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Anarchism and Nationalism
1970

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Superficially, anarchism is a movement of the Left but this is not strictly so, since it implies being part of the political spectrum. Anarchists reject this, asserting that there is more in common between Right and Left political parties (like the struggle for power) than between even extreme Left political groups and the anarchists. History has shown us that no matter how 'Left' a party is when it starts off, the achievement of power brings it round to the Right, for every government wants to maintain the status quo; wants to extend the control it has over the people, and isn't this what the Right really means?

Certain right-wing attitudes are specifically rejected by left-wing parties — until they become useful in the power game. 'Divide and Rule', for example, can be played with many variations, from wage differentials to religious and colour prejudice, and although nationalism is intellectually rejected by the political Left, they quite shamelessly use what are quaintly called 'National Liberation Movements' when it suits their political ambitions — and a 'Left' party in power knows very well the usefulness of nationalism and indeed patriotism as a weapon of government. Even if this were not deliberate cunning on the part of a so-called 'revolutionary government', the logic of authoritarianism leads to it.

Even allowing for soviets or workers' councils, the actual operation of state power cannot be carried out by the entire population. This demands the workers' own revolutionary party sitting at the top doing the actual governing, like suppressing all opposition in the name of the revolution and ensuring internal security by the perpetual policing of the population in its own interests to effect the immediate spotting of any deviationary elements. At the same time as this defence of the revolution is strenuously maintained, the population also has to be kept safe from external aggression, an efficient army, navy and air force is kept at the ready and since a workers' state is the most democratic state, a form of conscription becomes desirable to ensure that everyone does his bit.

This is really no sacrifice since the state belongs to everyone and everyone belongs to the state, but to keep the people enthusiastic for service to the state, a leader comes forward to give every citizen someone to identify with on a personal level. In order to provide the cosy feeling of collective security, of belonging to the corporate body around him,

the idea of the nation is encouraged and patriotism becomes a virtue once again — if, indeed, it ever fell out of favour.

Thus the service of the revolution achieved through authoritarian means brings the wheel full circle. The ideologies and justifications for lack of freedom — indeed for ruthless totalitarian control of the entire country — will differ from those of the old regime, but in fact the institutions and the realities of life are exactly the same, if not worse.

For this reason anarchists do not enthuse about revolutions which are mounted in order to bring to power another set of governors. Our interpretation above has been of a so-called revolutionary change in society; how much less, then, can we enthuse about changes which do not even pretend to be revolutionary from the start?

Into this category fail the movements for national liberation which are frankly nationalistic and call for opposition against a ruling or occupying power purely on xenophobic grounds. Although revolutionary means may be used in such a struggle, it has no more to do with social revolution as the anarchist sees it than the xenophobia of a Hitler or an Enoch Powell. Pathetic examples of this are to be found in Wales and Scotland. In fact — and here is where the situation seems to get confused — 'movements for national liberation' in the trouble spots of the world today tend to give a social revolutionary veneer to their claims, in order to get support from the Communist states. The classic example of this was in Egypt, where a successful anti-colonial struggle established a nationalistic, military regime (much like the Greek colonels!) with the aid of Russian arms and technology. By using devices like nationalisation and land reform, the veneer of socialism was applied — but, in spite of Russian 'friendship', the Communist Party is banned and Egyptian Communists are in prison. Meanwhile rabid nationalism was whipped up, patriotism by the imperial pint kept on the boil, but nothing prospers like the state and the international arms merchants. But your authoritarian left — the Trotskyists and the Communist Party — supported the new Egyptian state! Anarchists do not play this political game. We are not jockeying for position all the time and trying to further one or other of the power blocs that divide the world and its workers. We are truly international and oppose all those forces which divide people. Hence it is quite logical for anarchists to oppose an imperial power and the

indigenous politicians who lead national resistance. For example, in condemning the Russian military occupation of Czechoslovakia, we did not thereby support the Dubcek Communist state which was in conflict with the Kosygin Communist state, in the sense that we wanted to see Dubcek remain in power. We supported the Czech people and their right to choose — even though choosing Dubcek (as the lesser evil!) — because this is a right that all people must have, and also because they were using revolutionary means (if only because there were no others) and were learning how to do things for themselves. In the event, what opposition there was came from the people and not from Dubcek. Our attitude was the same on Vietnam (against US imperialism, but not for the Vietcong); Cuba (against Batista, not for Castro), Black Power (the answer to white racism is not black racism!), the American Revolution of 1776 (to hell with George III and the American state that followed him!); and all Arab, Jewish, Indian, African nationalisms.

The answer to imperialism is not nationalism and reactionary regimes — it is international social revolution, destroying all national, religious, racial barriers. We have learnt from history!