Revolution in Rojava?

Guerre de Classe

Nov 23 2015

Contents

We publish here a contribution (we have also translated from Spanish to French, English and Czech) synthesizing a series of critical discussions on the events in Rojava. This text comes from militants claiming to adhere to anarchism, based in Rosario, Argentina, and it was originally published in their bulletin La Oveja Negra [The Black Sheep].

We welcome the effort of these militants in their communist criticism of the social movement that is taking place in front of our eyes, without slipping into illusions of fashionable romantic visions too often read about Rojava and other struggles of our class. Too few critical texts circulate unfortunately nowadays on the "Rojava revolution" and the "Kurdish question", especially in Spanish.

Last small comment: the comrades of La Oveja Negra mistakenly attribute to us (in footnotes) the paternity of two texts that we have in fact only translated, presented, published on our blog and spread internationally. This had to be said…

REVOLUTION IN ROJAVA?

The territory claimed by ethnic Kurds is situated between Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Right in the middle of one the richest areas in the world as for oil and gas resources. Since a century this region experienced numerous struggles and initiatives for self-determination carried out by several Kurdish groups and factions.

The current situation is complicated and what can be described in broad outline is the coincidence of three factors: the armed conflict developed by the PKK (Workers' Party of Kurdistan) in Turkey since 1984, the invasion of the US-led coalition in Iraq in 2003 (and the subsequent deepening of ethnic conflict), and the civil war in Syria since 2011.

Let's remember that different regions of Syria (including what the Kurds call Rojava) were the ground of impressive proletarian struggles in –and before- 2011 where various expropriations and clashes of armed proletarians with the repressive forces (causing in turn mass defections of soldiers), and a significant degree of proletarian associationism appeared. This situation had been little by little transformed by the bourgeoisie into a civil war, channeling many proletarian structures that had emerged from the struggle into the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and converting thus the proletarian struggle into a struggle between bourgeois factions.

It is essential to mention this process, as it is in this context that various Kurdish groups, with the PKK being numerically the most significant and the most influential, managed to carry a process of control of the Syrian Northern territories (Rojava) through, feeding themselves on many of the proletarian ruptures with FSA when its bourgeois character became more obvious. In fact, the new cuckoo of the West, the organization nowadays known as the Islamic State (Sunni radical jihadism), actually arises from the dismemberment of the FSA when it begins to lose strength and prestige and when Islamic fundamentalism comes into greater prominence within it.

It is largely due to the confrontation between the Kurdish forces and ISIS considered as one of the forces engaged in the region, that the PKK has taken such importance internationally and has been supported by a wide global spectrum from Social Democrats to liberals.

Consecutively, throughout this complex process it is impossible to summarize in a few paragraphs, there are a certain number of peculiarities causing that many proletarians keep an eye on this region. For us it is essential to grasp these processes, to defend the proletarian ruptures in the process of development and to mercilessly tackle the bourgeois ideological falsifications and channeling.

These reflections are based on this need, motivated mainly by the great confusion generated by many self-proclaimed revolutionary groups talking about revolution in Rojava. Let's see a bit…

The PKK

It is a Kurdish political party founded in 1978. Ethnic, although currently its members and allies claim that it moderated. Social Democratic, although they pretend to pass it for a revolutionary.

Feminist, if by feminism we understand that women and men are equal to each other for both war and work. Environmentalist, although they do not hesitate to continue extracting oil.

Originally it was a Marxist-Leninist party with clear formal issues inherited from Maoism (guerrilla in rural areas, ban on love relations between its members, military discipline, etc.). In recent years it has adopted a more libertarian socialist tendency, first allegedly through the ideological shift in prison of its leader Öcalan, and then through the decisions of his 8th Congress in 2002.

Its new doctrine called democratic confederalism is closely linked to the concept of libertarian municipalism outlined by the American Murray Bookchin and it criticizes the traditional concept of the Nation-State, calling for a federal, ecological and feminist society. In this text we will enlarge upon the terrible limitations of some aspects of this great and confused ideological revolt.

