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MARXISM

AND ITS FAILURES



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Anarchist Communist Editions

No 5

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

is going through its most profound crisis ever. The repercussions of its collapse in Eastern Europe has thrown other non-ruling communist parties into a state of utter confusion. The degeneration of the Western European parties from Stalinism into social democracy is well advanced. The Party is over!

Trotskyists and near Trotskyists like the Socialist Workers Party will try to distance themselves from the collapse. They will try to find an enemy whilst carrying on authoritarian practices derived from Lenin within their own ranks. They will talk glowingly of Trotsky's "left turn" and "letting" his excesses go. They will idolize Lenin, to the point of saying that all that Lenin was the person who deprived the Russian Working class of its autonomy, who instituted one-man management (sic) and piecework systems.

And they continue to worship at Marx's tomb in Highgate cemetery. Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, they all contributed in their own way to the creation of the Soviet Union, that totalitarian state which discredited the revolutionary left for so long. But they do not deserve all the blame, for they were trying to put into practice the programme originally drawn up by Marx and Engels in the Manifesto of the Communist Party of 1848. It is within Marx that the counter-revolutionary core of "scientific socialism" is located. For was it not Marx who called for a central bank and state monopoly in the Manifesto? Marx and Engels called for the "centralization of credit in the hands of the state and the establishment of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly". They advocated "centralization of the means of communication and transport" and the "extension of the factories and instruments of production owned by the state".

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♣ ACE Editions
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First published as ACE No 5 August 1990

ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

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PREFACE

Marxism, and particularly its Leninist variant is going through its most profound crisis ever. The repercussions of its collapse in Eastern Europe has thrown other non - ruling communist parties into a state of utter confusion. The degeneration of the Western European parties from Stalinism into social democracy is well advanced. The Party is over !

Trotskyists and near Trotskyists like the Socialist Workers Party will try to distance themselves from the process of Marxism's collapse. They will continue to treat Stalinism as an enemy whilst carrying on authoritarian practices derived from Lenin within their own ranks. They will talk glowingly of Trotsky, conveniently "forgetting" his excesses whilst in power. They still idolize Lenin, talk of power etc. knowing full well that Lenin was the person who deprived the Russian Working class of its autonomy, who instituted one - man management (sic) and piecework systems.

And they continue to worship at Marx's tomb in Highgate cemetery. Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, they all contributed in their own way to the creation of the Soviet Union, that totalitarian state which discredited the revolutionary left for so long. But they do not deserve all the blame, for they were trying to put into practice the programme originally drawn up by Marx and Engels in the Manifesto of the Communist Party of 1848. It is within Marx that the counter revolutionary core of "scientific socialism" is located. For was it not Marx who urged the centralization of power and state monopoly in the Manifesto? Marx and Engels called for the "centralization of credit in the hands of the state and by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly". They advocated "centralization of the means of communication and transport" and the "extension of the factories and instruments of production owned by the state.... in accordance with a common plan". On the labour front they argued for "the establishment industrial armies, especially for agriculture".

All of these aspects came to pass in the Soviet Union, with the disastrous consequences of which we are all aware. The experiment is over. The time has come to look for other ways to realise the emancipation of humanity and fortunately for anarchists the prospect for a libertarian solution is once more on the agenda. There are great opportunities to advance the ideas of libertarian or anarchist communism. We should seize them.

This pamphlet was originally compiled by Sussex University Anarchist Collective from articles in Virus and one from Black Sheep. Virus was the discussion magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation and has since been renamed Organise! Black Sheep is no longer published.

The aim of the pamphlet is to provide an introductory libertarian analysis of the flaws of Marxist theory, the disastrous consequences of its practice and the failures of the organisations of its adherents. The conclusions should be food for thought for socialists of all shades of opinion.

BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

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"Liberty without socialism is exploitation,
socialism without liberty is tyranny"

M. Bakunin (19th century anarchist)

BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

Marxism has always prided itself on being a materialist philosophy. The role of ideas in determining the nature of history and society has always played a secondary role. An often repeated aspect of Marxist thought is that it is not individuals who shape society but primarily social and economic forces. According to Marx in his "Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy", the economic base determines the superstructure, and not vice versa. In other words the mode of production (feudalism, capitalism etc) determines the content and nature of its laws, religions, forms of consciousness, governments etc. This formulation has always presented difficulties for Marxism. Quite simply it cannot be squared with reality. Nowadays only vulgar Marxists are said to hold such a viewpoint; of course, say more sophisticated Marxists, other factors beyond the economic ones are important. As Engels points out in his letter to Bloch (Sept 21, 1890), economic forces are only the "ultimate" determining factors. Other elements, argues Engels, can be very important and may even supersede the economic ones. Now, if it is accepted that other, non-economic, forces can take precedence, the purity of Marxism as materialism is undermined.

To argue that economic factors are only the 'ultimately' determining factors is of course a cop out. Either economic forces are the determining factors or they are not. How can it be that if human intervention (based on ideas, religion etc) can change the course of social development, economic factors are of such over-riding importance? Engels, like all Marxists, wants it both ways - he tries to allow for human intervention on the one hand, yet insists on the primacy of economic factors on the other. His arguments on the possibilities of human intervention retaining their validity in his letter to Bloch is flatly contradicted in another to Starkenburg (1894). In this letter, economic factors once again become dominant. "Had Napoleon not been dictator of France", wrote Engels, "somebody else would". "Great men", argued Engels, "are always found as soon as they become necessary: Caesar, Augustus, Cromwell etc.. Are we to assume then that the individual views, personalities, attitudes etc of these great men are of little importance? Would substitutes for Hitler, Stalin, Margaret Thatcher etc have acted in broadly the same way out of economic necessity? Such a standpoint does not bear examination. Individuals do make decisions which can alter social and political development.

THE LAWS OF HISTORY

Does the economic base on perhaps a looser level determine the superstructure? Insofar as certain social and political forms can only occur within a given economic framework, this must be true. Totalitarianism, which is a purely twentieth century phenomenon, could not have happened in the Middle Ages for example, since it requires a much higher level of technology than was available at that time. There is only a correlation between base and superstructure in the sense that a given level of technology can only allow a limited number of social and political superstructures. Capitalism has so far managed to support very different political types, including fascism, liberal democracy, military dictatorship and social democracy. To be sure, some marxists cannot perceive great differences between fascism and social democracy (Stalin at one stage described them as twins; social democracy became social fascism) but to the rational observer they are extremely different political forms.

