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THE ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION



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ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

We Anarchist Communists have a vision of a revolutionary organisation in bold contrast to that of the Leninists and other authoritarians. At the same time our concept of revolutionary organisation is in political and organisational disagreement with the idea of informal groupings as advocated by some Anarchists.

What truly distinguishes the Anarchist Communist organisation is its structure, its relationship with the working class, and a theoretical elaboration of that relationship coupled with a precise understanding of class spontaneity. It becomes increasingly important to attempt this clarification. The crisis of market Capitalism in the west and state capitalism in Eastern Europe, China and Cuba on every level, (economic, social, cultural and sexual), is reflected in the crisis of the organisations of the revolutionary left. These organisations duplicate ruling class values in their authoritarianism, their high degree of centralism, their worship of hierarchy and the sheep-like submission of the rank and file to the omnipotent and all-wise leaderships.

As the crisis in capitalism deepens, the related crisis in the left parties becomes more extreme, with split after split, opportunism and collaboration with the social-democratic agents of the bosses and the Labour Party. Militant seeks to show its respectability, denouncing anarchists to the police, while the once influential Workers Revolutionary Party has shattered into over a dozen fragments. For them, financial corruption, spying for Middle Eastern regimes, endorsement of murders of foreign fraternal comrades by the same regimes, the horrific systematic sexual abuse and rape of young women by top dog Healy, were the order of the day.

It is vital that a strong libertarian movement in all areas of social life is created so that working people can defend themselves against the capitalist onslaught and create a free self organised society. To assist in the building of such a mass movement, a libertarian revolutionary organisation is necessary: an organisation that fights for the co-ordination of all anti-capitalist struggles. Such an organisation must have a structure that ensures permanent political debate and must be controlled by the whole membership. The anarchist revolutionary organisation must expose the authoritarianism and elitism of the Leninist, Marxist and Social-Democratic groups.

CLASS SPONTANEITY

"The emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves."

Declaration of the First International.

"The working class by itself can only attain trade union consciousness."

Lenin, What Is To Be Done.

A vast abyss of theory and practice lies between these two statements. We reject the Leninist concept which springs from the managerial strata and the intelligentsia, which seek to dragoon the workers into a new form of oppression: the workers' state.

The concept of working class spontaneity has been distorted and misunderstood for so long. We do not take the "unhistorical" attitude that some anarchists defend: that the working class springs into revolutionary activity with no links with previous struggles and no previous agitation by revolutionary minorities. On the contrary, the work of revolutionaries over many years in taking part in clarifying and co-ordinating struggles in the working class greatly helps the revolutionary process.

What we mean by working class spontaneity is the ability of that class to take direct action on its own behalf and to develop new forms of struggle and organisation. This can be seen in every great revolutionary upsurge where working people have thrown up committees and councils independent of "vanguards". In this country both the flying pickets and the mass pickets have been developed as weapons of struggle. More recently, 'pit commandos' emerged during the 1984-85 Miners Strike. All of this has been done independent of the Revolutionary Party (whichever one that happens to be). The activities of the working class have taken place regardless of and sometimes against the pontifications of the revolutionary elite.

"Let us put it quite bluntly: the errors committed by a truly revolutionary workers movement are historically far more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of even the best central committees."

Rosa Luxembourg, Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy.

The experiences of working class life constantly lead to the development of ideas and actions which question the established order. On the other hand, the ruling class seeks to reinforce and perpetuate the fragmentation of working class solidarity through its control of the media and education and through the perpetuation of racism and sexism. At the same time, different sections of the working class reach different degrees of consciousness. The working class is neither an amorphous mass nor, at the moment, a solid and united class, conscious of itself and its power.

The anarchist revolutionary organisation understands this. It also realises that only possible working class revolution is one where working people use mass action to smash the state apparatus of the ruling class and that class itself. Any other revolution cannot, by its nature, be working class and only leads to the formation of a new ruling class. Understanding these facts, the anarchist organisation recognises that it has several tasks to perform.

