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On Class Struggle and the Daily Struggle

Kubo Yuzuru

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Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)*.

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Editor's Note: Kubo Yuzuru (1903–1961) was a Japanese anarcho-syndicalist. In this article, “Of the Class Struggle and the Daily Struggle,” originally published in *Kokushoku Undo* in 1928, he responds to some of the criticisms of anarcho-syndicalism made by the “pure anarchists.” Ironically, the ZenkokuJiren labour federation adopted a “pure anarchist” position in 1928, and the anarcho-syndicalists broke away to form a separate anarcho-syndicalist organization. By 1931, the ZenkokuJiren had over 16,000 members, while the anarcho-syndicalist federation, the Libertarian Federal Council of Labour Unions of Japan (Nihon Rodo Kumiai Jiya Rengo Kyogikai, referred to as the Jikyō), had a membership of around 3,000. As Hatta Shūzō argued in the selection above, the “pure anarchists” did not oppose trade unions as such; rather, they argued that the unions should be animated by an anarchist spirit, with the goal of a decentralized, classless, anarchistic communist society always in mind. The translation of Kubo’s article by Yoshitaru Hashimoto, originally published in *A Short History of the Anarchist Movement in Japan* (Tokyo: Idea

Publishing, 1979), has been modified by the editor for stylistic reasons.

IT IS NO WONDER THAT THE ANARCHIST promotes class struggle and the daily struggle, for there is no reason to prevent such propaganda by the deed. There may be a few intolerant ideologues among Japanese anarchists who accuse class struggle of being an amalgam of Marxism. But the tactic of class struggle is not the monopoly of the Marxists...

Capitalism divides society into two classes, such as the oppressor and the oppressed, the exploiter and the exploited. There we come face to face with the confrontation of classes and the strife between them. The existence of classes engenders class struggle. Where class struggle is a fact, there our movement will be. Really, the problem is one of goals and the method of struggle. Then we can see two main tendencies of class struggle, one based on authoritarian Marxism, the other on free federation. According to the Marxist conception of class struggle, the proletariat will take over the position of the capitalist class by usurping political power through political struggle. Its object being political power...it means the monopoly of a party... That is, Marxist class struggle does not bring an end to the strife or the contradiction of classes, but reverses the positions of the opposed classes. Nominally it is the dictatorship of the proletariat, although in fact the Marxists do not concern themselves with their fellow workers' intentions of emancipation, despite their possession of numerical strength. There [in Marxism! the ideas of free federation and spontaneity, essential factors for building the new society, are killed. Therefore, we are vehemently opposed to them.

Our class struggle is based on the principles of communal property and anti-authoritarianism, to put an end to class

confrontation, in short, to create a new society where there is neither exploiter nor exploited, neither master nor slave, revived with spontaneity and mutual free agreement as an integral whole. After all, our class struggle is to achieve the radical transformation of economic and political institutions by means of the workers' organizations based on the ideal of free federation. Their [the Marxists'] goal is to replace one ruling class with another, but ours is to put an end to class antagonism. Because of the aggravation of the class struggle, you may condemn us as Marxists; then the free federations of labour unions that in the past... had a revolutionary platform based on class struggle ought to be condemned as Marxist too. There are some who dismiss the class struggle but deny it by referring to the elimination of class contradictions. This is... a pretext for avoiding the terminology of class struggle. It also seems to proclaim the ceasing of struggle against the master and capitalist... There are a number of tactics in Marxist strategy borrowed from the syndicalists and anarchists... you narrow-minded people remind me of the fable of a dog having a fish in its mouth who barked at its own reflection and lost the fish, as you indiscriminately accuse us of merely using the same phraseology as the Bolsheviks...

It is possible to argue that the anarchist movement is divided into economic and political phases. The movement related to the economic field deals with the struggle to obtain daily bread for the worker. The desire to obtain better bread, to conquer bread, has been, in fact, the source of modern socialism. If the workers were without the desire for the good of tomorrow, there never would have been a liberation movement. Anarchism originated from the fact of the struggle of the workers. Without that, there would be no anarchism... [Anarchism! has far greater meaning than to denigrate the workers' economic struggles as mere reformism. We do not neglect the fact that there is a distance between raising wages, reforming conditions and the ideal society. Nevertheless, it is our role

to move step by step against the foundations of capitalism. I need not point out that raising wages and improving working conditions are not our goals per se. On the contrary, they are nothing more than a means or rationale, yet by such means we ought to rouse direct action and cultivate a bud of anarchism through daily struggle, which I believe will be the preparation for revolution...

Besides the economic struggle, there is also the political struggle. Besides economic oppression by the capitalist, there is also political tyranny... We ought to lead a direct struggle of revolutionary movements of the people against all political institutions and oppressive measures, such as the heavy tax burden for the benefit of the capitalists. Then we create awareness of anti-authoritarianism. We should seize every opportunity in economic and political struggles so that anarchist thought may prevail... We urge grabbing every chance and utilizing any moment ... to shake the foundations of society... That is to say, the daily struggle is a ceaseless struggle.