The correlation between base and superstructure does not even hold true for technologically primitive societies, with their small scale and relatively simple cultures (ie in relation to 'advanced' class divided societies). One might have expected that 'tribal' societies with similar economic bases would have similar superstructures. But this is simply not so. There are, for example, widely different political and social forms among the economically very simple horticultural societies of Africa. What was a virtually universal application of stone age technology in pre-Columbian America gave rise to glaringly different social, political and ideological structures. On the basis of maize cultivation and stone tools, we have at one end of the scale fairly egalitarian tribal societies of the USA. At the other, we have the highly socially differentiated Mayan and Aztec civilisations who pushed the possibilities of their technology to the limit.

Despite being a 'stone age' society, the Mayan Indians achieved much in the realms of art, mathematics, astronomy and urbanism. Other cultures with the same means hardly moved beyond village horticulture. Much of the former's success must have been due to superstructural factors.

THE LAWS OF HISTORY

Marx's greatest claim was to have found the key to the working of capitalism - exploitation, accumulation of capital, conflict between the means of production and their relations etc. He nevertheless took an historical viewpoint, capitalism is just the latest (albeit the most powerful) in a whole series of exploitative societies. The history of all previous societies, he once declared, is the history of class struggle. One form of economic society (the mode of production) superseded another once the contradictions between exploiter and exploited became acute enough to lead to a revolution. The prime exploited class in capitalist society, Marx argued, is the proletariat, which when conditions are right will sweep away capitalism and create a classless society. Thus, as well as providing a model for understanding the past and present, the marxist ideology was claimed to be able to indicate the course of future development.

During the graveyard speech for Karl Marx, Engels claimed that the master had done for capitalism what Darwin had done for nature, namely that he had discovered the laws of its development. The idea of a scientific revolutionary doctrine revealing social laws akin to the discovery of natural laws is very much a nineteenth century approach which Engels adopted and helped to place at the forefront of subsequent marxist thought. Unfortunately the marxists have been much less successful than natural scientists in their application of 'laws' to society. Biologists and chemists can often demonstrate with certainty that given certain conditions definite predictions can be made (eg that a plant starved of nitrogen will achieve only stunted growth). Once the number of variables increases however (as, say, in meteorology), the degree of predictability diminishes.

For similar reasons the usefulness of marxism, whatever the claims of its proponents, is limited. As a means of understanding the distant past the marxist economic deterministic model has often proved to be among the most satisfactory. Archaeologists, for example, often have only physical remains - buildings, tools, irrigation canals, pottery etc - from which to reconstruct pre-literate societies. From such 'economic' remains reasonable explanations of past societies can be offered which, by the nature of the evidence, cannot be easily disproved. What often does not survive from pre-literate societies are people's thoughts, ideas, beliefs etc.



As such material becomes available when we research more recent literature (historical) societies, economic deterministic models must compete with philosophies of history of a more idealistic bent. Nevertheless marxists have achieved some remarkable successes in the field of economic and social history and British marxist historians have perhaps led the field. The problem remains, however, that given a pre-determined theory of history, marxist historians will tend to select evidence which backs up that theory, whilst rejecting more uncomfortable information. This type of history is most commonly associated with the USSR, especially in the Stalin period. In the hands of politicians history is used to justify present day actions. Thus events in the past are seen as historically inevitable and therefore historically necessary. From this it is a simple leap to justify any action on the basis of historical necessity - witness present day Stalinist justification of the 1930s purges.

If the past and the present are believed to conform with some theory of historical inevitability, then surely so must the future. The temptation to offer predictions has proved irresistible to all marxists since the master set the trend. The problem has been that most of the predictions have been proved wrong. Like early Christians awaiting the second coming of Christ, the proletarian revolution in the West has had to be pushed further and further into the future. The forces behind social change are simply too complex to be predictable on the basis of a theory, no matter how sophisticated. The marxist 'scientific' tools are not precise enough to cope with the enormous interplay of forces and events which mould the movement of history. Accordingly, Marx was proved wrong regarding the 'increased immiseration' of the proletariat despite subsequent wriggling by his disciples to reinterpret what he meant. Imperialism, the greatest economic development of the twentieth century was completely unforeseen by Marx. Western marxism is in a state of profound crisis as so many of Marx's predictions which were supposed to have happened have failed to materialise. European marxists can no longer sit back and wait for the inevitable revolution as did their forefathers in the early German SPD. Their inevitable revolution is a long time coming.

Bolshevik predictive abilities were little better. Lenin, like all marxists, was taken totally by surprise by the spontaneous February revolution of 1917 and hurriedly scurried back from abroad (he was in Switzerland and Trotsky was even further away in New York!). After they had seized power they confidently expected victorious revolutions to break out in the West. As we know, that prediction proved to be wildly over ambitious. Trotsky was perhaps the most arrogant of the Russian marxists. Even after he lost the battle with (in his opinion) the inferior Stalin, he never lost faith in the superiority of his marxism. Accordingly he made many 'scientific' predictions, nearly all of which turned out to be wrong. For example he thought that his Fourth International would win the support of the seething revolutionary masses at the expense of the Comintern. Of course he was wrong. He predicted the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy and was wrong, and, the biggest howler of them all, he confidently forecast the outbreak of revolution in Europe after the end of the Second World War.

So all in all, the marxist method has proved to be singularly unsuccessful in the realm of futurology. This has not undermined their faith, however, for blinded with the often impenetrable density of much marxist writing (for example see any structuralist marxist text) they cannot see the wood of reality for the trees of theory. Other less academically minded marxists simply push any doubts to the backs of their minds. They would do better to abandon marxist metaphysics in favour of a genuinely liberative revolutionary approach unfettered by a constantly disproven ideology.

Democratic Centralism

A PARTY FOR BUREAUCRATS

A persistent weakness of marxism which has had disastrous consequences has been its failure to comprehend the subjective and organisational forces which can undermine a revolutionary state apparatus and government. For Stalinists the problem is of relatively minor significance. Despite shortages and shoddy goods the Soviet-style system is basically sound and political oppositionists can always be labelled 'Trotsky-Fascist' or less sinisterly 'anti-party'. Trotskyists and their offspring, while accepting that the USSR is a monstrous perversion of virtually every principle of socialism, nevertheless argue away the problem with a convenient string of excuses - the backwardness of the young Soviet state, capitalist encirclement, civil war etc. They conveniently ignore the dictatorial arrogance of Trotsky and the bureaucratic manoeuvring of Lenin. It is the purpose of this article to indicate some of the factors which lead to political degeneration within 'marxist' organisations.

