MaRK

Class Struggle Beyond Anti-Globalization Protest

2002

Contents

The theme of this issue can be misleading. Most forms of 'anti-globalization protest' currently taking place around the world, especially in the global South, represent a culmination of class struggles; a manifestation of resistance waged by the exploited against their exploiters. We should certainly continue to provide active solidarity for these struggles. However, as a federation, we are interested in moving beyond the symbolic forms of solidarity embodied in reactive "summit-hopping" in favor of developing a more substantive and long-term strategy based around the everyday struggles of the working class in our region.

Anarchists have played a crucial role within the anti-globalization movement, effectively reshaping the debate beyond anti-corporate sentiment to embrace a more fundamental anti-capitalist analysis, and pushing the terms of struggle from polite appeals for reform to militant disruption in the streets. Through our interventions, new social layers of progressive workers and students have been radicalized, and anarchist politics and methods of organizing have been asserted on a mass level.

However, our concentrated efforts within the anti-globalization movement have often come at the expense of our activity in other, more substantive, areas of the class struggle. The inevitable result of this imbalance is that we have contributed very little towards the development of a libertarian resistance culture within a working class social base here in North America, and have made few meaningful links between international struggles and the existing class war at home.

Although we are internationalists, we organize within a specifically North American context. If we are to effectively contribute to international revolutionary struggles, we must develop a revolutionary strategy that reflects the reality of our situation. In order to avoid the past mistakes of anti-imperialist resistance movements (i.e. abandon the struggles and self-activity of the domestic working class, and any hope for revolution in industrialized countries of the North, in order to play a supporting role for Third World revolutions — in it's most extreme form, the strategy of "creating chaos in the metropoles" exemplified by groups such as the Weather Underground, Red Army Faction, and even certain elements of the German autonome), we need to develop a strategy of revolutionary dual power, where systematic power can be challenged, and ultimately overthrown, right here in the "belly of the beast", the highest form of revolutionary solidarity we can extend to those in struggle around the world!

Why Class Struggle?

Regardless of how anarchists orient themselves to it, class struggle exists. The division of society into antagonistic social classes remains the main fact of modern capitalism; class is defined, above all, as a social relationship to Capital.

The politics of class struggle anarchism are not based on a historical-materialist "science", but rather on a strategy of identifying a social base that is, by its very nature, antagonistic to the ruling (capitalist) class, and prioritizing areas of struggle within this social base that can develop into revolutionary challenges to ruling class interests.

Class struggles are by no means confined to the workplace, and there is no definitive "revolutionary subject" to be found in the industrial proletariat (at least in the classical Marxian sense). There are certainly sectors within the working class who hold strategic positions in their relation to Capital (i.e. the industrial proletariat), but this does necessarily mean that the first points of rupture within the system will find expression here.

Anarchists must take an active role in all of the struggles of the working class: around housing and community, against poverty, struggles in the workplace, of the unemployed, against the prison industrial complex, around immigration, and in all areas where direct action and self-management can be applied and revolutionary dual power can be developed.

Beyond this, we understand that the majority of the working class is made up of women and non-white workers, which means we need to reconceptualize our notion of class struggle to include, at the absolute base-level, a radical analysis of patriarchy and white supremacy in all of our activity.

Re-Focusing the Political Activity of NEFAC

For all intents and purposes, NEFAC can be considered a product of the post-Seattle movement and this is reflected in the early activity of the federation. Like most anarchists, we considered the burgeoning anti-globalization movement to hold great potential, and oriented most of our activity towards pushing this movement in a more radical direction (both politically and tactically).

Despite the important gains made within the anti-globalization movement, there are, however, fundamental limitations that must be addressed in terms of overall revolutionary strategy. The tactical dichotomy of 'violence vs. non-violence' in the realm of symbolic protest has obscured any real insight into moving beyond reactive politics (or, as it has been said in the past, moving "from

protest to resistance"). Direct action, regardless of whether it is "violent" or "non-violent" in nature, can only become revolutionary when it is a direct response to the daily exploitation and oppression of the working class, and manifests itself in forms of collective action with the ability to create decisive ruptures within the capitalist social order. Only when rent strikes spread widely and our communities are in revolt, when workplaces are occupied and industry is brought to a standstill, and when capitalist property is expropriated and re-distributed on a mass scale will direct action truly be placed in revolutionary context.

This is certainly a lot easier to theorize about than to actually put into practice. How do we actually get to these points of decisive rupture? Obviously we are very far from this stage of revolutionary struggle, but we have to start somewhere.

At a recent conference, those of us from NEFAC have agreed to prioritize the activity of the federation in three specific areas of class struggle: workplace resistance; housing/gentrification; and anti-poverty. This does not mean that we are absolutely limited to these three areas, only that this is where we have agreed to set a priority of importance in our regional activity. Our activity in each of these areas of class struggle is seen in the context of a mass revolutionary strategy. Minimally, we promote the autonomous organization and self-activity of the working class in each of these areas of struggle; ultimately, our goal is the creation of a revolutionary dual power capable of superceding the capitalist/Statist system entirely.

MaRK
Class Struggle Beyond Anti-Globalization Protest
2002

Editorial Piece for NEA #4
The Northeastern Anarchist Issue #4, Spring/Summer 2002
nefac.net