Before that we want to point out that the main reasons for this shift are twofold. First, it is the international strategy of the PKK to be no longer considered as a terrorist organization by NATO, what is a complement to its tactic of creating parallel organizations like the PYD (Democratic Union Party of Syria). This tactic has taken over in the party's history in order to develop its policy in regional parliaments of the four countries.

Moreover, it was no longer profitable to be a Marxist-Leninist when the world imperialist polarization changed significantly since the 70s. Without the Soviet Union backing them and supplying them with weapons, they probably needed to begin to change their strategy.

For those who fight for social revolution it is not new to be considered as terrorists by the State, which is a way to open the route to repression, but it is clear that for the PKK such a NATO action is an obstacle to finally settle a State, to participate in the world trade of crude oil and to be member of the United Nations.

"The PKK/PYD were reluctant to join the anti-Assad uprising in 2012 and are now equally hesitant to overthrow private property. Instead, having allied with Assad's murderous dictatorship in the past, they are now allying with the US and its murderous bombing campaign. This campaign may have saved Kobane but it has also probably encouraged even more Arabs to distrust the Kurds and to join ISIS. And this is now pushing the region even further into an inter-imperialist bloodbath." We must say it openly; the PKK is a counterrevolutionary force since its beginning and it is currently responsible for channeling the most advanced expressions that remain in the region of the North of Syria. It is also an important reason for their strategic change. In addition to criticizing their actions in their zones of influence, we should also point out how this kind of counterrevolutionary process is used throughout the world.

What is the State?

"State is not merely a structure of government, police, army and administrative apparatus, State, as the communist movement grasps it, is a social relation, materialization of capitalist world order, no matter whether its legitimacy is based on parliament or community assemblies. If therefore PKK and its PYD's henchmen claim that they do not seek to create a State, it is just because in reality they already – due to their role, practical and ideological, they play in Rojava – represent the State. This is what some of PKK's partisans call quite rightly "a State without a State", i.e. a State that doesn't necessarily territorialize as a Nation-State, but which ultimately

really constitutes a State in the sense that capitalist social relations, private property, are not fundamentally challenged.

(…) No surprises for guessing who has the real clout. The PYD have got a virtual monopoly of weapons. They are the state. And in each country (Iraq, Iran and Syria) the local Kurdish bourgeoisie has set up its own national entity in the same vein. These might not be recognised by international imperialism but they are states in all but name. In some ways they impinge more on people's lives than the state in the UK. For example, if you are over 18 you are subject to conscription. And as for the supposed internationalism of the PYD, its leader Salih Muslim has threatened to expel all Arabs from "Kurdish" territory in Syria despite the fact that most of them were born there."

Although there are definitely more pro-State Kurdish expressions, as the government of Iraq headed by Talabani and the Iraqi Kurdistan regional government led by Barzani (both confronting each other and also PKK), this does not mean that the PKK isn't so as well.

The PKK has apparently broken with the classical conception of the seizure of State power, peculiar to Marxism-Leninism, and introduced certain "criticisms" of the State in its new doctrine of democratic confederalism. These criticisms propose a formal change where the new State called by them "confederation" would assume more and more tasks of social organization with grassroots democracy, raising in turn the search for the most peaceful coexistence possible with the existing States, making use of self-defense if necessary.

This tale of direct democracy, local resistance in front of the existing States, self-determination of the peoples, administration of a "Stateless" territory is actually nothing new.

It is all these fantasies that had seduced many sectors of anarchism (including some in our region), which provided their support in various ways, as far as calling for taking part in the Kurdish militias as did David Graeber, the Occupy movement referent.

It's amazing to see once again that many of those who claim to be partisans of the destruction of the State and who focus their critique and analysis on that, fall again into the trap. Many of the critiques against the State that they consider to be the central problem of capitalist society don't grasp its nature and end up defending it under a new shape.

