

Black Flag

FOR ANARCHIST
RESISTANCE

Anti-Capitalism or State Capitalism?

A new movement has appeared, one which has made a name for itself in its militancy, its willingness to consider alternatives to the status quo, to accept with pride the name "anti-capitalist."

Sadly, Globalise Resistance is not part of that movement. Eschewing any explicit anti-capitalist label, it claims to be "a network of groups opposed to the global growth of corporate power." It is a "central organising goal of unity-in-diversity among the anti-globalisation, environmental, anti-privatisation and human rights movements." No mention of anti-capitalism.

Why? Could it be because many of its leading activists proudly place themselves in the Bolshevik tradition. The politics of Lenin and Trotsky are their basis, the Russian Revolution their inspiration. They argue that the current wave of protest is the latest in a long line of movements which challenged how the world works and we should learn from them.

Past and Future
And they are right. Every new movement has the past to contend with. The importance of understanding previous movements, their successes and their failures is obvious — we do not want to repeat the same mistakes again nor continually reinvent the wheel. Past struggles, movements and ideas are a foundation upon which we can build, an inspiration for the poetry of the future. The danger is that we

forget that and seek safety in the past, in what appeared to have been have successful.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the anti-capitalist movement is facing that danger. When it exploded at the J18 "Carnival against Capitalism" and Seattle, the various vanguards of

can only gain access to the means of life by selling themselves to those who do. If workers do not directly manage their own activity then capitalism remains, regardless of who formally owns property. That is why we argue for workers' self-management of production based on federations of workers' associations and communal ownership.

Bolshevism does not share this vision. Lenin was clear what kind of economy he was aiming for, a state capitalist one. For Lenin "socialism is merely state-capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people and has to that extent ceased to be capitalist monopoly." The institutional framework of capitalism would be utilised as the principal (almost exclusive) instruments of "socialist" transformation. The "modern state

possesses an apparatus which has extremely close connections with the banks and syndicates, an apparatus which performs an enormous amount of accounting and registration work . . . This apparatus must not, and should not, be smashed." "Without big banks Socialism would be impossible," argued Lenin, as they "are the 'state apparatus' which we need to bring about socialism, and which we take ready made from capitalism." The job of socialism was to "make it even bigger, even more democratic, even more comprehensive," a "single State



Bolshevism advocated and implemented capitalist relations in production based on capitalist structures. It may be against private capitalism, but this is because it favours state capitalism

the Left were conspicuous by their absence. Since then they have tried to catch up, hoping to gain members from the movement for their parties. They aim to recreate the apparent success of the Bolsheviks and their role in any movement is to show that it is doomed to failure unless that model is embraced.

The question is, is Bolshevism actually anti-capitalist in the full sense of the word?

State Capitalism
For anarchists, capitalism is defined by wage labour. Under capitalism workers

Bank, the biggest of the big." As this would be "nine-tenths of the socialist apparatus," the building of socialism would be easy, created from above, "at one stroke, by a single decree."

The Bolsheviks would "not invent the organisational form of work, but take it ready-made from capitalism" and "borrow the best models furnished by the advanced countries." The idea that capitalist means could not be used for socialist ends did not exist for Bolshevism.

Workers Control or Controlled workers? Lenin did, at first, advocate "workers' control." Unlike anarchists, he did not see "workers' control" as workers directly managing production, he always saw it in terms of workers'

"controlling" those who did. It simply meant "the country-wide, all-embracing, omnipresent, most precise and most conscientious accounting of the production and distribution of goods." In other words, "over the capitalists" who would still manage production.

This "workers' control" was always placed in a statist context. For Lenin "the new means of control have been created not by us, but by capitalism in its military-imperialist stage" and so "the proletariat takes its weapons from capitalism and does not 'invent' or 'create them out of nothing." Thus "workers' control" would be based on state capitalist institutions, not on workers' ones.

