

# ANARCHISM

MARCH



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Six Essays  
by Members of  
London Anarchist Group



# ANARCHISM

Anarchists wish to see the government of men by men abolished. They want this to happen because they believe that no man is clever, or honest enough to rule others. They also believe that without a system based upon liberty, equality and fraternity, there will always be "haves-nots" and "haves".

We live in a world in which millions of the "haves-nots" live in conditions of dire poverty. One part of the world is throwing bread into the dustbins, taking acres of land out of cultivation and, in general, basing its society on a system of waste. The poorer part is starving and in many cases is also being plundered of its economic wealth, thus ensuring that it will continue to starve.

The Congo is a prime example of this. A colonial power moved on after making certain that all the economic wealth of the country was in the hands of the same regime who controlled it before, and is now stealing what can be taken from this impoverished people. How many governments in the banana republics of central America are in the pockets of the United Fruit Company?

The only liberators of the peoples of these countries as well as our own will be the peoples themselves, for if they do not do it, none else will. You can be sure. History has shown us that "good" leaders very seldom exist, and that if they do they very quickly become dead leaders, with demoralising effect. Anarchists believe that we must start to build a different kind of society with a different kind of morality from that which has been handed down to us.

MORE CO-OPERATION

Anarchists want a society based upon co-operation, not competition. We are told that competition is good for us, that it is a firm basis upon which to build a social order. Meanwhile we see that big business forms giant corporations, companies merge, and monopolies grow vaster as big business learns that co-operation pays. Anarchists agree with big business on this point, if on nothing else. Co-operation most certainly does pay, but we want to see it co-operating for the common good, not just a few individuals for the common ill.

Co-operation equals friendship and peace, while competition equals war. War is competition carried to its logical conclusion.

L.A.G  
1965

# ANARCHIST-COMMUNISM

## Jack Stevenson

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Co-operation equals friendship and peace, while competition equals war. War is competition carried to its logical conclusion.

We want a society within which all men will have a say in the running of their place of work, and a man will not have to sell himself to another just for the right to live; a society in which someone who is no better than other men will not be able to pass judgement on them, in which men will be free to do as they please, *providing they do not attempt to coerce others into doing the same.*

## CRIME

In such a society 'criminals', or anti-social people, would be treated as sick people are now treated. Prisons, it has been proved, do not cure the criminal but, on the contrary, are universities of crime. They are just a way of society's bundling its dirty linen into the cupboard and forgetting it is there. This does not solve the problem at all. There is another way.

In an anarchist society we believe there would be less crime. Why? Because we would abolish the reason for most crimes. What is the reason? Surely no one denies that most crimes are committed for profit? Someone wants something that another has, so he takes it. It depends upon his character whether he takes it, using violence or not; nevertheless he wants it, so he takes it. This is a crime in present society, unless, of course, politicians decide to steal something from another country - and that means war.

## PROPERTY

Anarchists believe in the abolition of property; that is to say, property that gives someone the right to a better life than others *at the expense of others*. What did the "train robbers" want if it was not a better life, a life with little work, access to better things, access to more goods, better homes, travel, an easy time? When anarchists say that they believe in the abolition of property they do not mean that a man will not own the food he eats, or the clothes he wears, but that he will have access to what goods there are; that in his community, be it large or small, he will have his share; not the same share, since all men are individuals with different tastes and likes, but what he would like. We believe that it would be possible to do this if society were based upon different lines. Is that possible? We believe it is.

## FOOD PRODUCTION

We are living in a world which has seen vast changes in the last two hundred years in the fields of science and

industry, yet there has not been the same advance in agriculture. We are not thinking about men per acre, or industrialisation of farming. We are remembering why people started farming in the first place - to grow food. In Russia, for example, under a system where the almighty central government could send people here or there at its slightest whim the agricultural policies of the five-year plans always failed. This was farming bogged down in red tape. In other parts of the world under a system of private ownership that has happened too. Enough food is not being produced. Could it be perhaps that the production of food is secondary to production of profit?

If men were to put their scientific skill, not into armaments and weapons to kill each other but, to the task of feeding the earth's starving population, the problem would be solved for all time. If you think that this is impossible remember how the Israelis made the desert bloom in not such a long time, at least not in terms of what they had to do it with.

