

# **Three Articles Criticising Green Anarchist's Line**

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Autumn 1987

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# Anarchy Must Be Green: But We Must Keep Some Technology

THERE IS NO MORE vital base to our society than the ecological base. We need to find ways in which we can live as a positive and productive part of our environment. It is not that 'pollution' itself is necessarily environmentally damaging — all life produces 'waste' which is naturally recycled — it is the sheer amount and types of pollution that are environmentally damaging.

As living organisms we are wholly dependant on the maintenance of the biosphere for the production of lifes essentials — e.g. air, fresh water, food etc. etc. So we must recognise that we have to take active responsibility for the way in which we exploit the Earth's natural resources and participate as actively as possible in a green way of life.

This begs the question — 'What is a green way of life?'. We have to be constantly aware of the environmental effects of EVERYTHING we do; and if we find that we are being more extravagant than is necessary with the environment we must stop it, and STOP IT NOW. Sample.

If we find that eating meat produced in the present system is ecologically unsound; if we find we are using too many petro-chemicals; if we find that we are using up non-recycleable resources — then we must stop it.

So when we speculate about the anarchist use of technology, books etc., we have a definite criteria for structuring out alternatives: Does a particular practice or piece of technology place unnecessary strain on the environment? If so, can we — a) Do without or b) Modify it so that it becomes environmentally acceptable?

Obviously, at times, there will inevitably be compromise, but there is vast amounts that can be done to minimize them. Without this green awareness anarchists will be part of the process that is destroying the biosphere.

However, this is not to advocate the abandonment of advanced technology. To deny people the right to kidney machines etc. when we have the technology to produce them is obscene. What we should be doing is denying the manufacturers the right to profit out of peoples suffering, and ensuring that production of high technology is ecologically sound.

Autonomous, self sufficient, low technology villages are fine for those who wish to turn back some imaginary clock to a rural paradise; but it is ridiculous to imagine that we cannot redesign our industrial base in a way that is ecologically sound. We can, and must.

In our capitalist society, technology exists only because it is profitable. For any one piece of technology to survive it must find social, economic, or political relationships in which it can exist. So, it is up to us to redefine the relationships in society, so that we can redesign technology along lines that are not exploitative of both people and the planet.

As for how we will interact in a state of anarchy, it is obvious that each person must have equal access to, and ownership of, the ways and means of production, be it land, services, or factories. The only criteria for the distribution of resources in society is need, and we must have contingents which allow for the mass organisation and participation in the running of society.

In the meantime, a ‘Culture of Resistance’ must DO something, and it must have a clear idea of what anarchist analysis of society means. We cannot wait around for a revolution in ‘The Third World’ which would be unlikely to produce a state of anarchy anyway — We are here, and it is here that we are best able to work towards bringing about anarchy.

Chris Hall.

# Rural Armchair

IN G.A. number 16 there was an article entitled 'Industrial Slavery or Rural Freedom' by Paul Whymark, which used the example of the printers dispute at Wapping to argue that workers in most, if not all, jobs under Capitalism, who fight for short term gains such as better working conditions and wage rises etc., are merely supporting the whole principle of wage slavery and even Capitalism itself, and therefore should not be supported. We in the London group of the Anarchist-Communist Federation, and the A.C.F. as a whole, believe that this argument is quite wrong and a very serious mistake.

Whatever we do, we all support Capitalism in some way. The only way one can not give any kind of support to Capitalism is by living in some remote area and being totally self-sufficient. However, is this really furthering the cause of Anarchy? Of course not'. It is merely isolating yourself from other people and leaving all the problems behind. It is also impracticable as most people need to work to support their families and haven't got the money or the knowledge to set up some self-supporting farm. Anarchy is about ordinary people (not terrorists or eccentrics) working in the community and workplace to try and gain more control over their own lives; trying to get across anarchist ideas to the rest of their class; and with the aim of eventually destroying capitalism altogether. Living cosy lifestyles within Capitalism in the middle of nowhere changes nothing.

Paul states that he does have pity for workers who are oppressed; how noble.' However though, workers, and the unemployed for that matter, and also those oppressed by their sex and colour, do not need pity, but need active support from other members of their class. By giving that support you gain respect and create a basis whereby some people may be more willing to listen to your arguments. However, to refuse to give that support on the grounds that workers don't quite fit into your own moral blueprint, and are not aware that Capitalism needs to be destroyed, is merely to distance yourself from the very people you want to reach, and is a sure way of turning people against anarchist ideas.

Paul suggested that one reason why the printers should not have been supported was because they printed sexist and racist material; let's face it though, many working class people are racist and sexist and do support the basic ideals of Capitalism; this is . hardly surprising considering the ruling class owns and controls our schools, newspapers, and T. V. and radio stations etc. However though, when sections of the working class are directly victimised by the state or the boss class a contradiction becomes evident between the values that people have been taught to believe, and their own actual

experiences. This contradiction can produce doubt and therefore, sometimes, workers may start to question previously strongly held beliefs and prejudices. That is why it has so often been said that people change and learn most in struggle, and if overheard conversations at Wapping are anything to go by it would seem that this is quite true.

Considering this, it is absolutely vital that anarchists support such struggles and try to make people realise that their particular struggle is part of a much wider general struggle. To sit back and merely criticise such struggles is to waste good opportunities for communication and possibly revolutionary situations. When people fight for short-term gains such as better wages and working conditions, it is not a wholehearted support for Capitalism, as Paul suggests, but an encouraging act of defiance against those that oppress them, and such acts can sometimes lead to a greater awareness and a progression on to much wider demands.