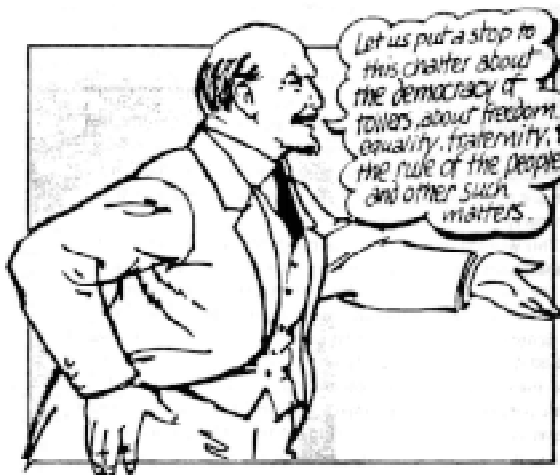
Once in power, the Bolsheviks quickly turned away from even this limited vision of workers' control. Lenin raised the idea of "one-man management," granting state appointed "individual executives dictatorial powers (or 'unlimited' powers)." The revolution, he claimed, "demands" that "the people unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of labour." His "superior forms of labour discipline" were simply hyper-developed capitalist forms. The role of workers in production was the same, but with a novel twist, namely "unquestioning obedience to the orders of individual representatives of the Soviet government during the work."

Capitalist management techniques were praised and introduced. "We must raise the question of piece-work and apply and test it in practice," stated Lenin, "we must raise the question of applying much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system; we must make wages correspond to the total amount of goods turned out." Techniques designed and used by management to break the collective power of workers at the point of production were now considered somehow "neutral" when imposed by the Party.

Industry was soon nationalised, but capitalism was not ended. As anarchists then (and now) pointed out, the relations between labour and capital where the same. State capitalism simply replaced private capitalism.

While most in the "anti-globalisation"

movement are inspired by a vision of a non-capitalist, decentralised, diverse society based on appropriate technology and appropriate scale, Bolshevism is not. Rather, it sees the problem with capitalism is that its institutions are not centralised and big enough. For Lenin, when "the separate establishments are amalgamated into a single syndicate, this economy can attain tremendous proportions, as economic science teaches us." Yes, capitalist economic science, based on capitalist definitions of efficiency and economy! That Bolshevism bases itself on centralised, large scale industry because it is more "economic" suggests nothing less than that its "socialism" will be based on



the same dehumanising and anti-ecological priorities as capitalism.

In a nutshell, Bolshevism advocated and implemented capitalist relations in production based on capitalist structures. It may be against private capitalism, but this is because it favours state capitalism. It is significant that the "one-man management," piece-work, Taylorism, etc. advocated and implemented under Lenin are listed by his followers as evils of Stalinism, showing its anti-socialist nature. Clearly, Bolshevik policies had a decisive impact on how the revolution developed.

Perhaps this explains why Globalise Resistance is not explicitly anti-capitalist. If it were, it would have meant that Lenin could not honestly join!

Party Power

Politically, Bolshevism argues for centralism and strong government. For anarchists, this is unsurprising. Centralism is designed for minority rule, to exclude the mass of people from taking part in decision-making processes in society. The state means the delegation of power, the abdication of initiative and sovereignty of all into the hands of a few. It means an inequality of power, where the handful of people in the government rule the rest.

Ironically, Bolshevism agrees. As Trotsky argued in 1939, "the very same masses are at different times inspired by different moods and objectives. It is just for this reason that a centralised organisation of the vanguard is indispensable. Only a party, wielding the authority it has won, is capable of

overcoming the vacillation of the masses themselves." This was not a new idea. In 1921, he had argued that the party was "entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy."

In this he simply repeated Lenin's opinion that "the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised through an organisation embracing the whole of the class, because in all capitalist countries (and not only over here, in one of the most backward) the proletariat is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts . . . that an organisation taking in the whole proletariat cannot direct exercise proletarian dictatorship. It can be exercised only by a vanguard."

