

# **The importance of a strong economic foundation for revolutionary organizations**

**Without resources, there is no revolution!**

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In the framework of the anarchist revolutionary struggle, the economic question can no longer remain a footnote. The economy is not a “neutral” field or a technical dimension separate from politics; it is one of the main arenas where power relations are reproduced. Any political strategy that seeks to radically transform society must clearly acknowledge that without resources there is no real possibility of sustaining struggles, building popular power, or protecting our comrades from state repression or capitalist sabotage. Material means alone do not guarantee emancipation, but their absence can doom it to failure—or reduce it to mere symbolic expression.

We need to equip ourselves with economic resources not only to survive, but to take the initiative. Resources to print pamphlets, produce propaganda, maintain community spaces and safe houses, fund strike funds, send delegates to meetings, support those targeted by (in)justice, sustain long-term strikes, organize political education processes, meet the basic needs of precarious militants, or finance cooperative projects that strengthen autonomy.

Building a robust economic base is an urgent necessity: it allows our organizations to operate autonomously, resist in times of repression, expand their influence, and meet the basic needs of those who sustain them. This is not about falling into mercantilist logic, but about practicing an ethic of collective care—with the material means to sustain and scale our struggles.

Politics without the material means to reproduce and expand itself retreats into symbolism; organization without the ability to sustain strikes, support its members legally, or even print propaganda becomes neutralized by the weight of poverty and isolation. This essay addresses the urgency of adopting a militant economic praxis—one inspired by historical examples from anarchism and informed by contemporary contributions that combine critique of capital with concrete organizational proposals.

## **Militancy with a Budget: The Financial Muscle of the Movement**

From paying fines and legal costs to maintaining strike funds, political events, awareness campaigns, mutual aid networks, or community kitchens—every organization needs stable resources. This is not a luxury or a whim, but a vital element that determines the real reach of political action. This is not a concession to liberal economism but a materialist affirmation: our structures must be able to resist, reproduce, and grow if they are to have any structural impact. Every revolutionary action needs a financial base that allows continuity and projection. Precarity cannot be the mode of existence of a movement that aims to transform material conditions of life.

Regular membership fees, solidarity donations, or income derived from the sale of political materials (books, zines, shirts, posters, etc.) are fundamental to sustaining our initiatives without depending on the State, NGOs, or grants that impose conditions and limit autonomy. Self-management begins with how we finance our activities. Regular contributions, however small, allow for planning, foresight, and rapid response in emergencies. Donation drives or political fairs can also be moments to make the project visible and strengthen ties with sympathizers and allies.

In anarchist history, economics has never been a foreign or secondary concern. In the 1930s, the CNT not only organized strikes but also built a complex network of social structures: cultural centers, rationalist schools, consumer cooperatives, care centers, publishing houses, cultural groups, and defense networks. This economic ecosystem sustained everyday struggle and projected an integral alternative to capitalist society. Anarchists such as Bakunin understood

this dimension—he himself financed revolutionary expeditions to support libertarian cells across Europe, knowing that the movement needed resources, logistics, and planning to expand. A concrete example of this is Fanelli’s mission to Spain.

The goal is not to accumulate wealth or capital, but to build a common fund—a popular infrastructure at the service of revolutionary ends. Abraham Guillén made it clear: “Self-management without control over economic means is a farce.” Organizations need not only political autonomy but also economic sovereignty. The opposite implies constant dependence on external actors, individual voluntarism, or cycles of enthusiasm that offer no continuity. Only with a solid financial base can we think in long-term processes, territorial expansion, internationalism, and the emotional and material sustenance of those on the frontlines of struggle.

## **From the Workshop to the Barricade: Collectives that Built Power**

During the Spanish Revolution of 1936, in the territories where the coup d’état partially failed and power fell into the hands of workers’ committees and popular militias, processes of social revolution and antifascist war developed simultaneously. Among the most notable of these was large-scale agrarian and industrial collectivization, especially in regions like Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia. In these territories, rural communities and urban factories came under collective management by their workers—without bosses or state bureaucracy. These collectives were primarily driven by militants of the CNT, who had been developing theoretical and practical proposals for self-management for years.

In rural areas, collectivization meant the socialization of land, tools, and resources, with the goal of abolishing wage labor and organizing production based on social needs. In many zones, regional federations were created to coordinate among villages. In urban areas, hundreds of factories, workshops, and services were taken over by their workers and reorganized under principles of workers’ control. Despite the lack of a centralized plan, production was maintained in key sectors such as food, transport, and the war industry.