Some of the anti-democratic, authoritarian and bureaucratic tendencies within marxism are amply expressed in the organisations of the revolutionary movement today. As anarchists have argued for decades, 'revolutionary parties' tend to reproduce certain tendencies inherent in themselves upon seizing state power. Authoritarian, hierarchical parties based upon discipline and intolerance will bring about (despite a genuine desire to the contrary) authoritarian and intolerant societies. Political parties may well be the creation of human beings but these organisations in turn affect the consciousness and therefore the actions of these human beings. Organisations often take on a life of their own - people become trapped within them, acting out predetermined roles. Formal organisations of the working class (as demonstrated perhaps a little too intensely by Michels) are extremely prone to oligarchic structures and acting in ways which are actually contrary to their avowed aims.

Leninist parties, which by definition must be democratic-centralist, almost inevitably and imperceptibly move away from 'democracy' towards centralism. It does not require very penetrating analysis to observe that, for example, the Socialist Workers Party (neo-Trotskyist) and the Communist Party (neo-Stalinist) negate any genuine intra-party democracy. The forms of democracy as represented in constitutions and formal party structures are devoid of real content. Simply stated, democratic centralism requires that the lower party bodies (cells, branches etc) should be subordinate to the higher bodies (eg the central committee). The supreme body of the party is the annual (usually) conference at which non-mandated delegates from the branches decide on policy which is binding on the whole party. In between conferences it is the job of the full time (often elected but not always) officers to lead the party and carry out policy. Within this collection of party organs the potential for subverting democracy is considerable.

HIERARCHY

The first problem is the issue of hierarchy. Why should 'higher' party organs interpret party policy any more accurately than 'lower' ones? The pat answer is that the 'higher' bodies comprise the most capable and experienced members and are (from their lofty heights) in a better position to take an overall view on a given issue. In fact what may well happen is that, for example, central committee members may be more isolated from the outside world than mere branch members. This might ordinarily be the case given the fact that many central committee members are full timers and therefore detached from more real issues such as making a living in a factory. Furthermore, given that party leaders are concentrated into higher bodies, there is often a tendency to view the membership within the lower bodies as troops on the ground to be directed when and how the leadership requires. 'Higher' bodies are necessarily smaller in membership than lower ones and thus the potential for manipulation is greatly increased. Added to this, once the rank and file membership accept the general superiority of the leadership and their 'sacrifices' they are much more likely to accept their dictates. An amazing feature of revolutionary militants who constantly challenge authority in the outside world is their often unthinking acceptance of the whims of the party leadership, however absurd these may seem to other people (and perhaps to themselves, on reflection later).

FULL TIMERS

The second aspect of democratic centralist parties which tends to subvert democracy is their reliance on the energies of full time organisers. Often, quite tiny organisations of a few thousand members can employ thirty or forty full time officials. Whilst we should not necessarily denigrate the motives and sincerity of these people (as many work very hard, are badly paid and have to bear heavy responsibilities) nevertheless it is these very factors that seem to bring about high handed and authoritarian attitudes. 'They' are making the financial sacrifices etc, 'they' therefore are extremely keen to ensure that 'their' party (for which they have devoted so much) should not be sidetracked by 'Johnny-come-lately's or subverted by mere rank and file members who, after all, are only part time revolutionaries. Also of course full time officials are right at the centre of things and unlike rank and file members (who are often kept uninformed about party developments, internal dissent, difficulties etc) are usually fully informed about all matters concerning their organisation.

At 'lower' levels, branch meetings are often prevented from assessing developments in between conferences as 'horizontal' party groupings (factions) are normally prohibited. Additionally we should ask what the subconscious motives are which induce people to become leaders. The ponds may well be small but some people still have an irresistible urge to become 'big fish'. The goal clearly is not pecuniary advantage but respect and adulation from the membership. Intoxication with authority and self-righteousness (which usually result in abuses of such positions) certainly leads many people to seek leadership positions.

CONFERENCE

Regarding the supreme body of the party, the annual conference, an obvious weakness is that they only meet at very widely spaced intervals. Clearly not all, if any, future developments can be accurately predicted therefore remaining generally outside of the conference jurisdiction. It becomes the responsibility of the full time officials to interpret, undertake and develop the organisation's policies etc.

The delegates who represent the lower organs of the party are often chosen in such a way that the existing leadership is assured of its continuity in/via elections. Also, since delegates are not mandated by their branches, there is no compunction to represent the grass roots opinion. This gives entrenched leaders (who inevitably obtain a disproportionate amount of 'air time') the opportunity to build up support.

Party conferences are, as far as it is consistent with the appearance of free debate, inevitably rigged. The existing leadership normally occupies the platform separate from the rest of the delegates, giving themselves an air of authority. To ensure that it is the leadership which guides the electoral process, a recommended list of candidates is presented to the conference by the outgoing central committee. Unsurprisingly the central committee slate contains most of the names of the existing leadership. Given the existence of the central committee as a permanent faction both before and during the conference, it is not surprising that its list of candidates succeeds in obtaining support without too much amendment. The ordinary membership is in contrast in a very weak position to effectively challenge the existing leadership.

Another feature of conference is the amount of behind the scenes manoeuvring and politicking which goes on. Entrusted party members (in the Communist Party, for instance) bully, cajole and plead with movers of resolutions to have them composited into pro or anti leadership positions whilst others are not prioritised for debate and therefore disappear. Finally conferences are an effective instrument for identifying, isolating and ultimately expelling dissident members or branches.

PARTY PRESS

The leadership, as we have seen, is well placed to maintain more or less total control over the ordinary membership. It is assisted in this by controlling the party press. New ideas, policies and orientations virtually always only appear in party papers, journals etc, if they have the sanction of the central committee. In this way the nature and rules of intra party debate can be firmly controlled. Dissident views, to be sure, do appear, but only at the behest of the leadership. In pre-conference discussion documents such views inevitably take second place to established leadership positions.

All in all, the factors outlined ensure that the party remains a firmly controlled machine. The membership is, to a great extent, acquiescent to leadership manoeuvrings partly through ignorance and also partly from a subconscious, if not conscious, desire for a disciplined vanguard party. Such matters might not be important if they were the sole concern of the Leninist parties themselves. However all of them aspire to lead the revolution and if miraculously, as in Russia, they happen to say the right things at the right times, then they may well find themselves in such a role. Then a party of the Leninist type would re-create all the attitudes, organisational forms and hierarchies which typify them. Subverted democracy within the party would ultimately mean 'guided democracy' for the masses.



MARXISM AND THE STATE

Marxists and anarchists seem to share rather similar approaches to the question of the state. In reality however serious differences exist which allow us clearly to differentiate between the two approaches - anarchists will have no truck whatsoever with the state, whilst marxists believe that in some circumstances the state can be utilised.

ORIGINS

For marxists the state is primarily an instrument for the maintenance of class rule. The first states, from the marxist standpoint, were created as social classes appeared to maintain and ensure the power of the exploiting class. In other words states as legitimately organised violence, government, bureaucracy etc were in their original forms created by the ruling classes as they emerged from a condition of 'primitive communism'. There is some evidence that this may have been the case on occasion. The problem is that the earliest states in a given region often developed in the distant past and there is no way of knowing if states were actually created to preserve the domination of a new class.

