

Radical Left, I'm Breaking Up With You

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After several years as an anarchist in the radical left, because I thought that I would find people there who would share my ideas (which in some cases also happened), today I am at a point where I ask, how I could ever believe that anarchy and the radical left are somehow compatible. The fact that I succumbed to this error is also due to the natural participation of many anarchist people in the radical left movement and the naturalness with which anarchy is understood as part of left ideologies (perhaps reinforced by the protection of the constitution, which both – the radical left movement and anarchism – classifies it as “left-wing extremist”). Here, completely contrary ideas come together under the concept of the radical left. Authoritarian communists from the DKP, the FDJ or the MLPD, the party Die Linke¹ and its many sub- and youth organizations and foundations, more autonomous communist groups and libertarian communists, autonomous and post-autonomous groups and anarchists, all these people and ideas are summarized under the term “the radical left” or “the radical left movement”. So for many left-wing radical people on the radical left, anarchy is somehow part of it, even if it is ridiculed by many as naive and lacking in theory, and only has to admit (although by no means everyone who feels they belong to the radical left movement) that its criticism of authoritarianism might not be completely wrong after all. However, one sighs, shaking his head, would people who were exclusively interested in anarchy do not see that the anarchist theory does not encompass the complexity of the world, which can be seen from the fact that anarchists cannot produce a Bible like Marx’s *Capital* and do not have complicated writing intellectual authorities, who would help shape the academic discourse and would enjoy prestige in the university landscape. Apart from the fact that there are unfortunately already people who think they can make their contribution to anarchy by climbing the career ladder in the academic world while researching anarchy, it is, of course, clear that anarchists with their distrust of authorities of all kinds and their hatred of state and non-state institutions as well as the teaching industry and the trust in their own judgment and their ability to speak for themselves and only for themselves, cannot produce any such publications or theories. Anarchy is often (depending on the individual only to a certain extent) defamed, but at the same time ostensibly integrated. Spicing communism with anarchist elements is believed by many to be the most fruitful combination of the two. Anarchist ideas are falsified beyond recognition, with the exception of extra-parliamentary opposition, registered demonstrations

¹ “The Left,” referencing left-wing political parties.

and rallies, demands on the state, projects funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, fixed groups, Plena with a speech leader and speech list, capitalist publishers, symbolic acts such as igniting a Bengalo² at a demo, etc. — the whole boring repertoire of left activism — also for people who consider themselves anarchist to become the epitome of anarchist rebellion.

While many may occasionally criticize authoritarian structures within the radical left, they still believe that they basically share the same ideas. For years I believed that too, but recently I have become more and more aware that we simply have absolutely nothing in common. As the name of the radical left already suggests, it is located far to the left within a parliamentary (party) system and sees itself as an extra-parliamentary opposition. This means that people decide to stand up for their positions outside of parliament and sometimes — within a certain framework — to go beyond the limits of the legal and thus force changes within the system. For many, this does not exclude cooperation with political parties and their various sub-organizations. Of course, that still means wanting to participate in the parliamentary process, just outside the parliaments. Extra-parliamentary is not anti-parliamentary. It does not mean a radical rejection of the state and rule in general. To be “left” only makes sense in the context of a parliamentary understanding. Of course, a term is just a term, and many people who feel they belong to the radical left clearly see themselves as anarchists and reject state and rule. In addition, the radical left (as opposed to the democratic left) basically has the desire to change or even overturn the currently prevailing system. However, since the basis of the radical left is communist in nature, most of them are united by the vision of a new, “fairer” social order, which, depending on people and ideas, is diffuse to very concrete and differently authoritarian, but rarely includes a rejection of any order. In addition, many are (for the time being) satisfied with standing up for reforms or with partial struggles or probably also hope that such partial struggle movements will eventually result in a “revolutionary mass” that will shake the current system.

But can’t anarchism still be part of the radical left because of that? In asking myself this question, I find it worthwhile to reflect on how communism and anarchy — the ideas that are at the base of the radical left — differ. And that is clearly the attitude towards rule and state. Anarchism clearly rejects both, while communism finds both acceptable as means to an end. “The radical left” in contrast to communism is the more diffuse, less uniform, less authoritarian development of classical authoritarian communism, with more diversity, more different opinions, due to the experience with the real socialist regimes as well as democratic and anarchist influences, a less concrete plan than that of the old classical communist cadres. However, the basis of the radical left remains communism, even if for most of them with significantly less authoritarian ideas.

