So it's, for example, the clothes you are wearing, the bike you ride to work on, the computer or phone on which you read this document or your apartment. Such a property system does not require coercion because it is simply the logical consequence of the use itself. Worker's ownership of the means of production, also known as socialism, is one of the most important pillars of anarchist ideology.