It is just as likely that states actually preceded the development of classes. Classless societies may still be hierarchical in the sense that individuals, families etc may be awarded leadership roles through their superior abilities or knowledge (eg magic). The authority of the highest ranked group could have been reinforced allowing effectively to form a state. As the marxist anthropologist Maurice Bloch has admitted, there are examples of centralised systems with a single head controlling defined territory called states where no obvious dominant classes exist. The African Bemba people in the nineteenth century were an example of such a classless state. There is also evidence from central America that in the sixteenth century states were in the process of being created before the emergence of class divisions. These proto-states were in fact destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors who imposed their own class based system of state control.

This brings us to the second objection to the marxist theory of the origins of states. Most states in historical times were created as the result of conquest. Countless examples of this kind of state creation exist. For example both the Western Allies and the communists created their own preferred form of state as a corollary to the conquest of the Nazi empire. In England the feudal state was also created by the Norman conquerors, with its own French speaking ruling class. For two hundred years or so that language was the preferred tongue in state institutions, including the court, church and legal system.

AN INSTRUMENT OF CLASS RULE?

The state is seen from a marxist perspective as an instrument of class rule. The problem with this formulation is that there are plenty of occasions where the state acts in ways which hinder capitalism and the pursuit of profit. Taxation, laws restricting the length of the working day, trade boycotts of the USSR etc are examples of how governments may act in ways which reduce profitability. Sometimes, as in the case of Peru from 1968 to 1975 when the army seized power, a nominally capitalist state can actually expropriate capital, collectivise agriculture and generally upset the capitalist oligarchy. States are essentially national entities whilst a lot of present day monopoly capitalism operates across national boundaries. Thus UK based petroleum companies go to great lengths to avoid paying tax in this country which has marginally high tax thresholds. Multinational firms may then have quite distinct strategies from states with which they may conflict.

Whereas between capital and labour the prime relationship is one of economic exploitation, between the state and its citizens it is one of political domination. Relations based upon hierarchy - domination/submission - are just as important as exploitation in British society and the two are not always directly linked. Domination can exist within all forms of social relationship which are unconnected with economic exploitation, eg families, sexes, friendships. Whereas the capitalist dominates through his relationship to the means of production, the state bureaucrat, minister etc exercise control via a mechanism of domination which is the state.

They do share a common belief in the validity of capitalism but where they may differ is in how capitalism should be run. The statist tends to take an overview, the capitalist a more narrow, profit-motivated approach. Thus there may arise from time to time a conflict between the general and the particular.

In Britain there is no clearly demonstrable subservience of the state to capitalism. There is in reality a sort of partnership between the state and capitalism which is to be expected, since generally speaking the top echelons of both are recruited from the same public school and Oxbridge elite. The community of background, wealth and outlook which is shared by the two sectors of domination helps to cement them in generally agreed partnership but there is no clearly discernable dominator.

WORKERS STATE

Politically speaking the above outlined objections to the marxist theory of the state are not crucial insofar as both marxists and anarchists are opposed to the capitalist state (at least this is so if we ignore the Eurocommunists). The major and most important difference, however, lies in regard to the role of the state after the revolution. The marxists advocate smashing the capitalist state and replacing it with a workers' state - the dictatorship of the proletariat. From the marxist standpoint, since the state simply acts as an agent of the ruling class it can be utilised to good effect by the victorious proletariat, so long as the capitalist threat persists. As the last remnants of capitalism disappear the state, so the argument goes, will wither away.

As Bakunin pointed out decades before the Russian revolution of 1917 this functionalist approach to the state is deeply flawed and ignores the corrupting effects of power. Since the whole of the proletariat cannot feasibly, directly exercise power, some sort of intermediary is necessary. The Bolsheviki disposed of this by identifying the 'correct' wishes of the proletariat with that of the party. Proletarian dictatorship thus becomes party dictatorship. The state in the USSR and indeed everywhere else where communist parties have seized power have not withered away. Far from it, the powers of the state have been extended to all areas of life and a state bureaucratic elite/class has entrenched itself in precisely the way that Bakunin predicted it would. Since the state has granted itself so many privileges, why should it diminish its powers?

The state which concentrates enormous powers in its hands must be destroyed and those powers should be dispersed throughout society. It is only with the disintegration of power that genuine emancipation can be achieved.

COMMUNIST LOGIC

As an afterward to the above chapter, we bring you this marvellous bit of marxist dialectics. According to Alexander Berkman in his book "Now and After" (1929) Bukharin had this to say on the question of the 'proletarian dictatorship':

"Proletarian compulsion in all its forms, beginning with summary execution and ending with compulsory labour is, however paradoxical it may sound, a method of reworking the human material of the capitalistic epoch into communist humanity."

So that's what they mean by a workers' state!



LENIN ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

"In order to go on with the nationalisation of banks and proceed unswervingly toward the transformation of banks into nodal points of social accountancy in a socialist economy, we must prove ourselves successful in catching and shooting grafters and crooks etc."

Sobranie Sochineniy, The Next Tasks of the Soviet Power, p.204, the Works, vol XV.

"There will not be any famine in Russia if we take a full census of grain and other products at our disposal and if we show ourselves ready to mete out the harshest punishments for the violation of the established order."

p. 246, Works, see above.

"There was not a single revolution in history when people did not instinctively feel it and did not manifest salutary firmness by shooting thieves on the spot. The trouble with the former revolutions was that this revolutionary enthusiasm which maintains this state of tension among the masses and which gave them the strength ruthlessly to crush the elements of disintegration lasted only for a short time."

p. 214, Works.

"Does not class struggle in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism consist in safeguarding the interest of the worker from the small handful of groups and layers within its own ranks who obstinately persist in the traditions of capitalism? They still view the Soviet state as they did the employer in the old times: give 'him' as little as possible, as bad work as one can get away with - and squeeze out as much money as possible. Haven't we quite a number of such scoundrels in our proletarian midst - among the typesetters of the Soviet print shops, among the workers of the Putilovsky and Sormovo plants? How many of them did we nab, expose and pillory?"