IDENTIFICATION

The anarchist organisation must always see itself as part of the working class. In order to strengthen this identification it must develop and extend its influence in the class. At the same time, the anarchist organisation must recognise itself as being in ideological advance of the class as a whole. Ideological advance should not be confused with practical advance because, as we have said, workers everywhere learn new forms of struggle and organisation that can benefit other workers. The anarchist revolutionary organisation must always be ready to learn from the class and should be expected to constantly revise its tactics with the unfolding situation. It should always realise it is not infallible and does not have all the answers all the time. It is transformed as the working class is transformed in the revolutionary process.

Because it is part of the class and at the same time a distinctive tendency within it, the revolutionary organisation faces a contradiction in its relationship to other working people. Of course, if it not part of the class then, like other groups, it tends towards elitism, vanguardism and divorce from class reality. Theory and practice must be rooted in concrete conditions. There are dangers in these contradictions and the revolutionary anarchist organisation must be aware of this and derive a practice from this awareness. This contradiction cannot be completely removed until the triumph of libertarian communist society.

TASKS OF THE ORGANISATION

In understanding that the revolution must be made by the self activity of the working class, and recognising the above contradiction, the anarchist revolutionary organisation has a number of tasks to perform. It must act as a propaganda grouping, ceaselessly and untiringly putting over the message that the working class must destroy capitalism and establish a libertarian communist society. It must also show how this can be done by giving ideas of libertarian organisation and examples of self activity by working class people. It must search out and recall the history of past struggles, their successes and mistakes, and impart the lessons to be learned to the rest of the class. Working class history is deliberately obscured and excluded from the books by the ruling class. The revolutionary organisation has to help in the task

of rediscovering these struggles in its efforts to help the development of class consciousness.

Whenever important developments occur within the class, the revolutionary organisation must spread the news through its links with organisations in other countries. The revolutionary organisation is internationalist and seeks links with other groupings in order to increase class effectiveness.

However the organisation cannot see itself solely as a propaganda group. Above all it is an assembly of activists. It must actively work in all the grassroots organisations of the working class such as rank and file groups, tenants associations, squatters and unemployed groups as well as women's, black and gay groups. It seeks to make links between unionised and non-unionised workers in a struggle for a movement at the base. The organisation seeks to work inside the women's groups and sexual politics groups to help radicalise them and to argue for a break with liberal reformism and Leninism. It aims to help in the recognition of the essential interconnection of sexual and class oppression. At the same time it respects the independence and autonomy of the working class women's, black and gay movements. It does not try to make these movements an appendage of the revolutionary organisation just as it respects the autonomy and self-organisation of the rank and file workers movement that may develop. Obviously this does not mean that it does not seek to spread its ideas in these movements.

The organisation works for the fullest mass participation inside all these groups and inside the class as a whole, for self activity and for self organisation by working people of every struggle and every facet of life. Only by building such organisations in the course of struggle can the working class hope to achieve liberation. The revolutionary organisation itself must have mass participation and decision making. It must also be organised as a federalist structure as only federalism can hinder bureaucratic degeneration and encourage the active participation of all members in the organisation.

The anarchist organisation realises that the social revolution cannot be won without a struggle at the point of production and a seizure of the means of production. However, it does not relegate the struggles in other areas of life (unemployed, sexual, anti-racist, environmental and cultural) to a secondary role. All these struggles are implicitly anti-capitalist and all these issues are closely intertwined. The questioning of one facet of capitalism can lead to a total rejection of the system. The militants of the revolutionary organisation who are involved in these groups must seek to pinpoint in what ways the class system causes and/or perpetuates the problems different sections of society are confronting.

It is vitally important that a 'libertarian front' of all these movements and groups is built. Thus, revolutionary work consists in part of linking each area of struggle, bringing out all the latent anti-capitalist and libertarian tendencies to be found there. Revolutionary anarchist militants seek a regroupment of all those who have 'globalised' their struggle, having developed from fighting on one front of capitalism to a total critique. This radical regroupment has to be striven for by the revolutionary anarchist organisation and reflected in all its activities and publications. It must act as a driving force of such a grouping, constantly drawing in radicalised elements and helping to build a mass movement.