For me, however, anarchy cannot be part of the radical left, because for me anarchy means rejecting and attacking rule in any form. This also means seeing the state and all of its organs and institutions as my enemies. For me, it also means to refuse the political game in its entirety. I do not want to speak for others or advocate for the rights of a group, nor for rights in general, since the judicial system and its whole ideology is domineering. I don’t make alliances, I don’t found a group or a party, I don’t submit to any ideology or leaders, I don’t negotiate, I don’t compromise, I don’t present myself as the avant-garde or an alternative. I’m fighting for my freedom and I’m looking for accomplices that I can conspire with. I don’t want a new social order, because the idea of a social order is already authoritarian, but I want to free myself from any order and morality that restricts my actions. For me, that also means absolute uncompromisingness with regard to

² A German firework or flare.

my anti-domination ideas. But this is not compatible with the radical left, which in large parts has no clear hostility to rule, and in some cases even welcomes rule if it is exercised by the “right” people. To see myself as part of the radical left or to locate myself accordingly or to participate means for me to give up this uncompromising attitude. It means that I mediate that anarchism and authoritarian ideas — and this also includes standing up for or against individual laws or entering into alliances with democratic or other non-domineering people — are compatible. This fundamentally contradicts the anarchist idea — and thus turns it into a hollow phrase that no longer has any content. I am not at all a fan of adorning oneself with any identity or of giving myself any fancy name and especially of submitting to a group ideology, nevertheless, I get suspicious when people have reservations about the concept of anarchism or anarchy and prefer to stay within the radical ones. Locating the left as the supposedly “looser” affiliation, because for me anarchism or anarchy means nothing more than the radical rejection of rule in any form, in contrast to the term radical left, for me that can only mean that this person is not fundamentally hostile to rule. But we certainly do not share a consensus, not even minimally, with regard to our ideas.

What good is it for me to see anarchy as part of the radical left? Why is there such an umbrella term at all that combines so many different ideas under one general name? Anarchism and communism have a long history in common. From anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism to platformism, many people have tried to combine anarchism and communism. But from the beginning, there were always anarchists who could not discover anything in common with the communists. Those who saw their individual freedom threatened by the authoritarian ideas of communism and corresponding anarchist actors and who have not yet seen themselves as part of the left-wing radical or communist “movement.” Communism as well as the communist variants of anarchism always require a “mass”, that is, a large number of people come together in order to act together with a goal and to force changes through their masses. How do you achieve such greatness, especially when the golden days of mass organizations are over? In any case, it seems to bring together practically all possible ideas under the term “radical left”. Those who follow the discourses within the radical left at least a little will probably not be able to avoid hearing the calls for unity and the warning of division over and over again. Allegedly they all have the same goal and you don’t have to get into each other’s hair over any little thing. How many times have I heard this call when I or others criticized something. Be it a criticism of Rote Hilfe, orthodox Marxists, anti-Semitism, or authoritarian behavior, especially when this criticism was also expressed in a journalistic way, I heard that one could lead such disputes “internally”, but not externally and that people still have to show solidarity with everyone. Especially in times of a shift to the right, it is currently said, for example, that all “progressive” or “emancipatory” forces should stick together. Already a clever move to first include anarchists in the universe of the radical left, in order to then counter criticism with the accusation of division and to admonish conformist behavior because only in the mass and in unity are people strong. Otherwise, one would play the “counterrevolutionary”, the “fascist” forces, or currently the AfD in the cards. A trick that communists used in revolutionary Russia from 1917 to 1921 or in Spain in 1937 and which has worked wonderfully to this day. Those who rely on countervailing power need unity and mass. Who, as I and how I understand anarchism, fights every power and stands only for himself, as an individual, distrusting any mass, any unity and despising the suffocation of substantive criticism with the help of rhetorical tricks and opposes the political game that is playing neither right nor left authoritarian assholes into the hands, but fights no matter where the political wind

blows from, for their own freedom. This is one of the reasons why I am so vehemently opposed to assigning anarchy to the radical left. Because I see how people try to silence me and my criticism, admonish me to make political calculations, to use me for themselves and their ideas that are not mine. I see that people with whom I have nothing in common who represent authoritarian ideas think that WE would be on the same side of a united front. I see that many are not interested in a serious discussion about ideas, but just want to emerge from a debate as winners, just want to distinguish themselves, want to gain authority. I see all of these dynamics paralyze and stifle how people try to silence me and my criticism, admonish me to political calculation, to use me for themselves and their ideas that are not mine.

That is why I declare my break with the radical left! May she perish because of her united front mentality and her sympathy for communism and politics in general!

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