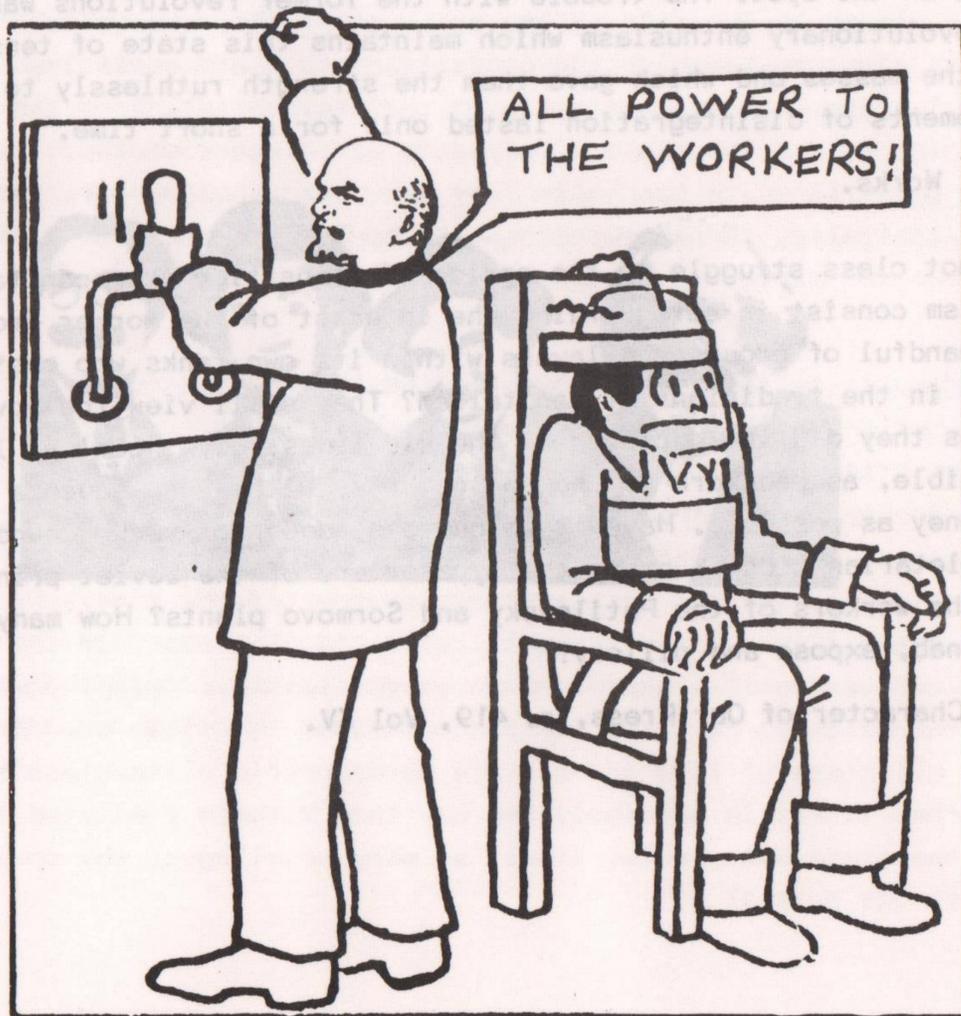
On the Character of Our Press, p. 419, Vol XV.

"The Red Army, as a result of many months of propaganda to that effect, was on a par with the discipline of the old army. Harsh, rigorous measures, going as far as applying the highest penalty - shooting - were used in the Red Army; even the old government shied from introducing those measures in the army on such an extensive scale. The philistines shout and howl: the Bolsheviks have introduced shootings. Our answer should be: yes we did and we did it purposefully."

A Speech Delivered at the Second All Russian Convention of the Representatives of Politico-Educational Departments of the Red Army, October 17th 1921. p. 379, Vol XVIII.

"An insurrection of White Guards is in the course of preparation at Nizhni. The utmost must be done, unleash a mass terrorist action, shoot and deport the hundreds of prostitutes who are getting the soldiers drunk etc. Do not lose a single minute. Shoot those withholding arms. Massive deportation of Mensheviks and unsure elements."

To the Soviet of Nizhni-Novgorod, 9th August 1918. p. 356, vol XXXV.



TROTSKY AND WORKERS CONTROL

During a recent demonstration members of the Militant Tendency were heard to call for the nationalisation of industry under workers' control. This demand for industrial democracy within a structure of nationalisation stems directly from points made by their mentor, Leon Trotsky, in his "Transitional Programme" of the Fourth International, 1938. Most Trotskyists, at bottom, base their tactics on this pamphlet, this being the master's programme for world revolution. The purpose of this article is to show that Trotsky's, and by extension perhaps Trotskyists, attachment to industrial democracy is at best tenuous.

All governments are exploitative and need to hide this fact from their subjects. Various ideological means have been tried, throughout history, to justify domination and exploitation. One ploy was to give the ruler divine status (the royal families of ancient Egypt, Peru and Japan up to modern times claimed to be gods, or related to gods). Then followed the idea that rulers were god's representatives on earth; the so-called divine right to rule (England, France etc). More recently, rulers have claimed the right to govern on the basis of tradition, patriotism and democracy. In the so-called socialist bloc, leaders have justified their control, in part at least, on the basis of 'science'. By applying the 'revolutionary science' of history and economics to society, marxists have claimed the right to run their states. It must be said however that this so-called scientific understanding, in their eyes, only allows them to act as agents of the working class, who are in a deeper sense the rulers (even if they do not actually govern directly). Trotsky was perhaps not aware of this contradiction in 'proletarian rule', for whilst in power himself he talked of soviet power, as if the soviets had any real control over the state. The soviets were in fact mere transmission belts for the communists from very early in the life of the Bolshevik regime. In a near Rousseau like sense, marxists claim to know the general will of the proletariat even if the class itself is not aware of it. In this way marxist rulers have been able to justify some of the most terrible acts of tyranny ever known.

Bakunin, writing in "Statism and Anarchy", had this to say about the likely effects of the application of marxist science.

"They will create a single state bank, concentrating in its hands all commercial, industrial and agricultural and even scientific production; they will divide the mass of the people into two armies - industrial and agricultural armies under the direct command of the state engineers who will constitute the new privileged scientific-political class."

Quoted in "The Political Philosophy of Bakunin" ed. G.P Maximoff, p. 289.

The stunning accuracy of Bakunin's prediction was realised after the success of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Towards the end of the civil war which followed the revolution, and when victory was in sight, Trotsky published his book "Terrorism and Communism" to justify some of the more extreme methods of the Communist dictatorship. The latter part of the book deals with the organisation of labour in a socialist society. Several issues are dealt with - the compulsion of all to labour, the militarisation of the production process, a single all embracing economic plan applicable to all, the value of piecework and 'scientific' management, repression of 'slackers' and the subordination of the trade unions to the state in order to act as an other arm of management and the state.

