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Standing at the Crossroads

Anarchist Communist Group

7th May 2019

“The ACF remains a comparatively small organisation. Its desire to create or be the component of a large revolutionary organisation and movement has failed to happen. Many are put off joining a group where a strong commitment and a lot of determination are required. Many libertarian revolutionaries are as yet unconvinced of the need to create a specific libertarian communist organisation. They remain tied to the ideas of local groups, or at best regional federations loosely linked, being adequate for the very difficult tasks of introducing libertarian revolutionary ideas and practices to the mass of the population. They remain unconvinced of the need for a unified strategy and practice, for ideological and tactical unity and collective action as we in the ACF have insisted upon consistently. Some remain mesmerised by the myths of nationalism and national liberation, some by illusions in the unions. ... As we noted in *Virus 9*, in late 1986-early 1987: ‘There has been little sharing of experiences among libertarians in various campaigns and struggles. Even on something as basic as a demonstration, libertarians have marched separately and in different parts of the demonstration.’ This still remains true today. Libertarians remain within their separate local groups

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and organisations. There is little dialogue and little attempt for united activity, for forums and debates where these are possible. And yet not since the pre-World War 1 period and the late 60s has there been such a potential for the growth of the libertarian revolutionary movement. The collapse of Stalinism, the changes within social-democracy-including the British variety of Labourism- with the end of welfarism, and the effects of both of these on Trotskyism, have created a space which revolutionary anarchists must fill.”

This was written in spring 1996 for *Organise!* The magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation, in which several of those of us who founded the Anarchist Communist Group were active. Its observations remain largely true and valid, apart from the temporary reviving of the Labour Party with the phenomenon of Corbynism. The fact that this statement is still relevant 23 years later is both tragic and disturbing.

Indeed since this statement both the Solidarity Federation and the Anarchist Federation have gone into decline with few of their groups still functioning and active. The events which followed the last London Anarchist Bookfair in 2017 have aggravated these circumstances and there appears to be little appetite for cooperation between anarchist organisations, and between those organisations and unaffiliated local groups – with a few exceptions like the Revolutionary Anarchist Group in Birmingham.

We later noted in *Organise!* In summer 2014 that:

“An indication of the malaise within this scene- a scene rather than a movement as the last term implies some shared identity, which seems lacking- is the disappearance of hard copy publications like the newspaper *Freedom* and the magazine *Black Flag* [update: there is a plan for an issue in time for the London Bookfair 2014]. These both disappeared essentially because they lacked a base able to write for them and to distribute and sell them. Other magazines like the magazine of the Solidarity Federation, *Direct Action*, and *Here and Now*,

based in Glasgow and Leeds, have also disappeared. They were unconnected to a movement, a network of groups and individuals, or a national organisation or organisations. Even the problem of a lack of a visible and united presence on demonstrations and actions is one that still plagues British anarchism.”

This again remains largely true, with *Freedom* sporadically appearing now and again in hard copy and with an online presence.

The article went on to say: “What passes for British anarchism seems at the moment unable to develop as a result of the space created by the decline of the traditional left and seems to be in crisis itself. Various conferences which somehow sought to unite the different anarchist groups and develop a revolutionary practice- Mayday 1998, the Anarchist Movement Conference of 2009, the ALARM Conference of 2012- all proved to be damp squibs and failed as organisers. Some local attempts to organise- the Whitechapel Anarchist Group, the ALARM London-wide network, also collapsed. Meanwhile the Haringey Solidarity Group, which has done sterling local work over many decades has, we must speak truthfully, failed to develop its idea of a network of local London community groups, influenced by libertarian ideas. Apart from the HSG, few local neighbourhood/borough groups have developed and the network, Radical London has disappeared.”

In fact since then we have seen the development of Corbynism and the complete loss of critical faculties among many self-defined anarchists with their entry into the Labour Party or at the least enthusiastic support for Corbynism. Alongside this has been the capitulation to nationalism, whether it be Scottish nationalism, or the uncritical cheerleading for the Kurdish nationalists of the PKK. There has been a significant shift away from class struggle politics.

There has been some useful local work in neighbourhoods and several interesting attempts to set up Solidarity Networks.

There has been some work around workplace issues and strikes, and some valuable work around housing, evictions, Workfare, and the Bedroom Tax. There has been the setting up of the Green Anticapitalist Front in response to the climate change school strikes and the emergence of Extinction Rebellion. This latter venture appears to be growing to include activists beyond the original initiating work of the Anarchist Federation, but these are early days and already the involvement of Leninist groups may lead to difficulties.

This work is not enough, it needs to be multiplied. We need to develop a serious class struggle anarchist practice and theory. We need to move away from amateurism and lack of seriousness. We have to develop a willingness and practice of coordinated activity wherever we can. We have to reject populism, electoralism, nationalism and anti-organisationalism.

We have to break with the swamp of traditional anarchism and emphasise the need for anarchist communism, an anarchist communism that relates to everyday struggles. We need to assert the need for a specific anarchist communist organisation, with both clear analysis and practice based around the struggles mentioned above, with the aim of assisting in the creation of a mass movement in both the neighbourhoods and the workplaces and in every sphere of life. We need propaganda and activity, we need an active intervention in the social movements. Our propaganda needs to be clear and free of jargon, able to relate to the mass of the population, and it needs to be on a mass basis as possible. We have to develop a press and our social media. We need to actively propagate the ideas of anarchist communism as widely as possible.

In order to do this, we need to strengthen and solidify the Anarchist Communist Group. If you agree with these aims, we strongly urge you to join the ACG.