For Bolshevism, "All Power to the Soviets" meant, in practice, "All Power to the Party through the Soviets." As Lenin made clear in 1917, it was the Bolsheviks who would "take over full state power," not the working class as a whole. Twenty years latter, Trotsky simply repeated this Bolshevik truism when he argued that "the proletariat can take power only through its vanguard." Significantly, he stated that the "revolutionary party, even having seized power . . . is still by no means the sovereign ruler of society."

So the party is "the sovereign ruler of society," not the working class.

Unsurprisingly, when workers turned against the Bolsheviks in the spring and summer of 1918, soviets which were elected with non-Bolshevik majorities were simply disbanded by force. In Petrograd and Moscow, the soviets were gerrymandered by packing them with Bolshevik controlled bodies, making direct election from the workplace irrelevant.

Even after the rise of Stalinism, Trotsky stressed that the "revolutionary dictatorship of a proletarian party" was "an objective necessity" and that the "revolutionary party (vanguard) which renounces its own dictatorship surrenders the masses to the counter-revolution."

Rather than seek popular self-government in federations of self-managed community and workplace assemblies, Bolshevism aims for party power. As Trotsky stated in 1937, "those who propose the abstraction of Soviets to the party dictatorship should understand that only thanks to the party dictatorship were the Soviets able to lift themselves out of the mud of reformism and attain the state form of the proletariat."

Socialism from Below?

The principle of Globalise Resistance is supposedly organisation and direction from the bottom up. Lenin was quite clear that the "organisational principle" of Bolshevism was "centralism" and "to proceed from the top downward." He argued that "limitation, in principle, of revolutionary action to pressure from below and renunciation of pressure also from above is anarchism." He stressed

that "the principle, 'only from below' is an anarchist principle" and the importance of combining "from above and "from below, where "pressure from above" was "pressure by the revolutionary government on the citizens."

The implications of this became clear once the Bolsheviks seized power. As Lenin explained to his political police, the Cheka: "Without revolutionary coercion directed against the avowed enemies of the workers and peasants, it is impossible to break down the resistance of these exploiters. On the other hand, revolutionary coercion is bound to be employed towards the wavering and unstable elements among the masses themselves." Of course, "wavering" and "unstable" elements is just another way of saying "pressure from below," the attempts by those subject to the rule of the party to influence its policies.

Bolshevism confuses party power with working class power. For Lenin, it was "evidence of the most incredible and hopeless confusion of mind" to ask the question "dictatorship of the Party or dictatorship of the class?" and it was "ridiculously absurd and stupid" to "draw a contrast . . . between the dictatorship of the masses and the dictatorship of the leaders." Indeed, "all talk about 'from above' or 'from below,' about 'the dictatorship of leaders' or 'the dictatorship of the masses,' cannot but appear to be ridiculous, childish nonsense." He proved this by discussing the "general mechanism of the proletarian state power viewed 'from above,' from the standpoint of the practical realisation of the dictatorship":

"The interrelations between leaders-Party-class-masses . . . now present themselves concretely in Russia in the following form. The dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat which is organised in the Soviets and is led by the Communist Party . . . The Party, which holds annual congresses . . . is directed by a Central Committee of nineteen elected at the congress, while the current work in Moscow had to be carried on by [two] still smaller bodies . . . which are elected at the plenary sessions of the Central Committee, five members of the Central Committee in each bureau. This, then, looks like a real 'oligarchy.' Not a single important political or organisational question is decided by any State institution in our republic [sic!] without the guiding instructions of the Central Committee of the Party."

This did not stop Lenin claiming that the soviets were "more democratic" than anything in the "best democratic

republics of the bourgeois world." If true, then why did the Bolsheviks need non-Party conferences "to be able to watch the mood of the masses, to come closer to them, to respond to their demands"? Needless to say, these conferences were stopped once they criticised the party.

