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The Panarchist Solution to a World Divided

Nicky Reid

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In these days of epic collapse, with the established order rapidly disintegrating before our very eyes, mankind seems to be tearing apart at the seams and resorting to the bipolar extremes of the far-left and the far-right. And why the hell not? Poor people across the globe have grown weary of the false promises and bald-faced lies of the so-called moderates. The one thing the warring camps of extremes seem to agree on is that the mass democracy of neoliberal globalism is an epic wash. A rigged shell game that only pays out to the house, and now the house is on fire.

So we witness the spectacle of populism on both the left and the right. Record numbers of young people embracing the once tainted label of socialism while the kind of xenophobic nativism which was once only uttered in hushed tones at the far corners of church potlucks has now become mainstream fodder openly brandished like Hermann Goering's revolver. These are the times that we live in but we've seen them before. Whenever empires crumble and the fixed markets of state capitalism find themselves in peril. The people who stand to gain the most from the cataclysm find

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themselves divided on the opposite ends of the barracks. Stalinists and Brown Shirts. Antifa and the Alt-right. It's times like these when the call of Samuel L. Jackson's prophetic DJ in Spike Lee's classic dissection of urban upheaval, *Do the Right Thing*, rings like tinnitus through my eardrums. "Can we live together?! Together, can we live?!" I've spent my life in search of an answer to that existential question. I believe I'm getting closer.

I've always found myself on the far-left end of the barracks, even while the proletariat was still drunk on the delusions of progress that came with the first black president and Apple Store commodity fetishism. I discovered Marx young and Chomsky shortly after. I spent the lion share of my teens flirting with a carousel of Libertarian Socialist ideologies, Chomsky's Syndicalism, Red Rosa's Council Communism, Subcomandante Marcos' Zapatismo. All set to a hard-driving soundtrack of Billy Bragg, Joe Strummer and Zack de la Rocha.

By my late adolescence, I found myself under the spell of more statist genres of leftism, brought on by the unexpected revival of Bolivarianism in Hugo's Venezuela and Evo's Bolivia. I eventually came to embrace Third World Communism as a bulwark against Northern attacks on these democratic social experiments. I came to see Fidel Castro's harshly undemocratic measures to protect the Cuban Revolution in the wake of Kennedy's terrorist campaign against it as the only solution to imperialism. But my appetite for history wouldn't allow me to hold on to that delusion for very long. Upon further studies, I came to the conclusion that the state itself was cancer and it mattered little how benevolent its managers were. It was always a wicked contraption designed to oppress before it self-destructs. I turned back to anarchism but contradictions continued to haunt me.

The biggest problem with nearly every school of leftism is its almost messianic assumption that mankind can be united in internationalist harmony beneath the banner of a single way. As much as I may believe that my own brand of Post-Marxist Syndicalism

is the ideal model for a truly democratic society, I had trouble convincing myself that someday mankind would reach a singular collective consciousness and fall in love with the guild. Frankly, as an anti-imperialist, I've always been uneasy with these sort of notions of internationalism.

Assuming that some 19th-century factory workers in industrial Western Europe had all the answers for my friendly neighborhood primitivists in the Amish community, let alone the tribes of Borneo or the Kalahari, just smacks bitchingly of colonialism. With a world so beautifully complex, how could there ever be just one way? This seemed like the same trap that led our Founding Fathers to set the stage for the neoliberal hellhole of global capitalism, only ours was an egalitarian Manifest Destiny. I believed very strongly in the ideals of Murray Bookchin and Rudolph Rocker, but these contradictions kept me from seeing even my own anarchism as anything more than a distant pipe dream. That is, until I discovered the philosophy of Panarchy.

One of the biggest misconceptions about anarchism is that it is defined by the absence of government. Such notions are patently absurd. Governments have, do and always will exist. A government is any gathering of individuals brought together to make collective decisions. Technically speaking, three stoned roommates debating over pizza topping is a government. Anarchy is defined by the absence of the state, a permanent government micromanaged by a class of professional politicians, be they corporate board members, congressmen or monarchs. The very existence of this managerial class is what makes a simple government a state. Anarchy, in all its forms, seeks to abolish this hierarchy and replace it with an entirely civilian government. Panarchy is the recognition that in our world, in this diverse cultural landscape known as mankind, there is no singular answer to the scourge of the state. Anarchy can only exist outside of manifestos and punk rock venues when it is free to take on any form, regardless of adjectives, as long as it does so voluntarily and free from force.

Globalism has brought on nothing but colossal super-states. The tyranny of bigness, big government, big business, big race, big religion. This problem cannot be solved by hijacking these systems and rebranding them as internationalism. The only valid solution to this mass tyranny is localism and that's precisely what Panarchy embraces, the idea that government can only succeed on the same grounds as any other relationship, through reversible contracts between consenting parties committed to voluntaryism and non-aggression above all else. These could be mutual aid societies, autonomous communes, democratic syndicates, tribal orders, a quilt-work of endless Utopian experiments competing peacefully for their citizenry's patronage with individuals free to opt-out and collectives free to succeed at anytime. Ideally, these governments would exist like social clubs with benefits, completely untethered by geography. Making it entirely possible for six stateless nations to exist on a single square block.

What's the catch, you ask? And there is always a catch. The catch is that freedom of society exists under the same parameters as freedom of speech. Panarchy doesn't just protect the societies you like, it protects the societies you hate. Under the grand contract of a confederal constitution, people would be free to build societies based around any ideology as long as they remained peaceful and voluntary. That means societies based on Mutualism, Syndicalism, Capitalism and Communism. But that also more than likely means peaceful nations governed by ideologies like Religious Fundamentalism, Geographic Integralism and even Racial Separatism. Allowing such societies to exist does not mean condoning them anymore than freedom of speech means condoning hate speech. It's a matter of excepting the reality that true liberty means respecting the decisions of others, however misguided, to live voluntarily however they damn well please, provided they do so peacefully, much like my clannish Amish neighbors who peacefully coexist with wicked English trannies like me.

This philosophy runs anathema to the current culture of both the far-left and the far-right, who both seem to define themselves by their guttural opposition to the others very existence. But I see this catch as the solution to a proletariat that will always remain divided across complex cultural lines. When they lack the nifty shield of persecuted victim-hood, the Fascist right tends to lose its appeal to the masses. Every time one of those goosestepping pricks gets hammered by Antifa, there book sales go through the fucking ceiling. I have to believe in the Kropotkinite theory that free mutual aid leads left towards true egalitarian evolution. When free to compete peacefully, the more malignant fear-based cultures will dwindle while the open communal ones will thrive. The beauty is that the far-right is free to believe the very same thing about my Queer Syndicalist Tribe. They get the opportunity to prove me wrong just as I do them, but the both of us will be too small to waste our energy on combat. Micro-nations make any form of sustained warfare an act of mutually assured destruction. Coexistence becomes the only sustainable way to exist.

And this is how I believe we can live together, Communists, Nationalists, melting pots and Isolationists, together we can live. Behind every apocalypse hides an opportunity for Utopia. The Panarchist says why not a thousand? Why not? Tis the season after all....