

how much less, then, can we enthuse about changes which do not even pretend to be revolutionary from the start?

Into this category fall the movements for national liberation which are frankly nationalistic and patriotic and call for opposition against a ruling or occupying power purely on xenophobic grounds. Although revolutionary means may be used in such a struggle, it has no more to do with social revolution as the anarchist sees it than the xenophobia of a Hitler or an Enoch Powell. Pathetic examples of this are to be found in Wales and Scotland. In fact—and here is where the situation seems to get confused—‘movements for national liberation’ in the trouble-spots of the world today tend to give a social-revolutionary veneer to their claims, in order to get support from the Communist states. The classic example of this is Egypt, where a successful anti-colonial struggle established a nationalistic, military regime (much like the Greek colonels!) with the aid of Russian arms and technology. By using devices like nationalisation and land reform, the veneer of socialism was applied—but, in spite of Russian ‘friendship’, the Communist Party is banned and Egyptian Communists are in prison. Meanwhile rabid nationalism is whipped up, patriotism by the imperial pint is kept on the boil, but nothing prospers like the state and the international arms merchants. But your authoritarian left—the Trotskyists and the CP—support the new Egyptian state!

Anarchists do not play this political game. We are not all the time jockeying for position and trying to further one or other of the power blocs that divide the world and its workers. We are truly international and oppose all those forces which divide people. Hence it is quite logical for anarchists to oppose an imperial power **and** the indigenous politicians who lead national resistance. For example, in condemning the Russian military occupation of Czechoslovakia, we did not thereby support the Dubcek Communist state which was in conflict with the Kossygin Communist state, in the sense that we wanted to see Dubcek remain in power. We supported the Czech **people** and their right to choose—even though choosing Dubcek (as the lesser evil!)—because this is a right that all people must have, and also because they were using revolutionary means (if only because there were no others) and so were learning how to do things for themselves. In the event, what opposition there was came from the people and not from Dubcek. Our attitude is the same on Vietnam (against US imperialism, but not **for** the Vietcong); Cuba (against Batista, not **for** Castro); Black Power (the answer to white racism is **not** black racism!); the American Revolution of 1776 (to hell with George III **and** the American state that followed him!); and all Arab, Jewish, Indian, African nationalisms.

The answer to Imperialism is not nationalism and reactionary regimes—it is international social revolution, destroying all national, religious, racial barriers. We have learnt from history!

If this has interested you, Anarchy 100 explains more about Anarchism—is available for 15p (2½p post), from Freedom Press 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1.

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The relevance of Anarchism today

ANARCHISM is a philosophy of freedom. It is a body of revolutionary ideas which reconciles, as no other revolutionary concept does, the necessity for individual freedom with the demands of society. It is a commune-ist philosophy which starts from the individual and works upwards, instead of starting from the state and working downwards. Social structure in an anarchist society would be carefully and consciously kept to a minimum and would be strictly functional; where organisation is necessary, it would be maintained, but there would be no organisation for its own sake. This would help to prevent the hardening of organisations into institutions—the hard core of government.

The heart of anarchism is its opposition to government. Not just a particular government, but government as an institution. This is explicitly expressed in the word ‘anarchism’, meaning the philosophy or ideology which aims at ‘anarchy’: the absence of government. This aim is shared by other ideologies—socialist and communist—who see the ‘withering away of the state’ as a desirable goal, but conceive the way towards that goal as lying through the use of the very institutions they want to abolish. Anarchists maintain that the use of these repressive institutions in the name of the revolution, or of progress, or of freedom, corrupts the revolution, inhibits progress and crushes freedom.

For anarchists, the end determines the means. If your end is a society without government, then you do not do anything to support the idea or fact of government or to encourage the idea that government can in any way be desirable. If your aim is the abolition of the state—which is the concentration of the institutions of government—then you do nothing to encourage the life of the state by pretending it can be used for liberation. All the means by which people are governed are anathema to anarchism.

This adds up to a coherent and logical ideology and within itself anarchism is a perfect set of ideas. In its application to the existing ‘real’ world, however, it is being applied to very imperfect situations. And furthermore, anarchists themselves differ in their interpretations of anarchism, both in relation to current events and in the emphasis they put upon the various aspects of the overall philosophy.

This can lead to apparent contradictions. Anarcho-syndicalists who advocate the abolition of the wages system support workers on strike for higher wages; individualists who are opposed to the state see no reason

why they should not avail themselves of the social services when they are unemployed; anti-parliamentarians support the abolition of a law (hanging, abortion, homosexuality) which can only be done through parliament; anti-imperialists condemn 'national liberation' movements which are fighting an imperialist oppressor; anti-war militants who have gone to prison rather than take up arms support a violent revolution . . . and so on.