In order to demonstrate Trotsky's commitment to industrial democracy some quotations are in order. Remember that in saying the following Trotsky claimed that his proposals were an expression of proletarian rule (as scientifically applied by himself and Lenin). Discussing the general organisation of labour, he has this to say: "The element of state compulsion not only does not disappear from the historical arena, but on the contrary will still play, for a considerable period, an extremely prominent part." (Terrorism and Communism, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, 1963, p. 135). He continued by arguing that the great mass of humanity must be organised on military lines using military techniques to implement a single social and economic plan. And military techniques meant a direct transference of military discipline, command systems etc to civilian life.

Trotsky was impressed enough by militarism to transfer army units to civilian work under a military system, rather than demobilise them. The military became involved as soldiers in civilian life and civilians were to be subject to military methods. To quote, "Consequently comrades, militarisation of labour in the root sense indicated by me is not the invention of individual politicians or an invention of our War Department, but represents the inevitable method of organising and disciplining labour power during the transition from capitalism to socialism." (ibid, p. 143).

Taylorism, scientific management combined with piecework techniques were roundly condemned by Trotsky as "the most concentrated methods of the system of sweating" within capitalism (ibid, p. 146). In the new system however such methods became miraculously transformed (here he was echoing Lenin). He states that "Under socialist production piece work, bonuses etc have as their problem to increase the volume of the social product, and consequently to raise the general well being. Those workers who do more for the general interest than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless and the disorganised." (ibid, p. 149). Trotsky does not say how those who are weaker, older or infirm are to fare under such a system, perhaps he did not perceive it as a problem. In any case piece work served to enforce strict labour discipline. He also conveniently omitted to mention the fact that Communist Party members, managers etc received more than ordinary workers, regardless of output.

True to form, Trotsky had little time for workers' self management. Rather than work together creating a cooperative enterprise, the workers were to try to outsmart each other. Different abilities should not be pooled, rather, under a system of one-man management, individual competition was to be encouraged. They (differing talents) "must be brought out and displayed in rivalry." (ibid, p. 166).

Capitalist style hierarchical management should not be viewed as some aberration forced upon the Bolsheviks by the problems of the civil war, for as Trotsky made clear, "I consider that if the civil war had not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should have undoubtedly entered the path of one-man management in the sphere of economic administration much sooner and much less painfully." (ibid, p. 163). Industrial democracy was to Trotsky quite erroneous to the problems of socialist production - efficient administration was of far more importance.

Perhaps, even with one-man management, the unions could have a significant role to play in representing the workers' interests? No chance. Trotsky argued that "the young socialist state requires trade unions, not for a struggle for better conditions of labour - that is the task of the social and state organisations as a whole - but to organise the working class for the ends of production, to educate, discipline, distribute, group, retain certain categories and certain workers at their posts for fixed periods - in a word hand in hand with the state to exercise their authority in order to lead the workers into the framework of a single economic plan" (ibid, p. 143).

Trotsky, in the above passages, prescribed all of the features which were to become the standard features of the process under Stalin. How then can present day Trotskyists advocate workers' control (except in the most abstract form, ie as a 'form' of proletarian rule)? The answer may be that Trotsky, having been defeated by Stalin, had to do two things in order to try to wrest control of the international communist movement from Moscow. Firstly he had to discredit the Stalinist system, and that meant demonstrating its anti-democratic features. Secondly he had to try and present himself as the advocate of a more fair and democratic system than was available under capitalism. Thus his "Transitional Programme" advocated, in a thoroughly opportunistic manner, industrial democracy.

The "Transitional Programme" advocated policies regarding industrial democracy which are poles apart from those of "Terrorism and Communism". No talk here of compulsory labour armies, one-man management etc. Trotsky, for instance, advocated "factory committees" within capitalist enterprises as elements of dual power alongside "workers control" in a more general sense, to expose the "behind the scenes deals, swindles" etc. In regard to public works he actually went so far as to recommend workers' self-management and ultimately "on the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalised industry when the hour for that actually strikes." (Transitional Programme, WRP, pp. 20-23). Finally, in complete contradiction to his practice as a Soviet leader, he called for "factory committees (which) should be returned the right to control production." (ibid, p. 51).

Trotskyists today are fonder of quoting the Trotsky of the "Transitional Programme" rather than of "Terrorism and Communism". Given the opportunity for latter day Trotskyists to exercise power one wonders if "Terrorism and Communism" might once again be given pre-eminence. Now they stress democratic anti-capitalism. Given the almost inevitable crises which accompany all revolutions they may feel compelled to turn to that half-forgotten text for dictators that is "Terrorism and Communism".



MARXISM IN POWER.....
THE NATURE OF THE
DICTATORSHIP OF THE
PROLETARIAT.

ENGELS ON AUTHORITY: A CRITIQUE

Engels' short article "On Authority" has been used by authoritarian marxists since Lenin to justify at one extreme 'dictatorship' and at the other 'iron' discipline. Together these two elements in marxist thought have subverted a potentially liberatory doctrine and transformed it into an instrument for bureaucratic despotism. Engels article is most usually dragged out to counter criticism by the libertarian left, as if the arguments contained in it are sufficiently 'holy' to require little further explanation. It is time that Engels' article received a reply. So here goes.

Factory life for most people is, quite simply, crushing. There are two categories of people - those who wake to the day with a feeling of indescribable dread and loathing at the prospect of the working day ahead, and those who don't. Factory life in general for the worker consists of a mixture of bullying by petty 'generals' plus dirt, danger and the giving up of an independent human existence. It manages to create a regimentation of individuals into preconceived patterns determined by the needs of production. All of this Engels accepts as being a necessary fact of modern life - so much for marxism as liberation! Now Engels never spent 30 years or so of his life as an industrial worker, so his detachment is understandable (in fact he managed to do quite well exploiting the efforts of the proletariat in his own Lancashire cotton mills). The crux of Engels' arguments regarding industry is this. "Everywhere combined action, the complication of processes dependent upon each other, displaces independent action by individuals. But whoever mentions combined action speaks of organisation; now is it possible to have organisation without authority?" In other words, the processes of production, the requirements of efficiency, speed, output, efficient use of machinery etc require the subordination of the individual.

Engels could not envisage any possible situation where the most rigid authority would not be necessary. For him "wanting to abolish authority in large scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself, to destroy the power of the loom in order to return to the spinning wheel." So there we have it: industrial society requires the denial of individuality. Argued in this way Engels' argument seems irrefutable. But aren't there two types of authority - that with which we agree and have helped to bring about through participation, and that which is imposed from without? Whilst one might not agree with all decisions arrived at collectively, subordination to them might be acceptable insofar as they were the legitimate expression of the workforce after free debate.

