



AGITATOR

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"The 'free' world is not free; the 'communist' world is not communist; one is already openly class-divided & is becoming totalitarian, the other - already totalitarian & is growing more and more class-divided.

"Pollution, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction put a question mark over the very survival of mankind; and they are the inevitable product of the 'free world'/'communist world' power struggle and its disregard of human values.

"We charge that both systems engender servitude; that pseudo-freedom based on economic slavery is no better than pseudo-freedom based on political slavery.

"The monopoly of power which is the state must be eliminated. Government itself - as well as its underlying institutions - perpetuates war, oppression, corruption, exploitation & misery.

"We advocate a worldwide society of communities & councils, based on cooperation & free agreement from the bottom (federalism) instead of coercion & domination from the top (centralism). Regimentation of people must be replaced by regulation of things.



"Socialism is a deceptive mirage,
Socialism without freedom is despotic.
Libertarianism is free socialism."

(Slightly revised from the "What
we stand for" of the New York
Libertarian League.)

START

Syndicalist
Tendency of the
Anarchist
Revolutionary
Tradition

REVOLUTION

- when used of social revolution - does not mean
mere insurrection.

An insurrection may well be a
device for replacing one small elite at the apex of
the state and power system, with another similar
elite, bringing no serious attempt to change the
economic & social infrastructure.

A revolution - which is a change
in social & economic relationships may well be carried
out without insurrectionary means.

REVOLUTION

means the abolition of the privileges of the exist-
ing ruling class, & of the economic differentials
that give rise to them; followed by the creation
of a new social order.

REVOLUTION

by no means inevitably involves violence on the
part of the revolutionaries.

It is however inconceivable that
the ancien regime would ever willingly surrender
power. If it can avoid being dispossessed it
will and it will resort to violence to further this
aim.

It must therefore be expected that
unless there is an economic collapse, or unless for
some reason, such as war-weariness, the ruling class
has lost its will to rule; that the defenders of the
old order will resort to arms.

It does not necessarily follow that
reactionary violence can best be overcome by revol-
utionary violence. Such is the nature of the modern
state and its weapons of mass destruction, that it
is unlikely that a just society could emerge from a
full scale military confrontation.

ANARCHISTS

ADVOCATE A SOCIETY BASED ON CO-OPERATION WITHOUT
COERCION.

ANARCHISTS

do not set out merely to overthrow one class in order
to replace it with the 'Diktat' of another; but set
ourselves the harder task of abolishing all class
privileges, & of so ordering society that no new elite
class may emerge.

ANARCHISTS wish to abolish all class divisions, & - since "the state merely reflects the class divisions within a society" (Marx) - hold that that abolition entails the abolition of all states, government (rule by one man, or one set of men - &/or women - over others) & not - as the "Marxists" advocate - the creation of "workers' governments" or "workers' states.

Such "workers' regimes" - be they democratic, or be they despotic, have invariably produced their own elites ruling the masses.

Anarchists were warning of the dangers of such new exploitative and class-divided systems, long before the creation of any of the self-styled socialist states. The fact that in practise the Stalinist regimes brought not merely all the evils against which anarchists had warned but even exceeded them, confirms the validity of those early anarchist arguments.

ANARCHISTS do not necessarily argue that Marxism & Leninism lead inevitably to Stalinism; nevertheless the danger is very much inherent within the state road to socialism and the concept of the vanguard party; both of which are central doctrines of Marxist-Leninism. It is therefore highly probable that such Leninist revolutions will follow a Stalinist path, & anarchists recall with pride that we warned of the danger early.

ANARCHISTS - to repeat - oppose all governments, whatever the label, & all states as being symptomatic of class divisions and rest on class privileges. When Marx described governments as the executive committee of the ruling class, he used the word executive as a body responsive to the orders of another and merely doing what it was told, - an implementation committee.

Marx spoke at a time when capitalism had not taken a collectivist & corporative form; the fact that his term "a mere executive committee" still appears to have value is due to the changed nature of executive committees within society as a whole.