This is not quite as absurd as it may appear, since the only alternative to compromise at some level or another is suicide. If we want to live at all, we have to live in the world as it is—but as anarchists we are going to do our damndest to make it as we would like it to be. We know how beautiful life could be, but we have to start from the ugly reality. If our beautiful black brothers will forgive our analogy, we can put it like this: if the present is black reaction, and we want to reach the blinding white light of freedom, then we have to move through varying shades of grey.

Now each anarchist will make his own moves and if we respect each other we will respect our comrade's own scale of priorities. Thus, for example, the anarcho-syndicalist will be concerned primarily with achieving workers' control of industry, and this necessitates building up workers' confidence in their own powers. Every victory in even a minor struggle encourages this confidence; every defeat diminishes it. So the anarchist in an industrial context will throw in his effort to help win a dispute which perhaps in itself is irrelevant as far as a money-less society is concerned, but which will teach the workers more about tactics, about the value of direct action, about their importance in society, the strength they gain through solidarity, the creativity of their work, their dignity as human beings—perhaps a hundred lessons.

For we should not forget that there are two aspects of anarchism: the end and the means. We have implied the end: anarchy, the society without government or any of the means of government, without money and the wages system and the exploitation they bring; without the state which defends that exploitation through the law, the police, the prisons, the constitutional murder of the gallows or the gas chamber, all backed up by the army, navy and air force; the inculcation which passes for education, the subtle pressures of the bureaucracy and the church. Anarchy means the replacement of these anti-social forces by free association and mutual aid, by free access to the means of life, by the joy of making and sharing and living. A delightful ideal!

Anarchism also means the struggle to achieve all this. A bitter struggle against ruthless forces which will apparently stop at nothing to maintain the power set-up as it is. The great advantage anarchism has is that it is not side-tracked into diversions like the parliamentary struggle, like 'workers' government' or the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', trying to achieve power in order to abolish it or the historical process or any other mythology. Anarchism teaches the governed to use their strength where it matters—at the point of production; and to use it in the way it matters—by direct action. More can be done to house the homeless by half a dozen squatters than by a thousand well-meaning local councillors.

The means of freedom for the end of freedom: that is the relevance and the strength of anarchism. How it can be applied from situation to situation will vary. There will even be situations where it cannot be applied. But it represents the only way to achieve what we want to achieve: freedom.

Anarchism & Nationalism

SUPERFICIALLY, ANARCHISM is a movement of the Left, but this is not strictly so, since it implies being part of the political spectrum. Anarchists reject this, asserting that there is more in common between Right and Left political parties (like the struggle for power) than between even extreme Left political groups and the Anarchists. History has shown us that no matter how 'Left' a party is when it starts off, the achievement of power brings it round to the Right, for every government wants to maintain the status quo; wants to extend the control it has over the people, and isn't this what the Right really means?

Certain Right-wing attitudes are specifically rejected by Left-wing parties—until they become useful in the power game. 'Divide and Rule', for example, can be played with many variations, from wage differentials to religious and colour prejudice, and although nationalism is intellectually rejected by the political Left, they quite shamelessly use what are quaintly called 'National Liberation Movements' when it suits their political ambitions—and a 'Left' party in power knows very well the usefulness of nationalism and indeed patriotism as a weapon of government. Even if this were not deliberate cunning on the part of a so-called 'revolutionary government', the logic of authoritarianism leads to it.

Even allowing for soviets or workers' councils, the actual operation of state power cannot be carried out by the entire population. This demands the workers' own revolutionary party sitting at the top doing the actual governing, like suppressing all opposition in the name of the revolution and ensuring internal security by the perpetual policing of the population in its own interests to effect the immediate spotting of any deviationary elements. At the same time as this defence of the revolution is strenuously maintained, the population also has to be kept safe from external aggression, so an efficient army, navy and air force is kept at the ready, and since a workers' state is the most democratic state, a form of conscription becomes desirable to ensure that everyone does his bit.

This is really no sacrifice since the state belongs to everyone and everyone belongs to the state, but to keep the people enthusiastic for service to the state, a Leader comes forward to give every citizen someone to identify with on a personal level. In order to provide the cozy feeling of collective security, of belonging to the corporate body around him, the idea of the nation is encouraged and patriotism becomes a virtue once again—if, indeed, it ever fell out of favour.

Thus the service of the revolution achieved through authoritarian means brings the wheel full circle. The ideologies and justifications for lack of freedom—indeed for ruthless totalitarian control of the entire country—will differ from those of the old regime, but in fact the institutions and the realities of life are exactly the same, if not worse.

For this reason anarchists do not enthuse about revolutions which are mounted in order to bring to power another set of governors. Our interpretation above has been of a so-called revolutionary change in society;