

What's new in “anarchism”?

National self-determination and the coincidence of interests with capital?!

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The following lines are a short response to an article by Wayne Price published on the Czech Anarchist Federation (AFed) website. The delay in our brief response can only be explained by the fact that it took us a long time to recover from the text “Are Anarchists Giving in to War Fever?” [originally this text was published in English on the Anarkismo network]. We assumed that even an organization as programmatically disparate and confused as AFed could not deviate from at least the basic principles of anarchism, since it already has it in its name. But we were wrong.

In the context of the war in the Ukraine, under the guise of specific conditions and critical support, Wayne Price (and his publisher, AFed) are trying to introduce into anarchism (which we take for a revolutionary movement and part of the general struggle of the proletariat against the dictatorship of capital) fundamental elements of bourgeois ideology that are in direct contradiction to the anarchist program for the emancipation of humanity. Let’s remark that this program does not derive from the text of this or that anarchist theorist, but was formed in opposition to capitalism, in struggle against it and as its negation.

Anarchists for the nation?

Who exactly do the “anarchists” of AFed in Ukraine support? Wayne Price tries to convince us that it is the “oppressed nation”. He states that “Anarchists reject nationalism but not the goal of national self-determination (...) including the freedom of a people to chose what political system they want (e.g. a democratic state, a centralized state, or no state at all [anarchy]) — and their freedom to decide what economic system they want (state socialism, capitalism, libertarian socialism).”

That “anarchists” operate with the concept of nation is new to us! For until now, we have assumed that anarchists are opposed to nationhood and its material consequences such as the nation-state, national self-determination, the national unity, and ultimately even the war between nations.

Revolutionary anarchists have always held anti-national positions, and for a good reason. If we argue that social relations correspond to the stage of development of material production and also produce principles, ideas, and categories corresponding to these social relations, then it is clear that even these ideas, these categories, are only historical and transitory products that appear and disappear. Such an idea is also the nation, an artificially created entity, a historical product of the development of the productive forces, which served the bourgeoisie to carry out its revolution, to establish its domination. And also to attach the proletariat to its project, to divide it into nation-states, to convince it that its interests are identical with those of the capitalists of the same nationality, so that it can better control it physically and ideologically.

The nation is an artificial alliance of the exploited and the exploiters. The “people’s independence, culture and national freedom” that Wayne Price comes up with is just a terrain on which the bourgeoisie can exploit us at will and make us believe that if we are chased to work by a slaveholder who speaks our language, our toil is more bearable.

The constitution of the proletariat as a class is constantly undermined by the competition between proletarians as free and equal sellers of commodities, of labor power. All ideological, political and military forces consolidate this atomization on which social peace and bourgeois order lean on. The proletariat disintegrates into the people, this bourgeois negation of the exploited

as a universal being, as a class standing in antagonism to capital. And this negation ultimately culminates in the massacre in the capitalist war.

The establishment and existence of nation-states has not eliminated the very essence of the bourgeoisie – competition – which forces the bourgeois to brutally oppose and confront each other on all levels regarding the distribution of the means of production and markets. Unity within the bourgeoisie (for example within a nation-state, international agreements, etc.) is established in order to obtain the best possible conditions in the commercial war (and also the class war). This unity can at any time break up into various specific factions which will assert their interests in mutual conflicts.

Therefore, any peace is only a phase of an upcoming war. On the other hand, every action of the proletariat – however partial – in which it acts for itself and its interests contains an affirmation of the proletariat and its struggle for the general social revolution.

That is why anarchism as a revolutionary movement from the beginning opposes the fatherland, the nation and the national struggle and seeks the abolition of all frontiers and nations. Revolutionary anarchists do not support one nation against another, neither “the weaker one” nor “the invaded one” nor “the oppressed one”. Revolutionary anarchists stand on the side of the proletariat on both sides of the front.

The coincidence of whose interests?

Price explains the fact that some “anarchists” are fighting for the interests of the Ukrainian state by a kind of temporary “coincidence of interests between Western imperialism and the Ukrainian people.”

If “anarchists” feel that their interests are “temporarily” intersecting with those of the bourgeoisie, they should seriously consider what interests are actually concerned. In the case of Russia and the Western powers opposed to it, it is about expanding the sphere of influence and maintaining Ukraine’s status as a buffer zone.