Perhaps this explains why Lenin did not bother to view "proletarian" state power "from below," from the viewpoint of the proletariat? If he did, perhaps he would have recounted the numerous strikes and protests broken by the Army and Cheka under martial law, the gerrymandering and disbanding of soviets, the imposition of "one-man management" in production, the turning of the unions into agents of the state/party and the elimination of working class freedom and power by party power.

Globalise Bolshevism?

Globalise Resistance states that its members "are unified by a common belief in values such as human realisation, freedom, welfare, equality, environmental responsibility, democracy and peace, and by a common objection to the debasement of these by current local, national and global structures of dominance and profit making." Simply put, none of the leading Bolsheviks could be members of Globalise Resistance. As can be seen, the Bolshevik tradition has no such "common belief" and when in power it "debased" all of them by the party's "structures of dominance."

It is important to stress that this process had started well before the outbreak of the Russian civil war, which is usually used by modern day Leninists to justify Bolshevik actions. Moreover, Lenin and Trotsky thought civil war and economic disruption were inevitable in any revolution and they universalised these anti-democratic policies and placed them at the heart of their politics.

Bolshevism confirmed anarchist theory that a "workers' state" is a contradiction in terms. For anarchists, the Bolshevik substitution of party power for working class power (and the conflict between the two) did not come as a surprise. The state is the delegation of power — as such, the idea of a "workers' state" expressing "workers' power" is a logical impossibility. If workers are running society then power rests in their hands. If a state exists then power rests in the hands of the handful of people at the top, not in the hands of all. The state was designed for minority rule. No state can be an organ of working class (i.e. majority) self-management due to its basic nature, structure and design. For this reason anarchists have argued for a bottom-up federation of workers' councils as the agent of revolution and the means of managing society after capitalism and the state have been abolished.

Why this leaflet?

Our account of past struggles is not simply a history lesson. We must understand the past in order to avoid repeating mistakes and dead-ends. To advance we must reject those ideologies which failed in the past, yet linger on like the undead in our midst.

Some will dismiss this leaflet as "sectarian" and urge us to "unite" against the evils facing the world — fascism, war, whatever else can make us feel guilty for daring to discuss their politics. But debate is as important as action. Mindless activism can only weaken a movement. Theory and practice must become one if we are to succeed. To dismiss our work as "sectarian" simply shows that some people have skeletons in their closets and while they know it, they do not want anyone else to!

Others will dismiss our leaflet by saying that it is "old news," that "lessons have been learned" and so on. This does not stop them praising the Bolshevik revolution and urging us to repeat it. Nor does it stop them justifying and rationalising Bolshevik actions, so ensuring that they will be repeated. Nor does it stop them using the same tired old slogans, such as "nationalisation under workers' control," a "workers' government" and so on.

So when someone says that they, too, are "anti-capitalist" we cannot assume we mean the same thing. A hostility to private capitalism can hide support for state capitalism, as Bolshevism proves.

As anarchists like Chomsky have argued, it is not just a case of agreeing on the ends and arguing over the means. The ends themselves are different. Bolshevism aims for party power and a highly centralised state capitalist system. Anarchists argue we cannot use capitalist means for socialist ends -- means determine ends.

Ultimately, any "unity" which waters down anti-capitalism is spurious at best, a betrayal at worse. It links anti-capitalism with state capitalism, with a politics which replaces direct action from below with power from above. Don't be fooled again!



For more on anarchism:

www.anarchistfaq.org www.struggle.ws www.infoshop.org www.ainfos.ca

For more on Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution:

Maurice Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*

www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/2163/bolintro.html

www.struggle.ws/russia.html www.infoshop.org/faq/secH.con.html



An Alternative Vision

The idea that socialism may have different priorities, have different visions of how an economy was structured and run, need different methods of organising production and society than capitalism, is absent in Bolshevism. We may be against the same thing, but that does not mean we are for the same thing. The anti-globalisation movement should remember this and start to be explicitly positive. Unless we clarify what we want, modern day Bolsheviks will use the

lack of clear pro ideas to push state capitalism, not anti-capitalism.