Engels seems unable to differentiate between a recognition of the needs of production which is under democratic control and authority imposed from without through a hierarchy of managers. And of course, in a truly democratic society people would be able to make choices - it just might be preferable to produce goods on a small scale (with reduced output and efficiency) than to be dictated to by machines and the industrial process. To some extent we can now have the best of both worlds. Automation, if introduced to relieve the monotony of labour, could leave us free to control the machines rather than be controlled by them. So even if in the field of industry Engels was correct (and we doubt it) his arguments have been superseded. The advances in automation are so great that in a non exploiting society work need not be the major conscious life activity or a tyranny under which the industrial workers must deny their humanity for the sake of some machine.

Engels' arguments on political authority are similar to those advanced for industry. Basically his position is that the anti-authoritarians, in demanding the immediate abolition of the coercive state and political authority, do not understand the political requirements of revolution. Surely a revolution, he argues, "is the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the means by which one part of the population imposes its will on the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon ..." Just so, it is the method which is required to end the rule of a tiny minority and replace it with a system in which political domination and exploitation have been abolished. The authority of the armed majority of the population acting in its own interests against a tiny ruling group is liberating for the majority. After all the revolution is not carried out for the immediate emancipation of the bourgeoisie but in order to liberate those who are oppressed. Libertarians have never extended a helping hand to those who support the existing system of exploitation. The issue at stake is not the authority of a popular, self organising revolution, but that of ruling cliques, juntas, parties etc which speak on behalf of the revolution. The former is truly liberating for the oppressed, the latter merely replaces one group of bourgeois elitists with another.

S T A T E V E R S U S S T A T E

1. "Labour, obligatory for the whole country, compulsory for every worker, is the basis of socialism."
2. "A general prohibition of child labour is incompatible with the existence of large scale industry and hence an empty pious wish."
3. "We must replace irresponsible agitators with production minded trade unionists."

Whose quotes are these: Margaret Thatcher, Franco, Hitler, Mussolini, some third world dictator? No, the first and third were by Trotsky and the second was Marx. A far cry from the party building propaganda of left wing parties like the CP/SWP/RCP etc. Leftists of all shades use radical rhetoric but what happens when they capture state power themselves? Let's look at the Russian revolution as an example, one they are forever quoting themselves.

Did the Bolshevik party wish to revolutionise the relations of production, replacing the bourgeois manager by self managing workers organisations? Were they willing to destroy the authoritarian relations of production of class society where producers are in a subordinate position to those who manage their work?

Before the revolution Bolshevik leaders talked of freedom of speech, workers democracy and the abolition of the police, army and the bureaucracy. In fact these institutions were all enlarged and freedom of speech was gradually extinguished even within the party itself, factions finally being banned in 1921. As Lenin said, "those who don't support wholeheartedly the forces of order and discipline within the army are traitors and must be ruthlessly destroyed."

Many factory committees were set up during the chaos of the Tsar's downfall but, as with the trade unions, "their powers and independence were gradually eroded as the Bolsheviks centralised control of all economic, political and social life in their Party/State machines. Not only was the party dominated by its central organs though - the Politburo became the sole repository of revolutionary wisdom. Disagree with it and you faced death - 500 anarchists were arrested and subsequently killed in Moscow because five of them dared to steal the unofficial American ambassador's car. Trotsky personally ordered the attack and even instructed the Cheka (secret police) to show allied representatives around the battle area the next day. And the Trots wonder why we hate 'Reds'! They set up institutions to replace and absorb workers' control and enforced one man management in factories, dismantling any procedures for control by workers which did exist.

Lenin, who before the revolution attacked scientific management as dehumanising now argued that "much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system (production streamlining through divisions of labour and reducing workers to the most simple, machine like tasks) should be adopted." Trotsky's statements are even more frightening, such as his well known calls for "militarisation of labour", that in its time slave labour had been progressive, and that "compulsion of labour will reach the highest degree of intensity during the transition period from capitalism to socialism." He advocated that labour deserters be organised into punitive battalions or replaced in labour camps (read his "Terrorism and Communism", a truly terrifying book).

ELIMINATION OF OPPOSITION

When large areas of the Ukraine organised themselves from below through anarchist influence, the Bolshevik leaders made an alliance with Nestor Makhno's guerilla army to help defeat the Tsarists. Having finished with them they turned on Makhno, smashing the free communes and shooting or arresting Makhnovist militiamen. All this happened at a time when Tsarists generals could enter the Red Army where the hierarchy remained unchanged and discipline was just as harsh. As Trotsky wrote in 1923: "We are the only party in the country and in the period of dictatorship it could not be otherwise."

The Cheka were not set up by Stalin but while Lenin and Trotsky, heroes of today's left, were leading the Bolshevik government. All opposition was crushed and revolutionaries whose views differed from the Bolsheviks were called 'counter revolutionaries', White Guardists etc and imprisoned or killed.

In contrast, ex-businessmen and imperial civil servants joined both the party and the burgeoning state machine while militant workers and political dissidents (Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, Anarchists and others) filled the jails. It was to defend and enlarge the power of the bureaucracy (which Trotsky called "an autocratic bureaucracy in a classless society" - what a logical absurdity) that the Bolsheviks in the period 1917-1921 attacked all the various committees, councils and unions which had sprung up in the power vacuum of the period. This makes it easier to understand the classical Leninist attitude to workers organisations in a 'workers' state' - ha ha - for the ends of production, to retain certain categories and certain workers at the post for fixed periods. The proletariat did not become dictators - the Party did. The seeds of Stalinism were firmly rooted in the Bolshevik Party from its conception. Capitalism is condemned by the Trots for being centralised

and all-powerful - but so are the Trots. Ask yourself, what do you know about the hierarchy, structure, committees and people involved in these parties. Do you know what their beliefs are, where they are situated within the party - the control they exercise. And if you don't - you're being stupid!

IDEOLOGY

These processes were only to be expected given the Bolsheviks' organisational and ideological background - vanguardist ideas of taking power on behalf of workers and peasants who presumably aren't capable of running their own lives, then after the revolution the inquisitional attitude to all opposition. The party knows best. The arrogance of leftists is appalling. After the Bolsheviks' takeover the number of political prisoners increased enormously, the secret police were institutionalised and labour discipline in the factories was tightened up easily, as the Bolsheviks didn't believe in allowing the workers to organise themselves. The roots of the slavish conformism, the Stakhanovism, the purges of the 1930s (which killed or imprisoned at least 12 million) are to be found in the ideas and actions of Marxist-Leninists themselves and not explained away by blaming everything on Stalin's personality (itself a most un-marxist form of argument anyway).

People still peddle these tired, stale ideas now. Can't today's left wingers see the connection between an authoritarian and hierarchically structured party and the kinds of societies such parties have always produced. Leftists' claims of support for workers in Poland are sickeningly hypocritical. The Bolshevik line in independent trade unions was voiced by Zinoviev in 1918: "trade union independence was a bourgeois idea ... an anomaly in a workers' state."