As far as we know, the anarchists, as part of our class movement, are and always have been concerned with bringing about a social revolution. With realizing the interests of the oppressed class, liberating it from the yoke of capitalism, with realizing a real human community.

So what is the coincidence of interests?

Just as it is not in the interest of the proletariat to build new factories (in which it will exchange its life energy in filth and sweat for a poor wage, contributing not only to the enrichment of a particular capitalist-owner, but above all to reproduction of the whole social relation of capital that enslaves it), neither it is in its interest to defend national borders, the integrity of territory, democracy or human rights, which are only a framework for its exploitation and an instrument of control.

Wayne Price invokes the example of the Friends of Durruti. But he didn’t understand their critique of the united front in the least. After all, the united front which the Friends of Durruti criticize is not only a united formal organization, the participation of anarchists in government or collaboration with this or that party, but also an informal alliance, a united course of struggle for and in the name of the bourgeois program, a resignation to the program of the proletariat and its postponement to the time “after the war”, i.e. precisely the unity of interests referred to above.

Indeed, the Friends of Durruti did not demand the withdrawal of the anarchists from the front, but this proved to be a decisive error from a historical point of view. While the proletarians on the Aragon front thought that they were defending by their struggle the ongoing social revolution against the fascists, the democratic anti-fascist parties were carrying out a counter-revolution in the hinterland. In other words, instead of freezing in the trenches and suffering from a lack of supplies and ammunition, the anarchists of Spain should have gone to Barcelona and Madrid to put the brakes on the forces which, under the guise of a united anti-fascist front, were step by step restoring the rule of capital. The Spanish Revolution was defeated both by the fascists and, precisely and above all, by the “democratic parties” which had prepared the ground for them.

There is now no proletarian revolution in the Ukraine, and the proletarians on the front are indisputably dying only for the bourgeois state and its interests. Therefore, we cannot but repeat what many have pointed out before us. The proletariat has no interest in defending its state or in fighting for democracy. Neither democracy nor “our own state” is a terrain that is more favorable to the class struggle – quite the contrary.

The slogan of the Ukrainian proletariat is not “Glory to Ukraine” (a better one, more democratic one, socially just one and altogether the one that cannot exist in the reality of capitalist relations), but “Not a man out of the factory, not a penny out of the wage!”

What solidarity?

We can only understand the capitalist world and its deep social contradictions through the perspective of proletarian struggle, which is and must necessarily be internationalist. The proletariat, whatever country it is in, whatever conditions it faces, constitutes one single international class, and by the logic of the matter it is up against one and the same enemy.

The bourgeoisie and its ideologues (even though they may beautifully call themselves “anarchists”) deny the universal character of the conditions of struggle of the proletariat, in stressing the specifics of this or that situation.

The bourgeoisie is trying to impose on us the terrain on which it can best defeat us. In other words, the bourgeoisie lets the proletariat “forget” that it constitutes the only universal class and imposes on it the terrain of confrontation that suits it best. In this way it can dictate the framework of the war it sends us to: the international united strength of the bourgeoisie against the isolated activity of our class, confined to this or that area. The bourgeois politics for the proletariat, social democratic politics, keeps the proletariat of each country within its borders, transforming the “internationalism” of our class into collections, petitions, parliamentary interpellations and “solidarity” through bank transfers and supportive emails. This form of activity is not only completely innocuous to the bourgeoisie, but also transforms the need for direct action against capital into collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

Anarchists are not interested in this kind of “solidarity” with the proletarians (not the people) in Ukraine, but rather in working together with them to promote the same struggle, the same interests, the same community of struggle, all over the world. Against this false “solidarity” we oppose a real solidarity that is the result of a common struggle.

What to say in conclusion?

Someone should tell Wayne Price that the positions he takes (not only in relation to the war in Ukraine) are not those of anarchists, but those of liberals.

And the Anarchist Federation should decide whether it should not drop the word “anarchist” from its name, as it is totally inconsistent with the positions it holds. Today AFed has more than one foot in the camp of warmongers who support the mutual massacre of proletarians in Ukraine in the name of defending imaginary democracy, national self-determination and other concepts that are completely alien to the proletariat (and even more so to anarchists).

And if the present war conflict spreads to the rest of Europe, will AFed perhaps send our brothers and sisters to the slaughter in the name of the same misguided and essentially bourgeois ideology?

Class War [CW] & Anti-Militarist Initiative [AMI] – May 2023

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