With a different system of farming this tiny island could feed its population. *We are not saying it should do so, for we believe in international co-operation, but it could do so.* It would mean smaller units and more people actually engaged in work on the land; in other words - intensive cultivation, controlled by those working to see that the land is not tired out. A great amount of food can be grown in a small area, if it is grown with an eye to feeding people, and not to the making of profits.

## PROFIT BASED

In this society very few things are produced for people's needs. That people may, or may not, need them is incidental. "Can they pay for them?" is the only question that is asked. Absolutely worthless articles are manufactured in the hope that advertising can persuade people to buy them. Multitudes of men working like trojans to get others to buy what they do not really want, while a bumper crop of apples or potatoes is greeted as a disaster, because it will lower the prices.

Thousands, millions, of people are doing jobs that are a waste of effort and time; for instance, those whose work involves money. In a society where all men worked for the good of all, money would be unnecessary. What is money? It is a means of exchange, but with freedom of access a means of exchange is not needed. We will receive goods from the communal stores; not because we have the money but because we are human beings and that is our natural right.

All this in the present society sounds like a dream and a person could be understood if he said, "It sounds alright but it will not work". Of course, if the governments of the world all dropped dead tomorrow, it would not work. However things do not happen that way. Changes are achieved bit by bit. Such a change cannot be brought about in a day. This is what we must work for and bring about by our own actions. Not so long ago in this country women and children dragged coal carts at the bottom of coal mines. Those days are gone. We have progressed since then. Changes have been won. Anarchists believe that we must take part in the struggles for better conditions of work, for more civil rights, for the weakening of the State and the taking of more power by the people. The difference between anarchists and the political parties is that parties tell the people that they must put their faith in them; then they betray the people.

#### LEADERS BETRAY

The thousands who died in revolutions in the past were all betrayed. To believe that anyone who is not one of the people really cares about the people is to be naive. It is naive because, by and large, men see problems only as they affect them here and now. You may elect a working man to power over other working men, but as soon as he is in power or even *enjoying a better standard of living* he thinks of strikers as troublemakers who are disturbing his own peace. He no longer sees their problems, because now he has a new set of his own.

#### DIFFUSION OF POWER

In an anarchist society, it might be said, ordinary people who did not understand such things as science could be taken in by top scientists since they would not know what was best. Let me point out, however, that in an anarchist society there would be very little power for anyone to wield. The power of one man is only made big by the helplessness of others. In such a society a different attitude of mind would prevail. If all men were playing their individual parts in the making of decisions there would be no power for any one man. If the majority disagreed with him it would say, "No" - and that would be that.

A man is only great in such a society in the respect and esteem in which he is held by others. Take these away and he is a mere windbag. An example of this was the

Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, "With the party he was everything; without it he was nothing", in his own words.

The fundamental problem of the world today is that men lack confidence in themselves. They permit themselves to be blown about by any political "wind of change", leaving things to the so-called 'experts'. Who are they? *They are the very people who have led the world into its present condition of poverty, waste and war.*

## ANARCHISM & AGRICULTURE

Alan Albon

The first essential for a stable civilisation is a stable non-exploitative agriculture, an agriculture that will at any moment nourish the community of mankind, maintaining a high level of health, and continue to do so indefinitely. The possibility of man returning to the role of food gatherer and hunter is remote; even fishing has to be controlled if that source of food is to be maintained without seriously depleting the supply.

Without food we cannot live. With a bad diet we suffer disease. With a shortage of food we have insecurity and a limitation of the ability to enjoy life to the full. Therefore agriculture is the primary human activity, and any viable civilisation must approach this activity with wisdom, knowledge and the ability to ask the right questions. Owing to great increases in population in the modern world our ability to create a stable agriculture becomes of urgent and paramount importance.

The soil community, of which the animal and human communities are part, consists of a thin crust of minute particles and animal and plant residues, which, by the ability of the plant to utilise water, air and substances in the soil, combined with solar energy, is able in variable circumstances to preserve a balance. Experience has shown, however, that where man has increased in large numbers, particularly where the rainfall is limited, the ability of the soil to maintain life can be catastrophically impaired, and the ability and power of man to do this is greater than ever before.

