

From a Shia Muslim to an Anarcho-Syndicalist

Nima Golkar

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The Iranian online magazine “Anarchism era” will organize a series of interviews with some Iranian anarchists, who are involved in the political movement since few decades already. Our purpose is to take a small step forward in the history and experience of the struggle of the anarchists in Iran, and to present this documentation to the young generation. This time [January 16, 2019] is the third interview that has been done with NIMA [Hasse] GOLKAR. He is a translator and co-author of the online magazine “Anarchism era” / Anarchist Union of Afghanistan and Iran

Anarchism Era: dear companion, please tell us from what year did you start working in the anarchist field, and if you have published articles? If your answer is yes, at what point

Nima Golkar: Warm regards to you, dear activists in the “Anarchism Era”, who with love and affection has invited me to this [written] conversation

Given my brief experience in the last decade, which has been a worker activist in the “Central Organization of Swedish Workers – Syndicalists” and constantly and systematically acquainted me with anarchist – syndicalist literature, which in my opinion are these inseparable twins. Of course, I can not take the role of a theoretical expert to answer your questions. But only as a supporter for Anarcho-Syndicalism

Today especially young people turn to this emerging movement in Iran and I have the special respect for your dear colleagues and readers, so I want to do my duty and try to give as short answer as possible to your questions. But first and foremost, I want to give you a background to my political past to this day

In early November 1976, I came to the northern part of Sweden, the city of Umeå, because of my long time dissatisfaction with the Shah’s dictatorial and capitalist regime. I lived in a poor family with a politically active father. With the strong political atmosphere of the university and political parties in this city, and in particular the active presence of the “World Confederation of Iranian students abroad”, I was attracted to the leftist movement, despite my conventional Shia Islamic beliefs at the beginning of my residency

I was very impressed and influenced by a book named “The Ideological Political Declaration”, published 1975 by the Shia Islamic organization “Iranian People’s Mojahedin” which had changed its ideological view from Islam to Marxism-Leninism. One of the key arguments in this book

was this sentence: “The Islamic religion for us was like a rotten rag. We repaired some of it, but ripped apart again in other parts “. This short sentence with the middle level of knowledge of Shia Islam which I had, made me think a lot about it. Gradually, the roof and wall of my religious beliefs began to fall down. This helped me that my religious thinking increasingly lose their color. I was drawn to the Marxist view and its way of struggles. During these early days, I was told about anarchism, which was defined as chaos. Based on that time’s political knowledge and educational level of the movement. Anarchism was regarded as an enemy of the working class and syndicalism was defined as a reformist and reactionary organization, even a counter-revolutionary, only mentioned through certain decisions of the Soviet Union Bolshevik party’s congresses. Of course, I believed it. Unfortunately, the usual Marxist Leneinist education (with all its different colors : bolchevist, maoist, hoxhaist and i forget surely others sects) of those days and even today, in tune with the capitalist system’s theorists, gave us deliberate wrong – still gives us – one-sidedness and sickly definitions of anarchism

Their main argument at that time was the sailors’ revolt in the city of Kronstadt. For them, the Party had to crash the Kronsdadt movement to save the Party, identified as the Revolution. Due to the low level of our political knowledge, we could not accept the description of this unfortunate event as it happened in reality. We could not imagine Revolution to be a worker’s autonomous movement, accoring marxist point of view, the Party was the Vanguard so the party could not be wrong and every body had to obey the party without discussion. Of course, the profound and damaging effects of such false and unrealistic propaganda about anarchism in the powerful movement of anti-anarchism-syndicalism, especially from the Bolsheviks in the former Soviet Union after the October Revolution [1921] which ideologically – politically I belonged to this movement, had long-standing and radical influence in my thinking. And it continued for years after the defeat of the Iranian Communist movement and the silence activity of one of its associated organizations named “PEYKAR” [Struggle Organization for the Liberation of the Worker Class] which Isympathized with when in the student movement abroad

