

Against State Leftists In The American Empire

A Critique Of Authoritarian Communists, Their Organizations And Theory From An Anarchist Point Of View

Written By Sasha Gramsci

With Editing and Proofreading By Lucia

The following short essay is compiled from messages of a solidarity group discussion after learning of the crackdown on LGBTQ+ groups in China by WeChat (and others), edited and expanded upon within reason, accompanied by an earlier rough draft article criticizing Leninism and its modern incarnations. It is the summation of the opinions of the author regarding the authoritarian tendencies on the Left in the so-called "United States," particularly with regards to the affinity in this particular group of leftists to leap to the defense of states that utilize socialist rhetoric regardless of the atrocities they are known to commit against workers, ethnic and religious minorities, and against the rights of the People in those states. It also serves as an examination, loosely, of what the author has personally perceived within the American Left today. It is written from the perspective of an Insurrectionary Anarchist with individualist views, and represents the author's own feelings and understanding of theory, which, in the spirit of the revolution being led in Rojava, are evolving as the author learns more, and may be incorrect, incomplete, and somewhat lacking. If that is the case, I sincerely apologize and will happily listen to criticisms to better myself and my understanding. With all of that out of the way, I thank you for reading.

In my years as an organizer, as a Leftist, as an Anarchist, a disturbing trend has become more and more evident in the day to day of Revolutionary organizing. The trend in question is not one of rabid calls to arms and action, for any Leftist worth their salt knows fully well that such actions at the present moment are not supported by the material and social conditions available us to work with, but rather one of nearly religious campism and authoritarianism. Whether they are calling themselves Maoists, Marxist-Leninists, Dengists, or whether they say they subscribe to the convoluted "Marxism-Leninism-Maoist-Xi Jinping Thought," they are not a small or irrelevant faction within the modern American Left. In parties such as the PSL (Party for Socialism and Liberation) and CPUSA (Communist Party USA, at once both irrelevant and deeply relevant to the modern struggle) there has existed for a long time now a deeply reactionary and dangerous faction that has threatened, as they always do, to co-opt the momentum of grassroots, autonomous uprisings and turn them into platforms for their work to make names for themselves, their leaders, and their Party members. Core to many of these groups and the platforms of these personalities is the unrelenting defense of authoritarian "socialist" regimes, past and present, from the USSR to Cuba to China, all in the name of some misbegotten and misshapen idea of "solidarity" against the singular Imperial Core that they can recognize given their severe blinders to the atrocities of any regime other than that of the American Empire.

Yet there is not one but, I would posit, three primary Imperial Cores in this world, all of varying power and military ability, and with different ways of manifesting their imperial ambitions. These are the Western Imperial Core (the so-called "United States"), the European Imperial Core (the European Union and its member states, who to this day bleed dry their former colonies economically and physically), and the Eastern Imperial Core (the "People's Republic" of China, which has greatly expanded its regional military might, and has been engaged in an economic colonization of Africa for more than a decade). Much of the modern Western Left, that is to say from the Western Imperial Core into the European Imperial Core, is taken hold of by a grave misunderstanding of what anti-imperialism means and entails, so much so that they would defend the Eastern Imperial Core to a bitter conclusion, even if it were a Chinese boot upon their throats rather than an American one.

I ask you, how can you call yourself a Leftist and proceed to defend *any* State, let alone China? Is this the state of Western Leftism? So downtrodden by defeat after defeat after crushing defeat that it feels the need to coddle up to a different empire with a red color scheme and the aesthetic appropriation of the revolutionary politic? Yet, if you are to criticize China, you are to be accused of peddling State Department propaganda, of mongering for an American intervention and subsequent domination of the region. I am neither a fan of the Federal Government, as I am not a fan of any government, yet this is the most common accusation that is leapt to, or that of Sinophobia (a relatively understandable accusation given the recent upswell of anti-Asian bigotry and hate crimes in the so-called "United States"). I ask, then, who at the State Department is pushing the narrative that China is Capitalist, when just last year that very same department published propaganda explicitly identifying China as a "Marxist-Leninist" state, the beginnings of a concerted push to jumpstart another Red Scare that has been carried on with gusto by the Biden administration?

So we, that is to say Anarchists, are to avoid the topic altogether, or else face risking the dissolution of already tenuous coalitions with Statist Leftists, who I, at this point, question whether we should be pushing for coalition with anyways given the history between the factions and the more recent history of their ease of infiltration, destruction, and co-option by State agents. Ne'er you mind, of course, that their parties and groups regularly peddle misogynistic language, cover for abusers, actively heckle and alienate survivors, and then go so far as to stalk their members' social media accounts to see if they are liking dissident posts! This is not even to speak of the rampant issue of white supremacy, consistent showings of willingness to work with reactionary elements in the name of "growing a mass movement," and the ease with which conspiracy taints the outlook and operating procedures of these organizations.