These experiences were thoroughly analyzed by Miguel Gómez in *La CNT y la Nueva Economía. Del colectivismo a la planificación de la economía confederal (1936–1939)*, where he examines how the libertarian movement, through the CNT, developed economic planning proposals during the Second Republic and Civil War, and how these were articulated in practice. Gómez documents the evolution from spontaneous socialization to the creation of structures like the Confederal Economic Council (CEC), aimed at coordinating productive efforts along libertarian lines.

Gómez also notes that this social revolution was not led by a vanguard but carried out by the working and peasant base itself, acting in the power vacuum left by employers and landlords who joined the military coup. He also highlights how CNT’s participation in bodies like the Antifascist Militias Committee, the Generalitat’s Economic Council, or even the Republican Government reflected a complex and contradictory strategy: cooperating temporarily with the State to sustain the revolution and face the war, without fully abandoning libertarian principles.

The collectives faced many challenges: political pressure from statist and Stalinist sectors, logistical difficulties from the war, and internal tensions over the degree of centralization. After May 1937 in Barcelona and the dissolution of the Aragon Council, the collectivization process began to be dismantled by counterrevolutionary forces within the Republican camp itself.

Despite everything, the collectives proved that it was possible to organize the economy on egalitarian, cooperative, and democratic bases—even in a context of total war. The confederal planning model promoted by the CNT, though unfinished, remains one of the most ambitious and advanced experiences of libertarian economic construction in modern history.

## **Anarchist Economics: Principles and Praxis**

From Kropotkin to Michael Albert, through Abraham Guillén, Iain McKay, Asimakopoulou, Wayne Price, and even Marx's critical insights, the anarchist tradition has offered concrete analyses and proposals for an economy that breaks with the logic of capital and builds libertarian and emancipatory alternatives.

Kropotkin, in *The Conquest of Bread and Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, argues that the economy must be organized around the direct satisfaction of human needs. He proposes radical decentralization, the abolition of wages, and production based on cooperation, mutual aid, and free association. For him, a free society is impossible while resources remain under the control of a few; the expropriation of the means of production must go hand in hand with their communal and horizontal management.

Abraham Guillén, more technical and tied to Iberian and Latin American anarchism, proposes a model of democratic planning based on economic federations, territorial assemblies, and workers' control. In his view, the libertarian economy is not spontaneous but organized, scientific, and oriented toward the common good. He provides tools to think about how to scale self-management without falling into chaos or state centralization—a challenge every revolutionary organization must take seriously.

Michael Albert, with his *parecon* (participatory economics) model, offers concrete institutional mechanisms to transcend both capitalism and authoritarian socialism: workers' and consumers' councils, remuneration based on effort and sacrifice, balanced job complexes, and participatory planning without markets or states. His model envisions a functioning economy without economic hierarchies, property classes, or bureaucratic planners.

Iain McKay, author of *An Anarchist FAQ* and various studies on libertarian economics, emphasizes linking theory and practice: anarchist economics is not a utopian abstraction but a living tradition practiced in numerous historical experiences. McKay also stresses that while abolishing capitalism is essential, the process must be guided by principles such as mutual aid, equity, decentralization, and direct economic action.

Wayne Price, in turn, defends the need for a libertarian economy that critically incorporates Marxist tools—without falling into authoritarianism but without discarding class analysis. He recognizes in Marx a powerful critique of capitalism—especially his analysis of value, accumulation, and exploitation—that can be reappropriated from a libertarian perspective if one avoids statism and centralism. Bakunin had already anticipated this in his critiques of Marx: the problem was not the economic analysis but its translation into authoritarian structures. Thus, an anarchist economy does not deny the usefulness of certain Marxist categories but redirects them toward a horizon of emancipation without state or ruling classes.

## The Case of Evangelical Churches: Solidarity or Submission?

In many working-class, migrant, and marginalized territories—where the State is absent and the market guarantees only exploitation—Evangelical churches have built a strong social presence. They have embedded themselves in communities hit by unemployment, violence, and precarity, offering what the system denies: food, listening, companionship, children's activities, social ties, and meaning. They have understood, with unsettling effectiveness, that hegemony is not won only from the pulpit but from the material base.

But this insertion is neither innocent nor emancipatory. These churches act as buffers for social conflict, channeling anger into resignation and proposing individual salvation as a substitute for collective transformation. Their very arrival in Latin America was part of a CIA psyop—viewing Catholicism as bolshevized and fearing revolutionary contagion. From an anarchist and class perspective, they constitute a particularly insidious form of social control. They promote deeply conservative values: obedience to authority, personal guilt for poverty, female submission, rejection of critical thought, and punitive moralism. The central message is clear: if you suffer, it is because you lack faith, not because the system is rotten.