Several years later, I came to understand the true and really definition of anarchism – syndicalism. At that time, I did not know the basic and simple meaning of anarchism, namely “without any state”. We used to use the word “syndicalist” as a profanity, and “economist” as a politically bad label against our opponents. We also considered the legitimate uprising of the anarchist sailors in support of the syndicalist workers’ strike, against the Soviet state in Kronstadt, between February and March 1921, as a counter-revolutionary act. I could not have asked myself at the time: Wasn’t it the sailors’ rebellion in defense of the secret workers’ strike committee in conjunction with a protests against the words and actions of the Communist Party under Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, ...? Would not the withdrawal of the Communist Party from its slogan of “All power to the People’s Council” to turn it into “All power to the Communist Party” be considered as a kind of hypocrisy

Why must those parts of the dissenting working class, the peasants and the sailors, who demanded that: “address the situation of the poor livelihood, freedom of speech, the stopping of concentration camps, the change of the war policy, the abolition of the party’s control over the people council, ...” reacted in a dictatorial way in the most hardest form

Why the anarchists – who had saved their homeland during the critical crisis in Russia during the revolution of 1905 and 1917 and cooperated in the struggle together with the Communist Party – would have suddenly change in a way that teh Communist party declared war on “the small bourgeois and chaotic anarchists”, and literally slaughter tens of thousands of protesters

with the help of the Red Army under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, under the direct orders of comrade Vladimir Lenin? Why the Communists executed so many of anarchists and also protesting people, without a single and public trial

Understanding of all these painful facts caused the roof and wall of my previous thoughts to collapse, and the more I studied the various anarchist-syndicalist literature of Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman etc. in the Swedish language, the more I could distance myself from the previous view and lead my thinking in a different direction. But all this desire for more knowledge, started in a primitive and non-continuous way, until a terrible event happened in Stockholm which changed my old hostile thinking ever since in favor of anarchism-syndicalism

On October 12, 1999, Björn Söderberg [born 1958 in Sweden] was murdered by several shots outside of his home, carried out by some young neo-Nazis, because of his syndicalist and anti-fascist activities. Björn was a worker rights activist and member of "The Central Organisation of the Workers of Sweden" / SAC. At his solemn memory, which I also attended, more than twenty thousand people gathered in the south of Stockholm city. It was after that time that I gradually became acquainted with the anarchist syndicalist books in Swedish, which had been written by the anarchists themselves and not by the Bolsheviks. Fortunately was compiled later in 2012 a collection of these literature in a book entitled "A Century of Syndicalism [in Sweden]". If I live longer [September 2019, I turned sixty-eight years], then I will try to translate these articles in Persian as much as I can. My studies in this field has gradually changed my political outlook, which had the angle of one hundred and eighty degrees of my previous political narrow-mindedness, in favor of the sympathy of anarchism-syndicalism

At the end of 1987, due to the failure of the left movement in Iran, all my organizational political activities ceased as a serious emergency consequence. And this "offered" me political frustration and depression [not psychically] until the end of 2008. At that point, my previous political outlook faded to a large extent

From this time until today, January 2019, I am a member of the Stockholm Bus Syndicate, which is affiliated with the "Swedish Workers Central Organization – the Syndicalists". So my political path changed through the passing of good collective and individual education. And of course, the more I try to learn, the more discover that I have less knowledge. From 2014 until now, I have been a member of the board of "Syndicalist Bus drivers in Stockholm / SBS08"

Since December 2013, after several years of resistance to activity on Facebook, I began to publish more anarchist-syndicalist texts and pictures in Swedish and sometimes in Persian. Later, I discovered some Facebook users with the anarcho-syndicalist tendencies, among others someone under the synonym "Anarchist Mulla". Then I decided to translate some interesting content from these pages into Swedish for posting on my Facebook account. The news of the arrest of one of the editors on these pages made me not publish them. It was later revealed that one of the arrested was a young man named "Soheil Arabi". And from now increased on my interest in his high consciousness and persistent and courageous personality. His views were very near to my intellectual political tendencies. These still exist. Therefore, I decided to introduce him to Swedish society for the first time by translating of his views through letters from the prison. My acquaintance with the very informative and good online magazine "Anarchism Era", which I highly recommend to all my friends to read it, allowed me to spread my thoughts on a larger scale. I try to do as much as I can according to my human-political commitment, which I have happily always kept loyal for this since my arrival in the Sweden, away from all kinds of narrow-

ness and fanaticism. Something that unfortunately still prevails in our left movement. Yesterday I was active in one form and today in another form and content

