

Hope

An Issue in Revolutionary Struggle

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The Background

I was once talking with two people, a post leftist and a Marxist Leninist (who I will be calling U and S respectively). While the debate covered many topics from past, present, and future revolutionary struggles, one bit from it stuck with me the most. U said that “All Anarcho-Communists either become post leftists or Marxist Leninist” To my surprise, S agreed, relating it to their and their friends evolution as leftists. What both seemed to agree on is that the lack of successful anarcho communists revolutions leads to most of them either becoming a flavor of post leftism (which rejects the idea of revolutions entirely in favor of impermanent insurrections) or a flavor of Marxist Leninism (which provides a solution to the permanence of revolution by calling for a strong centralized state that protects the revolution from external and internal threats (Though the validity of this claim is up for debate)). Now I have no interest of proving if this claim is accurate, that in itself is borderline impossible, but I do have an interest in outlining a solution of sort for any comrades who are struggling with this dilemma. but before we can describe the solution, we must outline the issue.

The Issue

The most clear issue that causes this crisis is the lack of successful long lasting Revolutions for anarcho communism. The big two revolutions that one thinks of when it comes to Anarchist Revolutions are Revolutionary Catalonia and Makhnovia (Rojava and the ELZN are up for debate if they count as Anarchist or Libertarian Left leaning communities, and the Korean People’s Association in Manchuria is rarely if ever brought up), and even those two are under constant scrutiny and critique (as any leftist community or movement should be). Now when someone looks at this, it looks small, pitiful even. This leads to one of two reactions: either a defense of these communities or a rejection of Anarchism as an utopian and idealistic version of the revolution. The latter is held by both ML’s and Post Leftists for different reasons, but even the former is slowly worn down by doubt about how successful these were and how would such projects survive longer and spread.

The second issue is misinformation or misinterpretation of Anarchism in general. To some Anarchists, core parts of the state (the police, prisons, formalized government) are “removed” in the way of a name change and slight structural changes (figuring out what caused this, whether it was a slow change in definitions, or the theory of Bookchin, Chomsky, etc is beyond the scope of this essay). Such relabeling will often lead to a believer slowly backtracking into a form of Authoritarian Socialism and the disbelievers fleeing to the endless critiques and debates of post leftism.

But there’s a secondary part that causes this crisis, discouragement. Discouragement on the how’s, when’s, or what’s of Revolution, discouragement caused by bad experiences while doing praxis, discouragement from the news, discouragement from the ticking clock of climate change, discouragement from people in general. Such discouragement builds up in a person, leading to apathy and nihilism when it comes to revolutionary struggle. Such apathy and nihilism often plays out in two different ways. The first is discouragement that the revolution will ever occur. This comes from the “lack” of revolutions despite of all which Capitalism has done to the working class. This train of thought often leads to the nihilistic beliefs of Insurrectionary Anarchism, that

where the revolution will never happen and small insurrections are the way to spread Anarchism. The second is discouragement about keeping and spreading the revolution. This comes from the crushing of Anarchist projects by larger powers in the region and internal struggles leading to a corruption of the ideals of the revolution. With this train of thought in mind, one would be more willing to accept a stronger state to protect the revolution from external and internal threats, leading eventually to the adoption of ML beliefs. Even without this drastic change of beliefs, discouragement, apathy, and nihilism can often lead to people giving up the struggle or electoralist, reformist, and “lesser evil”ist ideas, all of which are harmful to Revolutionary struggle.

Clearly, for Anarcho Communists to succeed and organize in the 21st century, we must deal with these issues or struggle to build any form of a movement.

The Solutions

Now that we have a basis for what the main issues that cause this are (lack of success, misinformation, and discouragement), we must find solutions. We must have constant discussions about what causes these issues, how these issues affect our movement, and what we can do to solve them. I am just one person; my suggestions are far from laws, but I believe this is a start to finding solutions.

Let's start with a solution for a lack of revolutions. Now I have many issues with the idea that there is and has been a lack of anarchist revolutions. There has been anything but a lack of them in the past 2 decades alone. The problem is, is that we as western leftists are obsessed with revolutions in the Global North, often completely forgetting or ignoring revolutions in the Global South. As of 2020, there are revolutionary struggle in Bolivia, Chile, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, West Papua, the Philippines, and many other places in the Global South. Many of these are fought by indigenous people, who are always at the forefront of any revolutionary struggle. Clearly, the Revolution is far from being immaterial or dead.