Paul also argues that the goal of anarchy is the achievement of a system of 'small self-supporting communities and villages. This typically back to nature approach is not only impracticable; most people would quite rightly laugh at the idea of a mass exodus back to the countryside; but is also undesirable. If the technology in the modern world were to be controlled by the people for the needs of the people, rather than for profit at the expense of people; it would provide us with many advantages such as saving us labour, saving lives, helping the old and handicapped; and would also be useful in many fields of life such as education, transport and communication etc...

If anarchism is ever to be adopted by the working class as THEIR ideology then it must be about fighting the struggles they face TODAY. To argue that anarchy is about going back to nature, rejecting technology, and not supporting various oppressed sections in the struggles they face today, is a perfect way of confining anarchy to the armchair and turning people away from anarchist ideas. If anarchist theory merely leads to inaction, then it is worthless.

The London Group of the Anarchist-Communist Federation.

# On The Periphery

GREEN ANARCHIST'S manifesto calls for revolution on the periphery — what does this mean?

## The Geographical Periphery

The manifesto calls for 'the destruction of the system from outside inwards starting in the Third World', and GREEN ANARCHIST has repeatedly argued that if the agrarian in the Third World won control over their own resources they could both starve out the industrialised north and rob them of the means to retaliate against this.

The motives of the Third World to do this are simple: starve or be starved. Those facing this dilemma are the peasants driven from their lands by the cities in their own country or cities in the affluent north. If they are so powerless to lose their land in the first place, it seems doubly unlikely that they will have the power to take them back. Rather than fight against the overwhelming military power of their own cities, many disinherited peasants opt for the squalor of shanty life and migrate from their lands to the borders of urban industrialised production.

Only when the burdens of debt imposed by the north so cripple this Third World industrialism that migration there ceases to be an option and the cities of the Third World lack the military resources to bring regional groups in line when they attempt to take back their 'land is a green anarchist option in the Third World open.

However, to argue that 'the worse the situation is, the better it is' is to condemn the Third World as a whole to disinheritance and starvation — in the despair of social collapse, nationalist/anti-imperialist struggles against the north are far more common than regional autonomism: moves towards green anarchism in the Third World are seen as a stab in the back to be crushed either by the cities, if the nationalist struggle rebuilds the power of the nation, or by the north (for example, through the use of Rapid Deployment Forces) if it is not.

To call for division, despair and powerlessness as the motors of social change in the Third World is likely to consign green anarchism to the despised and impotent political periphery of the third world.

## The Political Periphery

The manifesto also calls for the building of an autonomous and alternative green productive base in the North-as people find only squalor and unemployment in the cities, they are supposed to take to the hills and build their own communities in opposition to the industrialism they have left behind.

Committing your life to growing your own crops on your own land is the very opposite of a soft option — it means working long hours, foregoing 'luxury goods' that cannot be locally produced and 'getting your hands dirty'. The only proper motive for doing this is a strong commitment to green anarchism as the road to the future.

If these green anarchist communities succeeded in undermining industrialism, those living on the city are certain to react to the threat they posed to their way of life. As with nationalism in the Third World, city dwellers are more likely to blame the green 'outsiders' for the problems of living they face rather than looking at the way they themselves live as the real difficulty.

Faced with the persecution of mob opinion, the law and ultimately even the military, communities would either be forced back off the land or adopt a 'seige mentality' of 'them and us', which will marginalise both autonomous production and the ability to attract others to such communities or to develop their own as they will simply not get the chance to be exposed to green anarchist ideas.

## The Mental Periphery

If green anarchism is to become influential, it is important that everyone understands both what it is and how they can get involved in it. Rather than a strategy of confrontation that says 'Either go with us all the way or go to hell. common ground between all people has to be found showing how all can benefit from a greener and more anarchist attitude and lifestyle.

To argue that someone can only be a green anarchist by 'going all the way' is admirable for the small minority that are prepared to toil on the land for the whole of the lives and forego cars, telephones and modern medical resources, but the vast majority of people in our society are simply not prepared to do that.

Robert Owens communes in America in the last century gathered only a few hundred people and despite removing the temptations of a more affluent industrial society by 'setting up shop' in the middle of the wilderness, these communities usually collapsed in under a decade.

Conversely, Owen's industrial reforms in his cotton mills — shorter working hours for his employees and more control by them over their workplace — not only made these mills more productive and a more pleasant i environment to work in (something that suited everyone) but also spawned the whole idea of the co-operative movement. A small gain, but one that is now accepted as a fact of life.



If it properly explained how these small gains benefit all and are tinged with green anarchism, people are more likely to see green anarchist ideas as something both workable and something that they can get directly involved in. They become an asset rather than a threat to the way people live.

As part of green anarchism is recognising how our selfish and mindless consumption exploits peasants in the Third World, more local production would reduce the burden we impose on them. It is the North's power over the Third World and our willingness to play along with this that is the problem. We are in the best position to lift the burden from their shoulders by such simply achieved actions as choosing to buy locally produced goods rather than those imported from the Third World.

So how can we set about spreading green anarchist ideas? If, rather than focusing on a final utopia and offering no real workable way of achieving it, we think out ways of solving immediate problems in the community and then push these both locally through personal contacts and nationally by feeding the green anarchist perspective into the centres of decision making (Universities, think tanks, the more thoughtful and sympathetic elements of the State), a current for real social change will be created which can accomodate those willing to 'go all the way' as well as those only able to 'make a step in the right direction'.

P.N. Rogers.

The Ted K Archive

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Autumn 1987

Green Anarchist #17.

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