

# **Anarchism today**

**After the collapse of socialism**

Workers' Solidarity Federation

1995

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At the present moment socialism is in crisis both in the West and the East. This is despite the need for a real alternative to capitalism. After all racism, — mass unemployment ,homelessness and poverty show that capitalism has failed to provide for the majority.

This crisis of socialism affects the Western reformist Social Democrat or Labour Parties. It also affects the various groups of Marxists/ Leninists/ Trotskyists.

They are paying for their betrayal of socialism in this century. What they conceived socialism to be has been- totally discredited. What we need to do is to reclaim the revolutionary and anti authoritarian socialism represented by anarchism.

## **LABOUR PARTY BLUES**

The large 'socialist' tradition of Social Democracy (or labourism) is in deep trouble. These reasons for this are not hard to find.

The Social Democrats in the West always aimed to reform capitalism towards socialism. They sought to do this by introducing a welfare state through parliament, by setting up arbitration procedures and by getting the union leaders, bosses and government to cooperate in the "humane" management of capitalism.

Many Social Democratic policies were adopted by most First World states from the end of World War 2 to the early 1970s. This was partly because capitalism was going through a boom. It was also because of high levels of class struggle.

Capitalism entered crisis in the 1970s and the capitalists needed working class wages and living standards to be driven down. As co- managers of the bosses' states, the Social Democrats in power led the offensive.

In Britain this led to massive conflict between the Labour government and its working class and union supporters 1970s. In Sweden it was the Social Democrats who dismantled the welfare state in the 1980s. (This was not the first time Social Democrats attacked workers to save capitalism: in Germany they led the counter revolution against the 1919 workers uprising

Obviously working class people resisted with some success but many struggles were sabotaged by the trade union bureaucracy. There were many defeats and so disillusionment with Social Democracy and even class politics grew.

## **COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET BLOC**

Most of those groups who draw their traditions from Marx, Lenin, or Trotsky are already collapsing or have collapsed. They usually saw the so- called "Communist" countries as being "actually existing socialism". The collapse of these regimes, in Eastern Europe, Russia and also countries like Mozambique, has resulted in the belief that socialism itself cannot work.

To anarchists there is no such problem, we realised that the Soviet Union stopped moving towards socialism between 1918 and 1921. The revolution was destroyed from within by the Bolsheviks who believed that a centralized, authoritarian State apparatus under the control of their Party was necessary to introduce socialism. The result was a form of State capitalism run by a tiny bureaucratic elite

## STATE SOCIALISM

Clearly much of what passed for socialism this century was nothing of the sort. Rather than see their version of socialism as flawed, many have come to see capitalism as triumphant.

But there is an alternative: the anarchist tradition. This has always rejected the reformism of Social Democracy and the authoritarianism of Marxism. It has refused to see socialism as something being imposed by a minority wielding state power “on behalf of the majority,” whether that minority was in parliament or a “workers state.”

Anarchists believe that the capitalist economic system must be done away with and replaced with a new economic order in which the working class of the world will own and share all the wealth they produce.

The hierarchical and authoritarian political institutions of capitalism must also be smashed. The state structures cannot introduce socialism but will actively sabotage the working class cause.

Firstly, parliament cannot challenge capitalism. Real power does not lie in parliament but in the civil service, the military and the board rooms of the companies. And MPs often quickly adopt ruling class values and lifestyles (the gravy train).

Secondly, state institutions are built so that the small number of bosses can rule over the majority from the top down. These hierarchical undemocratic structures will always create hierarchical and undemocratic society. The so-called “workers’ states” advocated by the Marxists to introduce socialism have thus proved to be its greatest enemy.

We also reject the elitist and undemocratic idea that a party of professional revolutionaries is needed to make the revolution for the workers. This can only lead to the creation of new ruling elite.

The mass of the people must make the revolution by and for themselves.

## WHY ANARCHISM?

By contrast, anarchists argue that the mass of “ordinary people” must make the revolution for themselves. Every member of the working class (workers, youth, housewives, unemployed, rank-and-file soldiers, rural poor) has a role to play.

We believe in a revolution that comes from the bottom up and is based on worker and community councils. This would be defended by a workers militia which is internally democratic accountable to the masses.

The role of the Workers Solidarity Federation and other anarchists is to encourage ordinary people to take their struggles in their own hands and to fight for a society without bosses or governments.

The crisis of the traditional Left opens the way for the spread of the anarchist idea. As a result anarchism is growing rapidly across the world, including in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Experience demonstrates that there is no authoritarian route to socialism. Join the WSF and build for revolution from below.

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