Before I outline the anarchist attitude to agriculture in modern times it is salutary to note:

1. Famine has precipitated the decline of most preceding civilisations.
2. Only two civilisations have succeeded in building soil: the Incas with a communal ownership basis, and Western Europe with a medium freehold basis.
3. The application of Marxists and Communist dogmas to agriculture has failed to produce significant increases, and after over forty five years is still unable to supply the Russian people. China seems intent on making the same mistakes.
4. The application of new methods of commodity farming present new hazards associated with chemical poisoning and food quality.
5. A recent picture of Kenyatta waving an automatic gun symbolises how completely the African and Asian nationalist movements have accepted Western European values, failing to see that real independence and freedom will depend on a country's ability to feed its people adequately.

Today as in many other spheres of human activity agriculture is prevented from performing its function by politics and commerce, and in highly industrialised countries men are out of touch with this vital activity. The anarchists in dealing with agriculture can dispense with the complications of commerce and politics, and get down to the basic issue of being a farmer instead of a business man or politician. "Does it pay?" will cease to plague mankind in the sense demanded by the present financial desert, and will become an ecological question. There is great danger in the present method of producing food as an export commodity with consequential soil depletion, as crop residues cannot be returned to the native soil. It seems necessary for basic agricultural production to be relatively adjacent to the consumer, both on the grounds of soil fertility and food quality, and for the whole community to have some knowledge of the source of life. Today the question of cost is limited by arbitrary ideas of finance, and questions of long term hazards, sterilisation of land and future fertility are not considered, until much damage has been done.

With adequate ecological knowledge the ability of agriculture to increase is enormous. Consideration must be given to the siting of buildings, roads and towns, the conservation of water, the use of sewage, adequate research

into the questions of pest control, chemical fertilisers and how human activities affect the total ecological picture.

Land reclamation could become a pleasurable human activity. Steady reforestation would help to reestablish fertility in areas like India where agricultural production is low.

Anarchism starts with man and his human needs, His first need is food, and this agricultural activity must concern not only the agriculturalist but everybody. Large low-cost production units are not in the interests of man, as every acre of land will count in the future; and small production units produce more per acre.

Anarchism has now a significance and relevance it never had before, calling men to partnership with each other and their environment. Other social and political groups think in terms of power and exploitation. Agriculture will best be served by a partnership of artisans and peasants, in groups small enough to control both their social and biological relationships, so that there is a reality of values; the peasant to conserve what it is necessary to conserve, and the artisan to innovate what it is necessary to innovate.

## ANARCHISM & INDUSTRY

### Bill Christopher/Peter Turner

Because of the failure of the Liberal Party to alleviate the lot of the workers, trade unionists and socialists formed a party of their own, calling it the Labour Party. Once it had won power, many thought that capitalism would be abolished and socialism achieved.

These conclusions have proved to be wrong. The victory of the Labour Party by a huge majority in 1945 did not bring socialism any nearer for it was only interested in running the present capitalist system more efficiently.

The failure of the Labour Party and the method of the ballot box have demonstrated the uselessness of giving power to others. The power that should remain in the hands of the workers has been given to politicians and trade union leaders. While this situation continues, employees

will be told what to do, with no control over the job, or participation in decisions. Scrambling for more wages to catch up with the cost of living will remain. It makes no difference whether they work for a private company or for one of the nationalised industries, the worker's lot remains the same.

Some people claimed that nationalisation would change all this, giving the workers more say on the management side; but what has happened is that many of the old owners now sit on the State management boards, together with some of the Trade Union leaders, all of them probably being paid more now than before nationalisation.

What is the anarcho-syndicalist answer? First of all, in an Anarchist society it will be the men and women working in industry who will conduct and control its branches, but before we go into the outline of this let us look at the structure of trade unions.

The role of the trade unions has always been one of bread and butter issues, wages, hours, pensions, safety, etc.. From their inception they were organised for the protection of workers within capitalist society; their strength was, and is, used to make the "boss" humane.

Trade unions were established on the basis of crafts; later rose the industrial and general unions, i.e.: N.U.R., A.E.U., T. & G.W.U., and N.U.G.M.W. This growth became a battle-ground for membership. When Ford's management applied to the T.U.C. for union organisation at Dagenham 26 unions made application for membership.