There is another vision of socialism. This vision has anarchism as its leading proponent. Anarchists are extremely happy that many in the "anti-globalisation" movement have embraced anarchist ideas and practice. It shows that our ideas appeal to other activists and meet their needs, that they are themselves drawing similar conclusions from their own experiences and analyses. A new generation is developing their own theories based on a critical dialogue with previous revolutionary ideas and their own experiences. This is an extremely positive sign. We have a lot in common and can learn from each other.

Anarchism argues that real anti-capitalism has to be based on worker's self-management of production. Without this, as Bolshevism showed, workers remain wage slaves, subordinated and exploited by those who do manage production. An anarchist society is a federation of decentralised communities in which production would be based appropriate technology and scale and on human and ecological needs. In an anarchist society, the economy would be run by federations of workplace assemblies and committees. We have long argued that capitalist methods cannot be used for socialist ends and this explains our struggle to democratise and socialise the workplace and our awareness of the importance of collective initiatives by the direct producers in transforming their work situation.

Instead of a workers' state (a contradiction in terms) run from the top-down by a "revolutionary" government, anarchists argue for the abolition of the State and establishment of a federation of communes (workers' councils) based on mandated and recallable delegates, not representatives. Only in this way can all participate in the running of society. To quote Bakunin, the revolution "everywhere must be created by the people, and supreme control must always belong to the people organised into a free federation of agricultural and industrial associations . . . organised from the bottom upwards by means of revolutionary delegation" and so the "future organisation of society must proceed from the bottom up only, through free association or federations of the workers, into their associations to begin with, then into communes, regions, nations and, finally, into a great international and universal federation."

In other words, a real socialism from below based on federations of workplace and community assemblies, a socialism which is libertarian, built and run from the bottom up and which does not equate party power with popular power.



Building the future in the present!
As history shows, to get real change we have to impose from the streets and workplaces that which politicians are incapable of realising in parliament. Anarchists organise accordingly. We argue that working class people must organise their power apart from and against the State by building their own fighting social and economic organisations. This means encouraging direct action, solidarity and community and workplace assemblies in the struggle for improvements under capitalism while fighting to get rid of it totally.

By organising resistance in the workplace and community we can create a network of activists who can encourage the spirit of revolt and resistance. By creating assemblies where we live and work we can create an effective countering power to the state and capital. We must create that part of libertarian socialism which can be created within bourgeois society in order to combat that system with our own special weapons of solidarity, direct action and mutual aid. These combative class organisations can also be the focal point for creating co-operatives, credit unions, self-managed schools, social centres and so on.

The seeds of anarchy are created in struggle. By fighting for change, those involved have to organise themselves, to management their own affairs, to make their own decisions. They see that bosses and politicians are not needed and that we can govern ourselves. The class struggle is the school of anarchism, with self-management within the class struggle preparing us for a self-managed society.

How we organise under capitalism is very important. Anarchists stress the importance of building the new world in the shell of the old. We argue for self-management, federalism and decision making from below upwards. We apply within our organisations the same principles which the working class has evolved in the course of its own struggles. Autonomy is combined with federalism, so ensuring co-ordination of decisions and activities is achieved from below upwards by means of mandated and recallable delegates.

At the dawn of the 21st century, let us ensure history does not repeat itself. This means rejecting the state capitalism of Bolshevism in favour of a real anti-capitalism, one rooted in working class struggle, self-organisation, solidarity, direct action and self-liberation.

Black Flag



For a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation; against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

Black Flag,

c/o 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh, EH7 5HA

Solidarity Federation
PO Box 1681, London, N8 7LE
Counter Information
c/o 17 West Montgomery Place,
Edinburgh, EH7 5HA
<http://www.j12.org/lothian/ci/>

Anarchist Federation
PO Box 248, Aberdeen,
AB25 1JE
Workers Solidarity
Movement
PO Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland
www.struggle.ws/wsm.html