ANARCHISTS advocate the replacement of existing society - whether the openly capitalist "free world" or the state capitalist "communist world", or indeed the "Third World" admixture of the two, with a society based on free cooperation.

ANARCHISTS regard calls to build a "militant workers' party", as wholly misconceived. These too often conceal cynical attempts to manipulate workers in the interests of one clique or another, & have as much to do with the liberation of society, as the appeals made to the national interest by spokesmen of the Right, & Centre.

Attempting to bring about the revolution through the creation of a workers' party is not merely misguided, but as it offers only the illusion of success, the projected weapon of freedom soon becomes the tool of manipulation, bureaucracy and - ultimately - new oppression and exploitation.

SYNDICALISM IS A STRATEGY FOR ATTAINING THE ANARCHIST REVOLUTION,

SYNDICALISTS advocate the social general strike - (that is the simultaneous occupation of factories by workers, locking out the bosses, taking over the firms and converting them, to produce for use not profit, and running them in a non-authoritarian and non-hierarchical way) - as the principal means of revolutionary change.

SYNDICALISTS in order to plan for the social general strike, advocate revolutionary industrial unionism;

(that is unions based on the fundamental unit that workers who work together, whether in factory, office, shop, or part of these, - irrespective of their craft or other divisions, - meeting at work, and while class society exists preferably in the bosses' time;

(that is moreover unions without highly paid permanent officials, but wherein all elected officers shall be paid only the average of the workers they represent and shall hold their office only for short limited periods with a duty to go back to the shop floor after their term of office so as not to lose contact with their electorate;

(that is unions where all decisions shall be made subject to ratification by the rank & file, where the elected officers shall always be subject to recall, where all committees other than those at the place of work shall be made up of mandated delegates whose duty will be to the workers who elected them;)

and this revolutionary industrial unionism shall make it clear that while capitalism lasts it exists solely to fight for the immediate interests of workers until it has won the adherence of the mass of the working class when it will launch the social general strike.

SYNDICALISTS insist that direct action, (industrial or otherwise,) by the worker - whether individually or collectively - is the only form of political action in which he can fully trust; the only form of action where he does not leave himself open to be betrayed by leaders.

SYNDICALISM is not however an invariable blueprint; nor is it a theory dreamed up by some academic. It is a cover-all term given to a number of disparate movements, & in each case these were the product of the spontaneous struggles of the workers; created in the midst of major upsurges of the working class.

Such differing circumstances as explain the individual characteristics of movements as diverse as the American IWW, the French CGT, the Spanish CNT, the early days of our own shop stewards' movement here in Britain, (as also the workers' councils in South Wales & on the Clyde in and after 1916.)

SYNDICALISM as a theory demands first and foremost that the anarchist aim must be explained and interpreted in terms of the radical struggles in which major sections of the working class are currently and spontaneously engaged.

It must show that the logic of the rank and file democracy found wherever workers do act

spontaneously leads directly to the truest form of socialism. Must combat all attempts to impose leadership and discipline on the workers, attempts which amount to the reintroduction of capitalist relationships to the workers' movement.

It must show that inherent within this direct democracy and within the spontaneous direct action is the whole conception of anarchist struggle, and that the worker has adopted these because deep down he naturally yearns for the free society even though he probably does not know the word anarchy.

SYNDICALIST

movements, created in the heat of one proletarian upsurge, have, where healthy, remained as the basic organization for future struggles, both the partial & defensive struggles of workers in every day life, & the longer term educational struggle to convince other workers of the need to change society basically.

Not all revolutionary struggles that have followed a libertarian pattern have however left such a residue. In 1953, in East Berlin & Vorkuta, in 56 in Poland and Hungary, the working class intervened decisively; in struggles which set out as combats within sectors of the Stalinist bureaucratic-collective. They did not survive the coming of the tanks, - nor later were Czech and French workers' councils to survive in 68.