Membership growth has become a vested interest not only non-union to union but also union to union; thus came about the Bridlington agreement, "Thou shalt not poach". Trade Union organisation is based on class but its outlook is far from class-conscious. In other words, *sympathetic action* is extremely limited, and all too often the situation arises where one section of workers 'scabs' on another, and to be blunt about it, the bulk of the membership want it that way, with the full support of the leadership. The idea of busmen, railwaymen, and shop assistants on the picket line scares them to death.

Trade unions have become part and parcel of the capitalist system. Their aim is to make it work. They talk in terms of productivity, seats on the board and shares in the company. "Mixed economy" is the new phraseology. They support the state; in fact, cry out for more state control. Workers' control or workers' management in their eyes is unattainable. Someone must always lead and govern; the employers say the workers are incapable of control, and what is more to the point, of course, the employers do not want to lose control; once they lose, society as we understand it today will change completely. On the other

hand, the majority of workers themselves believe they are incapable of control. They fail to realise that every day in some form or another they take control, make their own rules and arrangements.

This is the trade union set-up in 1965 that we as anarcho-syndicalists see. Any employer who does not recognise trade unions must be a nut-case, since the unions maintain discipline, prepare the way for productivity increases, make compromise agreements, and make sure that nothing really attacks the grass roots of the system.

Can trade unions be reformed to fight and change the system? The answer is, no. The communist party tactic of capturing the leadership and control is false because all it means is that a political party will control the union, which in turn means an attempt to substitute a so-called workers' state for the present state.

Anarchism is a way of life found, not in the hazy future, but here and now. It needs a complete revolution not only of society but in the individual worker. To achieve the Anarchist society we must first have anarchists, particularly in industry, amongst the men and women who form the labour force which produces the wealth of the world. It is not enough just to put over the idea of workers' control. Anarchism must be applied to every-day life, in the relationships with work-mates, friends and families.

What steps can be taken now? Active participation is needed in unofficial organisations such as shop stewards' and rank-and-file movements, whose role is often passive and defensive, if these are to gain more support and go on from strength to strength; always recognising the fact, of course, that these movements can become bureaucratic. The only possible safeguard is "right of recall"; there is no 100 per cent protection against bureaucracy.

Organisation can, and should, be kept to a minimum. The all-important word is *liaison*, not only on an industrial basis, but in terms of tenants' committees, anti-nuclear committees, etc.. What is desired is a federation based on rank-and-file control, its ultimate aim being the Social General Strike.

In the present capitalist society, these rank-and-file controlled movements are able to gain certain measures of job control such as "encroaching control" which is "gang-working" as opposed to "individual-working".

Instead of working as individuals, each doing a particular job, a gang could be formed which would undertake the job collectively, being paid as a group, each member receiving an equal share. The whole work process could be undertaken by the gang without management interference, allowing the members to reach their own decisions in their own way. These forms of contract could be set up in many branches

of industry and in this way workers gain not only a measure of control over actual job production, but also solidarity and the mutual benefit of working together. From these basic work-groupings further steps could be taken in the direction of workers' control in industry.

If real solidarity is built up at shop-floor level, the rank-and-file through their shop stewards will be able to gain all sorts of benefits such as better wages and working conditions. While union leaders and their executives negotiate national wage rates and conditions, it is up to those on the job to gain more control over the actual work process. Agitation for higher wages and shorter hours must be linked with more control of the running of the factory, mine, mill, building site or what have you.

No one can, or should, lay down a blueprint for a free society. It must be played by ear. All one can say is that this is one of the roads towards it.

As an individual one must think and live anarchism as far as possible within the limits of present society. To do less negates the struggle.

## ANARCHISM & EDUCATION

Brian Leslie

The essence of anarchism is freedom of choice, limited only by the freedom of others. Applied to education this means freedom for the child to choose what, and how much, education he should receive.

Education is the process of learning and imparting knowledge in all senses. What is generally accepted as education nowadays, learning acquired in schools, the subjects and scope being chosen by the educators, is a very limited part of complete education, and much of it is of little interest or value to the children forced to receive it. For many children the very fact that it is in varying degrees, forced upon them removes any interest the subject might have otherwise.

State education has progressed far, since Victorian times, in the direction of "child-centredness". This is especially true of primary schooling, but there is still only a small element of choice which diminishes almost to vanishing point in most secondary schools.