The state of the Left in the so-called "United States" is utterly mortifying, not to the point where one should lose their hold on Revolutionary Hope but to the point that it becomes but another effort in staving off madness to try and find an organization wherein you (that is to say, an Anarchist) do not feel so disabused of your values that you feel the need to publicly abandon them in order to keep the peace.

I ask, then, why is it that we be the ones accused of never reading theory, when the only theory that Statists speak of is that of failed State projects that have proven, again and again and again and again, that they can only devolve into pure reaction or else be so easily toppled as to be made martyrs of? Why do they not speak of *our* theorists? Why do we not accuse *them* of being ill-read, ignorant of theory, failing to grasp that what they ask for and dream of is far more idealistic than anything an Anarchist of any measurable impact has ever put forward? They speak of co-opting the State to build what they call a "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," something that has proven nothing more than a fever dream that has failed to materialize every single time their methods are attempted, even by their own definitions which they have bent to such great lengths as to be considered unsound for construction.

We are called idealists while they speak of their precious "Actually Existing Socialism," and given examples that have not one modicum of one atom of similarity to Socialism, Communism, or anything of the sort! We are to be told that we are ignorant of theory because we do not view Lenin as some master of theory, but for a charlatan? Is it because we see Bakunin as correct, on one front at least, in recognizing Marx's theory as a ripe garden from which authoritarianism can spring forth readily? This is not to say that we are not Marxists, but that we recognize the most significant flaw in that ideology, and that we have taken from the theory what is most useful and scrapped the rest.

Time and again we are taken to task for not submitting to the hierarchical organizational tactics of the Leninists and Maoists when we have witnessed, over and over and over again, from the Communist Party USA to the Black Panther Party to the Party for Socialism and Liberation, that they simply do not work with regards to their stated goal of the overthrow of American Capitalist hegemony. Speak highly as you will of the success of Mao in the overthrow of the Republic of China and the reactionary forces Chiang Kai-Shek, or of the Red Army in deposing the Tsar (with significant aid, I might add, in distracting and routing Imperial and White Army forces lent them by the Black Army of the Ukraine), or of Castro's removal-by-force of Batista, you cannot tell me these are successful revolutions in the Leftist sense. They are but coups, nothing more, installing armed, revanchist Democratic Socialist States that devolved away from even that into the authoritarian regimes which they came to be known for. Defend as you will these coups, but the People's Police Officer is still a pig, irregardless of whether the government is Communist or Capitalist.

So highly they speak of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, saying that they are the "primary ideologies" of Leftists in the Global South, something demonstrably untrue and frankly insulting to people in that half of the world, even, dare I say, chauvinistic. Yet they do not question why, if that is to be accepted as a true statement, that is. They do not examine why the large-scale Anarchist and Syndicalist movements of South and Central America, of Korea and China, Vietnam, Japan, Central Africa and Europe, seemingly dissolved into nothingness and out of the history books. Is it not because the authoritarians managed to capture the economic bases of Russia and China, small and underdeveloped though they were at the time, and then forcibly develop them into export powerhouses of ideology, military training, and weaponry?

Yet we are the idealists! We are the ones idealistic in mind because we denounce authoritarianism, because we find the State in any form abhorrent, because we recognize that genocide is not the exception but the rule to these forms of power, of all forms of power. We are the idealists because we recognize that material reality is shaped by the drive of the People to make it as they see fit, starting from their minds' own wishes to build better lives for themselves? We are the idealists for recognizing that in conjunction with the liberation of the community so too must the individual be liberated?

I find Statism idealistic! I find it preposterous, ludicrous, and an insult to the intelligence and willpower of the People to create their own liberation! They speak of "building productive forces" to defend against Capitalist incursion, yet the methods of building those forces which they propose are the very same as those of the Capitalist! They say that the State will wither away, a folly dreamed up by a power hungry imp of a man who sought only to justify his own pursuit of personal power, and who went so far as to defend a widely known abuser to do so in his early days when the most power he held was at a newspaper. I ask, then, in what portion of history have we any semblance of the withering away of State power? None! It is an impossibility, as much of one as it is to build a perpetual motion machine.

