

Anarchism Before Labels

The Eternal and Constant Gardeners

Magical Comrade Molotov Catgirl

September 13th, 2020

Anarchism had seen a resurgence in recent years, in response to the collapse of Capitalism and the ensuing rise in Fascism worldwide. The word “Anarchist” has a different meaning to each of us, as words always do; if you ask ten different Anarchists about their exact definition of Anarchism, you’ll come away with ten very different answers. As the singularly most diverse political ideology to have ever existed, it is no surprise that Anarchists would argue endlessly about ideology, with debates often escalating to bitter rivalry. Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre, two of the most famous American Anarchists, had a long-standing feud over numerous issues, from the fundamental difference between Individualism versus Collectivism, to their different outlook on the use of political violence.

This heated rivalry, however, did not prevent them from coming to the help of one another in times of great need, and they poured themselves into the defense of each and every comrade knowing that their comrades will do the same for them. This is, to us, our Anarchism: we might bicker endlessly about our visions of the future beyond the barricades, question and attack each other on ideological grounds, but when the chips come down and the shit hits the fan, we would have each other’s back. This is why de Cleyre, whose outlook on Anarchism and society had shifted over the years, proposed the idea of Anarchism Without Adjectives: both as an ideal that Anarchism can and will exist in different forms in different regions based on the local culture, and as a call for solidarity in our ongoing struggle against the establishment, for none of our vision for the future is worth anything if we lose the fight.

However, the tendency of certain Anarchists to police political labels with the same zeal and vigor as they condemn slurs worry us. There’s no singularly defining text on Anarchist thoughts, never mind Anarchist lexicon; the need for the precision use of language when it comes to political label is always the start of an implicit hierarchy and unstated rules, where nuance and context give way to linguistic dogmas and moralist authorities. We have written on the topic of Nihilism, an ideology which some considered to be post-left while others considered to be just Fascism; we have also written on the topic of Transhumanism, which some might find incompatible with Nihilism while others might believe to be nothing but a pipe dream. We do not mind; as Anarchists, we believe that the tangled mess of ideologies and even messier tangle of lingo is an indispensable part of Anarchism, and ought to be celebrated with self-conscious laughter instead of being policed with the fanatic rigor of a Commissar.

What happened to the Anarchism Without Adjectives? What happened to the comrades in arms? Since when did precision of language take priority over praxis, and political labels become more important than solidarity? Insurrection makes for strange bedfellows; in the face of a tyrannical regime with far superior power, sometimes one must make strategic alliance with people one despises. This is not a call for compromise or solidarity with authoritarians and right-wingers, but the exact opposite: this is a call to never compromise, and use your enemies for your cause until you can't. We can use Capitalists and Libertarians to fight Fascists, knowing that we'll eventually have to overthrow both of them too. So why can't we do the same with each other? Why can't we use each other, regardless of our labels and beliefs, until the fight is over and the revolution is won, before we go for each other's throat for our own vision of the perfect world? It's high time that we, as Anarchists, abandon our obsession with labels and embrace one simple truth: we shall fight the world until we won or die trying, and then we shall fight each other until the day comes when not even one innocent has to suffer from oppression. It's not enough to simply walk away from Omelas in disgust and leave the one child to their fate, we must raze all systems of oppression to the ground, even systems of oppression that we made ourselves.

The revolution has to be perpetual, otherwise it would just end up creating another set of chains and a new system of oppression, different in name but not in actuality. Every now and then, the tree of liberty must be watered by the blood of tyrants and martyrs, and we Anarchists must be forever vigilant and always ready to trim the branches of hierarchy – implicit or explicit – even at the cost of our lives. This is Anarchism Before Labels (add whichever labels you prefer): the eternal and constant gardeners.

May the fire that burns within us burn everything around us.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Magical Comrade Molotov Catgirl
Anarchism Before Labels
The Eternal and Constant Gardeners
September 13th, 2020

<https://signalforge.wordpress.com/2020/09/13/anarchism-before-labels/>

theanarchistlibrary.org