Question 2: Had you been alone this way or were there some friends with you to promote the anarchist movement of the Persian-speaking people? If you have been in contact with them, please mention the names of the comrades and also their activities

Answer 2: Fortunately, I was not alone, because trade union activities enabled me to have a good educational opportunities. But even though there was anarchist-syndicalist literature in Persian, I had no idea about it. It was only in recent years that I came in contact with a struggling teacher who I knew her for thirty years ago. She is one of your co-workers. It was thanks to her that aroused my interest in co-working with the magazine “Anarchism era”

Question 3: Of course there have been obstacles along the way to you, so please tell us a short and useful experience to our readers, to be able to help even the anarchist movement. And whether states and parties have agreed or have taken hostile positions against this movement

Answer 3: Yes, that’s right! Here I will tell you two of my experiences to your readers

One of my organizational experiences together with other members of our union was to block and refuse to move on city buses in some central parts of Stockholm. We wanted to protest against election advertisements from a racist party named “The Sweden Democrats” ahead of the Swedish parliamentary elections in August 2014. At that time, we found out that a contractor within bus companies had decided to put up some fascist and racist party campaign posters on a number of city traffic buses. After we learned about this, our little trade union decided to do something great. And it was that we all members made a collective decision to stop racist propaganda through a direct action. Of course, we were fully aware of the reaction from the job buyer to such “chaos and sabotage” would not be positive. But we did the courageous action despite the possible consequences, such as fines or dismissal from our work. We managed to stop several buses during the high traffic hours. This suddenly protest action was not okay for some of the shocking passengers in the beginning, But after the necessary oral and written explanation, we reduced their anger. The bus company sued us in Sweden’s Highest Labor Court and demanded an incredible financial damages of SEK 100,000. Due to some technical error on our part, the Supreme Labor Court which its decision is final and cannot be appealed, our strike declared illegal and thus accepted the bus company’s financial request. Since we lost the legal process, we also have to pay court costs of SEK 20,000. But our union had no financial opportunity to pay all these sums. So we did exactly the same way a company in such a case usually does, namely, we filed for bankruptcy. As a result, the hard blow of the capitalist system and one of its extended arm, the Labor Court [in addition to police power], could not kill us as workers. After a short time we gathered all old members and set up a new organization with the same essence as before, but only with a change of name. Since then, we have continued our union activity again to the present date. It is very important to mention that the LO – Unions’ national organization in Sweden – which has a political connection to the Social Democratic Party, because of their deep reconciliation and conservative nature in the fight against the Capitalist system, did not show the least support and solidarity for our anti-racist action

Another experience, this time politically, was that on July 7 – 8, 2017, I participated in the large anti-capitalist demonstrations against the leaders of the major capitalist countries known as the “G20 Summit” in Hamburg, Germany. We were more than two hundred anarchists from the Scandinavian countries [Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark], all of whom were stopped by about one hundred customs and security police at the Danish-German border. We went with

five buses, which I drove one of them. For more than four hours we were carefully examined and answered their varied questions. Since we had no legal barriers to entering the country, they allowed us to travel further. Of course, the main purpose of the police to extend unnecessary checks was that we could not reach the demonstration at any price. On the first day in Hamburg, nearly fifteen thousand protesting anarchists from all parts of the world would attend, under the slogan "WELCOME TO HELL!". Our late arrival in the city prevented us from being part of this collection. On the second day, more than 100,000 anti-fascist people marched in more than forty different gatherings in different parts of the city, but all held peaceful demonstrations under the slogan "Solidarity Without Borders". Inside the city looked totally like a war situation, when about twenty-five thousand fully armed riot police attacked as usual anarchist groups with strong water cannons, tear gas, electric batons and so on. Hundreds of protesters were arrested and many injured, including police. Fortunately, none of our comrades were seriously injured. More than 95% of us were young people and All of us returned to our hometowns with great satisfaction and unforgettable memories

Question 4: It seems that the first anarchist publications abroad included "Azadmanesh" [Libertarian], "Naafarmaan" [Disobedient], "Ensaan-e-Azad" [the Free Human], "Abgoun" [Water color] and so on related to the year 1976. Can you name any information about the staff writers or publication date