Even in the Global North, indigenous people all over are participating in Revolutionary Struggle against settler colonialism, in Russia and Belarus, comrades are fighting against tyrannical governments. In Amerika especially, large swaths of the population, lead by BIPOC, Queer, and houseless people, are participating in Revolutionary struggle against the fascist state, police forces, and Capitalism in some of the largest ways ever seen. During a time when millions are unemployed, houseless, and angry, I can think of no better example of not a base for, but the start of a revolution.

As for protecting it once it succeeds, we not only must learn from our past mistakes, but listen to the advice of those who's movements imperialists have attempted to crush the most, BIPOC. Their experiences and knowledge is invaluable to all Revolutionary struggles.

As for misinformation, the solution is much less straight forward. As Theory evolves, ideas become muddled and combined until it is hard to figure out what ideas were part of Anarchist ideals from the beginning, or recent additions. The first thing we must do is prioritize base theory before zines, as to not misinform new comrades. We must make sure new comrades read the source material and not just the interpretations of it, lest the creator of the interpretation intentionally or unintentionally adds their own ideas and passes it off as some one else's.

The second thing we must do is to diversify and modernize our theory. Much of the theory suggested to new comrades is late 18th century and early 19th century works from white westerners (Kropotkin, Malatesta, Goldman, ECT). There is nothing wrong with using these authors or their works to help people learn about Anarchism, but these works are out of date in places and miss crucial parts of our modern struggle. What we must do is to suggest more theory by BIPOC/ Queer people (such as from Afrofuturism, Anarkata, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, the Zapatistas, ECT). These group are at the forefront of dismantling hierarchies, analyzing societies, and doing Revolutionary Struggle and their theory shows. By suggesting BIPOC/Queer writings, we learn about and adapt Anarchism to the 21st century struggle, one that includes all. We must also encourage new Theory always, lest we stagnant on old idea and suffer from it.

The last problem we must solve is discouragement. For the solution, surprisingly, insurrectionary anarchism gives us some answers.

Insurrectionary Anarchism describes more personalized forms of praxis, where smaller groups or even individuals commit praxis with the ultimate goal of every small action leading to the bigger action of tearing down the systems of oppression. My idea to take this idea and adapt it to Revolutionary Struggle.

But first, we must redefine what a Revolution is. The Revolution to an Anarchist must not be the action of overthrowing the Capitalists class, but everything that comes before and after that. The Revolution to the anarchist doesn't begin when the first shot is fired, it has always been in action. The Revolution doesn't end to the Anarchists when the last Capitalist is hanged, the revolution never ends, as there will always be hierarchies to dismantle and flatten and injustices to be corrected.

The Revolution therefore is succeeding whenever our ideals of mutual aid, community, and liberation are brought to fruition by the masses. When an unemployed person is given a dollar on the street, the revolution is succeeding. When a group breaks into empty property to allow houseless people to squat, the revolution is succeeding. Whenever a community organizes community defense, the revolution is succeeding.

It should be noted that this shouldn't pacify you into not organizing or helping in larger forms of Revolutionary struggle like strikes, protests, insurrections, and even armed revolts. These forms of Revolutionary praxis help and liberate much larger swaths of the population and should be considered more important in the long run than smaller forms of praxis. Smaller forms of struggle should therefore be used to help achieve larger forms of struggle. For example, a black community organizing community defense and a police watch can be used to organize larger confederations of community defense, therefore creating a dual power system that challenges the State and Capitalism, which leads to even larger forms of Revolutionary Struggle.

The last thing to prevent discouragement in the lack of progress is the acknowledgement that progress isn't a straight line. Progress can leap forward one decade, and screech to a halt or fall back the next (LGBT rights being a good example of this). This back and forth shouldn't discourage you, but rather motivate you harder to push it forward as hard as you can and defend that progress from any reaction attempting to push it back. Never give an inch and always take a mile.

The last thing that ties all of this together is hope. Hope in a better, brighter future. Hope in the ability of humanity to cooperate, coordinate, and help each other. Hope in freeing all peoples from all forms of oppression. Hope for a world free of capitalists and tyrants.

But hope isn't enough, you must also have the determination to make these hopes into a reality. So many others are fighting for their lives against the tyranny of the state and capitalism. It would be borderline selfish to give up on them and the revolution.

So don't. Never give up. Always Hope, Always Fight.

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