Years earlier, (soon after the Russian October in Germany and Northern Italy,) similar waves had equally failed to leave remnants. Nor has the working class element in the American negro movement left an organization.

This has led to a false contrast between syndicalism and what is known as council communism. Certainly the various groupings which together make up the latter tradition stress spontaneity more than does syndicalism. Certainly syndicalists are sceptical of the claim that any upsurge is entirely spontaneous if that means that no one was working and preparing for it.

However no syndicalist is opposed to spontaneous working class action, we claim that if possible we should not lose the gains of yesterday & if yesterday the working class built an organization, then even though we accept that there are dangers of it growing bureaucratic after the first flush of enthusiasm is past, we would not lightly agree to abandon it.

Moreover we consider it a self-contradiction to agitate and propagate ideas, if it is then argued that spontaneity is all in all sufficient; yet every council communist group does so agitate & does work for that upsurge which it nevertheless argues will come through no action of its own.

This is not - from the syndicalist side - a major division. We accept that in aim, in the greater part of our theory, and in practice in the greater part of our strategy there is no difference between syndicalists and council communists. It is however seen by some council communists as a matter of fundamental importance, & we therefore have to acknowledge the difference.

START first & foremost IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE ADVOCATING AN ANARCHIST REVOLUTION, & WORKING FOR IT.

START believes that such revolution is most likely to be

achieved by a syndicalist strategy; & that the most useful body of theory in the anarchist armoury is anarcho-syndicalist.

However syndicalism is a means and must always be subordinate to the anarchist end, (save in that means shape ends, that is an end cannot be achieved by means that are incompatible with the end.)

It would be untrue to the very fundamentals of syndicalism to insist on syndicalist concepts to a degree which would alienate the anarchist from the working class when in revolutionary struggle. (Which is why, here in Britain - since unlike other countries most workers belonged to trade unions - the syndicalists have never attempted to set up a distinct industrial union federation.)

START

remembering that various bourgeois-liberal politicians have at times temporarily acclaimed themselves syndicalist; (to say nothing of the pre-war fascist use of the term); and noting that industrial unionism - however revolutionary is not necessarily anarcho-syndicalist; emphasizes that its task is not only to advocate syndicalism as a tactic for anarchists, but also to insist on the anarchist perspective to those we contact who are beginning to consider themselves syndicalist.

START

emphasizes that anarcho-syndicalism is always involved incorporating into the industrial unionist struggle elements of other streams of anarchist thought, indeed other streams of radical thought.

The formation of workers' committees - for instance - necessarily involves a significant measure of solidarity, (the product perhaps of mutual aid), & cannot be achieved unless workers have shed racialist, nationalist, militarist, sexist and other illusions that now divide the working class.

It is a commonplace to say that the social conditioning imposed by existing society; through advertising, formal schooling, conventional family roles and ideas as to sex-roles, the belief that it is morally imperative to work - even if the work is useless or positively harmful - the belief in the absolute necessity of economic advance - even when this means manufacturing goods that are designed to fall to pieces tomorrow so as to force the purchase of replacements - & the attitudes imposed by conventional moralism; all contribute to divisions among workers.

Given that workers are divided by these things it follows that any movement that contributes to their abolition provided it does not sow fresh divisions is advancing the cause of workers' unity. Therefore even if it does not see itself as revolutionary a movement by combatting the harmful conditioning of the present could aid revolution.

(However in practise most - if not all - movements which do not see themselves as revolutionary; ((Together with many that would claim so to be;)) do in fact foster a new set of divisions and illusions.)

Nevertheless to the extent that any humane and libertarian agitation - even if merely meliorist (reformist by blows) & do-gooding, in conception - frees the working class from the bonds of attitudes which prevent its own self-liberation; we see it as facilitating the growth of syndicalism.

need for management is
greater than at the
hey-day of the early
Factories
mode of production so complex,
all stages in the productive process
obvious to all workers that the boss's role
ion was inessential. That the workers could
selves run the factories better. The fact that
workers see all processes of production nowadays, has
a mystifying effect, making it look as if management
at least - if not the shareholders - play an useful
role.

