

Anarchist Colonization of Mars

I was on a recent episode of the Anarchy Bang podcast with the topic being Anarchist Colonization of Mars. Here are the pieces that I wrote for the intro and the editorial for this episode.

In 1974 Ursula K. Le Guin published the science fiction novel “The Dispossessed”, which told the story of a movement of anarchists who collectively left an Earth-like planet to go colonize a Mars-like planet, establishing there a new society organized around their anarchist beliefs. In 1992 Kim Stanley Robinson published the science fiction novel “Red Mars”, the first book of his “Mars Trilogy”, which told the story of people colonizing the planet Mars, including a number of explicitly anarchist groups, who then go on to become independent from the various authorities on Earth.

Then last Saturday, September 28th, Elon Musk held a press conference where he introduced the world to the “Starship” vehicle that he intends to use to send humans to Mars to begin the process of colonizing that planet. Musk’s company, SpaceX, has already shown the world that reusable rockets which are capable of going out into space can be made, and that a private company can make them. Prior to this only single-use rockets were made for space travel, and government agencies were seen as the only organizations capable of going out into space.

Taking inspiration from all of this, the question here becomes: How about we build some real-life anarchist colonies on Mars? Our current planet is fucked, in all kinds of different ways, so how about those of us who yearn for a completely different world go set up shop on a completely different world? How about we turn “the Red Planet” into “the Red & Black Planet”? Let’s become Martians! Join in the conversation!

Editorial for Episode 39 - Anarchist Colonization of Mars

For a long time I advocated for a Global Anarchist Social Revolution. I said that everybody in the world can and should change the way that they relate to get rid of all hierarchy and domination, and instead have voluntary cooperation and sharing be the basis for all of social life. This would involve the elimination of all governments, capitalism and patriarchy worldwide, and the dawn of a beautiful new age of freedom and equality for all of humanity. I saw my role in all of that as being to help inspire people to move to unlock this latent potential to make this happen.

Over time, after a series of different heartbreaks and disappointments, I came to hold a belief that a Global Anarchist Social Revolution (or “GASR” for short) was most likely not going to happen and that it would be best to not be putting my time and energy into things assuming that it would. At around the same time as this, other anarchists were coming to these same conclusions, most notably with the widely circulated text called “Desert”. That piece took things a step further by saying that not only would an anarchist revolution not happen, but the sibling project of “saving the Earth” from ecological catastrophe was not going to happen either, and that we should adjust our plans and expectations to accommodate that. My anarchist goals became much more diminished and narrow in scope, shrinking from a global scale down to a more individualist scale, looking at just me and my own little life.

Then in more recent years a new and completely unrelated development has taken place. Elon Musk and his company SpaceX has publicly announced their intention and plans to send humans to the planet Mars, and they have developed some reusable rockets to help make this happen. SpaceX also has the advantage of also being a private company, not a government agency, thereby showing that these kinds of endeavors can take place outside of the purview of a government. If SpaceX can do this, what can other non-governmental agencies accomplish?

An idea then hit me, perhaps a new big grand world-changing mission can be adopted by anarchists to fill the void left by what was previously occupied by the “GASR” (Global Anarchist Social Revolution). Perhaps instead of focusing on changing this world, anarchists can focus on getting off of this world and settling on Mars instead? Both tasks are enormous, involving lots of work, resources, and would most likely take generations to accomplish. But if we are indeed writing off all hope for this planet, as far fetched as it may sound, there may be some hope in the planet Mars instead.

I would like to have a conversation that I have never had before, and that is to talk about the possibility of anarchists colonizing Mars. How can we conceptualize this project in a way that is in some sense realistic and tangible? How can we even begin to break down this massive undertaking in a way that we can make some progress with it? How would we need to re-organize our tiny little anarchist scene or subculture to be able to tackle such a big endeavor? Or perhaps this all is still a project that is ahead of it’s time, and is best left for a future “wave” of anarchism to take up?

I don’t have the answers to any of these questions. Plus, there are a million other questions and variables to consider when considering something like a project on this scale. But I would like to talk about this, and in particular I would like to talk about all of this while using an anarchist lens. So let’s get going.