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# Territoriality and Anarchism

Alexander Atabekian

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If we look closely at the life of individual animal families and their societies, we will notice that each of them uses a certain place of residence — nest, burrow, den, anthill, beehive — and a relatively limited space of land, i.e. the *territory* on which it harvests the means for its own existence and for the preservation of the species (offspring). Even migratory birds, and those at different times of the year, return to their former home and old nest. The same is observed in nomadic tribes, which do not wander around the world wherever they see fit, but have their own definite *kyshlagi* and *eylagi* (as nomadic Tatars call the places of their winter and summer stay).

This natural connection with the place where they live, with their homeland in the literal sense of the word, should be called *territoriality*, as opposed to statehood, which is a forced association within arbitrary boundaries.

Anarchism, while rejecting statehood, cannot deny territoriality, just as, while striving for the destruction of monopoly capital (both private and state), it recognises labour property, which, thanks to its increased productivity and the communal-ity and mutual aid inherent in man, leads to communism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the conversation with P.A. Kropotkin in No. 4 of *Pochin*.

The love of homeland and tribe is not only not alien to, but also inherent in an anarchist no less than in any other person. It was this love that brought P.A. Kropotkin, after almost half a century of forced exile, back to his homeland, to central Russia.

The connection with the homeland is so strong in man that even with the modern extraordinary development of communication routes, people are very reluctant to move from their homeland, and then only under the pressure of irresistible economic necessity.

In nature territoriality, apparently, does not cause a sharp struggle within the same species of animals. Kropotkin, in his work on Mutual Aid, points out that separate groups of penguins have their own places for resting and their own places for fishing, and do not fight over them. Herds of cattle in Australia each have their own definite place to which they invariably, from day to day, go to rest, etc. In dogs, the territorial instinct is so strongly developed that man has utilised it by taming the dog for guarding purposes.

The reason for the absence of a sharp struggle for territoriality in animals of the same species can be seen in the greater homogeneity of animal breeds, which is determined, in turn, by the slowness of their development. The case is quite different in the human race, where the development of civilisation does not go everywhere with the same speed and sometimes makes astonishing leaps. The difference in the cultural development of different tribes and peoples is so great that self-defence in humans is a natural consequence of territoriality.

The present crisis of the basic idea of the International — the failed slogan of the international unification of the proletariat of all countries — is due precisely to the neglect of this difference in the development of the various peoples. This difference makes the defence of each society a necessary condition for its further free development.

Territoriality in the whole history of mankind has been so absorbed by statehood that even the main founders and

ideological inspirers of the international anarchist movement themselves, Bakunin and Kropotkin, do not draw a boundary between these two concepts. This leads to the idea that any connections for mutual self-defence must disappear; some anarchists, opposing militarism, understand our teachings in exactly this way. Meanwhile, neither Bakunin nor Kropotkin imagined that the whole of humanity would immediately turn to anarchism and that there would be no states left ideally organised for attack and conquest (see Bakunin's "Knouto-Germanic Empire").

Anarchism, as a social movement deeply imbued with the spirit of active struggle against all oppression and violence, cannot reject the organised defence of peoples against external violence. The theory of anarchism excludes coercive power and direct violence, which are the essence of statehood, from the relations of the population. Anarchism cannot reject the organised defence of society in a certain territory without coercive power.

Anarchism has so far put forward the territorial homeland — the *commune* — as its closest political ideal, because it was easier to imagine and realise a just social order there. But doom inevitably awaits the commune in a surrounding, hostile environment, as happened to Paris in 1871. In order to establish itself, anarchism must develop forms of organisation of large defensible units and then unite other countries more and more closely with its cultural influence. This is the direction in which the revival of the Anarchist International must be sought.

As long as the realisation of anarchism was regarded even by its ardent adherents as a *distant ideal*, as long as they were daily confronted with the enormous difference between this ideal and the iron fixtures of reality, until then it was possible not to wonder about the external enemies of societies that had converted to the anarchist system. During the world war the question of defence split the anarchists into two opposing camps, but now we are equally far from the unconditional fu-

sion with the national defence of some and the naive preaching of “sticking bayonets in the ground” of others.

The world war, having shaken all the foundations of the old social orders, has put the most incredible theoretical constructions on the line: it has sacrificed the vastness of Russia to the experiments of the party of State Socialists, who seek to plant their untenable ideas in the country by the dictatorship of power over all, i.e., by the arbitrariness of a bunch of people organised in a party. The inevitable collapse of this, perhaps the last form of the coercive state system, raises the question of a transition to a new order, to a free political system, to anarchist territorial associations. Otherwise, a reaction is inevitable, a return to the past, to the old forms of government, at best to the so-called “legal statehood”.

But internal internecine and civil struggles cannot give rise to external defence against aggressive military states, so a necessary condition for successful territorial self-defence is the development of practical forms of social organisation without class privileges and the coercion of power.

The resolution of social questions in the old outmoded state forms can no longer satisfy the “reason and will of the whole world” awakened by the world war (to use Wilson’s words).

The realisation of the anarchist form of dwelling within territorial limits has become an urgent task of our time. It is in line in Russia, where the old foundation of coercive statehood is unbridled in the arena of unlimited arbitrariness, seeking to consolidate its existence.

The great revolutions by their destruction themselves outline the ways for the renewal of society, and the forms in which the new system seeks to emerge.

“Pochin” endeavoured to grasp these forms, proceeding from the phenomena of the present, and presented them in a number of articles and separately published essays.<sup>2</sup>

Our ideal has historically matured. But are we politically mature enough to contribute to its realisation in practice?

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<sup>2</sup>“Social Tasks of House Committees” (sketch of urban social order without power and coercion), “Foundations of Zemstvo Financial Organisation without Power and Coercion”, some articles from the collection “Against Power”. See also the articles: “To the Question of Organising Public Medicine on Community-Cooperative Principles” (Gazeta “Anarchy”, No. 76 for 1918), “The Problem of a Free Army” (Gazeta “Anarchy”, No. 83 for 1918) and K.N. Ventzel’s article “Separation of School from State” (Zhurnal “Svobodnoe Vospitality”, No. for February 1917).