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What type of anarchism in the 21st century?

International Libertarian Solidarity

2006

The changes which have taken place in the recent history of this world we live in give rise to the doubts, and almost existentialist questions of:

- What say have anarchists got in all of this?
- What role does or can anarchism play in a society like this?
- Has this philosophy passed on to a better life?
- Should we limit ourselves to an anarchism that is more ethical than political, more called to respond almost from a private level, or can it aspire to compose reality?

Other philosophies, such as Marxism for example, have been forced to rethink their meaningfulness, arriving at many conclusions. The same is occurring to anarchism. Perhaps in our case no Wall has fallen on us, nevertheless we have spent decades in need of a profound revision of our proposals and goals, as well as a decisive modernising of our way of thinking and our ideas.

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What does a philosophy born for freedom and equality have to say in a world in which power is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, but in which there are tools that can stomp out this power? What can it say in the era of transnational companies, more powerful than the majority of States? Or of an era in which Internet provides all of us with a privileged viewing point to observe and co-ordinate initiatives, spread knowledge and ideas and articulate responses. What proposals does anarchism have against indiscriminate and unlimited development of technology, which, far from putting itself to the service of humanity is sided with commerce and the sheer profit. Or when humanity's dialogue with nature, instead of freeing us from our dependence on nature, gives rise to an egoistical exploitation where some people waste resources while the majority barely have enough to keep going. What is anarchism's response to democracy when the latter is in a clear crisis as system of social organisation?

The Left changed greatly in the second half of the last century. The large social pact, which bore the weight of the welfare state of these years, has also been subjected to revision. For many, the Left is merely the other face of the Right, the spare wheel used by the system when certain occasions or socio-economic cycles require it. Little is expected from it. However, this vast and complex "left" is also inhabited by groups and sensibilities that long ago got over historical divisions. Some argue that traditional Left ideologies are hoary fossils whose doctrinal orthodoxy has little to say in today's world. What can anarchism bring to the new philosophies of social liberation which our era will give birth to? Or is our philosophy so wonderful that it will never be surpassed by any other? And, what can we say about that old revolutionary hypothesis, the sublime moment when the system goes to hell and is replaced by something else, supposedly better? Does anarchism still think that modern societies change through this procedure? Does it still think that this will be useful and desirable? And, if not, what should we change it with?

It is clear that we no longer live in the same State which Bakunin directed his invectives against. Many of these States are, as we mentioned before, true puppets against the real power of the companies they give shelter to. All of them are put in doubt by the reality of multi-State or "supra-State" articulations which are bulldozing the previous attributions of the old Nation State: currency, policies of foreign affair and armed forces.

The Nation-State belongs to the past. To the point that nationalist arguments, apparently once again in vogue, are nothing more than cries of agony before a world which has condemned difference to nothingness. On the other hand, and contradicting the aforesaid, the State has acquired infinitive attributions. It is more of a warder than ever, a Big Brother which touches, investigates and taxes the deepest intimacies of its citizens. And, to add more contradictions, it is also, or at least is seen as being, the manifestation or materialisation of important social protection devices and/or as insurance for the continued collectivism of fundamental points such as education, healthcare and the rest of public services.

If, therefore, the State of Bakunin's days and our State differ so greatly, what should be our analysis of and attitude towards it (the State)? This is certainly not the first time that we have discussed this question amongst ourselves, but that does not take away the need to have a sufficiently solid and accepted criteria which can be generically perceived as the answer given by the libertarian philosophy.

Philosophy is not the only thing put to question. The other great debate amongst libertarians is about organising, how to coordinate action with the highest efficiency and lowest risk of reproducing hierarchies. Historically we have acted in trade unions, affinity groups, and larger collectives, as well as individually, within spheres of political action, at other times culturally, socially, ... How should we conveniently act now in order to thwart the increasingly undesirable changes in this world? How should we relate to this world? In what type of organisations?

In short, what is anarchism in the 21st century? Is it a solid political theory around which we can build an ample social response? Or is it an ethical reply (but, nevertheless, not less practical) by which we can survive in and react against this world? Is it just another ingredient of a liberating philosophy which adapts itself better as an answer to this historical moment? Or is it the eternal aching cry of the subdued and oppressed, of the losers?

A lot of questions to be answered. The historical anarchist and syndical Congresses were shaped around questions such as these. The *Confederacion General de Trabajo* (CGT) is a syndical organisation made up of workers who think differently. Nevertheless, it sees itself and is seen by other libertarians, as the best way to organise in the workplace and socially, would like to invite anyone interested in these questions to a full and ample debate.

To this end, we have committed ourselves to a Libertarian Week, to which people from all over the world are invited to debate, discuss, propose, as well as live, share, interchange and work together with people who feel the same as they do.

In other words, we are calling on all those comrades who prefer to share and discuss ideas, instead of insisting on sterile and tiring quarrels and rows. We call on comrades from all organisations and groups with a real presence and intervention in aspects of this world that need changing (or, at least, improvement).