One of their key economic pillars is the mandatory tithe: a minimum contribution—typically 10% of personal income—that each believer must give as proof of spiritual commitment. In practice, the tithe becomes a systematic extraction of resources from the working class, often under moral coercion, even among those living in need. These structures operate like real corporations, with business models based on loyalty, guilt, and obedience. In countries such as Brazil, Mexico, or the Philippines, some Evangelical (especially neo-Pentecostal) churches have amassed real estate empires, media networks, political parties, and clientelist systems resembling corporate conglomerates more than spiritual communities.

It is no coincidence that across Latin America, the United States, and Europe, various Evangelical churches have been implicated in scandals revealing their reactionary and exploitative nature. In Brazil, prosperity-gospel figures have been tried for money laundering, fraud, and emotional manipulation of followers. In the U.S., megachurches have enriched themselves at the expense of impoverished communities while pushing anti-abortion, racist, and homophobic agendas. In Europe, some Evangelical organizations have faced scrutiny for coercive, sectarian practices and for receiving public funds ostensibly for social work. These are not exceptions but expressions of a structural logic: these churches present themselves as spiritual salvation while consolidating conservative power networks serving the status quo.

For anarchists, the challenge is not to compete on theological grounds but to reclaim their place in the social fabric. What we must learn is not their doctrine but their ability to build sustained material presence. We must build mutual aid networks, spaces of companionship and solidarity, community kitchens, self-managed educational projects, health brigades, and play and cultural spaces for children. Because if we do not fill those voids through libertarian practice, others will—and when reactionaries fill them, they divert popular energy toward obedience and guilt.

The struggle against these forms of spiritual and economic domination is not fought solely in the political or union spheres—it unfolds, often primarily, in neighborhoods, popular communities, and spaces of everyday life. When Evangelical churches manage to make the working class hand over part of its scarce income in exchange for a place in heaven, we are witnessing a concrete defeat in the struggle for meaning, connection, and redistribution. If we do not occupy

those territories with libertarian, solidaristic, and combative projects, those who do will redirect the demand for justice into blind faith and personal sacrifice. We cannot allow class enemies to disguise themselves as “help” while reproducing obedience, guilt, and submission.

## **Resources for Revolt**

A revolutionary economy begins with solid principles and clear practices. It’s not only about resistance—it’s about building here and now ways of life and organization that embody the values we defend. The way we handle resources reveals our political ethics. In this sense, we must reject personal enrichment within collective structures: whoever profits at the expense of the organization breaks trust and corrodes the common fabric. The private appropriation of collective resources is a betrayal of any libertarian horizon.

All income must return to the struggle. Every donation, membership fee, or euro generated through self-managed activities must be reinvested in strengthening our capacities: maintaining spaces, publishing materials, sustaining care networks, providing direct aid. There is no “extra money” when the revolution is at stake. Every resource counts and must serve the common good.

That is why it is essential to build economic reserves—physical or digital—to respond swiftly to unexpected situations: repression, health emergencies, sabotage, urgent relocations. Failing to plan is to condemn oneself to improvisation, and constant improvisation exhausts and disarms.

Investing with political intelligence means prioritizing expenses that strengthen our autonomy, cohesion, and reach. Propaganda, safe spaces, educational tools, mutual aid networks—these are not expenses, but investments in popular power.

A libertarian economic structure must also be based on fair contributions. It’s not about imposing unreachable fees but about designing forms of economic participation that are solidaristic and proportional. Everyone contributes according to their means, but all share the common commitment.

Finally, we must generate sustainable revenues—fairs, cooperatives, workshops, publications. Activities that not only finance us but connect us with our communities, spread our ideas, and build real bonds. This resource generation must avoid the logic of business: we do not compete with the market—we confront it. Nor do we beg from the State, which is part of the problem. Our economic autonomy is not a technical detail; it is a condition for our struggles to be lasting, coherent, and transformative.

## **Because Without Bread There Is No Freedom**

The revolution will not be funded by philanthropists or sponsors. If we want to build popular power, we must also build a popular economy—not to reproduce capitalist logic, but to dismantle it. Not to compete, but to live with dignity and fight more effectively.

An organization that does not think about how to sustain itself materially is doomed to fragility. A political strategy that ignores the economic dimension is incomplete. And an emancipatory project that fails to meet its members’ needs is destined to burn out.

Every revolutionary organization needs an economic base—not as an end, but as a means. To sustain strikes, open spaces, feed comrades, free prisoners, care for children, and spread the libertarian seed in every corner of the territory.

Because without bread, there is no freedom. And without an economic strategy, there can be no lasting revolution.

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