Answer 4: Unfortunately, I had not been looking for such publications because of my hostile view of anarchism-syndicalism, therefore I am not aware of these publications

Question 5: Can a party, based on your knowledge and experience, call itself anarchist? To what extent can anarchism, philosophically, operate in the form of a political party

Answer 5: No, it is not possible, because according to the known anarchist-syndicalist principles, nobody of anarchists should organize themselves into a political party. In order to: 1- A political party fights to conquer the state and the parliamentary power. But anarchists fights against parliament and all kinds of the authorities as well as leadership and guardianship, 2- The structure of a political party organization is VERTICAL, UPPER-DOWN and led by one authoritarian leader. It fights to conquer the state and the parliamentary power. But structure of an anarchist-syndicalist organization is quite the opposite. It is HORIZONTAL and DOWNER-UP without any leader. It fights against all the states power and parliamentarism

Question 6: We have noticed a longer stop on the anarchist publications. Which anarchist activists, whether in the field or online, have you been in contact with they

Answer 6: I have not known or been in contact with any other anarchist journals in recent years, except with the online magazine "Anarchism era" which I collaborate with now. In recent months, I have come across a party called "IRANARCHISM" [National-Anarchism]. In my previous definition of the characteristics of an anarchist organization, I see a serious and dangerous deviation in this group from the true anarchist principles, which I have hitherto perceived. I experience the party leader ALI ABDOLREZAEI, as a sickly narcissistic and self-centric person. I do not think that he behaves verbally as an anarchist and political person when he approaches his critical opponents with very vulgar and worst sexist and patriarchal word choices. I believe that if an anarchist organization presents itself as a "nationalist party", so means that blowing in a trumpet from its open exit, and this can be counted as a violation of its purpose. Therefore, none of the criteria and definitions of true anarchism are met. My friendly suggestion to this man and his supporters is that they should stop playing as a competitor, especially when this makes the

enemy happy. We must work in a sound political atmosphere and let each political organization go its own way

Question 7: What is your opinion as an anarchist about Rojava and the development in Kurdistan? Is the built society in Rojava exactly the same as the ideal anarchist society system? What are its similarities and differences

Answer 7: I have explicitly supported, especially the Palestinian and Kurdish movements since 1977 and I will continue be in solidarity with their bloody struggle in the future. The Rojava Revolution and its indescribable and heroic resistance, especially women's fight against the Islamic terrorists called ISIS [Daesh] is a good reason for my pride in it. The socio-political project now being carried out in a part of Kurdistan in the north of Syria – ROJAVA – is not the exact as the ideal anarchist society system. In my opinion it is primitive in practice but acceptable. This is a good model for achieving the long-term anarcho-syndicalist project

Question 8: For young people's knowledge, name some teaching anarchists in political and educational activities for generations before you or in your generation

Answer 8: Of course, the number of anarchists from previous generations are really many, especially of the Paris Commune Revolution 1871, where they played a very crucial and pioneering role. Even from the Russian revolution 1905 and the Soviet Revolution of 1917 against the Tsars. I have mentioned above only three of the oldest: Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Emma Goldman. Therefore, I see no necessity to list more than these here

Unfortunately, I don't remember any people in my generation, but I have to present a brave and self-sacrificing comrade who has openly called himself an anarchist, namely SOHEIL ARABI. He is now being held prisoner by the Fascistic Shia Islamic Caliphate regime in Iran

Question 9: Do anarchists use sexist word choices and ugly swine literature in their writings? Do the anarchists have any headman over themselves or leader? According to the philosophical characteristics of anarchism, is it possible to act authoritatively and form an anarchist party organization

Answer 9: In questions 5 and 6 I have answered very briefly and well, therefore no need to repeat again. But must admit that I have never seen or experienced in an anarchist movement any so-called human such as "Ali Abdulrezaei". I see him as an exception phenomenon of the worst possible species, since there is no need to use gross vulgar expressions and behave as embarrassingly as a toddler to seek after attention. "It's a strange era, my dear" [Quotes from the Iranian poet Ahmad Shamlou]

Question 10: What do you think when we hear that anarchism is equated with "chaos" both from the right to the left activists? The latest example is the Shah's son, Reza Pahlavi