States, much like organisms, refuse to die willingly. Yet Statists continue to cling to this ridiculous folly while defending vicious regimes known to be racist in nature, known to commit crimes against humanity, known to be authoritarian; they defend their precious "Immortal Science" as though history can be predicted by ancient tomes written by an (admittedly extremely relevant) economist and a masochistic, egotistical man who at the first chance handed over the Anarchists of the Ukraine, the Left SRs, and the Factory Committees to Death. They cannot even explain the mechanism by which this would be effected! They do not know! They present possibilities, but ignore the very real human factor, the driving will to petty power that every person, be they Anarchist, Marxist-Leninist, or Maoist, et cetera is capable of falling into.

To go on a tangent, let us speak now of Lenin and his body of work. To be clear, despite the vitriol of this article, I do believe that Lenin has parts, bits and pieces scattered hither thither and yon, that are legitimately useful and valid. His body of work, however, taken as a whole, reads as nothing more than him being angry with people to the left of him politically, and finding excuses for his weak justifications of the State, and his advocacy for what I referred to before as armed, revanchist social democracy. Indeed, despite these failings I firmly believe that, even if only for historical purposes, Lenin's organizing methods can, and should, be studied and learned from, though, again, I find them deeply flawed and frankly reactionary. These failings, and inherent reaction, proved through the State Project of the USSR that the theories he put forth could create only an unsustainable revolutionary vehicle, and that they were, in fact, a major hindrance or an outright sentence of death to the praxis of the ongoing revolutionary projects that had spawned from the October Revolution and subsequent Civil War. (revolutionary projects go back more than that, it wasn't the October Revolution that started the movement, but rather it brought a bunch of existing movements together. Dont give Lenin Too much credit now)

Lenin was not so coy as his modern day ideological progeny to state his feelings on the inadequacy of the People to organize, autonomously, their own defense, and their own productive forces, nor was he shy about his belief that they could not, without higher guidance from the State, provide for themselves and each other their liberation. He was very open and blatant about those beliefs, and they today form the basis for much of the modern authoritarian left, if that segment can be called "Left" at all. Yet this portion of American "Leftism," while not dominant to be clear, is vocal, loud, and flamboyant in their propagandistic fervor.

If I may interject my own feelings, I must say that it enrages me, it fills me with an apoplectic discontent to be spoken to as though I am a child, to be told I am ignorant of their theory when I am not, to be made out a fool for refusing to be a part of their circus by the very people who subscribe to theory so blatantly counter-revolutionary in nature. I am purple with fury at the vacuous dialogue, the willingness to hand over the People from one form of oppression to another. I feel nothing but the most severe of discontent that we are expected to bend the knee to this group of people who have not one iota of respect in their hearts for the People, and given the nature of their theories I would argue that whether they say they do or not is irrelevant.

I am a revolutionary, willing to die for my belief in liberation, but I do not treat Revolution as a singular, instantaneous act as they seemingly believe Anarchists do. Revolution must be permanent, it must continue on into infinity, it must see the liberation of all classes, even those which today we do not know of or even acknowledge as existing. Any petty power which forms must be overthrown, and those systems which allowed it to form abolished. To act as though Anarchism calls for overnight transition to total liberation is ignorant of the theory, for, if we are to use Engels' ridiculous and simplistic definition, violence is authoritarian. Not until we can abolish violence, and make revolutionary actions successful peacefully, that is to say in a truly Post-Capitalist world, will any one person or class of people be liberated truly.

I am an Insurrectionary Anarchist, I believe in the individual drive to freedom. I believe that each and every person contains within them their own revolution. I do not reject the individual, I embrace them as part of a greater group called to liberation. It is Insurrection, permanent in nature, never ceasing, always evolving and changing, that drives us forward, and the individual from which that Insurrection springs forth that builds the basis for the future.

To lick the boot of a foreign Imperialist power is no different than the licking of domestic ones, kowtowing to outside powers is no different than if you were to do so for your own. To act as though they were different in any fundamental way is to be ignorant of history, theory, and the very nature of Revolution and the State. The only difference is in scale and in which populations are affected.

Such actions, words, and defenses are supremely ignorant of the very nature of liberation, nothing less. They are counter-revolutionary, they are anti-worker, they are nothing more than a Leftist's version of the White Man's Burden. I refuse to accept them on those grounds.

Yes, in writing this, I believe I have made clear that I am deeply angered and sickened by the state of the Left here in the so-called "United States." Yet, despite all this, despite the demoralization that it brings, I am not without hope for the future. The People shall liberate themselves, no matter what regimes boot they may fall under. They need only be given the tools and the education, and they shall achieve that which a hundred Red Armies could never dream of accomplishing: true liberation.

Thank you for reading.

- S.G.