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Capitalism is the disease — anarchism is the cure

Anonymous

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We find ourselves once again on the brink of an abyss; facing the horrendous prospect of propulsion into war as the result of decisions made and actions taken by a relative handful of statist, authoritarian bigots and fanatics. Once again, on each side in the coming conflict, those in authority will expect (and receive) the ultimate sacrifice from those they govern — their lives for ‘the cause’. How is it that so few can cause such misery and terror to so many; and how can they be stopped?

Imperialism, the ability of countries to globally and locally dictate trade relations with other countries, is a feature of a small number of powerful capitalist states. The policies of imperialist nation states are largely dictated by the major companies based there. As the dominant world superpower, the government of the USA is in a very strong position to dictate trade relations with other countries, and does so (US foreign policy is dealt with in a separate article). The ultimate sanction of all nation states against rival nation states is war.

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The military apparatus of the state (armed forces and associated hardware) means it is ideally suited to waging war on its rivals — the state is the ‘war machine’. The repressive apparatus (police, courts, prisons etc.) keeps any internal dissent under control.

At the same time as existing in a violent form, the state exists in our attitudes and interpersonal relationships — placed there by tradition on one hand and the media on the other. The mainstream media functions as a capitalist apparatus of consent, responsible for the mental subjugation of the people, and controlling of our hearts and minds. President W Bush’s call for a “war against terrorism” is self-contradictory, since war is the promotion of terror, bloodshed and death, in pursuit of military objectives (i.e. power politics, economics, religion). Most of the mainstream media didn’t question this however, and were quick to relay the war-on-terrorism message around the world, inflaming public opinion in the process.

War-time being a time of ‘national crisis’, the sense of ‘national identity’ is reinvigorated in people’s minds. Nationalism, racism, religious intolerance and hatred are much more in evidence in a nation at war. The climate for debate and dissent is somewhat stifled. As the anarchist Randolph Bourne wrote: “The nation in war-time attains a uniformity of feeling, a hierarchy of values, culminating at the undisputed apex of the State ideal, which could not possibly be produced through any agency other than war”.

To recap then, the state is the war-machine, the driving force of which is capitalism. The capitalist state also exists inside our minds by influencing our beliefs and values via the media. So working class people come to hold reactionary and false ideas such as nationalism, racism, xenophobia, sexism etc. This divides us from each other and weakens our ability to respond to the state’s destructive and dangerous manoeuvres, including war.

Anarchist social revolution will smash the capitalist economy. Capitalist industry will be expropriated and private property abolished, along with currency, and exchange generally. People will socialise the means of production, distribution and communication etc. for the benefit of society as a whole. Production and distribution of goods and services will be organised by workers' and community organisations: from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

Useless enterprises (insurance and financial services, advertising, sales, lawyers, stockbrokers...) will be closed, workers councils will take over and run those that serve a useful purpose. In this way the capitalist engine of imperialism and war is wrecked. With banks abolished and debts cancelled the economic inequalities that exist between nations at present could at last be addressed. We must strive for and establish egalitarian social relations between all people in all parts of the world.

Equally fundamental to anarchist ideas of social revolution, the dismantling of all state apparatus is the disarming of the war machine. Only when people abolish church and state can they organise society in a non-hierarchical, equal and free manner.

The struggle for anarchist revolution is principally a struggle for the hearts and minds of working class people. We have to win the 'battle of ideas' in order to transform society, to demonstrate that anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas about society and methods of working are the most useful and relevant for this purpose (although obviously we do not exclude good ideas simply because they have not been labelled 'anarchist'). Clearly anarchist ideas must become much more popular, widespread and well-understood than they generally are now in order to achieve a stateless, classless social revolution. This means counteracting the mainstream media of today, and working towards a society in which genuinely free and diverse media could flourish.

A successful anarchist revolution then, would result in society being organised by the free association and federation of workers (and peasants, in some countries), with decisions made directly by the people affected by them. A new era, of international solidarity, peace and co-operation is born. Relations between peoples unimpeded by capital will improve, and solidarity increase to such an extent that future war becomes unthinkable to the citizens of earth. The people never declared war on any nation, but by our tacit acceptance and passivity we allow war to be waged.

As Chilean anarchists CUAC-Chile say: *“We know that the task of stopping barbarism is not one of governments, who play with us as with pieces of chess, and they are not interested in the human cost of this macabre game. This responsibility belongs to the actions of solidarity of the people, in reviving a new internationalist spirit that can face up to death. Today our call is for peace, but we know that if we want peace, we should declare war on capitalism and on state power. But we will categorically reject participation in any war that is not against our true enemies. **No war between nations, No peace between classes! Stop irrationality and massacre!**”*

The reason why so few have caused such misery throughout history to so many in wars is: a) because they occupy positions of wealth and authority, and b) due to the deception of and acquiescence by ordinary people. As anarchists we aim to: a) eradicate the principle of authority from human relationships and the state war machine from society, and b) demonstrate to people that collectively they are powerful, and that their real allies are their neighbours in foreign countries, not their local ruling class. The people of the world have far more in common with one another than with any variety of ruling class parasite. We should band together to overthrow all states (capitalist, ‘communist’, religious, or otherwise) and live in peace.