Moreover given that many of the evils
of today are not (at least in this country) the lack of
goods, but that so much of what is produced is harmful,
useless, or designed to be obsolete & scrapped; given
therefore that many workers - particularly say in
munitions - feel they have an interest in maintaining
the production of anti-social products and feel them-
selves, consequently, menaced by campaigns of the Left;
it is more than ever necessary that workers attain a
globally radical consciousness and not just an indust-
rially radical one, before they begin to think of
becoming syndicalist.

Similarly with the growth of power of the nation-state, asp-
ects of anarchist arguments which may at times in the
past have seemed to stress individual liberty to the
exclusion of revolutionary class consciousness; (&
which for this, or other reasons, have been dismissed
by syndicalists as petit-bourgeois ultra-liberalism;) have
taken on a revolutionary tinge and a working
class appeal which they formerly lacked.

Nowadays, few working class youngsters
grow up without finding themselves in conflict with
stupid, piddling restrictions, on their individual
freedom; so that forms of protest which may once have
been the near-monopoly of the sons of the privileged
middle-class, - or which were applicable only to the
super-exploited, to racial minorities, to the homeless,
or the unemployed, - now have a far wider appeal.

Protests which marxists used to dis-
dain as a product of aristocratic disdain for necessary
controls, now are part and parcel of the activity of
every Leninist group; even though the Leninists con-
tinue to quote their forbears to the effect that anar-
chists are unconcerned with proletarian solidarity.

This means that the worker, nowadays, does not come to syndic-
alism solely as a natural extension of instinctive
industrial militancy; but he does instinctively come
to a libertarian rejection of many of the controls, &
conventions of the day, and the natural extension of
this is a rejection of the state.

Given his normal contact - not merely
at the point of production - with class society; the
worker either has to submit to being brainwashed, - to
bury his head in the sand, so as not to see that
he is enslaved - or alternatively to consider forms of
revolt that lead logically to anarchism. When he
goes that far, he can then see that capitalism is
vulnerable, chiefly, at the point of production, &
that the natural application of anarchistic revolt
is syndicalism.

...the revolt... extending far b...
...anarchist movement, shows...
...stic signs of distrust of le...
...anguardism, but which lacking the...
...tical case against these tends to follow the...
...ad of one or other of the Leninist factions.

Given this aim, and the fact that syndicalism is seen as a strategy, not an aim, & that therefore START accepts the validity of other means of revolutionary struggle; START does not aim only to stress the syndicalist strategy, but also sees a need to work for an united revolutionary federation of anarchist and other libertarian socialist groups, ready to work together in essentials, while not suppressing theoretical differences.

Consequently START does not wish to work in isolation, & for this reason - despite serious differences with the DTG Programme - intends to apply to the AWA, to be permitted to affiliate as a faction thereof; since the AWA is the nearest we have to a viable, revolutionary, federation of British anarchists.

We will actively seek the cooperation of other libertarians in building revolutionary organization organizations in industry. We are also committed as individuals, and as a group, to involve ourselves in other types of struggle for the anarchist revolution.

This call to form START is in response to what we see as a need to involve more people in active anarchism, to keep them more consistently involved in anarchist activity, & give them a greater impact in proportion to their numbers, so as to move anarchism away from its present image as merely people wanting to wave red & black flags & disrupt the demos of other groups.

This letter is being sent out (1) to a number of people who may well agree with us as to the need for an organization & accept this as a draft for an agreed statement; (2) to a number of people who while involved in other groupings may nevertheless welcome the initiative and be minded to work with START.

All those who share the broad terms of our analysis, aims and principles, are asked to write in with criticisms and comments; & say whether sharing the general tenor they would consider joining. (Obviously no anarchist group would wish to be dogmatic as to the details of a statement.)

Martyn Everett
Julian Turner
Laurens Otter