These people - Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists, Leninists - aren't part of the solution, they're part of the problem. They claim to act on our behalf yet they rule in their own interests and if necessary will shoot down workers as in Kronstadt 1921, Hungary 1956, Novocherkassk in Russia 1962, Poland 1970, 1976 and 1982, China in 1989.

ANARCHISM

The only alternative to the private capitalism of the West and the state capitalism of the East (both of which have produced poverty, alienation, repression, war, concentration camps and nuclear weapons) is anarchism. As anarchists we want a classless society. We want to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery. We oppose sexism, racism and militarism.

We want self managed production for need, not profit. Only independent workplace organisations opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucrats can achieve these ends.

The nearest any societies have got to a situation where factories and communities were organised and run from below have been in Spain from 1936-7 (and to a lesser extent until 1939) and parts of Russia in 1917-1918 - areas where anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists were most influential. So if we don't want to remain isolated utopian dreamers we have to work with others in non-hierarchical and non-authoritarian organisations and federations.



SOCIALISM, ANARCHISM AND THE QUESTION OF POWER

Political power involves the ability to achieve desired goals even (or especially) if others are opposed to those ends. It often involves the use of force and violence, or the threat of such use - coercion.

Socialists of reformist and revolutionary varieties seek to gain power and exercise it through the centralised institutions of the state. The reformist approach to the question of political power is deeply flawed, for being willing to work through the existing state institutions, democratic socialists delude themselves into thinking that they can be used to dismantle the economic and political institutions of capitalism. The whole history of democratic socialism has indicated that far from wielding the power of the state, reformers are its prisoner. Only those reforms which do not seriously undermine the existing social order are viable. Those like President Allende of Chile who have attempted to use the constitution to bring about socialism have sooner or later been liquidated. This possibility does not however apply to most reformist socialist parties such as the British Labour Party, since they have no serious intention of bringing about a socialist system. 'Socialism' for people like Kinnock is more properly described as welfare capitalism. It applies progressive taxation to provide social services but leaves the gross inequalities and exploitative organisations of capitalism intact. Real power remains with capitalism and the coercive state whilst the trappings of power are eagerly fought for by the 'socialist' politicians.

Marxists have always been aware of the limitations of the reformist approach. Power, they argue, must be seized by and for the working class and the capitalist state must be smashed (this is the classic position, even Marx however was willing in his later years to consider using the existing institutions to achieve socialism. See K. Marx "The Hague Congress" in Marx and Engels, "On Britain", 1962, p. 494). Power, for the marxists, must be centralised and wielded by the proletariat through dictatorship, to eliminate all of the last vestiges of capitalism. As capitalist relics are destroyed, so the story goes, the need for a coercive state disappears and thus the state eventually withers away giving rise to a communist society.

The marxist approach is very attractive. Unlike reformist socialism it appears to be realistic - since the capitalist state involves the concentration of force to maintain capitalist rule so will the victorious proletariat need such an instrument for its rule. The state, the marxists argue, must be an expression of the will of the proletariat. The chief weakness of this formulation is that it assumes the existence of a single, uniform, proletarian will. In reality, except over a very limited number of issues, and for a very short period of time, no such single will can exist. Human beings believe passionately in very different ideas and value systems. Within the proletariat alone there are clashes between individuals, within families, between skilled and unskilled, north and south, religious and non-religious etc. Any attempt to exercise power which assumes a single indivisible will can only lead to dictatorship over the proletariat (or at least sections of it). This development was most clearly demonstrated after the October revolution of 1917. In the name of the proletariat workers were subject to secret police and army violence, dictatorial one-man management, militarisation of labour and the shooting of strikers etc.

Few marxists have been prepared to allow the working class to act independently (the most outstanding contrary example being the 'Council Communist' movement) preferring to act as guides, leaders or authentic interpreters of its true interests. Proletarian dictatorships have been historically little more than party/bureaucratic despotisms in which any opposition, proletarian or otherwise, has been repressed. The centralisation of power, superficially so attractive as a means of emancipation, has invariably led to new forms of domination, hierarchy and exploitation.

Anarchists have from the beginning been aware of the dangers inherent in the concentration of power. As an effectively permanent condition (regardless of good intentions to the contrary) we have realised the corrupting effects of political power. Given control over other people's lives individuals, however well-intentioned, will tend to act in arbitrary ways. Power is enjoyable in itself and brings with it economic rewards, kudos and sycophancy.

On the other hand most anarchists have accepted the need for the exercise of power (as violence, force, boycotts, strikes etc) as a means of bringing about the social revolution. Where we have parted company with the marxists is in the way such power is organised and what happens to it on the morrow of the classless society. Anarchists are highly suspicious of centralised power, and indeed of political mediation of any kind. A balance has to be struck between the requirements of achieving and defending the revolution on the one hand and the avoidance of counter-revolutionary tendencies inherent in the exercise of power on the other. The fear of being corrupted by the exercise of power has been a source of both strength and weakness for anarchists. The problem is how to destroy the power of the old ruling class and as far as possible disperse and atomise it throughout society. In their pursuit of the latter anarchists have been unwilling to organise for the former and have consequently often fallen easy prey to both bourgeois and marxist authoritarians.

A balance must be struck between the achievement of revolutionary ends and the avoidance of the tyranny of power. Bakunin, while himself preoccupied with secret societies etc outlined a means of combining effective cooperative organisation with individual/local autonomy. His approach can be summed up thus: organisations must found themselves upon federation with authority flowing from the base to the summit, from the perimeter to the centre, which could act as the coordinating body for the association as a whole. By such means local autonomy is effectively incorporated into a unitary body. By the above means both the organisation necessary for revolution and the impediment to the abuse of power and dictatorship are contained within a single movement. A concomitant to the above is a jealous guarding of individual/group autonomy and the inclusion of institutional safeguards such as the recall of delegates etc.

Revolutionary structures can be created which are both decentralised and effective. Revolutionary autonomy as an expression of decentralised proletarian self-determination has been carried out on a number of occasions in the past, most notably in Spain during the civil war, though with a lack of clear objectives the anarchists ultimately failed.

Recognising the problems inherent in the concentration of power anarchists seek its destruction and disintegration (and this distinguishes us from socialists). Thus we are anti-state, anti-capitalist, anti-party, anti-church etc. Power must as far as is feasible be atomised and equalised so that no single group or individual can dominate another. Freedom is only possible with the elimination of concentrated power and the generalisation of social and economic equality.

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AIMS AND 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, health, ability and age, 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 revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on

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 workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to 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 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 anarchist 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.

Anarchist Communist Federation

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