In the last fifty years there have been many experiments in "progressive education", the most famous being A.S. Neill's Summerhill School at Leiston in Suffolk. While Neill denies that he is an anarchist, his school is run, nevertheless, on essentially anarchist lines, and has been, for several decades, the subject of widespread controversy in educational circles throughout the world.

No firm prediction can be made of the form that education would take in a developed anarchist society. Even in the present conformist society, and within the state-run educational system, there are widespread divergencies of methods and aims. In an anarchist society there would inevitably be far wider divergencies. It is probable that many parents would choose to teach the basic subjects to their own children, alone or more probably in small groups. A great many of the most important aspects of the education of young children are already carried out in their own homes. Social habits, basic abilities such as speaking, dressing, eating are not taught to any extent as "school subjects"; but there are strong arguments in favour of subject-experts being employed to teach specific specialised subjects, experts also in effective methods of teaching them.

This is one of the more serious criticisms of Summerhill. It is a boarding school, catering largely for children from broken homes, since most parents sympathetic to the idea of freedom for children also think that parental love is important, unless the home is an unhappy one. Children at Summerhill have a large measure of freedom of choice, limited only by considerations of physical safety, and by the need to conform with state laws and regulations, in order for the school to remain open. Attendance at lessons is voluntary, and the onus is therefore on the teacher to make his lessons interesting enough to attract attendance, but the teaching methods are in general old-fashioned, not taking account of recent useful research on the problems of gaining interest and making subjects comprehensible to their audience. Little experiment in these problems appears to be undertaken at Summerhill. However it can still be used as a model of what some aspects of an anarchist education at least might resemble and how effective they might be.

The most important thing to remember in trying to assess the success of Summerhill is that its aims are fundamentally different from those of most schools. Academic and formal "school subjects" are taught, but success in them is, to Neill, only of minor importance. His main aim is to produce people, individuals capable of thinking and, more importantly, feeling for themselves, soc-



ially adjusted, not in the sense of being taught to conform to a set of rules and behaviour, but in that they are aware of other people's needs and feelings, and respect them.

According to these aims, though it is impossible to measure success in them, almost all who have had contact with Summerhill, including Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, are agreed that Summerhill has had considerable success, while even measured by academic achievement, if the typical background and inherent ability of the pupils are taken into consideration, its record is impressive.

The aim of this article, however, is not to advocate one particular method of education. It is to examine the aims of education, how far these aims are desirable and whether they can be achieved as well, or better, by the anarchist method of free choice, as by the more usual method of compulsion.

Education has always been of great concern to anarchists, because it is recognised that adult behaviour is in a large measure determined by childhood experiences, and an anarchist society must be based upon a large majority responsible, self-reliant but co-operative adults, unwilling to surrender their own freedom, or to seek power over others.

The possibility of achieving such a community depends on the possibility of producing a majority of such people, and the educational system is fundamental to this aim. Therefore both present trends, and the possibility of extending desirable ones, as well as the forms of education in a developed anarchist society are of great interest.

Libertarian, "child centred" education has been advocated by various writers since the eighteenth century or earlier. Rousseau, Pestalozzi and even Plato in varying degree have advocated "studying the child", seeing how he develops, and seeking to meet his needs, rather than seeking to mould him to a preconceived idea of what he what he should become. This is the aim of the anarchists, given the belief that responsible social behaviour will develop naturally if not suppressed or distorted. Modern psychology tends to support this belief.

Social, not anti-social, behaviour is the norm, from which people deviate for many reasons, but of great importance among these is the violence done to them, and the restrictions placed upon them as children.

Of far greater importance, from the anarchist point of view, is the effect of education on social behaviour, but to convince our critics we must persuade them that a libertarian education can also achieve the specific learning required, if not to run an industrial society such as we now have, at least to ensure that basic and special-

## WAR & PEACE

Albert Meltzer

Anarchism reaffirms a belief in life. The religious philosophies have tended to suppress affirmations in life so that sex is a dirty word in the modern State, but mass murder is considered a commendable field in which the highest praise and honour can be bestowed. Because of its belief in life Anarchism supports those movements which tend to the greater freedom and happiness of the people, and (in common with many intelligent people outside their movement) oppose nuclear warfare.

