

The revolutionary anarchist tradition

Workers' Solidarity Federation

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Anarchism has always carried the banner of revolutionary anti authoritarian socialism. Socialists need to identify with the anarchist tradition, no easy task as many have been weaned on a diet of slander that said they were not real socialists at all and wanted a return to feudalism.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

Within the First International, the International Working Men's Association, in the last century the anarchists, such as Bakunin, consistently argued against a turn to reformism and parliament. They argued against the view that the state apparatus could be seized and used to introduce socialism.

The introduction of socialism could only be carried out by the working class itself, not by a minority of revolutionaries acting through the state.

They also argued against the version of Marxism that argued that the revolution could only come about if the working class was under the dictatorship of a minority of intellectuals.

These arguments help to explain much of what went wrong with the socialist movement in the twentieth century.

At the same time the anarchists showed that they were capable of organizing the scale of struggle needed to threaten capitalism. In the USA in the 1880s the anarchists were organizing a huge campaign for the eight hour day involving demonstrations of more than a 100,000 workers.

This showed the ability of the anarchists to connect building for a socialist revolution with the winning of reforms from the bosses. In 1886 this was to result in 8 anarchists being sentenced to death in Chicago, an event that May day originated from.

At the end of the century Anarchists in the US, most notably Emma Goldman were taking up the fight to unionize women workers and break the ban on contraception. At a time when most other socialists saw womens' liberation as a side issue the anarchists were fighting against those aspects. which most oppressed working class women.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The anarchist fight against the use of parliament by socialists continued when the Second International (Labour parties) was set up in 1889. Anarchists attempted to argue against reformism at the first three international congresses in 1889, 1891, and 1893. The 1893 congress passed a motion excluding all non trade union bodies which did not recognize the need for parliamentary action.

The next congress in 1896 however included anarchists who had been made delegates by trade unions. They were physically assaulted when they attempted to speak and a motion from the German social democrats Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel and Eleanor Aveling (Marx's daughter) banned all those who were anti-parliamentarians" from future congresses.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 confirmed the warnings made by the anarchists some 50 years earlier in the First International. The Russian Revolution was the first real test of anarchism in a revolution. The anarchist movement at that time was comparatively small but it had major influence particularly in the factory committees and the Southern Ukraine.

The anarchists were amongst its foremost supporters and were the only group to support the dissolving of the constituent assembly on the grounds that the soviets were a more democratic

form of government. (In contrast the Bolsheviks were clear that they wished to use the Soviets rather than the constituent assembly because they had more support in the soviets.)

The anarchist fought to push the revolution as far as it would go, recognising that this would maximize the willingness of the Russian workers and peasants, and workers internationally, to defend it. When the Bolsheviks started to impose their dictatorship the anarchists fought them through the soviets and factory committees.

By 1921 the anarchists alone recognized that the revolution had been destroyed and either died trying to bring about a third revolution or fled into exile to warn the world's workers of what had happened.

FASCISM AND WAR

After 1936 Anarchism in Europe, Latin America and Asia was severely weakened. This was due to a ruling class counter revolution against workers struggles and organizations carried out through fascism, military dictatorships and also Stalinism.

The anarchists organized workers resistance to the repression, but in many cases their efforts were weakened by the Social Democrats and, the Marxists. In Italy the struggle against Mussolini was undermined by the social democrats. In Germany the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party stood back as Hitler took power.

In Spain the anarchist trade unions organized workers militias against an attempted fascist coup led by General Franco. At the same time anarchist workers and peasants collectivised the land and the factories. But even here the Socialist dominated Republican Government and the Communist Party did everything they could to turn back this far-reaching working class revolution, -contributing to the fascist victory in 1939.

With the fascist occupation of Europe during the Second World War many more anarchists were wiped out. In countries Italy, France, Poland, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Korea there were anarchist resistance groups throughout the war. In Italy they were involved in the land seizures after the war but were defeated by the combined forces of the Italian Communist Party and the Allies.

In Bulgaria the anarchist movement after the war grew rapidly but was wiped out in 1948 by the Bulgarian C.P. Again, hundreds were executed or sent to concentration camp. Anarchists in other East European countries, China and North Korea shared a similar fate.

Anarchism re-emerged in the working class and student revolts of the 1960s, in countries such as France, Mexico and Czechoslovakia. It continues to grow through out the world, in countries as diverse as Nigeria, the former Soviet Union, Paraguay and Japan.

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