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PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

Acharya, Singh and Gandhi

Anarchist historians like Peter Marshall and Colin Ward et al in their works, while recounting instances of anarchist ideas in India often mention Gandhi and Bhagat Singh. I want to correct this judgment which is based on either incorrect understanding of anarchism or the figures under question.

First, Gandhi. Gandhi did show praise stateless society but this is a stand taken by many conservative and reactionary forces in India since late 19th century. Gandhi was squarely against class struggle - he did not see any antagonism between the two classes. Gandhi sided with most reactionary section of the Congress on question of caste and land reforms. He could not even advocate for inter-caste marriages and dinners. He did not see anything wrong in the Indian

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patriarchal families. His opposition to heavy industries was something that big industrialist found worrisome but this was soon corrected when Nehru became the leader of the Congress in 1940s.

Bhagat Singh on the other hand was a staunch Leninist who barely understood and it seems even tried to understand what anarchism was. He could not be blamed as the Bolshevik propaganda of a "successful revolution" in Russian was too powerful. His understanding of anarchism was that of a revolutionary terrorist movement - bomb throwing, which was taken seriously in Gadar circles.

The only activist who actually had a grasp of anarchism in India was MPT Acharya - and to a lesser extent Har Dayal.

"Is it to make large cities with miserable people, barely eking their existence that we want to have 'Swaraj'?"

I consoled myself by answering that the misery was due to foreign Government, but under Indian Government, it would all vanish, because our countrymen will be friends of the poor when they come to rule. Late on, however, when I went to Europe and saw misery there, my illusions about "National" rule were shattered." - Acharya.

His rejection of state and strong anti-capitalist beliefs stemmed from understanding of essentiality human freedom. He wrote extensively about anarchism in Europe and USA. He started the first anarchist press in India - 'Libertarian Socialist'. Though much can be criticized about Acharya, he clearly is the only activist and writer who took anarchism seriously and hence rejected the regressive beliefs in nationhood, capitalism and also prepared for a free society.

Har Dayal was also influenced by Syndicalist movement and formed the Bakunin society but his influence of anarchist is hard to discern from his writings on education and his book on self-help. This might be due to the limited access we have to his documents. But at this point he appears to have been less animated by anarchist ideals.

In conclusion. Gandhi from his actions is clearly a reactionary figure. All his anarchist credentials arise from isolated study of his preaching and tactics. These break down by slightest of scrutiny. Bhagat Singh was also not an anarchist in any meaningful way. The only anarchist activist during the pre-1947 period in India was MPT Acharya.

NEED FOR ANARCHISM IN INDIA

John B. McEwan, cybernetics mathematician, wrote in 1963:

"Libertarian socialists, synonym for non-individualist anarchis[ts], especially Kropotkin and Landauer, showed an early grasp of the complex network of changing relationships, involving many structures of correlated activity and mutual aid, independent of authoritarian coercion. It was against this background that they developed their theories of social organization."

Core of anarchist social organizing are based on concept of decentralization, autonomy of communities and federalism. The complexities of modern societies necessities anarchist form of organizing. This is true internationally - the concept themselves essentially reject national borders. But the move in this direction needs to be taken in current state of things. If we want a habitable planet that can sustain life we must move in anarchist direction at once.

Indian scholar and activist Amulya Kumar N Reddy had argued and worked for decentralized energy generation and transmission system that will be on end-use oriented. Work of Geetam Tiwari and others in traffic management in India is of utmost importance when tail-pipe emission is one of the greatest threats to life in India. Her work points out the affect of urban ..

100 Years of Leninist Counter-Revolution

"Leninism failed to correct the serious deformities that had crept in during the Civil War," proclaims Bernard D'Mello in Russian Revolution Centenary Special issue of EPW. His editorial is filled with distortions about the actual "serious deformities" of Bolshevism that are very prevalent in elite left circles around the world, and to a depressing extent in India.

His claim that "[a]mong the first moves made at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets was to make good the promise of "All Power to the Soviets," and the land decree—radical land reform which gave land, after it was no longer a commodity, to those who worked it" is chillingly Orwellian. The November 3 1917 Decree only restated and legalized what workers' grassroots organizations had already achieved in the previous months.