When we say 'driving force' we don't mean the Leninist approach of seeking to dominate such a movement by capturing positions and so forth. We seek to minimise the organisational contradiction and look for a close relationship with the mass movement. We don't want to take over such a movement. What counts is not the numerical increase of the organisation but the development of the whole working class movement. We see the revolutionary organisation as a means of communication and a weapon to be used by the working class.

THE LEADERSHIP OF IDEAS

In opposition to the Leninist ideas of leadership, the anarchist organisation fights for the 'leadership of ideas' within the class through example and suggestion. In a non-revolutionary period the potential revolutionary masses by and large hold conservative ideas and values. In this period there needs to be an organisation that holds on to revolutionary ideas. In this sense we recognise a 'leadership of ideas'. However, at the outbreak of revolutions, organisations invariably are taken by surprise by the audacity and imagination of the revolutionary masses. At this stage a revolutionary organisation could act as a brake on progress. Again however, as the revolution progresses, counterrevolutionary forces generate statist and civil war options. The revolutionary organisation now has a role to defend the advanced ideas of the masses in their initial revolutionary stage.

This leadership of ideas entails a clearer understanding of hierarchical society, the concept of self organised society and of Leninism. In the struggle against Leninism and all forms of elitism comes the realisation that the struggle of ideas must be waged at grass roots level. This realisation is reflected in revolutionary anarchist theory and practice e.g. the call for mandation of delegates, for mass decision making and for mass action.

A libertarian communist organisation will obviously not be the only organised tendency within the working class. Unlike Leninist organisations, it does not see itself as the Party but as one of several organisations which will participate in the

mass movement alongside those without affiliation. There may also be autonomous organisations of women or black people that will be represented in the movement and in the councils and other revolutionary bodies that may develop. However, these should be working class organisations as cross class movements hide class differences and imply that the working class have shared interests with the ruling class. Full emancipation cannot come about without the destruction of capitalism.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

All sections of the working class who recognise the need to overthrow capitalism and who want to create an anarchist communist society will be united inside the organisation. Elements of other classes and strata who see the need for the victory of the working class will also be gathered inside the organisation. Blue collar and white collar workers, elements of the working intelligentsia and scientific strata will work together in the realisation of the revolution. The intellectual has a role to play in helping to clarify positions inside the organisation, but he/she should never have a privileged position inside it. In fact the practicality of working class people very often outstrips the intellectual in theory and in practice. Workers must be the vast majority inside a revolutionary organisation.

The revolutionary organisation will fight in the newly created workplace and neighbourhood structures on an ideological level against authoritarian groups. It will work within the working class to ensure that these structures function with the full participation of all on an equal basis and to fight against any party or organisation that aims to take power in the name of the working class. If the Leninists try to use force to destroy the gains of the working class then the anarchist organisation must be fully prepared to combat them on a physical level and to help other working class people to prepare for this eventuality. It follows on from this that in the revolutionary period the anarchist organisation must call for and assist in the arming of all working people for defence against their enemies and for the formation of workers militias under the control of the mass organisations.

The anarchist organisation does not dissolve itself immediately after the initial insurrectionary phase of the revolution. It must continue to grow in order to struggle until anarchist communism is fully achieved. As this ideal is realised, the organisation becomes looser and eventually disappears completely.

The anarchist organisation should see itself in the revolutionary period as a tendency in the revolutionary movement. It should be prepared to exist with other tendencies as only constant debate in the class can ensure that correct decisions are made.

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

1. The Anarchist - Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.
2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, age, health and ability, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.
3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist - Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.
4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.
5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.
6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this will be a time of violence as well as liberation.
7. Unions by their very nature cannot be the vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by Capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the

- working class (between employed and unemployed trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc.). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the work force. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.
8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self activity.
 9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

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