Answer 10: I see no other reason than their fear of the development and dissemination of the anarchist-syndicalist ideas and projects. For example, I mentioned the oppression of the Bolshevik Party earlier. It is questionable to me that how parts of the left-wing movement in Iran, in the same direction and harmony with the theorists of the Capitalist system and its representatives in different colors, understand anarchism, consciously or unconsciously, only in the term of "chaos". They try to use the word "chaos" in any case as a political – organizational degrading expression against us

Aren't they ashamed those comrades who claim to be Communists, Marxists, Leninists etc. when they define "anarchy" in the same terminology as Reza Pahlavi? Because if we search for the Greek word "Anarchy" in all neutral Dictionnaires of the world's prestigious library, we will

clearly find the right definition, where “a” is a negative prefix meaning “without” and “narchy” means “state

Now that they consciously define the keyword “anarchy” as “chaos” and try to hypocritically deceive the unconscious public opinion, in my mind they want to show only their resistance against the formation of a social system without any State and consequently without any Parliament and Party, and so on

Therefore, by realizing this anarchist – syndicalist project as “chaotic and destructive” so they experience this as fear and it will hit them with a panic attack!! The reason why the Capitalist system with all its representatives and supporters openly opposes and cooperates against such a “chaotic” project is understandable, but why the left-wing comrades which struggling to gain power within the State, Parliament and the Party are hiding it behind other explanations

Question 11: As an anarchist, how do you view the environment and climate situation in Iran and the Earth in general, and what important solutions are there to deal with climate change

Answer 11: More than two decades have passed since most environmental scientists have turned on the warning bell on respiratory air and seawater pollution and climate change in nature. They believe that through the ruthless transition to fossil fuels, as well as unlimited use, especially in the oil and coal industry, petro-chemicals, have all these factors added and will continue to sustain their lasting destructive effects, including greenhouse warming in nature against plants and animals. But with the help of politicians and representatives of the inhuman capitalist system, either through the global monopolies or through the hypocritical representatives in the parliaments, who tricks people for not doing any good and effective action in reducing this crisis which is holding on ruining the future of humanity. Although there is new scientific research and possible practical suggestions for solving this vital and serious crisis, such as the use of solar cell systems, they will do nothing but deliver only meaningless annual empty promises with very high costs in their very wide and long conference halls and inside the parliaments. Therefore, in my opinion, the best way to save the nature – humans is that the working people must rise up and changing this unequal and exploitative system and instead to build a libertarian and equal socialist system with the underpinnings of the participation cooperative economy and the superstructure of a federal-democratic-ecological self-management council system. In other words, establishing a anarchist communist socio-political system, using anarcho-syndicalism to reach this aim, instead of establishing a “state-nation” with help of the parliaments and the political parties. If there has to be a fundamental change in the working people’s everyday life, and about the theory and practice of the past that has been tested many times, but has not had the necessary performance and success and ended with a failure, then it is better and wiser to put them aside and not go back to the past repeatedly, because we will never come to anything other solution than what we have achieved so far. So let’s evaluate the results of the previous plans and choose a different route and propose another project to be able to organize the working people. It is clear that in the very complex human society with one or more solutions and projects cannot be achieved so much, if we want to achieve a equal society with libertarian system without any exploitation of the individual. According to what I believe today, the solution can be a balanced mix of anarchism-syndicalism together with other equivalent projects, given the calculation of the specification of each country and time situation. It is possible to achieve such a purpose in the near or longer perspective, where all the world’s people would live together in the peace and with love and solidarity

If we believe in Communism in such a sense “From each one according to ability and to each one according to need”, then this proves that in the existing human society, it is not possible to reconcile each individual with each other, nor unite individual beliefs precisely because of the different needs of individuals. And of course, it is precisely because of this contradiction in thoughts and beliefs that inevitably leads to growth, development and changing in society

Question 12: Finally, if you want to add anything more, please let our readers know about it

Answer 12: Thank you my dear comrades, for the kindness of choosing me as a reliable person for this interview, also wish good health, happiness and victory for you and all your readers. Finally, I hope that this catastrophic Capitalist Shia Islamic Caliphate regime would fall down as soon as possible

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