"These excellent, and often quoted, provisions in fact only listed and legalized what had already been achieved and implemented in many places by the working class in the course of the struggles of the previous months. They were to be followed by three further provisions, of ominous import. It is amazing that these are not better known. In practice they were soon to nullify the positive features of the previous provisions. They stipulated (point 5) that "the decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees were legally binding upon the owners of enterprises" but that they could be "annulled by trade unions and congresses". This was exactly the fate that was to befall the decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees: the trade unions proved to be the main medium through which the Bolsheviks sought to break the autonomous power of the Factory Committees.

The Draft Decree also stressed (point 6) that "in all enterprises of state importance" all delegates elected to exercise workers' control were to be "answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property". Enterprises "of importance to the State" were defined (point 7) - and this has a familiar tone for all revolutionaries - as "all enterprises working for defense purposes, or in any way connected with the production of articles necessary for the existence of the masses of the population" . In other words practically any enterprise could be declared by the new Russian State as "of importance to the State". The delegates from such an enterprise (elected to exercise workers' control) were now made answerable to a higher authority. Moreover if the trade unions (already fairly bureaucratized) could "annul" the decisions of rank-and-file delegates, what real power in production had the rank and file? The Decree on Workers' Control was soon proved, in practice, not to be worth the paper it was written on." (Brinton)

He also states "It was Lenin's famous "April Theses"—upon his return from exile in early April—that put "socialism" on the revolutionary agenda." This would have been laughable if it was not published in one of the most respected journal in the country - but is to be expected. *The April Theses* and *State and Revolution* only mark a deviation in Lenin from his right wing works. That too for calculated political reasons and to use the moral force of the workers' movement's agenda for his own political ends.

Lenin's execution of Left SR leaders for supporting the workers instead of party, his decree of the press, which managed to shut down more than 400 newspapers in 5 months and crushing the soviets, all of which happened before the civil war set in, only show that the reality was "All Power to the Party".

In fact the ideological underpinnings of Leninism and State Capitalism are radically similar. The division of society in two sections - one that of "responsible men" who understand the harsh realities of the world and the meddling outsiders. And it is the task of the responsible intelligentsia and leader to mold the society in the image they see fit. The outcome of these totalitarian ideologies, then, is no surprise the same.

Need of Anarchism in India

... design on health of poor communities - due to either centralized planning or non-planning. In this case the end-use of such infrastructures must be questioned and altered for a more democratic and habitable human settlement.

Work of E. P. Shumacher in India on Intermediate technologies is also important and a threat to IMF, World Bank driven technology regime. He points out how problems arising in day to day work in production and exchange can only be solved locally in a decentralized manner.

Anarchist society is no longer just a requirement for more free and fair society but a necessity to for the continuation of human life.

Bourgeois influences on Indian Anarchism

Current state of anarchist movement in India is next to non-existent. There are, to my knowledge, two regions where some activities by anarchists are taking place (one of the group might not identify itself as such.) Namely, regions around Delhi NCR and Kolkata.

Before pointing out some shortcoming and serious flaws in their ideologies and hence their practices it should be noted these and other individuals are doing incredible work and raising important questions. The problem arises when they fail to see that some of these questions are not new and have been answered long ago and to a large extent, still remain valid today.

The Kolkata anarchists, for example, adhere to what Luigi Fabbri called escapism: the hope that when enough people cop-out of the system and start living alternative lifestyle the power of the power structures will be undermined. Their uncritical use and advocacy of anti-libertarian Antifa tactics also show instances of Nechayenism - roughly, tactics of suppression and violence.

At the same time, the Delhi "post anarchists" are obsessed with action for sake of action and "spontaneous action of workers" - without any need of organizing. They infact make a categorical error by creating a dichotomy between organization and non-organization. When in reality the only options are democratic organizing or non-democratic ones. The workers are not unorganized today. They are organized in a manner that is favorable to the owners and managers. It is undemocratic and immoral.

As historian Pier Carlo Masini noted "for them no practical preparation is needed". Which history has shown time after time to be a disastrous fallacy.

"To keep on repeating the same attempts without an intelligent appraisal of all the numerous failures in the past is not to uphold the right to experiment, but to insist upon one's right to escape the hard facts of social struggle into the world of wishful belief. We grant such a right to the weak, the infirm, to the tired radical, to the escapists. But we do deny such a right to the revolutionary whose main weapon is an unflagging will and an unblunted sense of reality".

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Notice

For various personal and financial reasons *Azadi* will be discontinued for few months.

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