One of the attractions of power politics is the way in which the politician can assert his power and authority over others. In no way is this more positive than in the Army. Control of the Army has a fascination for the politician, and for this reason, conscription appeals to their vanity even when they are not really convinced of its military utility. Even small countries quite unable to defend their territory, or to wage war, will cling to their conscript armies to the last.

"War is the health of the State". The origin of established authority may be found in war. The economic competition of capitalism leads to war. Wars are the breeding-ground of militarism, an alternative form of imposed authority, parallel to State and Church, and in the officer-structure of the Army a State within (or sometimes above) the State is created. Anarchism is the doctrine of anti-authority, and it is therefore opposed to government, church and army. Anarchists accept the fact that the spread of internationalism is a deterrent to war, but only if power politics can be removed. While there is governmental authority, and one group rules another, wars are inevitable. We do not believe that mere appeals to government leaders will prevent war, nor that the good will of statesman is sufficient guarantee of peace. It is only the abolition of government and the State, and the consequent lack of statesmen that can guarantee peace.

Without the State machinery to back him, a statesman's claim to be "great" or to be a "saviour" become laughable. It is only State power that makes a madman able to rally a nation into fighting for its own slavery. The philosophical question as to whether man is naturally warlike or not has only an abstract meaning for the Anarchist; the *capacity* to make war is only determined by control of the State machinery and economic power.

In opposing capitalist and imperialist war, the Anarchist is not "pro the other side". This is not what is

meant by being "anti-war"; it is one of the ways of being pro-war. Therefore the Anarchists would not cooperate with Fascists in the Second World War when these, in non-fascist countries, masqueraded as anti-war allies (as did the Communist Party in the war's early stages, and as it does today); nor with the capitalist pseudo-democratic powers. It is true that some anarchists have gone over to supporting the latter in the past and it is no part of the anarchist case to say that the mere profession of their ideas prevents anyone from changing in time of stress. But whereas one might, for instance, equate socialism with support for imperialist war if one tried and lied hard enough, the word *anarchist* is a direct challenge to those who use it: either you are *with* authority or you are *against* it, and if you use the term *Anarchist* you must be against it. (Hence those who wish to compromise change their name to the neutral word "Libertarian", which is not so specific in its statement). Those who were against authority in the wars were the deserters, Resistance workers, unofficial strikers, saboteurs, maquis, conscientious objectors, and skyvers and scroungers in the Army, but those who supported authority could by no stretch of the imagination be termed "anarchist". Many opposed authority who did not call themselves by this term, but this Other Line-up stretched across the warring frontiers.

All Anarchists are opposed to violence. On this subject much misunderstanding exists. The free society that Anarchists fight for is one in which oppression cannot exist, and violence (whether of the militarist or even the police variety) must be a form of oppression. Many anarchists, in the English speaking countries in particular, are pacifists also, meaning that they are opposed to using violence at the present time and in the future under any circumstance including self-defence. Others, who do not take this point of view, do not "support violence" but feel that they cannot, as Anarchists, tell the people as a whole either that they must take up arms, or that they must not. To them, Ghandi-ism ("in no circumstances must you fight") is as dictatorial as Marxist-Leninism ("form the Red Army in disciplined opposition to the capitalist forces"). While anti-militarists, therefore, they would in the event of a workers' rising (as happened in Spain against the fascists in 1936) be prepared to fight in the workers' militias. (The pacifist-anarchist would retort that in his view, it was the war itself, and not the compromises that were made in it, that led to the ultimate failure of the Spanish Revolution). The workers' militias - "the people in arms" - is an anti-militarist conception in opposition to the standing army, and when used by the Anarchists (such as Makhno, Zapata, Durruti) it was abund-

antly clear that this was not an attempt to form another army; indeed in each case it was fighting against the national Army.

A minority of Anarchists has always believed in "individual terror" against dictatorship. To this minority considerable publicity was given around the turn of the century (at first favourable since the Press on the whole was anti-Russian and approved attempts at mitigating the Russian Tsarist terror; then, after the alliance with Russia, unfavourable) which still haunts Fleet Street from time to time as a bogey of the more illiterate journalist. The Anarchists who used it did so solely in order to mitigate the terror imposed upon the mass of people by others. It is no longer a feature of Anarchist activity except in totalitarian countries such as China and Spain.