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Power, State, and Class

Article by KAF member

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We Kurdish-speaking anarchists often come into contact with Marxists. They accuse anarchists of identifying the state as the main problem of this system while ignoring economic issues and class struggle.

What we face today is not new. Anarchists have always been accused of this by many Marxists. Of course, this is not the only accusation. They have also been accused of rejecting organization, promoting chaos and violence, and many other things, none of which are true and all of which remain unsubstantiated.

To enter into this discussion, we need to examine the principles of anarchism and Marxism in this regard. Then, through the answers to questions and arguments, the entire foundation of both ideas can be revealed, allowing readers to judge for themselves and perhaps raise many questions as well.

Marxists believe that the existence of the state is rooted in the existence of classes, which leads them to the view that the state cannot be abolished before class society is abolished. However, the principles of anarchism do not focus solely on opposition to power, the state, centralism, and hierarchical orga-

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nization. They also emphasize economic issues, class struggle, freedom, equality, and social justice.

In my opinion, this issue must be discussed very carefully and supported with evidence so that anarchism, its principles, and the anarchist movement are not misrepresented.

Obviously, Marxists generally insist on political power being held by the working class, and for them the existence of a workers' state, or the "dictatorship of the proletariat," is a necessary temporary or transitional stage. They view the existence of the state as a means of moving from socialism to communism. In other words, the collapse of capitalism and the abolition of class differences occur through this stage, during which the state gradually disappears and society enters the stage of communism.

The anarchists' insistence on opposing the state and authority is an undeniable fact. This is why Marxists find grounds to accuse anarchists of being idealistic rather than realistic. They view all anarchist struggles solely within the framework of anti-authoritarianism and anti-statism, rather than recognizing class struggle and the other principles of anarchism for which the anarchist movement has fought throughout history.

An important point in the Marxist view of the class question is that, when they speak of this struggle, they are referring only to the struggle between workers and capitalists, or between labor and capital, and this is largely confined to the sphere of industrial workers. At the same time, they attribute the basis of all historical events to this conflict. They even regard the history of human struggle primarily as the history of class conflict, ignoring the issue of hierarchy, which is the cornerstone of class formation, as if the history of struggle began with the history of classes. For them, once the issue of class is removed, the issue of hierarchy mechanically and automatically disappears and is resolved.

Their view denies the fact that the history of conflict in societies has not always been between the oppressed and the op-

the state that gives it the power to grow stronger through the law, the police, the army, the intelligence network, the media, the courts, and educational institutions. All of these protect the system.

Without the state, its forces, and its laws, no corporation, company, factory, or institution can operate for very long in the face of strikes and occupations by its workers and users. It is the law, power, hegemony, and control of the state that prevent change, limit activities and freedoms, and oppose equality and social justice.

Finally, although anarchists and Marxists agree on the concept of a classless, socialist society, the root of their differences and conflicts lies in the first step toward the realization of that society. Here we see a major difference: for one side, the problem remains constant and grows, while for the other it is resolved at the root. For Marxists, class struggle requires the seizure of state power, and for anarchists, the seizure of state power creates a new form of oppression and betrays the revolution.

pressors. Rather, the history of conflicts and major wars has more often been between the oppressors themselves, between authorities and states. All wars were wars of power, not class wars. Internal social problems and class issues have been used as tools or strategies to obtain different forms of power, such as economic, political, and social power. In other words, the history of conflicts has not only been between labor and capital, but also between the oppressors themselves, including rulers, tribes, and states. These wars existed thousands of years before the rise of industrial society or before many sections of the working class even existed.

As I said earlier, Marxists had no evidence for their accusations against anarchists, neither then nor now. Most anarchist tendencies or traditions, such as anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-socialism, and anarcho-communism, have not only spoken deeply about class struggle but have also participated very actively in class struggle. Moreover, anarchist thinkers such as Mikhail Bakunin, Errico Malatesta, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman have themselves supported the labor movement to the best of their ability.

In response to Marxists' idea of a state and a temporary state, anarchists have argued that what they call a revolutionary state will not disappear but will instead create a new ruling class. The validity of this argument was, in their view, demonstrated in practice in the Bolshevik state and in all communist and so-called socialist states, as well as in the emergence of a new class of state officials and in issues of centralism and the weakening of the labor movement. History, they argue, has shown that centralized socialist states become authoritarian bureaucratic powers rather than creators of a society in which workers are free.

Anarchists believe that hierarchy itself is dangerous and reproduces the power of a dominant centralized state. Liberation, they argue, must take place through horizontal mass organizations, revolutionary federations, revolutionary syndicalism,

and directly democratic communes, rather than through a “provisional revolutionary state.”

There are two important points here:

First, anarchists maintain that there can be no genuine freedom for individuals, communities, or societies, nor economic equality or social justice at any stage of society, as long as power exists in any form or content. History has provided hundreds of examples of this. Therefore, the existence of power is the foundation on which all lack of freedom, economic inequality, social injustice, and oppression rest. In such a situation, these conditions will not collapse unless the main pillar itself collapses.

Second, all changes that can and must be made, such as social, popular, and fundamental changes, must be radical. This is clear to anarchists, and they know how to address it. Marxists, on the other hand, aim to solve the above-mentioned issues through states such as the dictatorship of the proletariat or a workers’ state. According to them, if the workers have their own state and control the power and laws of that state, then all problems will become easier to solve.

History has shown that since the establishment of power, and as it later consolidates itself in the form of the state, there has never been a power or government that has not intensified problems instead of solving them. Under such a state, there have always been people who are deprived of their rights, even if they are a minority.

Therefore, the program and plans of Marxists, as well as the principles of Marxism, not only cannot eliminate the issue of class conflict but also lead the power they take over toward violence and dictatorship, instead of leading it to its disappearance and achieving the final destination of communism.

A couple of questions arise here about the economic mode and the mode of power: Which is at the root of the class problem? Will the seizure of power come first and eliminate the economic problem and class struggle, or will it be through the

elimination of power and the state that the class struggle is resolved?

In my opinion, these two questions complete each other. Economic inequality does not exist without class problems. Similarly, economic inequality is based on power. It is inequality that creates power, and it is power that creates, maintains, and perpetuates inequality. We can see this very clearly in a pyramid diagram. In this picture, we can say that the basis of power is at the bottom of the pyramid, and the economy and economic issues, with all their problems, are at the top of the pyramid. No matter how much the top of the pyramid is broken, as long as the foundations, walls, and pillars of the pyramid have not failed, the same structure can be rebuilt, perhaps in different ways and different forms. It is obvious the class issue and the economic problem are still there, and what has changed is the type of power, such as dictatorship, democracy, liberalism, neoliberalism, workers’ power, and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

As I said, these two issues are complementary and cannot be separated from each other. This has imposed a two-way struggle on anarchists, namely the struggle against power and the state, and the class struggle. Both go hand in hand, but it is true that as long as there is power, the economic issue remains problematic.

These two aspects of the struggle are both at the heart of the problems for anarchists. If the problem of the state and power is not resolved, the economic problem will remain the same. If the economic problem remains the same, the class problem will remain the same. While the class problem remains unresolved, it will certainly not stop there, and the problems will grow, and the gaps between classes will widen, as we can clearly see now.

Power and the state are the main pillars on which the system is built, and the system is the institution that is protected and developed through the state and takes root in society. Capitalism has neither strength nor power without the state. It is