We must insist on the need to grasp and criticize the society in the most complete way possible. When we talk about social revolution we talk of abolishing the whole of the capitalist social relation: State, private property, wage labor, commodity production, value…

We became too much accustomed to the fact that when one talks about revolution he talks about the form rather than the content. In this sense, it is easy to compare pictures of Kurdish militias' armed women with those of militiawomen of Spain 36 as well as talking about fascism of the Islamic State and advocating once again conciliation with the bourgeoisie against the greater evil, as it happened with the republicans against Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

Once again we find ourselves back in front of historical parallels based on misunderstandings of both periods and not on a critical and anti-capitalist balance sheet of the struggles of our class.

Feminist revolution?

"The subversive nature of a movement or organization cannot be measured by the number of armed women — nor its feminist character either. Since the 1960s, across all continents, most guerrillas have included or include numerous female combatants — for example in Colombia. This

is even truer amongst Maoist-inspired guerrillas (Nepal, Peru, Philippines, etc.) using the strategy of "People's War": male/female equality should contribute to the tearing down of traditional structures, feudal or tribal (always patriarchal). It is in the Maoist origins of the PKK-PYD that one finds the source of what specialists call "martial feminism"."

"The feminist revolution has also been modest. Men still predominate both in the streets and workplaces. And, as the PKK website shows, the organisation's feminist theory derives more from the thoughts of its patriarch, Abdullah Ocalan, than from any independent feminist movement. Furthermore, any empowerment of women derived from joining – or from being forcibly conscripted into – the militia is unlikely to last. As in previous revolutionary wars, it will inevitably be contradicted by the disempowerment of obeying orders, combined with the brutalisation and trauma of war."

And then what...

Those who will read this publication with a pernicious attitude will accuse us to be purists, to not want to make our hands dirty, to remain on the sidelines. But one thing is to grasp the present contradictions in a given social process and to struggle for overcoming these contradictions in a revolutionary way, and another quite different thing is to defend these contradictions as if their mere existence implies the beginning of a social revolution.

We have no doubt about the historical existence of proletarian struggles in the region that the Kurds call Kurdistan. It is our task and that of all internationalists to try to penetrate the Social Democratic ideological cover and to draw conclusions from the current period. It's not a question to avoid to support the Kurds but to recognize the Kurds are an ethnic group like any other, with social classes and cultural and everyday constraints of all kinds. It's not a question to support generally and uncritically any expression, under the victimizing idea of a people without a nation. Fuck the nations!

Revolutionaries are internationalists; we don't turn a blind eye to this or that region or fight for distinct things in different regions. We don't endorse national liberation here, communist revolution there and democratic confederalism somewhere else. Fuck self-determination!

We have to get rid of the leftist logic, the logic that is always based on the analysis of the inter-bourgeois conflicts in a region, and then takes its favorite power side. We always have to start from the genuine expressions of the struggle of our class to find a way to show solidarity and contribute to its propagation and spreading.

We don't side with anybody in this conflict if we rely on the story that one wants to sell us. Our only possible side is to always claim the invariant mottos, to not give up, and to not to be blind: Social revolution; worldwide and total!

Source in Spanish: http://boletinlaovejanegra.blogspot.com/2015/09/revolucion-en-rojava.html & http://www.mediafire.com/view/xmfz62d4viheb59/laovejanegra31rosario.pdf

English Translation : Třídní válka # Class War # Guerre de Classe

La Oveja Negra [The Black Sheep]

Boletín de la Biblioteca y Archivo Histórico-Social «Alberto Ghiraldo»

Año 4 * Número 31 * Septiembre 2015

Guerre de Classe
Revolution in Rojava?
Nov 23 2015

https://libcom.org/news/la-oveja-negra-revolution-rojava-23112015

theanarchistlibrary.org